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CHASING THE GOAL POSTS: WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN BUSINESS AND COMMERCE FACULTIES IN AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

Despite Equal Opportunity legislation, affirmative action policies and increasing levels of participation by women in universities, higher proportions of women academics than men are still located in the lower ranks of the academic workforce. Proportionately more women are also likely to be employed in insecure, short-term contract positions and in casual (sessional) employment.

This paper uses women's voices to describe their perceptions and experiences of working in a university faculty with a predominantly male culture. The paper explores some of the common explanations for women's failure to rise to higher levels, such as less access to postgraduate teaching, research and other career advancement opportunities, and the perception that shifting goal posts ensure that successful candidates are those whose attributes best correspond with the predominant male culture.

Key Words: discrimination, promotion, merit, affirmative action, disadvantage.

Introduction

Women have been fighting for the right to participate in universities since 1873, when Sophia Jex Blake went to court with her fight to enroll at Edinburgh University. In rejecting her application, one of the judges stated that 'it is a belief, widely entertained, that there is a great difference in the mental constitution of the two sexes, just as there is in their physical conformation. The powers and susceptibilities of women are as noble as those of men; but they are thought to be different, and, in particular, it is considered that they have not the same power of intense labour as men are endowed with' (Scutt, 1994, p. 224).

In Australia, from the 1850s to the 1880s, both the University of Sydney and the University of Melbourne refused to admit women as students. In 1879, the Chancellor of the University of Sydney suggested that 'the best course to be taken by advocates of advanced education for women, would be to found some sort of affiliated college for them in the vicinity of the University ... if there really be a widespread wish on the part of young women for a higher education' (Scutt, 1994, p. 228). One hundred years on, women now enjoy the right to study at university. However, when it comes to the employment of women in universities, many of the old prejudices remain.
This paper is an exploratory study of women in academia. It compares the personal experiences of women working in faculties of Business and Commerce with the findings of empirical studies of women's disadvantage in university employment. The paper examines women's perceptions of disadvantage and discrimination, particularly in the areas of promotion and achievement recognition.

The purpose of the study is to determine how well the experiences of women working in an academic environment dominated by men fitted with the literature on academic women in universities in general. The women in this study reveal rich information about the difficulties they have encountered and the subtle attitudes which determine their success or failure.

Literature Review

Numerous studies have been undertaken in Australian and overseas universities concerning differences in the pattern of employment between men and women in academia. These studies have demonstrated that women's experiences are qualitatively different from men's and that women are systematically paid lower salaries than men of equivalent academic achievement, age and length of service (McElrath, 1992; Bagilhole, 1993a; Everett, 1994). Women are less likely to be employed at the higher levels and this is consistent even in Arts where, typically, a greater proportion of women academics are employed (Bacchi, 1993).

Studies have shown that differences in the experiences of male and female faculty can largely be explained by gender (Blackstone and Fulton, 1975; Over and Lancaster, 1984; Everett, 1994). Blackstone and Fulton (1975, p. 269) presented evidence to suggest that these differences were caused by sex discrimination.

We have shown that women, including those whom, to judge by their research output, it would be insulting to dismiss as lacking in motivation or commitment to their work, are not rewarded for their achievements to the same degree as comparable men.

The problem of inequality for women does not seem to have been overcome with the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act (1984) and Affirmative Action Legislation (1986). Interestingly, however, Everett (1994) found that more men than women believed that women's career opportunities had improved since the legislation was introduced.

Some male academics have criticised the legislation because they believe the current generation of men is being disadvantaged in promotion rounds by the use of affirmative action policies. For instance, two male academics at one of the universities in the study have lodged a complaint with the Equal Opportunity Commission, stating that their university's use of an Affirmative Action policy, which set aside promotion positions for woman, is discriminatory towards men.

Women, on the other hand, believe that promotion and tenure rounds are still dominated by male values. They feel that this is likely to remain the case while men continued to dominate promotion and tenure selection committees.
Women in Australian Universities

The proportion of women employed in Australian universities remains well below the participation rate for women students. In 1978, only 16% of full-time academic posts were held by women while women gained 25% of all higher degrees and 30% of all first degrees (Commonwealth Government statistics cited by Over & MacKenzie, 1985). In 1995, the proportion of women employed in universities increased to 33% while women gained 53% of all higher degrees and 59% of undergraduate degrees (DEET, 1995).

Women now comprise the majority of students at university. However, while women’s employment in universities has increased, and we have seen the introduction of Sex Discrimination legislation (1984) and Affirmative Action legislation (1986), women’s progress through the academic ranks has not proceeded correspondingly. Women continue to remain clustered at the lower levels of employment.

Table 1 shows the gender composition of men and women in Australian Universities by appointment level.

Table 1: Gender composition of Appointment Levels: Academic Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1988 Males (%)</th>
<th>1988 Females (%)</th>
<th>1995 Males (%)</th>
<th>1995 Females (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level A</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level B</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>44.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level C</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level D/E</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6.5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>n =</td>
<td>19300</td>
<td>7258</td>
<td>21906</td>
<td>11030</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Selected Higher Education Statistics, 1995, DEET

The Table shows that between 1988 and 1995, the number of women employed in universities increased by 51% while the number of men increased by 13%. Over both periods, the proportion of women employed at Level A (Associate Lecturer) was more than twice that of men while the proportion of women employed at the higher levels was much lower. In 1988, 33% of academic women were employed below lecturer, and only 9% above senior lecturer, compared to 12% of men below lecturer and 23% above senior lecturer. In 1995 this had not improved; the percentage of women below lecturer remained much the same while the percentage of women above senior lecturer fell to 6.5%.

While there has been a slight improvement in the percentage of women at senior lecturer (Level C), there has been little change in women’s employment at Levels A and B. Since this period follows the introduction of Sex Discrimination and Affirmative Action legislation, one might have expected more definite changes in the employment of women in universities.
Methodology

The study involved interviews with academic women who had been employed in faculties of Business and Commerce for at least five years. The participants were selected using the 'snowballing' technique; they initially comprised women known to me but as these women told female colleagues of the study I was given the names of other women who were willing to participate.

Participants comprised twelve women from three universities in Western Australia and two universities in New South Wales. One woman had recently left academia and started her own Business because of discriminatory practices she had encountered and another was contemplating leaving. In each university, women comprised a minority of the faculty and felt disadvantaged in some way.

A semi-structured interview was used to explore with the women the issues that had been identified from previous studies of sex discrimination in the academic profession. Open ended questions were used. Interviews in Western Australia were conducted face to face while those interstate were interviewed by telephone or email.

The purpose was to determine how well the position of women in the male dominated faculties of Business and Commerce fitted with the literature on women in universities in general. Previous empirical studies have found inequitable treatment of women without necessarily exploring the processes of discrimination.

Findings and Discussion

Each of the women in this study said that their university had established an internal promotion policy based on merit. However, they felt that the greatest problem they had encountered in gaining promotion was in determining the criteria upon which they would be judged from year to year and in meeting those criteria.

I have been chasing promotion for over five years. At first I was told that I would not be promoted until I got my masters degree so I worked really hard to complete it but then someone got promoted without a masters. Once I got the masters I was told I needed to publish to be promoted but in the next year someone was promoted without any publications. You go all out to meet the criteria each year but the next year the promotions committee changes and so does the criteria for that year. (Lecturer applying for senior lecturer position).

The promotion procedure at one university was explained by a Senior Lecturer who had served on promotion committees on two occasions.

There are about ten criteria upon which promotion can be based. When the applications are received we all get together to determine which are the criteria to be applied. In the last promotion round only four of the ten criteria were used so only people satisfying those criteria were selected.
When asked whether the criteria were the same as the previous year she replied:

Last year there was more emphasis on qualifications and publications. This year community involvement and involvement in university affairs were judged as more important ... it varies from year to year.

On questioning about the promotion procedures at their universities, women stated they were largely dissatisfied with the process, that they were presumed to be satisfied with their lot while the men were actively encouraged to apply. South et al states 'there is considerable research evidence that, not only do women need more encouragement to apply than men, but as well, they respond more positively to it than men' (cited in Burton, 1994, p. 47).

I was told not to bother to apply (for a senior lecturer position) as I would not get it ... that there was a queue of people to be promoted before me - (named males) - and until they were promoted, I would not be considered. (Lecturer)

The position was advertised with a specific male applicant in mind and specifically excluded me by stating that the appointee must have supervisory experience. Women in my department are not given the opportunity to supervise students so I didn’t even bother applying. (Lecturer aspiring to a senior lecturer position)

One woman, upon enquiring why she was not promoted, was told she should be grateful to have tenure and asked why she wanted to be promoted, anyway. ‘They would never have said that to a male, they would have expected a male to be working towards promotion’ (Associate Lecturer).

All women interviewed stated that they had problems keeping up with the ‘goal posts’ and determining what they were when applying for promotion. The moving of the goal posts each year is one means by which universities can maintain the position of women at lower levels. It is particularly worrying that, in some universities, it appears the ‘merit’ criteria to be applied are not decided until after applications for promotion have been received. This means that promotion committees can decide the criteria based on the applications of staff they most wish to promote. Unsurprisingly, academic staff at these institutions indicated they felt the promotion rounds to be based on politics rather than merit.

Over and McKenzie (1985, p. 66), in discussing the limited career opportunities for women in Australian universities, stated that university appointment systems assume

[the senior academics who constitute the committee will meet the interests of the institution by selecting among the applicants the person who demonstrates greatest merit. However, the process of evaluation is not necessarily free from bias. The committee is subject to limited accountability; the checks and constraints within the committee itself.
Since promotion committees remain unaccountable to anyone but themselves, there is no mechanism to prevent them from manipulating the criteria. Also, the secrecy often surrounding promotion procedures leads to the assumption that promotion committees have something to hide.

Bacchi (1993, p. 38) says that promotion decisions based on merit suggest that 'merit' is something that can be defined.

The current understanding of merit serves ideological functions, sustaining the status quo. The application of 'objective criteria' only appear to be applied and in fact disguise a manipulation of details and language to achieve a desired outcome.

Over and McKenzie (1985) state that women are disadvantaged by the fact that invalid merit criteria are applied to them which men as a group are more likely to satisfy. They state that the academic careers of most women do not fit the stereotypic male experience and it is mainly men who decide whether women should be promoted.

At one university in the study, the merit criteria for senior lecturer include the requirement that aspirants have a number of overseas conference presentations:

Some of us are single working mothers and overseas conference attendance is out of the question because who’s going to mind our children while we are away? The senior males were astonished when I mentioned that this was a problem for me. It had never occurred to them. (Associate Lecturer on why women at her university do not apply for promotion)

Women commented on the difficulties they had encountered in combining an academic career with responsibility for children. They felt that certain male faculty perceived married women with children as lacking in career commitment, whereas married men were not perceived in this way.

One interviewee claimed that when she needed to go home to tend a sick child, her male Head of School told her she should ‘get her priorities right’. In 1992, Family Responsibility provisions were added to the Sex Discrimination Act. Unfortunately, individual practice hasn’t always followed changes in policy.

Some women interviewed felt that the barriers between academic levels were an artificial barrier used to maintain the wage gap between males and females, regardless of qualifications and ability. This was particularly felt to be the case between the levels of Associate Lecturer (Level A) and Lecturer (Level B), where most women are employed.

They find excuses to keep you at Associate Lecturer so that they can pay you less to do the same work that you would be doing as a Lecturer ... lecturing, coordinating units and so on. (Associate Lecturer)
There are no men below lecturer in my Department, either lecturing or with masters degrees. As soon as they get their masters they are promoted to lecturer.... I’m coordinating units as an Associate Lecturer while some male Lecturers have less responsibility. (Level A with masters degree and publications)

McElrath cites numerous studies that claim an academic wage gap that favours males (1992, p. 279). Her study found salary differences for females and males at the same rank. After controlling for publications, length of service and other factors, ‘females were paid less than males as lecturers, associate lecturers, associate professors and full professors.’

One former Business lecturer interviewed claimed that she was employed at a time when there was a large turnover of staff in her department. A number of new staff were appointed of which she was the only female. Although she and the other new staff were all employed at Lecturer level it was only some time later that she discovered that the men were appointed at the top of the Lecturer salary scale while she was appointed at the bottom, with a salary differential of about $10 000pa. This was despite the fact that both she and the men had similar qualifications and work experience at commencement.

Another complaint by women concerned inequitable teaching loads. An analysis at one Business School showed that women carried higher teaching loads while men were given more time off for research. Women complained that the supervision of honors and masters students was divided up between the men, and women were excluded. As a result, women felt that their areas of interest and expertise were not being fully utilised.

In 1994, p. 33, Burton stated

Involvement in graduate teaching and supervision is important for promotional purposes, as this is an area to which staff are encouraged to refer when developing their teaching portfolios. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) principles would suggest that anything that is incorporated into criteria for promotion and tenure must be monitored for its equitable distribution as a developmental and ‘merit-accumulating’ opportunity.

The overwhelming employment of women at the lower academic levels compounds this problem as staff at Lecturer and below are mainly expected to teach. Since women comprise the majority of lower level academic staff it means that women have less chance for research and student supervision, not only because of direct discrimination against them supervising, but indirectly, because their level of employment denies them the opportunity.

Women at the lower levels, and particularly those on fixed term contracts, said they were often pressured into taking on higher duties than those prescribed in the Position Classification Standards for their level. They tended to acquiesce because of the insecurity of their position and because they needed to prove they were better than men to gain promotion. One woman said that the extra administrative duties she had been given meant that she had less time for research which actually reduced her prospects for tenure and promotion. She said she didn’t dare complain as the men in her department would use it as an excuse to question her commitment to her job.
Overall, the discussions with the women revealed interesting insights into the problems they had encountered in pursuing their chosen career goals. Unfortunately, at least one had found the going too difficult and had left for a career outside the academic profession and another was considering other alternatives available to her.

The collective experiences of the women served to confirm the findings of earlier empirical studies of disadvantage and discrimination against women while their expression of their experiences and perceptions provided an insight into the subtle ways in which disadvantage can be engendered.

Limitations and Future Research

This study should be viewed as exploratory and as a basis for further investigation. Some of the more obvious opportunities for further research include:

1. investigation into why women academics are under-represented in universities, and, in particular, at the higher levels of appointment,
2. comparative studies between similar faculties in different institutions,
3. comparative studies between male dominated and female dominated disciplines, and
4. investigation into the promotion processes and application of merit criteria in Australian universities.

Since the study involved interviews with only twelve women in faculties of Business and Commerce at five Australian universities, the findings cannot be generalised to apply to all women in Business and Commerce faculties. Differences may be found between universities and in individual schools and departments.

Summary and Recommendations

Studies reveal that discrimination against women survives in the 1990s and this is acknowledged by universities. Increasing evidence suggests that, despite the fact that universities promote themselves as equal opportunity employers and an open and meritocratic community of scholars, they cannot be held up as models of good practice when it comes to the employment of women.

The lack of objective guidelines and accountability in universities gives relative autonomy to departments and individual academics. Therefore, the culture of the institution remains that of the dominant group (male). Women need to take action to refine the culture in higher education institutions so that they can demand the same employment opportunities and achievement recognition as their male counterparts.

The women in this study say they are dissatisfied with their progress in gaining promotion and achievement recognition. However, the problem appears not to lie with the women themselves but with the institutional factors that serve to deny women their rightful place in academia.
It is important to recognise the part played by institutional factors in excluding women from full participation and success in the academic profession (Bagilhole, 1993b). Awareness of women’s experiences and perceptions can help us gain an understanding of some of the informal processes which work to maintain inequality.

Acknowledgements

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References

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT AND THE PROMOTION OF WOMEN TO PRINCIPAL POSITIONS IN WEST AUSTRALIAN STATE PRIMARY SCHOOLS

May Elin Goves

Abstract

Policies aimed specifically at greater equity in the number of women holding principal positions in West Australian state primary schools have had very limited success. Performance management, a corporate managerialist tool adopted because of its ability to effectively address economic, administrative and political concerns, is currently being implemented in the WA state education system. Is performance management as gender neutral as the literature would have us believe or will performance management affect, positively or negatively, the number of women attaining principalships in our primary schools?

This study set out to find some answers to those questions by interviewing policy actors and analysis of relevant policies.

Key Words: performance management, equity, development, leadership, masculine culture.

Introduction

Policies aimed at greater equity in the number of women holding principal positions in West Australian state primary schools have had very limited success and in fact been subsumed by economic, administrative and political forces (Hutchinson, 1992, p. ii). Performance Management, a corporate managerialist tool adopted because of its ability to effectively address economic, administrative and political concerns, is currently being implemented right across the West Australian public service and the state education system is no exception. The West Australian Education Department's Performance Management policy framework, with its emphasis on the largely economic and political issues of demonstrating accountability and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the delivery of education, triggered a concern that Performance Management could further undermine the initiatives aimed at achieving greater equity within the system or even create new barriers to women obtaining promotional positions. This concern resulted in a study aimed at examining the possible effects the implementation of the West Australian Education Department's Performance Management Policy could have on the promotion of women to the position of primary principal and includes interviews with policy actors and policy analysis. This paper will describe this study and provide a discussion on its findings.
Performance Management

Performance management is a concept introduced into educational administration from business and industry. Corporate management structures have in the past few years been introduced into the West Australian education system (Beare, 1988; Robertson, 1990; Considine, 1988) and performance management is one of corporate management's tools, a process and a practice aimed at raising productivity by fostering the individual potential of its staff members (Alderson, 1994). Schools have been compared to large corporate structures and described as 'organisational loose couplings,' that is, places where management has problems controlling the organisation's outcomes (Pratte, 1986). Performance management is seen as the solution to this problem and provides a means for members of the organisation to demonstrate their accountability to their various constituencies. The West Australian Education Department's Policy Framework for performance management defines performance management as 'the continuous process of reflecting, negotiating, developing, reviewing and making decisions about an individual’s performance in achieving organisational goals' (1993, p. 3).

The process is conceptualised as consisting of four stages:
(i) Self reflection;
(ii) Planning meeting;
(iii) Implementation, ongoing feedback and support;
(iv) Review.

Employees, it is visualised, will reflect on what area of their performance they need to develop, meet with their line-managers and draw up a performance agreement, take steps to achieve the aims set out in the agreement and finally review the process in terms of how well employees have achieved their aims. This will apply to all Education Department employees, but the performance manager is always a person at least one step above the person being performance managed in the line management structure. Teachers will in other words be performance managed by Heads of Departments, Deputies or Principals, while having no input into the performance management of their superiors.

Considering policies aimed directly at redressing the imbalance between the sexes at leadership level appear to have had only limited, if any, success, one was prompted to ask what effect a policy such as performance management will have on the promotion of women? Will it have a positive, negative or no effect at all?

The Study

The research question this study set out to answer was: How will the implementation of the West Australian Education Department policy on performance management affect the promotion of women to the position of principal within West Australian state primary schools?

To answer that question this study sought to analyse relevant government and Education Department policies and establish the views and perceptions of policy actors. The Policy Framework for Performance Management (1996) and the 1993 interim research report Gender in Promotion became the major Education Department documents used in the analysis together with the perceptions and views of 5 policy actors; 2 classroom teachers (CT1 & CT2), 1 teacher
union activist (TUA), and 2 senior Education Department employees (SDE1 & SDE2) - all female and selected on the basis of their knowledge and understanding of the performance management proposal.

Findings and Discussion

This study involved a limited sample so broad generalisations can not be made, however, some inferences are drawn by comparing the various sources of data. The nature of the findings in this study is of a character best presented through an integrated discussion of the study’s inferences and will focus on the barriers to women entering leadership positions identified in the literature and by the study itself.

Inference 1: Performance management will provide a means for teachers to demonstrate their accountability.

The performance management document states its aims to be:

(i) a means of demonstrating accountability, and
(ii) a means of providing opportunities for growth and development among Education Department employees (p. 1).

All the interviewees in this project agreed that teachers must demonstrate their accountability and felt that performance management will provide an opportunity for that.

Inference 2: Performance management may provide limited opportunity for some female teachers to develop skills and knowledge required for leadership positions.

Much of the data collected views performance management very positively as a means of teacher growth and development eventually leading to more women entering principal positions. The 1993 Gender in Promotion report also recognised the possible value of performance management in terms of teacher development (p. 37). One interviewee expressed a strong belief in the performance management process’ ability to foster leadership skills in teachers:

I think performance management will give women a forum to look at some of the things that they maybe don’t have skills in or are a bit weak in, and provide them with the opportunity to work on addressing those deficiencies or strengthening the really good things that they’re looking for in the principal type of person. SDE2

The policy implies that the performance management process will provide teachers (the majority of whom are women) with the opportunity to develop all the skills, knowledge and attitudes required for the principal position. The document with its constant references to ‘growth and development, development of individuals and enhanced performance’, clearly holds a view of teachers as deficient, lacking also in the skills, knowledge and attitudes required for leadership positions and makes no effort to change the notion of leadership. What this document implies is that performance management will provide teachers with the opportunities to rectify this deficiency, a notion also found in the statement quoted above from
interviewee SDE2. It is interesting to note that in the literature on the barriers to women entering leadership positions and in the 1993 Gender in Promotion report, women lacking appropriate skills and knowledge is not recognised as a barrier.

**Inference 3:** Performance management may provide limited opportunity for some female teachers to have their existing skills and knowledge recognised and valued.

The document's mention of acknowledging teachers' work is an important one. The 1993 Gender in Promotion report discusses the lack of recognition, in particular from principals, of female teachers' work, and suggests a system of performance management might address this problem (p. 40). Unfortunately, this performance management document in the end leaves the reader with the impression that there is a greater need to improve teachers than to recognise the good work they are currently doing. Acknowledging teachers' work seems to be treated with 'lip service' only.

**Leadership**

The Gender in Promotion report stresses the importance of the principal in the process of recognising women's work and leadership is an issue mentioned by all the interviewees. The performance management document in its emphasis on the process being managed within the supervisory line of the organisation clearly is advocating the traditional hierarchic notion of leadership, not a more democratic, collective approach to management (p. 5). SDE2 referred to a report into leadership in Australia and how that identified a need to move away from the autocratic style of management into a much more collective approach. SDE2 expressed a hope that performance management would lead to a change in the culture which is shaping the current view of leadership within schools: 'I'm hopeful that by people being involved in the performance management process it might help to change that culture.' DE2.

How this is to occur is not quite clear but the impression the researcher gathered was that the skills associated with the collective, collaborative and democratic style of leadership (often displayed by women), will be recognised and rewarded in the performance management process, even by traditional/autocratic administrators.

Three of the interviewees also expressed serious concerns with many primary school principals' level of professionalism:

> I really don't have a lot of faith in deputies and principals (in terms of professionalism) at this stage. CT1

In my experience, the level of professionalism in primary school principals varies a great deal, but more often than not I have found them to be petty and power hungry individuals concerned with their own agenda rather than what's best for the education of the students and/or their staff. CT2

Most of the performance managers (administrators) will have biases against women and minority groups' skills and knowledge. TUA
One interviewee expressed some concerns about how some principals might implement the performance management process:

If you've got a performance manager, whether that's a principal, or head of department or deputy, who sees it as a punitive measure then performance management is not going to be as effective as it could be. SDE2

It appears the document's faith in administrators' level of professionalism is a little naive and even if teachers' perceptions of principals' level of professionalism is flawed, the fact that many teachers have this view of principals, will certainly affect the effectiveness of the implementation of performance management in schools.

Organisational Culture

Performance management is also seen to be able to positively affect the organisational culture, which in the West Australian Education Department is a masculine culture, defined by men, based on men's values and notions of what is considered important and relevant. The 1993 Gender in Promotion report states that

Gender bias in school culture was cited by women as a painful and exhausting negative influence for them.

Women, particularly those from the primary sector, often cited 'masculine school culture' as the most powerful barrier to women's career development (p. 41).

One important aspect of school culture are the goals of the organisation. The performance management document refers quite liberally to the 'organisation's goals'.

The key to the success of the performance management process is the creation of an environment which fosters an individual's growth and development while focusing on the achievement of the organisation's goals (p. 9).

This assumes a general agreement within the organisation about the organisation's goals and treats this subject as unproblematic. As it has been established that the West Australian Education Department has a masculine culture, its goals are shaped and defined by this culture and now taken for granted by policies such as the performance management document.

As mentioned above, the 1993 report showed that many women feel a marked rift in educational ideology and educational practices between themselves (women) and men in promotional positions (p. 48). Clearly the West Australian Education Department's organisational goals and those of individual schools, are not generally agreed on and accepted. Yet, this policy gives principals and deputies more power to force teachers to comply with organisational goals, goals which they have had no input into defining and goals they may in fact find professionally unacceptable.
The merit principle is another aspect of organisational culture, one the literature also found to be a barrier to women entering promotional positions (Kanter, 1977; Hutchinson, 1992; Blackmore, 1993). The emphasis in the performance management document on professional development and evaluation and measurement of teacher performance will affect teachers' merit. The performance management process requires teachers to professionally develop certain aspects of their performance. If this development is in the areas traditionally associated with leadership as set out in the criteria for promotion, clearly this will improve their chances of promotion. If on the other hand, teachers professionally develop other aspects of leadership, those associated with a democratic/feminine style of leadership but not set out in the criteria for promotion, their chance of promotion will be decreased. They will be seen as not having made efforts at developing their leadership potential as they have not developed the traditional leadership aspects and the development they have achieved will not be recognised or seen as relevant. Interviewees in this project stated:

"The merit principle is associated with bias....the criteria used are seen to be gender neutral, but they are in fact masculinely defined, resulting in women's skills and knowledge not being recognised and valued in terms of leadership. TUA"

"Whilst the rhetoric may say we value or we need more participative leadership, what happens... is that [women's management style is] not valued as high as traditional management style. SDE1"

One interviewee expressed a belief that taking part in the performance management process would provide teachers with 'the opportunity to perhaps have some impact on the way their manager operates, and to provide feedback to them about what constitutes good practice' SDE2.

Clearly this again is dependent on the professionalism of administrators, but even with the most professional performance manager, the document's emphasis on working within the organisation's goals severely restricts teachers' capacity for this kind of influence. On the other hand, it can be seen as highly likely that the performance management process will work to silence the discussion about the organisation's goals, further entrenching the dominant masculine culture.

**Mentoring**

Performance management has been seen to offer opportunities for women to find and develop mentor relationships. Lack of mentoring has been recognised by women within the department as a major barrier to entering principal positions. Two interviewee responses were:

"Women don't have mentors like men do. Especially the role models. Men are still in most of the top positions so you don't have the role models [which leads] women into not seeing themselves as potential leaders. CT1"

"The department is developing a 'Women In Leadership' programme which will have a mentoring system in it. SDE1"
The 1993 Gender in Promotion report asserts that '[a] lack of recognition, encouragement and mentoring was perceived, particularly by female participants, as a major barrier to applying for promotion' (p. 37).

It is suggested that administrators, through the performance management process, will recognise and help develop their employees’ skills and capabilities and upon realising a person’s potential to make a good administrator, will actively encourage and offer insights into the power relationships, culture and informal processes of the organisation, thereby easing their journey to that promotional position. The role of the principal in this regard is crucial, but there is nothing preventing principals from doing those things now, although most don’t. Many of the respondents in the 1993 Gender in Promotion report complained of male principals and deputies actively working against women they see as particularly capable and ambitious (pp. 41-44). Considering three of the interviewees’ very low regard for the professionalism of primary school principals (discussed under leadership), the researcher does not see much realistic hope for the performance management process in alleviating lack of mentoring as a barrier to women entering principal positions.

Inference 4: Performance management is likely to reinforce and compound the existing masculine culture of schools, thereby making it even harder for women to enter principal positions.

This is the view of four of the interviewees in this project.

In practice I think it will have a negative effect, because it is so reliant on how it is implemented. TUA

If, like it is in this document, you are going to be performance managed by someone from within the school, someone you may have had disagreements and run-ins with, I don’t have much confidence in [administrators] giving women a fair go. They are not professional. CT1

I hope it will have a positive effect, however it will be in the long term. If the organisational culture is not changed, it could have a negative effect. SDE1

I think performance management will reinforce the masculine culture of schools, because most administrators are males, and they and the system only recognise male skills and knowledge as valuable and worthwhile. CT2

It is clear that these interviewees have a different view of female teachers. These women don’t see female teachers as defective, needing training and development in leadership skills. They clearly see the women as very capable, that it is the organisation which needs to change for more women to enter principal positions. This is a view supported by the 1993 Gender in Promotion report which in its extensive analysis never indicated that female teachers in any way lacked in skills, knowledge or attitudes relevant to the principal position.

~96~
School Culture

What these interviewees indicate is the view that performance management will reinforce and entrench the existing masculine culture within the department and within individual schools:

Probably, performance management could be a bit like mentoring and simply reinforce the existing culture rather than disrupt and change it. SDE1

I am concerned this adhoc process [performance management] will become an exercise in who can best meet the needs of the person at the top, who can conform and appear to be doing what the top considers important. CT1

The document's emphasis on the process being managed within the supervisory line of the organisation, hands a lot of power to the administrators, and I'm concerned many of them will use the performance management process to forward their own agenda and as a means of silencing 'troublesome women' and other dissidents. CT2

The particular aspects of organisational culture these women felt could be further reinforced or entrenched through the performance management process are mentoring, selection procedures, homosociability and the merit principle. As the issue of bias against women and women's work is not being addressed, there are no grounds for expecting that bias to disappear or even weaken. On the other hand it is likely that if the process is managed by unprofessional administrators, the status quo will at the very least be maintained or in a worst case scenario, used deliberately to keep the women in the classroom and the men in the administrative positions. Some interviewee responses illustrates clearly women's very distinctly articulated fear that this may in fact happen.

Homosociability may be further compounded by performance management if performance managers are not made aware of their biases and their need to address that issue. TUA

Men are seen as better disciplinarians and are often preferred over women as they are family bread-winners. performance management will give administrators the power to apply such values by giving women negative performance appraisals and favourable ones to the men they like. CT1

Grievance procedure

It could be argued that if women feel they are unfairly treated, they can submit a grievance. The performance management document states:

Grievance procedures attached to the Public Sector Standards should be used to address concerns relating to a breach of any of those Standards. Local procedures should be used for all other grievances (p. 6).
Interviewees said:

the Public Service Management Act now means we can only appeal against the process, that is, that due process was broken. In the previous system an appeal could at least be lodged with an independent umpire who would look at the appeal and determine if bias and/or discrimination had entered the decision. Now a breach of process is the only justification for appeal unless a complainant feels that there is ground for appeal on the ground of Equal Employment Opportunity. Most teachers would not be very familiar with this process. TUA

The process should be ensuring that people can appeal if they feel that they have been discriminated against and that can only be achieved by having access to the other applicants' applications/c.v.s. To be able to appeal only against the process means that as long as the employer ensures the process is followed, they can give the position to who ever. I wonder if the union has accepted that. T1

Well, the decisions and processes are guided by the principals of natural justice, that's about the only place it would fit. One of the problems that the office of EEO in the Public Sector Standards Commission had with these standards was getting anything by EEO embedded in them. It's absolutely amazing, I'm just horrified because an act of Parliament was passed with bipartisan support even though the conservative side has backtracked quickly since, the only time it is mentioned anywhere is recruitment and promotion, and that talks about bias. So there would have to be a fairly aware person to know, although mind you, they can complain under Equal Opportunity Legislation, if they feel that what's happened has been discriminatory they can come to us or...complain at the school level, under the equal opportunity rules. SDE1

Clearly there is very little faith in this grievance procedure's capacity to safeguard women from unfair gender-based treatment.

Family Responsibilities

There are other problematic issues raised by the interviewees. One is that performance management will lead to women being further disadvantaged because of their family responsibilities. One teacher suggested that as many women find it more difficult to attend many professional development courses and meetings outside school hours than men, this may be seen as them not being very committed to their work and career. Burton (1991) also makes mention of this same issue.

CT1 was concerned that performance management would exacerbate the barrier to promotion experienced by many women because of break(s) in service.

[W]hen they've been away from work for a period of 2 - 3 years, they are seen to be lacking recent and relevant experience. There is a need to give women kudos for that parenting experience and what should be written into the performance management document is a way of providing ways and means for women to keep
up professionally while on leave. They could be contacted and paid to attend professional development days at their schools. CT1

There was also a concern that merit promotion would further discriminate against women because women teachers are often not as mobile as men. Merit would be given, this teacher felt, to teachers with wide experience, experience in varying social, cultural and economic environments. The performance management process was seen to be able to recognise and acknowledge this experience as it would be a predominantly male experience, something the existing masculine culture in schools would reward appropriately.

Quality of Education

A fear that performance management would lead to competition between teachers and discourage co-operation and collegiality so essential for good education was also aired:

I have a feeling it’s going inwards, we’re going to go back to people being tight little balls of information which they won’t share with anyone else, it’s going to be highly competitive, we’re going to be nit-picking, that’s the sort of thing I came through [the system] with, it was a very narrow profession. CT1

Promotion and discipline

One final issue was raised as very problematic and one which all the participants at least acknowledged was a real issue for teachers. It was felt that performance management, while it attempts on paper to keep the performance management process separate from promotion and disciplinary processes, as administrators are involved in all these processes, they will not, in reality, be able to keep the processes separate. Although few people are disciplined by the department and there are also only limited numbers of people applying for promotions, if a majority of teachers have this fear this will certainly affect the effectiveness of the performance management process. Will teachers divulge information about their weaknesses to a performance manager they know is going to be on the selection panel for the next acting promotional position in the school?

Summary

This study has highlighted many issues related to the introduction of performance management in West Australian primary schools. Firstly, it seems that the performance management process can provide the means for teachers to demonstrate their accountability in a manner not measured by student learning, something most teachers would see as fair and positive.

Secondly, performance management appears to have a theoretical potential for allowing teachers to grow and develop as professionals and as such increase the opportunities for women to enter principal positions. For this potential to become reality depends on the professionalism, skills and knowledge of administrators, all of which this discussion has shown should not be taken for granted. The performance management document does nothing to safeguard against unprofessional, biased administrators; rather the insistence on the process being managed along supervisory lines and the change in grievance procedures, would make it even harder for women to complain on the grounds of bias and/or discrimination.
Finally, this discussion has highlighted the potential performance management policy has for reinforcing and exacerbating the existing barriers, which prevent women from entering principal positions. The performance management process, with its insistence on management through supervisory lines, its failure to address the issue of bias in evaluation of women's work and its insistence on improving an implied unproductive, deficient teaching work-force, will, unless administered by an exceptionally professional administration team, further obstruct women's efforts to achieve principal status within West Australian primary schools.

Acknowledgements

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Thank you also to my dear friend Maria for her support, honesty and proof-reading skills.

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WOMEN MANAGERS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER:
INTERWEAVING PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND WORKLIFE

Dr. Jan Grant
Edith Cowan University

Abstract

This study investigates the complex ways in which personal life, work life and social structure are interwoven in the construction of gender and identity in women managers and professionals. It draws on selected findings from a larger research project on the construction of gender in the workplace, which involved a sample of 92 women in middle to senior management positions within five different organisational settings (private enterprise, public service, universities, trade unions, and community advocacy), from five capital cities in Australia. The paper traces the changing constructions of desire, personal relationships, relationships with children and division of labour amongst a group who constitute a challenge to the current gender regime of the workplace. Major conclusions drawn are that gendered identities such as motherhood are undergoing considerable reconstruction; that some elements of the division of labour are changing; that the structure of desire is resistant to change; and that gender as a social category is continually reconstructed, reproduced and resisted in the interwoven workplaces of home and organisations.

Key Words: women leaders; gender and organisations; women, work and family.

Introduction

Since feminism first coined the catch cry 'the personal is political', the interrelationships between the public and private domains have been a focus of feminist scholarship and activism. More recently, the dichotomy between the public and private spheres, so fundamental to liberal democratic theory, has come under critical scrutiny by some feminist theorists. Carole Pateman, for example, argues that 'the separation of the private domestic life of women from the public world of men has been constitutive of patriarchal-liberalism from its origins...’ (1989, p. 132), and that the current feminist project to deconstruct such dichotomising is an important step toward a democratic social order. As Jeff Hearn (1992, p.17) suggests:

Rather than seeing the public and the private as zones or fixed domains, one might consider how parts of the public and private co-exist for individuals, social groups, or socially structured collectivities in their material lives.

Within the last three decades in Australia, there has been a marked increase in the number of women in management positions in the workforce. In 1966 women held 12 % of the management positions, while by 1991 women constituted 25.4 % of all management positions (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1966, 1991). In addition, there has been substantial growth in female business ownership (Still and Guerin, 1987). To this extent, women managers and professionals are presenting a partial challenge to the 'gender regime of the workplace' and the 'gendered logic of accumulation' (Connell, 1987).
Research in Australia, Britain and the United States, indicates that in comparison to male managers, female managers are likely to earn less, to have a lower status position (Freedman and Phillips, 1988; Tharenou and Conroy, 1988), to be childless or to have fewer children, and to be single, divorced or separated (Alban-Metcalfe and West, 1991; Betz and Fitzgerald, 1987; Tharenou and Conroy, 1988). Those who are married are far more likely to be in dual career families, with one study reporting 88% of women managers and only 27% of male managers in such family structures (Wajcman, 1996a). While 66% of male managers report that their partners were primarily in a supportive role, only 2% of the women report such an arrangement (Alban-Metcalfe & West, 1991).

The experiences of women managers in the interaction between home and work life are also different to those of men managers. Whereas men are more likely to perceive home as a haven, a place to relax and recreate, women tend to experience home as stressful, demanding, and as precluding private leisure time (Alban-Metcalfe and West, 1991). Marriage and family are often viewed as assets for men’s careers, but as liabilities for women’s careers (Wajcman, 1996b). Gendered expectations for domestic, social, childcare and sexual services from women mean that marriage puts increased demands on women managers who already work long hours in demanding jobs. For men, the reverse is true, with such services often provided for them by a female partner.

This paper investigates the complex ways in which personal life, ‘public’ work life and social structure are interwoven in the construction of gender and identity in women managers and professionals. It focuses on three of the 50 variables investigated in a larger research project (Grant and Porter, 1994) on the construction of gender in the workplace domestic responsibilities, motherhood, and personal relationships.

Methodology and Description of Sample

This study is based on interviews with 92 women managers, who were selected through criterion sampling. Several techniques were used to identify possible subjects, including peer nomination, snowball sampling, use of public service and womens’ organisations’ lists, the Directory of Women (1988), and letters to large corporations requesting identification of potential respondents. All respondents were full-time workers in professional or managerial positions, had been in the full-time workforce for at least ten years, and were mostly between thirty-five and fifty years of age. They came from a variety of class and ethnic backgrounds; four were of Aboriginal descent. Respondents were drawn from five capital cities in Australia: Adelaide, Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne and Perth. About half the sample occupied senior management positions in their organisations and about half were in middle management or professional positions. They were also from a variety of organisational environments. Respondents from private enterprise (44%) included partners in accountancy and law firms, marketing managers, human resource directors, geologists, psychologists, managing directors, bankers, doctors and engineers. Those in the public service (36%) included chief executive officers, chief social workers, psychologists, media presenters, research scientists, politicians, equal opportunity officers and directors/managers of specific divisions. Respondents from community advocacy organisations (8%) were predominantly coordinators or executive directors of small organisations in areas such as Aboriginal services, family planning, AIDS
services, and women's health. Academics (6%) were from professorial to lecturer levels, while those in trade unions (6%) were organisers, industrial officers, training officers, and general secretaries of their unions.

The data for this project was collected using an in-depth interview (lasting on average 2.5 hours), where work experiences and personal stories were probed in some depth, and an extensive written questionnaire which collected demographic data.

Results

Domestic Responsibilities

Game and Pringle (1983) argue that women's acceptance of the separation between the public and private worlds allows them to construct a work identity. In this way it has assisted women to enter the workforce and, thus, to reconstitute gender relations. On the other hand, it has led to the reproduction of the dual power structure through the continuance of a sexual division of labour in the home. This means that the double shift that most women do in the paid workforce and in the home is never really confronted. Current studies indicate that women continue to hold far more responsibility for both organisation and execution of domestic and parental obligations, whether or not they are engaged in the paid workforce (Baxter et al., 1990; Bittman, 1991; Glezer, 1991; Wajcman, 1996b).

In this sample, 69% of the women had children, fifty-two percent had children under the age of eighteen, and 10% under the age of five. Fifty-eight percent were in married or de facto relationships, while 25% were separated, divorced or widowed and 17% were single. The responsibility for organising any necessary childcare was clearly taken by these women, with 88% reporting that they organised the childcare, 10% that it was equally shared, and 2% that their partner organised it.

Turning to other domestic responsibilities, Table 1 indicates the breakdown of domestic labour for those women with male partners. The most striking thing about this data is the discrepancy between the domestic responsibilities taken solely by the women and the domestic responsibilities taken solely by partners. With the exception of outside tasks, women were two to fourteen times as likely to take sole responsibility for all six major categories of tasks. Men were three times more likely to undertake outside work.

Table 1: Analysis of Domestic Labour for Respondents with Male Partners (N=49).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Self %</th>
<th>Partner %</th>
<th>Other %</th>
<th>Shared %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily Household Tasks</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooking</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laundry</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tidying Up</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wash Up/Load Dishwasher</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Beds</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding Pets</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section Mean</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task</td>
<td>Self %</td>
<td>Partner %</td>
<td>Other %</td>
<td>Shared %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weekly/Monthly Tasks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ironing</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cleaning/Vacuuming</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paying Bills</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mending</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing Friends/Relatives</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section Mean</strong></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Daily Tasks With Children</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision of Children</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Care of Children</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding Children</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get Up to Children at Night</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying Clothes for Children</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drive Chn. to Activities</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play with Children</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help with Homework</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section Mean</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outside Tasks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawn Mowing</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Repairs</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improvements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washing Car</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arrange Car Service</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section Mean</strong></td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisational Tasks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organise Med./Dental Appts.</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organise Social Life</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organise Holidays</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organise Household Budget</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home for Tradespeople</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section Mean</strong></td>
<td>31</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Shopping Tasks</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Household Shopping</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buying Major Items</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy Clothes For Partner</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buy Gifts Friends/Relatives</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Section Mean</strong></td>
<td>43</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Impact of Children On Mother's Career

In terms of provision of childcare, the majority of women in the sample (64%) had spent some period of time as a full-time caregiver for their children, while 46% had spent some time as a part-time caregiver. In considering their partner's participation in childcare, the picture is somewhat different, and reflects both the reproduction of gendered arrangements in parenting as well as the reconstruction of such arrangements. In contrast to the women, 92% of the partners had not participated at all as a full-time caregiver, an indication of the strength of the institution of gendered parenting.

In terms of the perceived impact of children on their mother's career, Table 2 displays an analysis of responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Subjects Who Mention This Category (N=75)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>(N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Created Wisdom</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>(24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributed to Multiple Responsibilities</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>(14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited Career</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>(11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delayed Career</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed Time Management Skills</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created Flexible Work Approach</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved People Management Skills</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changed Career for Better</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created Image of Normality</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created Image of Inefficiency</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although respondents nominated a variety of negative impacts on their careers, a surprising number of positive impacts were spontaneously mentioned. A large percentage (41%) felt that having children created greater wisdom, allowing them to empathise with mothers as clients and workers, giving them a greater breadth of experience, creating a sense of balance, and giving another dimension to their world view. This senior manager in an education bureaucracy details some of the positive ways that children have affected her in the workplace:

I think having children has affected me profoundly. Partly, this is because most of us carry on like children a lot of the time. I've found myself saying things that I can recall having had to say to a child of six. So there's a bit of that, and I think you get very good practice on children. You learn, as a parent, the kind of behaviour that evokes uncooperative, unpleasant behaviour from children. In the main it does from adults too. I think it does.
Other positive effects included the perception that motherhood had improved people and time-management skills, created an image of normality, and produced more flexible work practices. Together, these challenge some of the conventional assumptions about the impact of children on women's careers.

On the other hand, there were a number of negative effects perceived by the women as impacting on their careers. The strongest negative consequences mentioned were the multiple responsibilities involved in being a mother and a professional (24%). As one professional said, 'I must admit, that I find that work, family, career, friends, and just being a normal person an extremely difficult balancing trick.' Women talked about the difficulty in balancing dual demands, the stresses of too much work, the guilt of not being as available for children as they would like to be, and the lack of time and tiredness that ensued as a result of attempting to meet the multiple demands.

The 'tremendous responsibilities' that women carry are elaborated by the following Personnel Management Consultant within the police force, who describes in graphic detail how they impinge on her life:

'It's the meal preparation, and the forward planning, and having everything defrosted or pre-prepared, so that when you get home people aren't eating at midnight. It's fitting in the homework and getting yourself to Assembly or Mother's Day. I don't do any of those sort of voluntary things at the school and I don't regret not doing them. Sick children are always a problem. I think that must be the worst thing. You've got really important stuff; you've got deadlines that you must meet at work, and then at home there's this poor little thing with a fever and chickenpox, and that's really where you want to be. Or going east. Going east for me is like organising the Chinese Army; it really is unbelievable. I've got to pre-plan everything.'

Such multiple responsibilities produced tiredness, role overload, and sometimes guilt, as this director of a small community advocacy organisation reveals: 'I think having children and working is full of contradictions, and I think you feel guilty for the rest of your life.'

The Impact of Mother's Career on Children

Turning to the impact of the mother's career on her children, Table 3 indicates how those subjects with children perceived such an impact.
### Table 3: The Impact of Mother’s Careers on Children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>No of Subjects Who mention this category (N=58)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive Impacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed Greater Independence</td>
<td>26 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widened Child’s World View</td>
<td>17 (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created Positive Female Role Model</td>
<td>14 (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developed Pride in Mother</td>
<td>10 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created a more satisfied Mother</td>
<td>10 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created Non-Sexist Parental Role Models</td>
<td>7 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Impacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unavailability of Mother</td>
<td>26 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Expectations on Child to Perform</td>
<td>10 (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulties Created by Mother’s High Profile</td>
<td>7 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of a “Traditional” mum</td>
<td>7 (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment of Mother’s Career</td>
<td>3 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Friends from Constant Moving</td>
<td>2 (1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Given the dominant discourse on motherhood, and in particular the ideology regarding the psychological impact of adequate and inadequate mothering (Birns & Hay, 1994), it is interesting that these women perceived more positive than negative effects of their career on their children. They felt that their involvement in the paid work world had produced greater independence in their children, who were seen as being more adaptable, resourceful, self-sufficient and creative. This law partner describes it in these terms:

> I think they’re better for it now ... They’re a lot more independent. They have had to learn how to relate to other people. One thing I’ve noticed is that they have to get on with other people because I’m not always there to protect them. And they learnt that very early on - that you have to appeal to somebody.

The exposure to interesting people, important issues and travel, meant that the children were more socially aware and knowledgeable, which helped to broaden their world view. Sometimes such exposure has both positive and negative aspects as revealed by this director:

> It has its positive and negative side. I can remember when she was about four saying to me: ‘Mum, please this year can we not go to children’s homes for Christmas.’ She has had a whole lot of experiences ... that no other kid she knows has had. She has sat in with me while I controlled the riots, and she has played with all the offenders ... She is tremendous in school with arguing about Aborigines, apartheid and other social justice issues, because they are a part of her daily conversation.
In addition, respondents felt that their career had helped to create a positive female role model of working women as industrious, active, self-disciplined and competitive achievers. This in turn assisted in creating a non-sexist view of parental roles and an active pride in the mother’s accomplishments. As one respondent remarked, ‘I think I would have been more frustrated, ratty, and depressed if I had not worked, so I think in the end they have gotten a much better deal.’

The sample also mentioned some perceived negative effects on their children, including children missing their mother, feeling deprived of their mother’s time, suffering from their mother’s absence and missing out on quiet time with their mother. This is articulated by the following senior manager of a public service organisation:

I think there are times when your kids give you quite specific messages about the amount of time you can spend with them. Your availability to do things during school hours is very limited, for instance, or the amount of energy you have when you come home to spend helping with homework. That difficult period at the end of the day when you come home tired and there’s a transition between one hat and the next. You’re shedding some stuff and picking up the other and it isn’t the time when I’m at my best. My children are wonderful. They’ll take me off, saying this is Mum when she comes home, as she grips the edge of the sink and says, ‘why is this house in such a shambles.’ So it does affect them.

The Effect of the Woman’s Career on Personal Relationships

Table 4 below presents an analysis of the effects the women in the sample perceived their career had on their personal relationships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Subjects Who Mention This Effect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Effects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Positive or Neutral Impact</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enriched Relationships</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interests are Shared</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enhanced Social Network</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful Work Skills Carried Over</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parenting Shared</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard of Living Increased</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative Effects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner Feels Threatened or Resentful .</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stress, Lack of Time/Energy for Relationship</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Contact With Friends</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Unlike the data on the impact of careers on children, the above data indicate considerably more negative effects on relationships with partners and friends than positive ones. Most striking is the number of women who reported their partners to be threatened or resentful of their career achievements (32%). Partners felt threatened, resentful or jealous about a variety of things, including interaction with colleagues, expanded interests, greater earning capacity, larger salary, greater success at work, perceptions that the job took priority over the home, and increased demands for them to participate in domestic labour and childcare. The complexity of the issue is captured in the words of a senior academic:

Externally he was incredibly supportive ... but he really wasn’t at all. He hated every minute of it and finally when my marriage broke down, he was able to say that. It impacted, because I spent an enormous amount of energy trying to pretend that I was the person that he wanted, or trying to pretend that I wouldn’t threaten him in any way.

Some male partners took action in the workforce in response to being threatened by their wife’s progress. For example, a senior retail buyer related that she and her husband were both working in a training department and she was senior, he went to the boss and requested a pay rise on the grounds that his wife should not be earning more than him. His boss granted the request.

Ten percent of the subjects mentioned that their work was the direct cause of obtaining a divorce, while another 10% implied this in their responses. The causes of marital breakdown included men’s resentment regarding their wife’s success, male perceptions that the time devoted to her work took time away from the role of wife or mother, male resentment that they were missing nurturing which they felt that a wife should provide, and feelings that their wives did not need them. A deputy director describes it this way:

I am someone who is efficient, able to do things, organise, knows a lot, is logical, thinks things through and tends to be seen to be in control, which means I am very difficult ... My marriage ultimately broke up after my husband had a whole series of affairs, all with women that he could be protective and helpful with and look after. They were all vulnerable.
On the other hand, a number of women talked about the differences between a past marriage and a current relationship, where the partner seemed able to accept, enjoy and desire a woman who was achieving her own goals in the public domain.

New forms of relationships also have their own specific issues. As one management consultant who was in a lesbian relationship said:

My work is the most important part of my life ... and that has been a huge point of contention. Also, the fact that I have very close relationships with women ... in other organisations I have worked with ... which is very threatening to my partner.

On a slightly different tack, a number of respondents (23 %) felt that they themselves did not have enough time or energy to devote to either an existing relationship or to developing new relationships. In addition, 11 % felt that the demands of their job considerably reduced contact with friends.

It is also important to recognise that 47 % of the sample felt that their career affected their current personal relationships in either a very positive or a neutral manner. This occurred through the stimulation of diverse interests, the personal development that occurred through work, the active involvement of the subject in the public world, and enhanced self-esteem, all which appeared to have positive consequences for the relationship.

Conclusions

The interconnections between personal relationships and work life for women managers are complex. Such interconnections contribute strongly to the construction of gender and its impact on the ability of women to engage fully in leadership positions. As the study has shown, it is clear that these women managers and professionals, though engaged in full-time paid work, are still far more likely to be involved in taking primary responsibility for most domestic labour and childcare. This over-involvement in domestic labour for women is disturbing, given the status and working hours in paid employment of this group of women.

On the other hand, the data indicate somewhat different trends than previous research, in terms of the degree of task-sharing with partners that occurred in the sample. In the whole sample, there were slightly more women claiming that they equally shared tasks with partners as those who maintained that they took sole responsibility in five areas. Thus, it would appear that women who are in more powerful occupational positions are better able to 'extract labor from their husbands as well as influence the types of family work these men do' (Blair and Lichter, 1991, p.101). This may indicate some genuine historical reconfiguration of concrete habits and practices that constitute gendered subjectivity (Alcoff, 1988; Goodnow and Bowes, 1992).

The data in the study also captures the contradictions and paradoxes in being a mother and full-time professional or manager. The limitations are clearly explicated, but so are the positive benefits, the personal growth, and even the direct relevance of the skills that are acquired in mothering, to workplace competencies. These women then, are clearly reconstructing the images of motherhood prevalent in the culture, and challenging some of the dominant discourse in psychological theory. Some of that discourse, particularly that grounded in psychoanalytic...
frameworks, is based on unexamined assumptions regarding the benefits of continuous one-to-one mothering in cognitive, emotional and social development (Grant and Saggers, 1991; Saggers, Grant, Banham, and Woodhead, 1993).

On the other hand, the reproduction of the ideologies associated with motherhood in this culture can also be seen in the women’s discussion about some of the negative effects of their careers. The general assumption in the culture that mothers are ‘available’ means that their unavailability is constructed as a deprivation.

Although women in Australia have begun to enter the public domain in larger numbers, the private domain has been slow to respond to a changing gender order in personal relationships. Assumptions regarding women’s status and function in marriage have proven difficult to shift. Rosalind Coward (1984) has argued that desire is socially constructed, and has clearly traced the practices that contribute to such a construction. The construction of women as vulnerable, dependent, nurturing, centred on the ‘other’, devoted, warm and attuned to male needs, creates certain patterns of desire in the culture. Given the large number of women in the sample who reported that partners were resentful or threatened, it is clear that many men have difficulty with different constructions of desire and relationships.

Such processes are not entirely conscious. Rather, the web of intrapsychic life has ‘stamped the history of the individual and the culture with its symbols and fantasies, its drama of subject and object’ (Benjamin, 1988, p. 221). Such symbols and fantasies form the basis for social-sexual practices and for the intrapsychic construction of desire. Benjamin (1988) argues that the basic pattern of domination is first created through the reduction of the mother to object which results in the gender polarity that now exists.

Is there possibility for change in this cycle? Certainly a number of the respondents were optimistic about the possibilities of change based on their assumptions that increased numbers of women in such positions would shift the currently constructed patterns of desire. Many, however, were despairing about the seeming imperviousness of such patterns. Benjamin’s vision for the future is the end to the cycle of domination caused by intrapsychic splitting, and the shift to mutual recognition of equal subjects. Certainly, the current patterns of desire are not inevitable, but they seem so deeply embedded in the cultural unconscious, they appear to be less amenable to reconstitution than other aspects of social or public life. Nevertheless somewhat different versions of desire exist. These women are in Bronwyn Davies words ‘developing new storylines, new metaphors, new images through which we can live our lives’ and where ‘unwanted patterns of desire can be displaced’ (1990, p. 504).

In conclusion, the renegotiation of gender roles in the family and in personal relationships appears to be proceeding more gradually than that in the workplace. Although the women reported some reconstruction of their social roles, there are still many gendered expectations about mothering, and particularly about being a wife or partner. Thus, when considering the data overall on childcare, domestic responsibilities, the impact of children on the women’s career, and personal relationships, it is clear that the inter-relationships between these aspects of personal life both serve to maintain current gender identities, and in turn to greatly influence how individual women relate to the ‘public’ domain.
Acknowledgements

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References


PART-TIME WORK AND THE DOUBLE SHIFT – HAVING IT ALL?

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Edith Cowan University

Abstract

There is a major theme to this paper, implied in the title – whether part-time work allows women to have it all, by juggling paid employment and the family shift. Additionally, two other themes are considered here. Firstly, the burden of the second (and third!) shift – family life, and how this falls upon women and, secondly, the increasing ability of women to parallel shift – that is, do two (or more) roles simultaneously, or in a rapidly alternating and interconnected manner.

This paper argues that part-time work is not the longed-for recipe which results in having it all, but that working part-time may be one way of keeping more tabs on all of it for much of the time. In suggesting this, the paper then goes on to argue that women are particularly competent at living interconnected lives, and that while women may experience more ‘stress’ than men (who live more compartmentalised lives), women are also more protected by their ‘interconnectedness’ when facing traumatic life changes.

Key Words: women, work, family, part-time.

Part-Time Work and the Double Shift – Having It All?

This paper considers the increasing importance of part-time work in women’s lives, and of women as part-time workers in both the domestic and the national economies. In juggling a number of different, competing and (increasingly) simultaneous responsibilities, women are having it all – and the stresses which accompany and exacerbate these situations. Nonetheless, there are good reasons to believe that women are particularly well-equipped to reconcile these multiple demands, and that the very networks of responsibility in women’s lives which compete for attention also offer some protection against the stresses they engender.

‘Unpaid work makes it possible for paid workers to produce and earn, and for children to grow and learn’, argues Anne Else (1996). She also considers that

unpaid work is like a huge transparent trampoline. Without its resilience and flexibility, no-one can even get off the ground into paid work, let alone recover every time they crash back down. It’s the invisible infrastructure which keeps everything else going – a vast springboard-cum-safety-net, spread beneath the formal economy. (Else, cited without page numbers, in Tolerton, 1996, p. 66).

The value of women’s domestic labour has been extensively theorised since the second wave of feminism, in terms of such campaigns as ‘Wages for Housework’, although these campaigns have yet to achieve a social wage for domestic workers in a family setting. Over the quarter-
century since women began remobilising, the volume and nature of their historically
unrecognised labour has become more visible in better public childcare facilities, and in family­
friendly workplaces. As more women depend upon regulated childcare, and formal support
systems, in order to contribute within the paid economy so the informal networks, the
'transparent trampolines', become less resilient and more threadbare.

The slack has disappeared from the system; too many need to draw on it and there are not
enough people with the time, energy and resources to put in. The nineties are not the seventies.
The support provided historically by the extended family for the working mother has tailed off:
sometimes due to the geographical distance of mothers, aunts, sisters and other female relatives,
but also because women in the extended family are increasingly in paid work themselves. The
burgeoning number of childcare places, after-school and vacation programmes, and the advent
of family responsibilities leave are the most obvious signs of the increasing lack of informal
supports.

For some women, a possible strategy for negotiating the irreconcilable demands of work, home,
family and self is to seek, and to settle for, part-time employment. This solution fits in well with
what has sometimes been called the post-industrial, post-modern lifestyle. In fact, the fit is so
good that there is every reason to believe that the two go hand in hand. The early wave of
women's reintroduction to the paid work force was marked by a decline in traditional full-time,
male, ('modern') employment sectors, and a huge jump in the number of casualised, part-time
jobs for women. Between 1970 and 1980 13 million new jobs were created in the US and 1.5
million jobs in manufacturing were lost. 'The new jobs are largely part-time, largely non­
unionized, largely for females, largely unskilled - with little prospect of advancement, little job
satisfaction and poor job security' (Jones, 1983, p. 239-240).

The vast majority of part-time workers are women. The conditions of their work vary most
dramatically with whether the paid work is traditionally a female role (food handling, cleaning,
nurturing), or whether it is a 'professional' role. Poorly paid part-time workers in unsatisfying
jobs, whether male or female, have a tough time. For a small minority, however, if the work is
skilled, with prospects of advancement, job satisfaction and adequate job security, could it be
that part-time 'work' and part-time 'home' is 'having it all'? Is the magical formula for a
balanced life with time for self, family, friends and career as simple as three-days-a-week in a
professional occupation?

A number of common features arise when part-time female workers talk about their experiences
at home and in the workforce. Frequently their part-time status is motivated by a hope that they
can combine a career position with a greater role in the family than would be possible working
full-time. These women have typically experienced full-time work (usually pre-baby) and full­
time mothering (on maternity leave) and they fondly hope that part-time work will combine the
best of both worlds. The reality is tantalisingly different. (Discussing these differences, this
paper will generalise from the case of a woman returning to work for three days a week with
responsibilities for a young family.)

For home-based mothers with young children the irregularity of the 'mothering-days' can make
them even more challenging than child caring is for full-time mothers. The failsafes of toddler
'routines', naps, food, playtime, pre-school television; are constantly interrupted when the

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toddler or baby is 'commuting' between childcare and the home. Add to that the busy-ness of cramming in the home/world liaison chores. The woman's partner, for example, no longer goes out in his lunch hour to settle the rates bill or pay the credit card accounts - those tasks are left for her to do on the 'home days'.

The mother in her two home days a week is expected to erect and maintain all the family infrastructure: collect the shopping, liaise with the plumber, catch up with the ironing, make doctor's appointments and so on. In some cases the couple (or the male in the couple) sees the home days as representing a financial sacrifice which must be balanced by cost-savings elsewhere: ceasing paid domestic help, eating fewer take-aways, relying on home-washed terry nappies. And, in the world of having-it-all, days off paid work are the ideal opportunity to take the degree or study for the qualification which will make all the difference when the kids are old enough for full-time school and mum returns to full-time employment.

Typically the workplace (if the mother is a professional) finds that it is necessary to check that something has been done in a certain way or has reached a certain stage or a client or colleague has to call her on business. Alternatively she suddenly remembers a reason why she has to call them. The working mother's day at home is more crowded than that of a full-time home-based mother, and it is often less personally rewarding. The child is less attuned to the (frenetic) domestic routine than a child permanently at home with mum would be. While the child may be the reason for the home-based day, it is rare for the mother to have the luxury of letting the child dictate the rhythm of that day. The tantalising image which motivates the home based days is that these are precious moments in which mother and child develop the bonds to last a lifetime. The guilt-inducing reality is that the part-time working mother only rarely feels that mothering is a job she does well.

The social network available to the home-based mother is increasingly fragile and hard to juggle. Frequently the woman's natural social companions are also working, full- or part-time, and their availability does not coincide with hers. (Indeed, some women deliberately dovetail work with a friend's schedule so that they can alternate pre-school sessions and so forth: on Mondays and Wednesdays mother A collects A and B's children, on Tuesdays and Thursdays it's B's turn.) Her extended family may be geographically dispersed or in full-time work themselves. Most friendship-making activities necessarily centre around the child (because to have adult time on a home-based parenting day appears to miss the point) and the likely social contacts are either women in dissimilar situations, such as full-time mothers, or frustratingly irregular. (Since part-time mothers are almost always 'bushfire fighters', and find it hard to keep to regular routines, the chances of both being at the same playgroup three weeks running are remote). Sometimes the most satisfying personal contacts on home-based days take the same form as those available on work-based days: a chat on the phone.

Women who are full-time mothers at home are often not supportive of women who wish to have it all. Frequently full-time mothers are in this increasingly rare circumstance because they have strong views about the child's need for continuous parenting, and belong to a very traditionally-gendered relationship. At the same time, social meetings with full-time mothers and their children can underline any insecurities the working mother may have about her mothering style and capacity to cope. (With having-it-all mothers, it is always their child that throws the tantrum.) While it is useful, and sometimes necessary, to remember that full-time
mothers feel unappreciated and undervalued in society and may resent the freedoms and spending power of the part-time working woman, comments from ‘professional’ mothers on the child-rearing skills of their part-time sisters can equal and better those traditionally associated with hostile mothers-in-law. Such company can be uncomfortable.

It is sometimes argued that housework is ‘not really’ an issue any more in that it has been drastically reduced by improvements in domestic technology; and that women paid to work outside the home ‘don’t really’ do housework as their forebears did it, and get more help from male partners. Research indicates that this is far from the case: ‘new technologies may reduce the amount of time men engage in housework and increase the time spent by women, a finding which contradicts conventional wisdom’ (Bose et al., 1984, p. 78). Studies of women and housework have demonstrated that, regardless of their other roles, it is women who assume responsibility for domestic chores.

The allocation of housework between men and women is in fact much the same in households where the wife is employed and those in which she is not. Husbands in all social classes do little housework. Where men do undertake housework, they usually perform non-routine tasks at intervals rather than continually, and frequently the work is outdoors. This is in marked contrast to women’s housework, the dominant characteristic of which is that it is never complete ... Task-specific technologies may develop in such a way that women can take over tasks previously done by other family members ... Women have not been the prime beneficiaries of domestic technology. (Wajcman, 1991, p. 87-89).

Back at the office, part-time workers are frequently seen as inconvenient. Accommodation can be a problem, as the geography is juggled to avoid taking up a full-time space with a part-time person. Such employees frequently have to share: phones, computer equipment, desks and so on, getting more done in less time with fewer dedicated resources. For most employers, an employee going part-time is synonymous with them taking a back seat in terms of career ambitions. It can be perceived as putting professional development on ‘hold’ pending a less-demanding family responsibility environment. At the same time, employers will often underline that the move is not reversible at the employee’s behest. Once a position has been converted to fractional time a part-time employee wishing to return to full-time work may be required to compete for a full-time position.

Hand in hand with reduced pay and pension benefits, part-time professional employees typically over-achieve pro-rata compared with their full-time colleagues. In one example, two Assistant Producers sharing a job at the BBC in the early 1980s produced ten schools’ programmes a year, compared with the seven typically achieved by a full-time worker. This is a result of the fact that professional workers do not switch off on non-work days, and tie up time-consuming loose ends in their own time, from their own phone and often at their own expense.

Life in the nineties is no longer simply the traditional ‘double shift’ (with home duties being the add-on ‘second shift’, after a day in the office, as described by Arlie Hochschild, 1989). That idea has now been expanded and made both more flexible and more demanding by concepts such as ‘the parallel shift’ – mothering remotely for workers, and working remotely for mothers (Rakow and Navarro, 1993). Although Hochschild estimated that women worked fifteen hours
per week longer than men, and 'over a year they worked an extra month of twenty-four hour
days', the lived experience is not only of consecutive responsibilities, but of simultaneous
juggling (1989, p. 3). Home duties at work, work duties at home, sick children in the corner of
the office, sent home by childcare or school, while the primary caregiver frantically calls every
friend and neighbour she can think of. (Many agencies refuse to provide minders for sick
children).

This lifestyle is not prima facie evidence of female masochism, although it could seem to be
such. In a survey of mobile telephone use by nineteen middle class American women, Rakow
and Navarro comment that

[all of the husbands work full time, many at jobs that require extensive traveling [sic].
Most of the wives who work outside the home do not work full-time or do not work all
year round. Their greater responsibility for homes and children make it more likely that
they will seek jobs that allow them to be closer to home and give them more time there.
Then, their closer proximity to home and their greater presence in the home makes it
seem natural that they should assume more responsibility for the domestic ... [Women
try] to exist in their domestic and work worlds simultaneously. They may be the
harbingers of a trend for women who are trying to bridge the gap between the domestic
and work worlds, women working 'parallel shifts'. (1993, p. 152-153, citing Rakow,
1992)

In short, there is a structural requirement that (unless there are funds for double-shifting
nannies, i.e. the buying in of a wife's-worth of labour) running a family requires an accessible
adult to carry out the work of holding up the 'springboard-cum-safety-net, spread beneath the
formal economy'. These pressures are about to worsen. The 'triple shift' is an even more recent
concept, coined to describe the situation where women are responsible for their partner and
self, their children and their elder family members (Synnott, 1996). As the thirty-something
first-time mothers give birth to their firstborn children, they find that their own mothers and
fathers (the first, seventies, generation of thirty-something parents) are now sixty-something.
The stage is set for more and more women to be juggling school and after school care for the
ten-year old, and holding the reins of social reality for a seventy-something parent: triple
shifting? parallel shifting squared?...or, simply, parallel shifting with knobs on? People should
start campaigning now for family-friendly work-places to have elder-care centres too,
alogous to their childcare centres. And perhaps, while at this task, campaigners should ensure
that elder-care centres are well-run, stimulating and democratic enough to be the sorts of
communities to which they would like to belong themselves...in thirty-something years.

Fortunately for women and for society, parallel shifting and never-ending work are what
women are very good at. Leaving aside theoretical considerations of whether this is nature or
nurture, there is ample evidence of these dynamics woven through women's lives. The
examples offered shortly are drawn from technology theorists working in the field of media
studies: it seems likely that almost any other field of enquiry, refracted through considerations
of gender, might yield equivalent information. Women are almost always doing at least two
things simultaneously and one of the jobs is likely to be 'never-ending'. In contrast to the
cyclical and continuing domestic/work chores faced by women, a man's day is much more
compartmentalised. He leaves home to go to work, leaves work to come home. There are
clearer delineations. If the man does engage in domestic work, his is much more likely to be a second (part-time) shift, rather than a parallel one.

These different approaches are mirrored on many levels: as women’s and men’s ways of relating to their lives, their domestic spaces, and to the technologies within them.

The fundamental issue concerns the differential positioning of men and women in the sphere of ‘leisure’ (whether as a temporal phenomenon – ‘time off’; or as a spatial phenomenon – ‘at home’). For many men, the home is principally a site of leisure and rest (in contrast to their work obligations in the public sphere); for many women (if not most) the home is a site of labour (both physical and emotional) and responsibility, at least as much, if not more, than it is a site of leisure – whether or not they also do paid work outside the home. (Morley, 1995, pp. 321-322)

Morley argues that television viewing styles are also differentiated, with men preferring to plan their television viewing and to watch attentively, in (other people’s) silence and without interruption. Women, however, tend to watch television on a more serendipitous basis, and while carrying out domestic tasks. The rationale offered is that they can ‘take it or leave it’, as if conscious choice might be a harbinger of disappointment. Even when women are unambiguously watching television, such attention is often the site of further female work (Nightingale, 1990, p. 33).

It is because of the relationship between advertising and television that watching television is work. Watching television is a leisure activity in the pursuit of which viewers are asked to lose themselves, to blur the distinctions between reality and fantasy. They are asked to forget that watching television is also work, to see television advertisements not as a continual reminder of the work of purchasing, but as entertainment.

Thus television viewing reflects the distinctness of the home/work divide characteristic of men’s lives, while the women’s approach is more typically integrated/fragmented. These observations mirror Wajcman’s (1991, p. 87) view of domestic duties, that men engage in discrete, ‘non-routine tasks at intervals rather than continually, and frequently the work is outdoors. This is in marked contrast to women’s housework, the dominant characteristic of which is that it is never complete.’

Further, although it would be overly simplistic to characterise gendered television programming as a continuum between female viewing (those daytime soaps) and male television (sports, sports, sports), such programme formats tend to reflect something of daily experience. Soap opera, women’s programming of which men are (often) scornful, is a reflection of the continuing, evolving interconnectedness and fragmentation of women’s lives. It is also a site in which they hone their skills in analysing ‘socioemotional experience’ and explore emotions and emotional situations vicariously. Men are not socialised to enjoy any equivalent practices.
Sports programming is episodic in the sense that there is order; a beginning, middle and end; and an outcome. Sports coverage is segmented, partitioned, complete in many fundamental respects. It is numerical, for those inclined to keep a mental score card, and it is 'objective'. Any ambiguity is merely in the process – was the umpire right? Was the ball (there usually is one) in or out? The drama may concern accident, injury and illness, together with the vagaries of selection and player transfer, all of which can be interpreted as having psychological components of particular relevance to the male world. This contrasts strongly with the never-ending interweaving emotional narrative of soaps, mirroring domestic work. Uncoincidentally, as Ang points out

[one of the 'structural characteristics' of soap opera is its lack of narrative progress. *Dallas*, like all soap operas, is a never ending story: contrary to classic narratives, which are typically structured according to the logic of order/disorder/restoration of order, soap opera narratives never reach completion. They represent progress without progression and as such do not offer the prospect of a final denouement, in which all problems are solved. Thus, soap operas are fundamentally anti-utopian: an ending, happy or unhappy, is unimaginable. (1990, p. 80)

Work elsewhere speculates that some men pay heavily for their disconnected lives, and that women’s work (no matter that it is undo-able) at least connects women to each other in a safety net of interdependence (Green, 1996). The argument is, in simple terms, that although it is women who are working harder, men appear to be suffering. Evidence for this assertion includes spiraling male suicide rates, and self-destructive habits which have helped widen the gap in life expectancy between men and women: from three-and-a-half years at the turn of the century, to six years now (Biddulph, 1994). The argument offered is that men, lacking deeply interconnected lives, feel the pain disproportionately if one of their two major life roles (husband or worker) founders, and have fewer resources to draw upon to cope with their change in circumstances.

It may also be that their mothers, wives, girlfriends, sisters – double- and triple-shifting as they are - have less time and inclination to support their men as fully as they once did. Full-time workers on the multiple shift are less able to look after themselves, and others, and are more likely to need support while being less equipped to provide it. The greatest advantage to women (and to men) of combining part-time work with the multiple shift may be that it allows the space for the incidental cups of coffees in like-minded company, and the long, involved phone calls, which make it possible for those who have it all to cope with it all....
References


The words 'feminist' and 'women's movement' tend to have negative connotations for many rural people and are deemed by them to be threatening terms.

This paper will present a variety of views as to why the women's movement has been spurned by Australian rural women generally and Western Australian agricultural women in particular. That farm women generally support a set of beliefs, attitudes and opinions that deprive them of power and legitimates their subordination, illustrates the effectiveness of their socialisation in this regard.

There is evidence however, that in the present economic circumstances there is a growing number of farm women who are becoming conscious of their subordination by their families and communities. The rural down-turn has presented women with an opportunity to challenge the attitudes and perceptions that reinforce the still prevalent view that they are of secondary status in agriculture. Research is showing however that while women are wanting change they are not wanting to own it in the context of gender and feminism. Discussion about the impact of gender and its relationship to feminism is central to change for women in agriculture.

Key Words: women's movement, activism, agriculture, production.

Introduction

In the past five years, there has been a 'coming out' of rural women in Australia. They are demanding that their work and presence on family farms and in their communities and industries be recognised by all levels of government, farmers and agri-business. Fledgling status for Australian rural women's activism culminated at the 1994 International Women in Agriculture Conference in Melbourne and the subsequent appointment of a Rural Women's Coordinator as part of a Rural Women's Unit within the Federal Department of Primary Affairs and Energy. Subsequently, the First National Rural Women's Forum was convened in Canberra to continue the drive for all to recognise the work of rural women and their desire to be a part of decision making processes and to have 'access to, an equity in service delivery to rural areas including government, private and community services' (Alston, 1995). From research undertaken in Western Australia, it is clear that rural women's activism is only at its formative stage. There are pockets of women who feel strongly that women should mobilise politically in order that their roles be acknowledged formally. The majority, however, consider such activity to be antagonistic, unwomanly and unnecessary.

Gasson (1979) in her research observed that the role of farmer's wife is universal although that role has not been standardised, regimented or unionised. Furthermore, unlike most other occupations, there is no male counterpart; one never hears of a 'farmer's husband'. Therefore, farm wives cannot take men as role models. The role of farm wife is a complex one with many...
facets. Since the farm family is both an economic and a social unit, the farm wife may be called upon to combine a number of roles, contributing to the farm business as well as performing the tasks of housewife and mother. From a Marxist economic view, the role is difficult to categorise because farm women are constantly combining productive work with their domestic and so-called non-productive work.

Despite this, there is considerable evidence that the women’s movement has had little effect on farm women in Australia (Alston, 1995) and in fact, agriculture can be seen as the last bastion of female conservatism (Poiner, 1979, p. 59). Membership of traditional rural action groups such as the Country Women’s Association (CWA) once a formidable female voice and the nation’s largest women’s group, is declining. Women under 40 do not feel the CWA is a truly representative political voice and it is no longer safe to assume that a country woman will vote for the National Party. This paper will consider some of the reasons for agricultural women’s antagonism towards the feminist movement, manifestations of this belief and how the women’s movement might be better understood by farm women. The information offered in this work is based upon interviews undertaken with agricultural women in the Western Australian wheatbelt as preliminary work for a Ph.D. dissertation.

The Farm Woman and Feminist Theory

Slowly there is emerging what academics call a ‘primitive feminist consciousness’ in the bush, but the word ‘feminist’ is still a dirty word. Pitt (1993, p. 94) argues that to understand the difficulties we must also understand that in many country towns ‘it is still 1970’, there is wide conservatism and urban-based women’s groups have failed to gain a power base with rural women. Research on work has focused primarily on urban-based organisations and the men within them, while research on family has concentrated mostly on relationships between women and children. These research traditions have fostered the assumption that work and family in the industrial world are separate domains. The few studies that have been undertaken in the agricultural sector world wide, have raised few questions about interdependence of production and family systems. The rural ideology is supported by the patriarchal structures of society which dictate that women derive their status from their husband’s position based on his wealth and status. The conservative emphasis on customary roles or the ‘continuing male hegemony’, leads to a failure to focus on women’s contribution to production. Alston (1990, p. 33) argues that farm work is defined in terms of commercial agricultural production with the result that only tasks concerned with the direct production of goods for money are included. The indirect contributions by farm women are consequently discounted.

The farm family is a unique unit in modern industrial society because the family enterprise is the focus of both production and reproduction. Generally, all or most members of the family participate in independent commodity production, albeit women, often as unpaid, ‘invisible’ workers. A growing number of researchers (Sachs, 1983; James, 1989; Alson, 1995; Oakley, 1985) argue that the traditional androcentric definitions of work marginalise women’s work because they include the stipulation that effort must be paid in order that it be classified as ‘work’. Furthermore, since the family farm is both a production and consumption unit, the family cannot be considered apart from the agricultural enterprise (Ghorayshi, 1989). Work time is not easily distinguished from non-work time on the family farm where the household physically co-exists with the place of production, and as a consequence the division of labour...
emerges under the auspices of both family/household roles and wage labour. The division of labour on the farm, although patriarchal, is based on characteristics such as age, gender, ability and the needs of the family instead of competence and qualifications, which tend to be urban research benchmarks. In certain important ways the social relations of production within the household remain governed by principles other than those of the capitalist market. Therefore, as stated by Haney (1983, p. 183).

adequate consideration of the role of women within the farm and family, and adequate analysis of the food production system and its production units, necessitates a conceptual framework which sees work and family as interpenetrating and mutually dependent within the context of a household analysis.

From a feminist point of view, farm women’s work is not easily categorised using Marxist and socialist feminist analysis. Socialist feminism argues that class oppression stems from capitalism and that capitalism must be eliminated for women to be liberated. In Australia, the family farm is the backbone of the agricultural industry. The land and ownership of the process of production are integral to farming in this country. To recommend the elimination of it is to do away with the livelihood, home and lifestyle for an entire sector of the population. The underpinning of Marxist theory holds that gender oppression is the oldest and most profound form of exploitation (Eisenstein, 1984, pxix). The nuclear family has been considered, particularly by radical feminists, as a key source of oppression for women. The reproductive capacity of women is regarded as central to their subordination (Firestone 1970, 2). Millett (1970, p. 24) proclaims that ‘patriarchy’s chief institution is the family’ and several schools of feminists promulgate that the family supports and preserves the patriarchal system. Farm women find such notions difficult to accept, given that their workplace and their home and family are all inextricably connected. The attacks on personal relationships with men made by the early wave of feminists have been difficult for some women to understand and so have alienated many (Alston, 1995, p. 19). This is particularly so for farm women who are generally conservative and whose livelihood is increasingly dependent upon co-operation between all family members, male and female. To abandon the family and seek autonomy in a farm enterprise in the current economic climate would be idiotic. For these reasons, Alston (1995, p. 23) argues that feminist theory has an urban focus and has developed around the notion of separate spheres for workplace and home and therefore has little relevance to farm women. The parameters that describe urban feminism are not realistic benchmarks by which to delineate rural feminism.

The Diverse Roles of a Farm Wife

Wives have become active participants in all aspects of agricultural work. There is no particular task that they do not perform. They have multiple, intertwined roles which make them essential to the success of capitalised family units. As ‘domestic’ workers, they are in charge of housework and other tasks which are tied to farm work, such as running errands, book keeping and administrative duties, feeding poddy calves and lambs, raising poultry, experimenting with new seeds and taking responsibility for much of the farm landcare activities. Wives are farm managers, office workers, production workers and family counsellors. They are decision-makers as well as labourers. They are often concerned for the
survival and well being of both family and enterprise. This interrelated, multi-dimensional aspect of farm women’s work, makes it extremely difficult for the family unit to replace them with outside wage-workers.

The survival of most family farms would be immediately threatened if wives were to cease their support. The difficulty is, however, that for the farm woman whose work is unpaid, her economic contribution is largely unrecognised because economic theory purports that domestic work has no value because it does not contribute to the economy and she is therefore a dependent. Realistically, the wives’ contribution can not be provided by ordinary wage-workers. Not only can many farms not afford the additional labour costs, but it is not possible to find a paid worker, or a combination of paid workers who can perform the multi-dimensional and interrelated functions of the farm wife. Nor will hired workers use their income to subsidise the farm. The medieval French proverb remains true: a family can more easily survive the death of the husband than that of the wife.

Craig, (1979) in his research shows how women on farms are caught between the image of women fostered in our society and the realities of a situation in which they must react to expectations on the farm to be active in production. Much of what farm women do is done outside the public sphere. The public face of agriculture is a male one. The media, the advertising industry, the urban population in general, even the Departments of Agriculture and farm organisation have often acted as though all the significant aspects of farming are performed by males. According to Lyson, women will often deny their active role on the farm because farming has traditionally been classified as a ‘male’ occupation and women do not identify or classify themselves as farmers, simply because they are ‘female’ (1990, p. 60). ‘Farmer’ remains a male occupational label despite the increasing participation of women in agriculture. In Ghorayshi’s (1989, p. 583) research, the majority of women continue to see themselves as wife, mother and homemaker. Many explicitly say that only men can be farmers. Even when women are in charge of operating the farm, they have a difficult time defining themselves as farmers. They tend to associate the private sphere with women and the family and the enterprise with the public arena and men. Women see themselves in the domestic and supportive roles. Ghorayshi (1989, p. 583) believes they either de-emphasise their skill and knowledge, or see their work as an extension of their basic housework duties. In work undertaken by Ghorayshi in Canada and since validated in Australian research, farm women, when questioned about their role on the family farm, de-emphasise their skill and knowledge or see their work as an extension of their basic housework duties. Many do acknowledge that without them the enterprise would have to resort to hiring paid labour which they know the enterprise could not afford, but the majority fail to see or will not admit the essential nature of their work in the family enterprise. Ghorayshi (1989, p. 587) concludes, ‘there is no doubt that gender ideology has played a crucial role in masking the importance of women’s work. It is in the context of gender ideology that men are equated with farmers and women play down their actual role in farming.’ Alston (1994, p. 63) argues that women who threaten the gender order risk threatening their relationship and so consent to subordination.
The Farmer-Farm Wife: An Unequal Partnership

Confronting these realities is often difficult for farm women. They are faced by conflicting demands; on the one hand is the reality of a situation where they must react to expectations on the farm to be active in participation and on the other that their public contributions are 'unfeminine' and not necessary. Craig (1979) cites researchers of role conflict who have suggested several methods of resolving it. One way to resolve role conflict is to segment life. A person may play one role to one audience and another role when confronted with another audience. Craig believes this explains why some women who are active on their own farms are not active in farming organisations. When they are off their farm they avoid role conflict by not playing the farmer role. Another resolution of role conflict is withdrawal from the situation. If the strain of constantly being torn between conflicting expectations is too great, the person may simply leave. There is some evidence to suggest that farm wives attempt to resolve the conflict in this way. This has been demonstrated by wives encouraging their children to leave the industry and move away from farming.

According to a family counsellor working in New England, Shirley Gould, (1989) many women suffer a loss of income, status, individuality, time and space by becoming farm wives. A common reaction is anger directed at the land, for competing for their husbands' energy and time, followed by great feelings of depression and guilt for their left-out disloyal feelings. Gould believes that Australia's rural society is at least 50 years behind city communities in acceptance and participation of women in changing roles. Lack of recognition of women's work and their subordinate position within the family have affected women's self-image and their definition of work.

This is exacerbated by the often tenuous legal position of farm wives. In many circumstances where wives are made partners in the business of farming they are not partners in the ownership of the land, the real asset, by virtue of patrilineal inheritance. James (1982) argues, 'if the majority of farming partnerships are formed between spouses, the question then is whether these are owning or operating partnerships and in either case, whether farm wives are more than nominal partners in the farming enterprise'. Generally, women enter agriculture through marriage. By virtue of patrilineal inheritance 'women participate in the farm labour process under conspicuously different relations and conditions from those of their husbands and sons. As noted by Whatmore (1991, p. 74), 'women's rights over property reflect, and reinforce, social constraints on their identity as individuals arising from patriarchal practices and ideologies which subsume women as dependents of their husbands'. Furthermore, prevailing ideologies and structure tend to have the effect of excluding women who were brought into ongoing rural enterprises as 'outsiders' or the dreaded D-I-L (daughter-in-law). These women are often marginalised during major policy-making, whatever their legal status or labour contribution. As Canadian researcher, Ghorayshi (1989, p. 582) states,

There is much written on the interdependence between the family and the enterprise however this interdependence does not translate into equality: There are in fact, fundamental inequalities within the family enterprise. Farms are not owned or controlled collectively by all those who contribute labour. Property relations do not reflect the labour contribution of women. ... The patriarchal
relations that dominate families in farming are reflected in property relations which for the most part have excluded women from the ownership of land.

**Farm Women on the Cusp of Change?**

While farms continue to have on average, negative incomes, the next generation of farmers are unlikely to want to, or be encouraged to, return to the farm. In fact a tired joke that has done the round of rural circles for several years sums up a growing reality. Question: What's the latest form of child abuse? Answer: Leave your farm to your children. Statistics show that women are less willing to marry into a farm enterprise when they are unlikely to be recognised financially or legally. Alston's (1995) research shows that younger women are not as accepting of prescribed patriarchal gender roles as the older women. With limited opportunities for her to work off the farm it is unlikely the wife will have any financial independence or choice.

On the other hand, it has also been argued that farm women have the opportunity to exercise private power within the private sphere which later translates to economic worth (Hogan, 1995, pp. 31-37). Because the enterprise depends on family formation and development for its survival, the domestic sphere which continues to be exclusively the domain of the farm wife, enables the wife to exert influence. This however, has always been the case and there is limited evidence to show that women's influence has had the desired outcomes in terms of public power and economic worth. Hogan also states that crises often legitimise behaviour that is normally considered to be 'out of character or unacceptable'. They can provide the opportunity to challenge practices that have reinforced the subordination and marginalisation of women. This argument can perhaps explain the politicisation of farm women in Victoria but that development has also coincided with the consistent political support of key figures, particularly Joan Kirner, who as Premier ensured that rural women were given resources and recognition. The difficulty for many rural women who do not have that support is having the courage to challenge, and being prepared to lead often without resources.

Despite the fact that even on conservative figures, (census statistics have not been gathered in a way to properly account for farm women), one third of the national farm workforce consists of women, it is hard to find women in places of power in agriculture. Still, farm women rarely have positions on the Boards of the industry authorities that influence their lives and livelihoods. In 1994, the then Federal Minister for Primary Industry and Energy, Bob Collins, formally acknowledged this and made an effort to attract women to the 507 board positions within his portfolio. By 1995, 49 of the 507 positions were occupied by women but of those 49 only nine went to women primary producers. Perhaps a good analogy for farm women is the role/power relationship of women in the National Party. Heather Gunn, a Melbourne University Ph.D. student, claims that from its inception the National Party has discouraged and prevented women from participating in decision making. The party's hierarchy has always insisted that farm women's interests were identical to men's, and therefore there was little, if any, need for women's voices to be heard. (Presently, there is one woman in the Federal Parliament representing the National Party in Australia).
Western Australian Farm Women Study

In a preliminary study, the population of the sheep/wheat belt between Geraldton and Esperance was studied between the 1961 census and the 1991 census. There has been an overall population decrease in that sector over those 30 years. Farms have become bigger while towns have become smaller or died altogether. Distances are large in Western Australia and many women express a sense of physical, emotional and cultural isolation. Twenty one women from farms were interviewed from the most de-populated statistical divisions; that is to say, Hotham, the Lakes and Campion. Farms in these three divisions are large broad acre sheep and wheat farms.

The results showed that women in Western Australia are not nearly as active in agri-politics as their Eastern States counterparts. (Western Australia has only just established a Rural Women’s Network).  

- None of the women interviewed had inherited the farm.
- Less than half had rural childhoods.
- Two had some off-farm income. Ten others would like to have an off-farm income if suitable job opportunities were available.
- Four of the twenty one proclaim themselves as primary producers or farmers. The remainder perceive themselves as indispensable ‘help mates’ but not ‘farmers’.
- All but one had an education equal or better than that of her husband.
- Six said they would be interested in getting involved in agri-politics but only one had actually become involved. She said she felt it was easier for her because her husband was well known in the industry as a successful studbreeder and the committee would be less likely to belittle her.
- The remaining two thirds said that it was scary territory and were afraid that they would be put down for lack of knowledge, lack of political savvy, fear of being thin skinned and concern that their domestic responsibilities would be ignored.
- All acknowledged the financial commitment in terms of travel and time away from the property and family if one becomes involved in a committee, especially one based in Perth.
- Three said that their husbands were involved in some sort of agri-politics and someone had to stay at home and keep the place going.
- Three said they knew of one or two women involved in agri-politics and they didn’t like the way those women behaved and felt ‘put off’ becoming involved.
- Eight said the agricultural industry in Australia is in such dire straights and ‘what can we do to make ‘them’ (government and industry authorities) listen’?
- Sixteen would like or would have liked their children to have employment opportunities away from the farm or the local area. They are all agreed that this was easier said than done.
- All twenty one looked forward to the newly established Rural Women’s Network in Western Australia. Some were cynical and wondered how long the State government would support it.
- One claimed she was a feminist. Of the others, all but two said they wanted recognition and equity in terms of treatment by their families and their industries, but ‘they were not feminists’. The remaining two felt that they had the respect of their families and their communities doing what they did on the farm and using inflammatory words like ‘feminist’, ‘equality’ etc. would only be antagonistic and maybe destructive.
• All acknowledged that their industries cannot survive without the active participation of women.
• Only two have considered leaving a part of the farm to their daughters.

An overall perception of the women interviewed was that self-esteem was low and was likely to remain so while their contribution to the rural industries is largely unrecognised, although they did not necessarily state that. A sense of isolation is very real for many women. Isolation as expressed by these women is not necessarily a physical separateness from others, but also a cultural and psychological isolation.

Some similar responses were found in surveys completed by five rural women’s organisations in Australia, New Zealand and Canada in 1994 and 1995. Teather (1996, p. 40) comments that there is a surprising lack of will from certain respondents even from the newer rural women’s organisations, to identify as ‘feminist’, ‘despite the transparently feminist nature of many of their goals.’

The Australian Women in Agriculture (AWiA) organisation is in its first year in Western Australia. A conference organised by AWiA was held earlier this year and more than 200 women attended. Many attendees (32%), (most of whom were not paid up members of AWiA) noted in their evaluation of the conference that they did not know what to expect of the conference and were surprised at the warmth and sense of support amongst other women whose concerns and aspirations were similar. The gathering however was not perceived as a ‘strategic grouping in the battle over gender relations in the rural arena’ as was described by Teather (1996, p. 42) in national survey of AWiA. Nonetheless, at the end of the conference there was a growing awareness that there is strength in numbers and as a combined voice perhaps those in positions of power might listen to what they want for themselves, their families, their industries and communities. There was not, however a sense of demanding equity or even aspiring to a leadership role.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that farm women in Western Australia feel very keenly that their industries and communities are under threat from market forces, sophisticated technology and economic rationalist government policies. There are some women who sense their role as a farm woman as being undervalued and unequal to that of the male farmer. There are many other farm women who sympathise with issues that feminists and the women’s movement consider of central importance to their cause. These farm women have concrete images of the women’s movement and do not identify themselves with those issues even though they are essentially the same. Similarly, political activism is perceived as being threatening to the image they have of themselves and also to their families and their businesses. They do, however, recognise that their role is pivotal for the survival of their family business and those that attended the AWiA conference found it comforting to know that there are many other women with similar aspirations for their families who had similar stories of hardship and humour. A desire to keep in contact was widespread. Through instruments such as the Rural Women’s Network, the CWA and the AWiA perhaps a sense of activism and voice will emerge but in the meantime feminism continues to be an unmentionable ‘f’ word.

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References


Notes

2 Across Australia, government sponsored Rural Women’s Networks have been established to encourage rural women to look beyond their individual context and to identify as part of a much larger group of women, all with common concerns. These networks have encouraged women to view themselves as legitimate participants in a patriarchal society and to realise that the traditional male culture of farming is redundant.
TRAVEL 12 000 MILES TO THE SAME PROBLEMS

Alexandra Hugman

Abstract

This paper is a comparative study between the United Kingdom and Western Australia and examines the apparent lack of progress in the movement of women into non-traditional areas, such as engineering and technology, which in turn leads to a dearth of women in positions of responsibility and leadership in these areas. Strategies for the introduction and development of technology, with a specific bias towards attracting girls and women, in schools and colleges in the North West of England, and the South West of Western Australia are compared.

The paper examines key issues, based on action research projects in United Kingdom and Western Australia, affecting the opportunities for women in technology. A range of material is presented, including the authors personal experience of prejudice encountered and strategies used to help deal with situations; why girls and women do not choose careers in these non-traditional areas, their experiences when they do, how courses and training can be made more attractive; liaising between educational staff and companies, identifying the expertise and ability of women that was not previously recognised; reviewing teaching and learning styles; and the development and transfer of necessary skills. The problems and challenges that emerge are discussed.

In conclusion it is suggested that the problem is circular, as long as these traditional male strongholds continue. Decisions in the energy, health and defence fields, to name but a few, will perpetuate the traditional male characteristics in development and decision making. Until women enter these areas, no matter how much lip-service is given to equal opportunities, there will be few positions taken.

Key Words: women, engineering, management, strategies, non-traditional roles

Introduction

The object of this paper is to examine why, after more than a decade of active promotion of science and technology, including engineering, there are still relatively few girls and women studying and working in this area. Those who are employed generally occupy low status positions with little power or influence. Hence at management and policy making levels, no female influence or perspective is considered. This study follows the experience of the author over twenty five years in this field, and looks for improvement in the participation and opportunities comparing North West of England with the South West of Western Australia during the past ten years.

Personal Experience in the United Kingdom

Twenty five years ago there were three young women on the Maths and Physics degree course at a university in the North of England, one female research student in Physics, and only male students in Engineering. The only other women using the Department buildings, an extensive complex, were the secretaries and cleaners. The three young women were all educated in single
sex schools from the age of eleven to eighteen, and did not think it at all unusual to have chosen this line of study. On graduating, one joined a large company as a systems analyst, moving fairly quickly into personnel management; another studied further to become a hospital physicist, which she continues part-time as her young family grows up; and I trained to be a secondary Physics teacher. On reflection, it is obvious that we provided a strong mutual support group which has stood the test of time. This important factor, and that we had no pre-conceived ideas concerning gender versus subject suitability or ability due to our single sex schools, enabled us to succeed. Our male contemporaries all gained employment in research or industry.

Five years after qualifying I was on the second rung of the teaching ladder in the rural North West of England, and seeing a slight increase in the number of girls that I had taught choosing ‘O’ and then ‘A’ Level Physics (Year 12) due to my example and encouragement. In 1983 my partner and I moved to a large North West city which should have opened up many more opportunities for employment and advancement. However in the intervening years the enrolment on Physics degree courses had declined, few new teachers were emerging (male graduates moving into industry, and a further decline in female students), so Physics teachers were scarce. Department of Education and Science (DES) data from the mid-seventies showed that only 71% of girls compared with 90% of boys were even offered a chance to take Physics in years 9 and 10, and only 17% of the girls who were offered the choice had taken physics, compared with 52% of the boys (Whyte, 1986). The government tried to encourage scientists working in industry to retrain as teachers, or later even to train whilst in school teaching, and proposed offering an extra pay differential above teachers of other subjects as encouragement. This salary still bore no comparison to industry wages. Some people were enticed by the thought of short school days and long holidays. However, they soon found that this was not the case and retreated to the safety of industry. Schools were forced to adapt their curriculum to fit the staffing available and began to offer General Science, which could be taught by the ready supply of Biology teachers. Students did not experience specialist Physics tuition, did not choose it as a specialist ‘A’ Level subject, and so the vicious circle continued.

Unable to obtain a Physics teaching post in a school, I applied for and attained a position as basic lecturer in an Electrical and Electronic Engineering Department at a city college. I joined an all male staff, an all male student group, and had to walk three floors to the cloakroom which was on the Secretarial Studies department floor. This was a learning experience in how sexism was alive and well, and how different male social and working expectations are from a mixed group as in a school science department. This included the lack of sharing of anything, from worksheets to weekend activities except for handyman successes, and extended to complete amazement that a women could not only control an all male class of engineering students but also knew the subject matter. I did not fit into the wife, mother or secretary category and hence spent a year educating my colleagues as well as the students, that a woman was capable of fulfilling the role of colleague and Engineering lecturer. I was not able to encourage any female enrolment during this period as students were aged over sixteen and therefore had already made their career choice at school. Careers advice, family pressure and media perceptions were all strong negative influences (Hugman, 1994).
Promotion in this male bastion was not forthcoming for me, and I watched a less qualified, less experienced male colleague rise to the next level. So, I looked outside the Department into development areas, as a technical education provides one with abilities in problem solving and lateral thinking. Further education was moving into a growth area and was receptive to any new ideas that brought in new students. I began to look at why fifty percent of the population were not choosing science and technology. If girls and women were not even entering the field at the lower levels, how could we ever hope to gain positions of leadership or influence?

Of particular concern was the area of education, not only because it is one of the original and generally well represented areas of female employment, but also it represents a crucial place for women as teachers to exercise leadership through influence and example. There was already effort being made to promote the access for girls in schools (Whyte, 1986), so I concentrated on the women who had already missed out through the lack of opportunity in schools in the seventies, whose children would be starting school, and might be looking for a new start for themselves. Secretarial and caring courses were already flourishing from this source of students.

**Identifying Barriers – Empowering Women**

To equalise opportunities in less traditional areas the general barriers to access needed to be identified, namely:

(i) family responsibilities and general lack of daycare facilities for children  
(ii) cultural pressures and prejudice against women moving out of traditional roles  
(iii) lack of self esteem and confidence  
(iv) lack of money  
(v) perception of science and technology as a male environment, a factor exacerbated by the predominance of male staff, particularly in senior positions (McGivney, 1991, p. 18).

An ‘Electronics for Women’ course, responding to all these barriers by running during school hours, relating subject content to general home based examples, requiring no prior knowledge, and taught by myself in a pleasant laboratory with positive images, proved to be a great success for the twelve mature students who enrolled. They proved to the other staff that they could grasp the facts quickly and easily, and soon reached the standard of the normal Year 11 entrant with the added advantage of having high motivation. Part of the course included a trip to a local university which so inspired one member that she applied for the Civil Engineering degree foundation course and was accepted on the basis of her year returning to study. Several of the other students went on to other areas of higher education proud of their accomplishment, but still feeling that their main skills lay elsewhere. In later groups some of the students, planning to become primary teachers, were keen to learn skills to help with the new DES thrust to introduce science and technology into primary schools.
Another initiative which I explored was to use self study packs supported by short tutorials which could be purchased on a need basis. This was a more costly exercise initially but if the students were able to attend college to use the materials (at their own convenience) the overheads were reduced considerably. This was a lonely way to study, but was the only means available to some students. These courses continued with a full, (but not oversubscribed) enrolment until I left the College three years later, after which there was no one to continue with it (Hugman, 1994).

Moving 12 000 miles to Western Australia

Contacting the local University Campus I obtained employment immediately as a sessional lecturer in an all male engineering section to teach all male student groups. The technician and secretary were both female. However in the computing section were two female lecturers, who were anxious to increase student numbers. I discussed issues with them, recounting problems expressed by English women which had been identified through my research, and put forward a proposal to raise course awareness, and identify the barriers experienced by rural Australian women. However, no funding was available.

Examining market intelligence for the whole of Australia for 1991, considerably less than 25 % of the employees in the area of science and technology, for example agriculture, mining and construction, were women. These female employees earn from between 70-85 % of the men’s pay, reflecting their low status work (Graycar & Jamrozic, 1993).

Surfing the Net brings affirmation from US sources that attention to a girl’s educational achievements and career aspirations will improve women’s opportunities for economic security and better quality of life. Women in non-traditional careers have been shown to have potential lifetime earnings 150 % greater than that of women in traditional areas (Expect The Best From A Girl, 1996). However, if present trends continue, women will only be trained in the data and information retrieval capabilities of computers, working under the direction of (male) managers and decision makers. Excluding sales, it is predicted that the highest paying occupations, such as computer systems analysts, programmers and engineers, will be those requiring a high level of technical skills and understanding.

The proportion of women in employment with degree qualifications rose by 190 % between 1979-91, and this time span also saw a considerable increase in the employment of women generally. So it is evident that post-school qualifications have become an essential requisite for ensuring employment (Graycar & Jamrozic, 1993). Tertiary qualifications will indeed command higher incomes either immediately or eventually, or in both cases.

However Sargent (1994) shows that in the science and technology professions, although a woman in a non-traditional field might earn considerably more than a contemporary in a traditional area, male graduate earnings exceed female graduate earnings in every subject except law. Interestingly, although male dentists earn almost 12 % more than female dentists, male engineers were found to have only a 0.5 % lead, whereas even male social workers have a 1 % lead. Australian rates are said to compare quite favourably with the United Kingdom in this respect (Sargent 1994). However this is still not an equitable position.
Women entering the non-traditional workforce, while benefiting from better pay and more opportunities will also still have to face discrimination and harassment, and often have to balance the traditional homemaker role. Gerdes researched stress experienced by women in the non-traditional career paths of engineering, management and medicine, compared with men in comparable studies, and also with women in traditional career studies (1995). Using three groups of graduate students, Gerdes found that the women in non-traditional work appear to be disadvantaged in that they reported more job tension than men in the same fields, and they reacted more to the above-average level of stressors than the woman in traditional work. She identifies that these greater vulnerabilities and susceptibilities may arise from the facts that men and women are probably treated differently even within the same curriculum, and that their career choice may create social pressures and discrimination (Gerdes, 1995).

These pressures will continue until women have a proactive role in management in these areas. The added pressure of a career break for child rearing is particularly hard to undertake in a male dominated profession. Also, to maintain a scientific skill level is difficult without access to equipment. Some larger United Kingdom employers are now acknowledging the loss of years of investment in female staff by providing top up courses for staff returning after a break. It is inevitably the female partner that has the career break. A more pragmatic solution would be for job sharing to be acceptable in more than just lower level female jobs. This would enable individuals to combine both parts of their lives more satisfactorily with less stress, and make available to the economy the full range of the population’s ability (Swarbrick, 1991).

In rural South West WA the two major industries are mining and farming, both of which need a resource of well trained technicians and managers with technical expertise, both in electrical and mechanical engineering. Also every section of the public and private sector could benefit from customised, more user-friendly, computer and communication facilities. Environmental and social issues of concern are often based on scientific use and abuse: health, energy and transport all rely on scientific research and implementation. The importance of offering quality training in technology was identified by the National Board of Employment, Education and Training report in 1991. In the same year, 1991, the Department of Employment, Education and Training issued a report on the National policy for the Education of Girls in Australian Schools. In 1990 a programme ‘Tradeswomen on the Move’ had reached 42 schools and 2,450 girls. In the evaluation 87.3% of country students reported that they would now consider a non-traditional trade career. Follow-up details were not available to investigate the continuing influence of this obviously positive experience. Six years on there is no significant increase in the enrolment of female students on non-traditional rural TAFE or University courses. In the private education sector a few girls schools in the metropolitan area reported ongoing initiatives of variety and purpose which fitted well into their general educational ethos. No information was given on rural private schools (DEBT, 1991).

In 1993 a long term plan to a broad approach to improving educational opportunities for girls was promoted by DEET. This was fuelled by a commissioned report, in which 800 girls were interviewed in 1991, and expressed concern about sex-based harassment by boys which contributed to their passivity and restricted their access to space, equipment and attention. The report concludes that this is bound to influence their choice of subjects into stereotyped areas and reinforce their low level of expectation as indicated later in the report. The long term plan which emerged from this report identified four objectives for the national policy.

~135~
(i) Raising awareness of the educational needs of girls
(ii) Equal access to participation in appropriate curriculum
(iii) Supportive school environment
(iv) Equitable resource allocation (Australian Education Council, 1993, p. 4)

These objectives already seem to be being addressed and achieved in some private metropolitan girls schools (DEET, 1994). Should such opportunities be extended to state and rural schools by running separate girls groups in at least in the non-traditional areas of the curriculum to help to create equal opportunities? Until there are women in positions of leadership and policy making who are committed to introducing change and setting an example, the situation will hardly alter (Hugman, 1991). Because there are not sufficient such women in these positions the situation has changed little in the last twenty five years.

In addition to role models at school, the media has a very strong influence on girls and women. On the television science programmes are often fronted by women, but they then interview the experts - men. There is no indication that the presenters have any scientific knowledge or training. The trainee mechanic of Kylie Minogue has long left 'Neighbours' and the female doctor in 'Home and Away' has decided not to go into surgery. American imports now generally contain the token strong professional female role. Non-gender specific science and computing magazines are generally dealing with male-orientated issues, and women's magazines do not generally acknowledge the existence of science or technology at all. The only apparent exception in recent years was when the Women into Science and Engineering group in the United Kingdom managed to persuade 'Prima' magazine to run one article on a female engineer in a careers section.

Conclusion
At least ten years further and various initiatives on both sides of the globe do not seem to be having a significant effect in the career areas into which girls and women are moving. The impetus provided at the education stage needs to be more continuous, not so spasmodic. Equity still needs to be addressed in job opportunities, and the media must be much more positive in its portrayal of women in science and technology. Superwomen are now needed to be suffragettes in this continuing male stronghold so that a female perspective and influence can be brought into all aspects of society.

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WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP: UNDERSTANDING THE GAME – DECIDING TO PLAY

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Abstract

Research undertaken as part of the evaluation of Women in Leadership Project shows that the impact of participation in collegial groups extends beyond direct involvement in the groups. Additional analysis conducted by researchers external to the University confirms the effectiveness of collegial group participation for women. The Women in Leadership Project is an organisational change programme that has as its primary aim increased involvement and participation by women in the decision making processes of the organisation. The Project has three major activities, collegial programmes for staff, a Public Lecture series and an annual Conference.

It is suggested that as women's knowledge and networks increase, women become increasingly organisationally effective. Participation in the Women in Leadership collegial programmes strengthen the individual's belief in themselves through the affirmation of their skills and abilities. We suggest that through the establishment of collegial peer relationships, interpersonal power increases resulting in greater knowledge about how and when to influence organisational decision making. The ability to be involved in and influence organisational decision making presents new opportunities in organisational leadership for women.

This paper presents a summary of the research and highlights some implications for staff development and organisational change strategies.

Key Words: collegial groups, interpersonal power, organisational change, peer relationships.

Introduction

Despite ten years of affirmative action and equal opportunity legislation in Australia, women continue to be under-represented in management positions (Smith et al., 1995). If women are under-represented in management then it comes as no surprise that they are also under-represented or not recognised as organisational leaders.

The Women in Leadership Project was developed in response to the need to do something different, that would drive organisational change in a way that equal opportunity and affirmative action programmes had not. The Women in Leadership Project had as a continuing focus the need to develop deeper understandings about leadership, not just to offer training programmes that would 'be good for women' but which ignored the organisational context or the need for organisational change. The Project assumed that 'one size does not fit all' and that the expression of leadership within the organisational setting can take many forms. The aim of the Project since its inception has been to enable women at the University to claim their place and to influence and become involved in the University's decision-making processes.
The Project had as a central theme the understanding that real power is not restricted to those in certain positions within the organisational hierarchy; that leadership can be claimed by those who understand and use the leadership capacities of public voice, strategy, the ability to create or change environments and individual competence. These capacities of leadership shown in Figure 1 below, underpin the conceptual framework of the Women in Leadership collegial programmes (Pyner, 1994).

**Figure 1: Dimensions of Leadership (Pyner, 1994, p. 3)**

![Diagram of Dimensions of Leadership](image)

The project consisted of three main elements:

(i) A Public Lecture Series. This provided a strong public voice for women through its support of discussion and debate on a range of issues of strategic importance to women.

(ii) An International Conference. The Conferences provides the opportunity for public voice and creation of environments as well as providing the opportunity for increase in individual competence through participation in roles ranging from organiser to delegate.

(iii) The Collegial Programmes. These are the core internal activity offered through the Women in Leadership Project. The focus of the programmes was to use the leadership framework shown above (Figure 1) as a means of developing a more strategic and meaningful approach to leadership.
Evaluation has been seen as an integral aspect of 'good practice' of the Project. Anecdotal evidence has indicated that individual participants respond differently to the organisation as a result of collegial group participation. The need to find an effective means of describing and quantifying outcomes of collegial groups and changes in individual participants has driven both internal and external evaluations.

Using standardised psychological measures the internal evaluation showed that participants rated their own behaviours as having changed significantly in certain aspects as a result of programme participation. These changes appeared to endure over time (Pike, 1995). External evaluations of the Project have also indicated that women do feel differently about themselves and the organisation as a result of their participation in collegial programmes (Pyner, 1994; Watkins, 1996).

The Collegial Programme – Structure and Outcomes

Collegial programmes with a maximum of 20 participants normally run over a three month period, commencing with a two day residential and a minimum of six follow up sessions. The groups are conducted by trained facilitators, who are familiar with the Women in Leadership framework.

Since the project's inception 122 academic and general staff women at Edith Cowan University have participated in women only collegial group programmes. This represents approximately 15% of the total female staff population. It should be noted that the programme was not open to all women. It was aimed primarily at women who were in positions to become involved with and influence decision making and organisational outcomes; that is academic and higher level general staff women.

A recent examination of University statistics provided data on the career moves of these women. Of the total number of collegial group participants 24 (20%) have had what in traditional organisational terms is termed 'a positive outcome', in that they have been promoted, received tenure, had their position level reclassified or were transferred or seconded at their request.

34 women (28% of the total number of participants) were no longer at Edith Cowan University. Available data shows that 9 academic and 9 general staff women (15% of the total number of participants) had left as a result of voluntary separation. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of the women who left the organisation voluntarily did so as a strategic decision leading to positive outcomes. Nine women (7% of the total number of participants) had left as a result of non-renewal of contract.

64 women (52% of the total number of participants) remain at the same organisational classification level. One interpretation of this data is that collegial group membership provides a positive outcome for only 20% of participants. Data from two separate evaluations suggests that a more accurate interpretation is, that there are significant benefits which go beyond the traditional measures for success in organisations for the majority of participants.
Evaluations of the Collegial Programmes

To date there have been two projects conducted with the specific aim of evaluating the collegial group process as it operates in the Women in Leadership Project. The first, an internal evaluation reported by Pike (1996), was conducted over a two year period; the second an external evaluation was conducted by Watkins et al. in 1996.

The internal evaluation commenced in 1994 and involved comparisons of three groups of female staff; two being Women in Leadership collegial group participants employed as either academic or general staff of the University, the third, a matched control group of non-Women in Leadership participants. The evaluation attempted to quantify the nature and scope of changes in collegial group members by using quantitative as well as qualitative techniques. (For a detailed coverage of the rationale, methodology, measures used and results of this evaluation, see Pike, 1994; Pike, 1996.)

Typically, research on collegial groups focuses on the collegial process; how the group worked and how the process influenced the individual members. Assessment of collegial group outcomes - charting the extent and nature of changes in individuals - is a less commonly reported approach. This can be explained by the difficulties inherent in measuring subtle changes in attitudes and functioning in individuals pre- to post-programme. The evaluation also highlighted the difficulties of trying to measure changes in individuals in a tertiary work environment with psychometric instruments designed primarily for use in general work environments.

The evaluation sought to clarify how effectively collegial group objectives had been met. The three objectives for the collegial groups arose from the charter developed for the collegial groups and were enunciated by Pyner (1994) in her evaluation of the Women in Leadership Project, Shaping the Culture.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective 1</th>
<th>For individual women to identify &amp; develop those technical and personal skills and knowledge required in leadership.</th>
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<td>Objective 2</td>
<td>For each participating collegial group to identify organisational change strategies that will effectively include women in the decision making process.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objective 3</td>
<td>To build a strong and enduring network which will be a continuing source of support for participants and which will assist them to develop their full potential as leaders.</td>
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The following is a summary of the responses given by the women in one collegial group in response to the question 'How well do you think the collegial group achieved the following objective?'
Objective 1. For individual women to identify and develop those technical and personal skills and knowledges required in leadership;

Participants reported increased autonomy, more efficiency, being more task focussed. Without exception they reported an increased level of personal and work related confidence and this they generally attributed to their participation in the Women in Leadership programme. This increase in confidence was attributed to the knowledge they had gained from the Women in Leadership collegial group content. For instance, they stressed understanding the theoretical basis for a range of organisational or individual behaviours.

There appeared to be no significant changes reported by the women in terms of providing organisational leadership, but they did identify and were more keenly aware of their technical and personal skills and knowledge as a result of Women in Leadership participation.

Objective 2. For each participating collegial group to identify organisational change strategies that will effectively include women in the decision making process.

Some participants characterised the organisation as feudal in its structures and that they could see no changes in their capacity to influence or integrate into it post-Women in Leadership. They believed that decisions were still being made for and about them without any real consultation with them.

This view was in contrast to the opinion held by the majority of women in the group, who as a result of their participation in a collegial programme, believed that they had an increased capacity to impact on the decision making structures of the organisation.

The discrepancy is best explained by the notion that although some women indicated that they had initiated some changes in their role in decision making at the local level, they felt that nothing had changed in the larger organisational context.

Objective 3. To build a strong and enduring network which will be a continuing source of support for participants and which will assist them to develop their full potential as leaders.

The participants unanimously agreed that involvement in the collegial group was of enormous benefit both personally and professionally. They described how they had begun even in the early stages to use the group as: a professional network; a forum for developing strategies to deal with difficult people; an information source; a form of stress release through social support and conversation; and a reference group when work pressures arose. It was described by one participant as a 'lifesaver' and by another as the only reason she did not quit her job during a particularly difficult time.

Maintenance of the collegial group network had been difficult as the group members were diverse in the nature of their occupational roles, were geographically disparate and constrained by the structures of the institution (through scheduled time regimes, rosters, and so on). Yet in spite of these barriers the group continued to provide support to its members. The outcome here is quite clearly captured by the participant's descriptions of significant and enduring changes in their networking as a result of Women in Leadership collegial group participation.
In addition to these questions about the objectives, the women were asked 'What are the most important outcomes of collegial group participation for women in the University?'

The responses can be classified into three categories: Empowerment of women; knowledge; and networking.

Women consistently emphasised how the programme had given them personal insights as to their own strengths and capabilities. This greater confidence in their own ability clearly reminded and reinforced for the women the depth of their own personal knowledge and skills for dealing with their organisational roles. It is suggested that this reassessment of skills and abilities combined with increased professional knowledge about the organisation leads to a sense of empowerment. This empowerment is further enhanced by the development of a new and significant network which has evolved amongst the collegial group participants.

The second evaluation conducted by Watkins et al. (1996) was designed primarily to research gender issues in management by surveying collegial group participants. The majority of the questions on the survey focussed on aspects of collegial group participation and the impact of group membership on individuals. In essence many of the areas explored in this evaluation replicated those covered in the internal evaluation and largely confirm the previous results.

The survey instrument was circulated to 88 of the 122 women who had been participants in at least one collegial programme conducted over the past four years and who were still employees of the University. A total of 39 questionnaires were returned, a response rate of 44%.

Significant findings by Watkins et al. include:

- 58% of respondents who had applied for promotion/tenure/reclassification were successful;
- participation in Women in Leadership collegial groups was identified as a significant contributory factor by all respondents who had been promoted/tenured/reclassified. Expertise was identified as the other major contributory factor;
- 70% of respondents reported increased levels of job satisfaction;
- 82% of those surveyed indicated that their knowledge about the organisation had increased;
- 87% of the respondents identified networking as a major outcome deriving directly from their involvement in the programme;

The most frequent changes reported by respondents were related to networking, speaking out, increased confidence, changed perspective and strategic thinking; respondents felt that participation in the programme had not increased their leadership skills.

The findings obtained by Watkins confirm Pike's earlier findings that not all of the objectives of the collegial programmes appear to be achieved (Pike, 1996). However it should be noted that 85% of the participants thought the project delivered their expectation and they would recommend it to other women. On balance the results show the participants judged the project effective (Watkins et al. 1996, p 23).
Discussion

Despite the fact that the results from these evaluations have provided a wealth of information about the value to women of collegial group participation, we doubt that the evaluations have captured the whole picture as to why the Women in Leadership collegial programme is successful. We have some concerns that the traditional models of evaluation and techniques used, do not provide a full measure of the effectiveness of programmes such as Women in Leadership. We see the limitations including the absence of tools specifically designed for use in tertiary settings, difficulties measuring subtle shifts in attitude and beliefs and quantifying behaviours that are not readily observable. This suggests that new frameworks of leadership also require the development of new frameworks of evaluation.

Notwithstanding these limitations the evaluations have shown that involvement in a collegial group leads to increased networking, increased knowledge about the organisation, and increased confidence and willingness to act. These outcomes are seen as consistent with leadership that evolves from the Women in Leadership conceptual framework of public voice, environment, strategy and competence. These outcomes are similar to the characteristics Alimo-Metcalf describes as belonging to transformational leadership (Vinnicombe & Colwill 1995). This leadership style is according, to Alimo-Metcalf being adopted by women rather than them cloning masculine models of leadership.

Since the early 1980’s studies have shown that women in management are equally if not more effective than their male counterparts. Colwill’s research into perceptions of power in organisations identified three categories of power: personal power, that is believing that one is powerful; interpersonal power characterised by the ability to influence others; and organisational power which is the ability to mobilise organisational resources. Colwill points out that male and female managers face a power differential. Of greatest significance are her research findings which suggest that women are less effective in the area of interpersonal power, that is their ability to influence others, however her research suggests that women may be more effective at mobilising resources. No difference has been noted in perceptions of personal power between female and male managers (Vinnicombe & Colwill 1995). As Colwill points out the research raises as many questions as it answers. Questions such as ‘If women are less interpersonally powerful than men are – if they are less able to influence others – how are they better able than men to mobilise resources?’ (1995, p. 54). Colwill believes that the answers to questions such as this will be related to personal power and the feeling of control of one’s own environment that this brings.

Colwill’s description of power appears to support the outcomes of the collegial research. It is possible for each level of power to operate independently for an individual. That is, it is not essential for an individual to feel powerful in all three levels at the one time. This would explain the discrepancy identified by Pike(1996) where participants reported feeling increased personal power whilst at the same time reporting little or no change in interpersonal and organisational power. Watkins’ also reported increases in self-confidence and knowledge but no increase in participant’s perceptions of their leadership capacities (1996). It is our view that the changes in interpersonal and organisational power are greater that the participants perceive them to be.
The ability to create, change and control environments is a core element of the leadership frame work which underpins Women in Leadership’s activities (Pyner, 1994, p. 4). The results of the evaluations show that collegial group participants have a greater understanding of their environments and the key factors (such as structural and personnel, external to their control) that influence it. This understanding may not necessarily lead to greater control over the organisational environment resulting in a feeling of lack of interpersonal and organisational power. However, because the women are more aware of the organisational context within which they are expected to operate and are able to separate their own performance (which may have been previously perceived by them as inadequate) from the often unrealistic expectations of the organisation an increase in personal power results.

Much of the current literature indicates that a non-traditional leadership style is well suited to the conditions of many work environments and can increase an organisation’s chances of surviving in an uncertain world (see, for example, The Industry Taskforce on Leadership and Management Skills, 1994). Participants in Women in Leadership collegial programmes are exposed to new ways of doing things, that is adopting what may be seen as a non-traditional approach (for that organisation at least) to leadership. Rosner (1990) in her examination of leadership styles points out that women are succeeding because of certain characteristics previously considered feminine and inappropriate in leaders.

A further outcome of participation in Women in Leadership Collegial groups is an increase in organisational networks and the establishment of informal mentoring relationships. Networking and access to mentors have been cited by many writers as having a positive impact on women’s careers (Burke & McKeen, 1990; Arnold & Davidson, 1990).

Specifically peer collegial relationships have been identified by Kram and Isabella (1985) as having the primary functions of providing career strategising, job related feedback and friendship as well as some information sharing, confirmation and emotional support. Although Kram and Isabella’s research indicates that these collegial peer relationships tend to be with limited numbers of people (2-4) the collegial groups appear to provide a similar opportunity for developing these significant relationships with a much larger group (15-20). We believe that collegial group participation increases women’s interpersonal power through development of collegial peer relationships.

Participation in the Women in Leadership collegial programmes strengthens the individuals’ belief in themselves through the affirmation of their skills and abilities. Through the establishment of collegial peer relationships interpersonal power increases thus the women are more knowledgeable about how and when to influence organisational decision making. That is, having learnt the game, they can then decide when to play.
CHANGING THE FUTURE THROUGH THE PAST:
A CENTENARY OF WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Abstract

This is a background paper on the history of women's suffrage in Western Australia and outline of the planning to celebrate the Centenary of Suffrage in the year 1999. The paper outlines the context for the struggle within Australia and summarises the key points for Western Australian women. It identifies some key dates and encourages the community to take the opportunity to become involved in the celebration and planning for the future.

Suffrage is defined as 'the right of voting, especially in political elections' (Macquarie Dictionary, 1991).

Key Words: centenary, suffrage, women, history, celebrating, planning

Introduction

This paper provides background information on the achievement of one hundred years of suffrage for the women of Western Australia. It offers an outline of the setting in which the right to vote was achieved and provides an opportunity for women today to become involved in planning for the centenary celebrations.

New Zealand led the world in women’s suffrage becoming the first self-governing nation to grant universal suffrage in 1893. Australia followed close on its heels when it became the second country in the world to grant women suffrage. All Australian women were granted the right to vote at Federal level, in 1902 (Haines, 1992). However, prior to that, two Australian states share the distinction of granting women the right to vote before Federation and consequently having a significant influence on that event.

South Australia was the first state to give women the right to vote in 1894. In 1899 Western Australia became the second state to grant suffrage to women though this right did not extend to Aboriginal women. Thereafter, Western Australia has played a particularly prominent role in the history of female participation in Australian parliamentary life and has recorded a significant number of firsts which impacted both locally and nationally.

The celebrations around the year 1999 represent a major opportunity for Western Australia to acknowledge one hundred years of women’s achievements in all spheres of public and private life and to develop the foundations for further progress in the next century.
Background To The Struggle

From reading the history books of Australia one would think women neither fought for nor did they have to work too hard to achieve the vote. Kirsten Lees (1995) draws our attention to the Paul Hamlyn (p. 396) *Illustrated History of Australia* which in 1974 indicated that

> [I]he Australian (suffrage) campaign was never particularly strong or vehement. Because of the great surplus of men in the country, most women could count on marrying and few of them had any ambition beyond a happy home life.

However, truth will out according to Lees (1995) and researchers and historians have been uncovering that truth in recent years. The real history of the struggle has been put together from diaries and from the memories of those who took part in or remembered the battle. That in itself indicates how short a time ago this happened. There are a number of books now in print which document the story better, many from a woman researcher’s viewpoint (Lees, 1995).

Throughout most of history, women have not been treated equally with men. They were often seen as second class citizens. Both law and custom kept them in their place. No matter what their station in life their welfare was seen as the responsibility of their fathers and later their husbands. In some cases, their brothers or sons took on that role when other more senior family members died. In Australia, it is true that the duration of the battle for suffrage was much shorter than other parts of the world. However, women’s lives were determined as if they still lived in their country of origin (predominantly Great Britain) and the rules laid down by men continued to keep them in their place.

The prevailing attitude of the time when women were fighting for the vote was one in which women were either seen as irrelevant, as spoiling things for men or not having a contribution to make. For example, some women were involved in public life and Clarke and White (1983) suggest that women were seen as apolitical. This was despite the fact that women were a major force in the community, gathering food and caring for children, contributing to a cohesive political, economic and social community. Yet, as Clarke and White (1983) indicate, this was the only period in which class distinctions were ignored as women from all groups united to achieve the vote. The absence of clear party divisions in the colonies in this period, with parliamentary factions being fluid and lacking widespread organisation and discipline, facilitated women achieving a common bond as they were not politically divided against themselves. The only group excluded, by class and race, were Aboriginal women.

Although these factors helped win the battle, the overall context was not promising. For example we are again directed by Lees (1995) to the following one quote from the *Women’s Journal* of 1908.

> The invasion of women into the domain of political activity contradicts all human experience as to the fitness of things and runs counter to all our intuitive perceptions of the proper relations between the sexes and their respective spheres of work (Editorial in the *Advertiser* 27 August 1891).
This attitude was continued even after South Australia and Western Australia had achieved the vote. Frank Madden wrote in the *Australian Woman's Sphere* in 1900 that '[w]oman Suffrage would abolish soldiers and war, also racing, hunting football, cricket and all such manly games.'

In Western Australia, when Parliament was considering the bill to give women the right to vote, politicians (Hansard 1899), presented a range of viewpoints presenting conflicting perspectives. For example:

Women are not wanted in politics or on the platform, and I am sure they are not wanted as members in this House.

But I know where they are wanted - in their own homes and in the homes of the poor, because that is where women’s mission should and ought to be, instead of talking balderdash and seeking political prominence and positions for which they are not intended by nature. The very nature, the very physique of a woman, ... renders her an admirable manager of her own home; but, as a rule, she does not possess the grasp, and the education and the training, which would enable her to act as the governor of a large and complicated organisation like the city of Perth.

I say that the intelligence of the women in this colony is above the average intelligence of the men.

[W]oman was created as the helpmate of man - not as a competitor with him in the race of life.

Give the women the vote, and I am sure we shall never have occasion to regret having extended the privilege to them.

A difficult climate in which to achieve change which today we see as a right. However, the women of Australia did not generally set out to change the vote only because they saw it as a right - rather, they saw injustice all around them. Everywhere they looked, there was wife beating and child abuse.

Drunkenness was closely associated with domestic violence and women formed temperance movements in an attempt to convince people to take the pledge and say no to alcohol. Constant child bearing took a toll on women’s health and lives and therefore contraception and women’s reproductive rights were seen by many women as essential.

Some women recognised the importance of equal educational opportunity and access to professions - for women to become doctors, lawyers and engineers. The law of the time kept women from many rights (property, the right to keep their own salary, to divorce dreadful husbands and to be guardian of their own children). All these factors were an underlying spur to the pioneer women of Western Australia and to their counterparts in the other states. Over time, they convinced others of the justice of their cause winning the support of members of Parliament and *The West Australian* newspaper.
Given the climate outlined, why did they get the vote so quickly? The established historical view was that the legislation was finally passed to meet the needs of the then Premier John Forrest and the conservative government to utilise a female vote to offset opposition to the government in the male dominated and more 'radical' goldfields region. However, the role which was played by the prominent women of the day, including some significant 'wives' and several politically active community groups, suggests that there were other factors which helped to sway the decision as outlined below.

South Australian women were the first Australian women to gain the vote (Legislation passed in 1894, proclaimed in 1895) and Western Australia was next (Legislation passed in 1899, proclaimed 1900). After Federation, the other states followed gradually: New South Wales 1902, Tasmania 1903, Queensland 1905 and finally Victoria in 1908.

Although some American colonies such as Wyoming (1896) had granted women the right to vote, Australian women were still world leaders, with British women gaining the right to vote in 1918, Canadian women in 1917 and women in the United States 1920 (Haines 1992).

In 1891 the first Western Australian Parliament took place ensuring that politics were a topical issue at the time. Two significant factors for Western Australian women striving for political rights and equality were the support of two early women's groups advocating for the vote for women: the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Karrakatta Club together with the support of The West Australian newspaper.

Instrumental in increasing interest in women's suffrage was the visit of Jessie Ackerman in 1892 who established a local branch of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. The WCTU was an international organisation, with around 8,000 Australian members by the early 1900's. In Western Australia the WCTU had approximately 400 members each year throughout this exciting time. Janetta Foulkes was made the first superintendent for women's suffrage. The following year, 1983, Elizabeth Nicholls visited the colony as guest at the WCTU's first annual convention. Reflecting the energy for reform, a women's suffrage deputation met with Premier Forrest and the WCTU circulated its first votes for women petition. A proposed constitutional amendment to give women the vote was introduced and defeated three times during the year.

In 1984, the Karakatta Club was founded with leading members including Lady Onslow, Lady Forrest and Edith Cowan. Some of these women went on to achieve much in social reform including formation of the Women's Service Guild (WSG) in Perth in 1909. Early members of the WSG included Edith Cowan, Bessie Rischbieth and Dr Roberta Jull. The membership of the Karakatta Club during the 1890's averaged 100 to 120 women, representing many of the most influential and well connected women of the colony.

In 1895 the Women's Franchise League was formed to lobby parliamentarians, distribute literature and arrange debates to keep up the pressure. In 1896 a further attempt by Mr Cookworthy, Member for Sussex, to get the legislation through was defeated on the grounds that the legislation had not been demanded by the women of the colony. However, it was not until 1898, when the WCTU launched an aggressive public campaign, and a member of
Parliament Walter James introduced a motion in favour of women’s suffrage, that things started to move more rapidly.

Although the motion was defeated, *The West Australian* came out in favour of women’s suffrage and public support appeared to be emerging. In 1899 the ‘Constitution Act Amendment Bill’ was finally passed through Parliament giving women the right to vote. (It was rejected four times. There were several key dates in the passing of the legislation as outlined in the appendices. When it passed there were approximately 70,000 men of voting age and 20,000 women in the colony (Sawer, 1984, p. 3).

Some Effects Of The Passing Of Legislation

The first opportunity to exercise the vote by the women of the colony was in the 1900 referendum on the Commonwealth Constitution. The women of Western Australia and South Australia were the only ones who had input to the framing of the Australian Constitution.

In the 1901 election Western Australian and South Australian women were still the only ones with the right to vote. It heralded the beginning of formal participation for women in politics. For example Edith Dircksey Cowan in 1921 became the first woman to be elected to Parliament. Western Australia also achieved a number of other firsts over the centenary including May Holman who in 1925 was not only the second woman Member of Parliament and the first Labor woman Member of Parliament but also became the first woman in the British Empire to serve ten years continuously in Parliament.

Another achiever was the first woman senator Dorothy Tangleyn (later to become the longest serving woman Member of Parliament in Australia when she ended her Parliamentary career in the Senate in 1968). Western Australia produced the first woman cabinet minister Florence Cardell Oliver (also an Australian first). Agnes Robertson became the oldest woman to sit in an Australian Parliament when she ended her last parliamentary term in 1968 at almost 80 years of age. More recently Western Australia had five women as Cabinet Ministers in 1990 (an Australian first) with one of them becoming the first woman Premier.

In 1993 Cheryl Edwardes became the first woman Attorney General. Between 1921 and 1996 a total of 312 women were elected to each House of Australian Commonwealth, State and Territory Parliaments. However, it is only in the last few years that women have been elected in this arena in significant numbers with women being 159 (18.9 %) of the total 842 members at 30 April 1996 (Black, 1996).

Celebrating The Event

1999 marks the centenary of suffrage in Western Australia. New Zealand and South Australia have already celebrated their centenaries. In both places, the whole community became involved in commemorating the event, whether old or young, from all cultural backgrounds and all walks of life.

Women’s organisations and groups of individuals all joined in with women and men being involved at all levels in activities. A wide range of events and many great ideas were generated including the following

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• Local and international conferences and seminars.
• Lasting recognition of significant women in memorials, statues, stamps, coins, notes and phone cards.
• Living memorials such as named flowers.
• Television and film vignettes, documentaries and plays.
• National and local radio broadcasts on significant women.
• Books and resources including videos, information kits and posters.
• Exhibitions.
• Drama and dance.
• Sport and recreation.
• Rededication of existing memorials to women’s achievements.

The year 1999 through to May 2000 offers Western Australians an opportunity to demonstrate our own unique approach and make this a real year to remember. It is also an opportunity to address omissions of the past. Granting Western Australian women the right to vote in 1899 was not extended to Aboriginal women. Their right to vote was not granted until the 1960’s. In a referendum in 1967 the majority (92 %) of Australians voted to change the Constitution and allow the Commonwealth to make laws for Aboriginals and include them in the census. In preparing for the Centenary, this fact will not be ignored and the opportunities for reconciliation will be explored.

The Impact Of Suffrage - One Hundred Years On

In 1899, the women of Western Australia believed that the vote could give them some measure of status and power - power to influence the agenda, to make or to change laws and to have influence. The right to vote was then, and still remains, an important and powerful symbol of women’s equality as full citizens and decision makers. To win that vote with the assistance of men was a victory indeed. It required the support of men, no matter how reluctantly given. And once given - it could be used.

During the past hundred years it has been used in many and various ways. Women have won legal recognition of the principle of equal pay for equal work and full rights to education. They are represented in every profession and trade, sit in court on juries and as judges and represent their constituents, female and male, as members of state and federal parliament.

The centenary of suffrage has indeed seen progress. But the battle is not yet won. Many of the issues which stirred the women of the 1890’s are still with us today (domestic violence, poverty aggravated by inequality, discrimination, bias). This centenary is both a milestone and a turning point - an opportunity to plan for the next hundred years. We must take advantage of it and involve all the women of Western Australia from whatever part of the state they live in, whatever their age, their origin or their experience.

The young women of tomorrow can come together with the women who paved the way and make sure that the next century is even better.
References


Madden, F. (1900). *Australian woman’s sphere*, 1(1).


**OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF WOMEN’S SUFFRAGE IN WA**

Some key dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Western Australian women with property were given the right to vote in municipal elections</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>The first Western Australian Parliament took office</td>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Jessie Ackermann visited Western Australia and established the Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU). Janetta Foulkes made the first superintendent for women’s suffrage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Elizabeth Nicholls visited the colony as guest at the WCTU’s first annual convention. A women’s suffrage deputation waited on Premier Forrest, and the WCTU circulated its first votes for women petition. Three times during this year a proposed constitutional amendment, which would have given women the vote, was introduced and defeated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>The Karrakatta Club was founded. Leading members included Lady Onslow, Lady Forrest and Edith Cowan.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>Walter James introduced a motion in favour of women’s suffrage. It was defeated. The <em>West Australian</em> came out in favour of women’s suffrage.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>The WCTU launched an aggressive public campaign for the vote.</td>
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<td>1899</td>
<td>The “Constitution Act Amendment Bill” was passed in the Legislative Council on 17 August 1899 after first being introduced in 1893. (It was rejected four times). This Bill gave women the right to vote. It subsequently passed through the Legislative Assembly on 12 Dec 1899.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>After being endorsed by the monarch, the Bill was proclaimed and became law on 18 May 1900.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>When Western Australian women voted in their first state elections, proportionally more women voted than men.</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>Again proportionally more women voted than men.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Legislation was amended giving women the right to stand for Parliament.</td>
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<td>1921</td>
<td>First woman Edith Dircsey Cowan elected to the Western Australian Parliament (This was an Australian first). Edith Cowan was also only the second woman in the British Empire to take her seat in Parliament.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>May Holman became Australia’s second woman MP and the first Labor woman MP.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>May Holman was the first woman in the British Empire to serve ten years continuously in Parliament.</td>
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<td>1943</td>
<td>The first woman senator Dorothy Tangney.</td>
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<td>1949</td>
<td>First woman cabinet minister, Florence (Annie) Cardell-Oliver, Minister for Health. (honorary Minister in 1947, full Minister in October 1949 This was also an Australian first).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1962</td>
<td>Agnes Robertson was almost 80 years and the oldest woman to sit in an Australian Parliament when she ended her last parliamentary term in 1968.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1967</td>
<td>Aboriginal Australians granted suffrage giving Aboriginal women the right to join with other Australian women at the ballot box.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Dorothy Tangney was the longest serving woman MP in Australia when she ended her Parliamentary career in the Senate in 1968.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Western Australia was the first government to have five women as Cabinet Ministers simultaneously in the Lawrence Government in 1990 (Carmen Lawrence, Kay Hallahan, Yvonne Henderson, Pam Beggs and Pam Buchanan).</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990-1993</td>
<td>First woman Premier, Carmen Lawrence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>First woman Attorney General Cheryl Edwardes.</td>
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key dates in the passing of legislation to give women the right to vote in western australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>12 July 1899</td>
<td>Mr Walter James (Member for East Perth) introduced a motion to the Legislative Assembly: 'That, in the opinion of this House, early provision should be made for conferring the Parliamentary Suffrage upon Women' The motion was passed that same day and the resolution was forwarded to the Legislative Council for its concurrence.</td>
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<tr>
<td>26 July 1899</td>
<td>Mr Walter James presented a petition for women’s suffrage to the Legislative Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>17 August 1899</td>
<td>The motion advocating women’s suffrage was passed in the Legislative Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 August 1899</td>
<td>The Constitution Acts Amendment Bill was introduced into the Legislative Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 October 1899</td>
<td>Both the Constitution Acts Amendment Bill 1899 and the Electoral Bill 1899 were read a third time in the Legislative Assembly and transmitted to the Legislative Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 December 1899</td>
<td>The Constitution Acts Amendment Bill was passed in the Legislative Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 December 1899</td>
<td>The Electoral Bill was passed in the Legislative Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 December 1899</td>
<td>The Governor (in his Speech at the Prorogation of Parliament) indicated that he would seek Royal Assent for the Acts with Proclamation to take effect from the date of publication of the Proclamation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 May 1900</td>
<td>The Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899 and the Electoral Act 1899 were proclaimed (Government Gazette WA 18 May 1900)</td>
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WOMEN, TECHNOLOGY AND POWER

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Abstract

This paper presents evidences that technology will be the new source of power in the next millennium and examines the contributing factors to the apparent gender disparity in the mainstream technological fields. Two mutually enforcing processes are suggested to remedy this disparity; balancing the masculine nature of technology, and attracting and facilitating women's involvements at the developmental stages of technology.

Key Words: technology, change, masculinity, femininity.

Introduction

The nature and machinery of power has changed over the last century but it still remains by and large an elite and exclusive domain. While land ownership was the source of power before, today it is the ever advancing technological wonders that rule the power game. It is fascinating to observe how women were kept out of land ownership for centuries by harsh and blatantly unjust rules such as the doctrine of tenancy in entitivities, while now, ironically enough, they have chosen to keep out of the mainstream technological advances and their associated flow-on effects in the hierarchical power structure that operates in western technocracies. This is confirmed by woefully low proportion of girls choosing to undertake university level education in the technological fields (Emmett, 1992; Naghdy, 1996).

This aloofness towards technological advances can be attributed to a number of factors – masculine culture of technology, historical lack of involvement on the part of women in the technology development and adaptation processes, mystifying and complicated technological terminology, women's lack of confidence in dealing with advanced technologies, lack of role models in the form of successful female technologists.

Over the last two decades the issue of the relationship between technology and gender has been the subject of great debate amongst feminists and social science theorists (Gattiker, 1994). While there is universal agreement about women's alienation from technology with ample statistical backing (Geppert, 1995), the reasons for such alienation is debated extensively. Keith Grind and Rosalind Gill have discussed three distinct views about the reasons for women's disaffection from technology (1995). These views represent those of liberal feminists, eco-feminists and the more historical perspective which sees the technology culture as masculine. While the eco-feminists assert that there are fundamental and inherent differences between men and women and see technology as a means for male domination, liberal feminists see technology as gender neutral and women as fundamentally the same as men. They see the so-called 'feminine' qualities as only the consequence of role stereotyping and therefore see no reason why women could not be exactly like men in relation to technology. In a way liberal
feminists don’t see the necessity for any change either in technology or in men. However, they assert that women have to change and reconcile with technology by adopting the ‘male values’. The third group, on the other hand, see women’s alienation from the technology as a result of technology’s historical masculine culture. It is interesting to note that there are justifications and flaws in all the three stances and each succeed in the context of some specific technologies and fall short for others.

While the extensive study of the gender-technology relation is beyond the scope of this paper, there are a number of fundamental questions that need to be discussed in the context of this paper:

- Is technological knowledge related to power structure?
- Is technology inherently masculine? If so why?
- Is technology a source of oppression or liberation for women?
- How does the introduction of technology affect women in the work place?
- Can technology be more balanced?
- What will be the effect of women’s involvement in the development of technology?

The author, as a professional engineer, will argue that a fundamental change in the nature, emphasis, and motivation of technology is needed in order to attract more women at the developmental stages of technology. The current notion of technology which is masculine in its approach should be transformed to a conviction that technology must be balanced in its relevance and application. The challenge facing us is to break from the vicious circle – since there are few women in technology it is masculine and unattractive; since it is unattractive, women are not interested. The answer lies in two mutually enforcing strategies; changing the culture of technology by balancing its emphasis, motivation, direction, and rationale and attracting more women into the mainstream of technology. The other problems facing women in the fast-growing technocracy will be solved as a consequence. It must be noted that this perspective is markedly distinct from either the liberal or eco-feminists views in that it asserts that men and women have different and complementary roles to play in the formation of a balanced technology and sees today technology’s masculine culture as a result of an unbalanced ‘male value’ influence in its development.

The Age of Technological Ascendancy

A cursory look at the power structure throughout the current millennium reveals a definite transfer of power from church to science. Throughout the latter 200 years of this millennium, science has enjoyed tremendous status and prestige. One of the spin-offs of this revival of scientific prosperity has been the rapid growth of technological advances. Towards the end of nineteenth century, the industrial revolution ushered in a century of unparalleled and radical transformation in the humanity’s way of life. Throughout this rapid and amazing burst of innovations and inventions women in most part were the passive recipients of the technology. A number of women who did contribute to the development of technological wonders remained, for the most part, unknown. This lack of acknowledgment was aggravated by the patent laws that excluded women from registering their inventions, hence most of their inventions were registered in their husband’s name (Wajcman, 1991).
The twentieth century has been a century of tremendous reorganisation in all spheres of life. The source of power has been shifted from commodity to know-how and technological advances. The second half of the century has witnessed a scientific breakthrough no less potent in its impact than the industrial revolution. The era of electronic technology and computers has dominated the scientific scene and revolutionised every aspect of our life. The consummating outcome of this breakthrough at the closing years of twentieth century is information technology which has heralded changes of greater magnitude than the industrial revolution of the previous century.

Whether this technological ascendancy leads to a technocracy or not is a subject of interesting debate within the Engineering professions (Florman, 1981). If we define technocracy as being governed by scientists, engineers, and technologists, then the apparent lack of economic and political power amongst engineers and scientist makes the emerging technocracy hard to envisage. There is no doubt, however, that technology is the driving force behind many political and economic decisions; that knowledge translates to power. Economic and political power might not ultimately be the exclusive domain of the technocrat elite, but the technological illiterates or the ‘digitally homeless’ can expect to be more and more isolated from the mainstream power establishments. The drive to the top might still involve all the intricacies of political maneuvering, and social networking, but the ride will be much more expeditious for those who have mastered the myth of the ‘information super highway’.

The significant impact of High Technology on every aspect of our workplace is increasingly unabated despite the pessimistic views expressed by some researchers with suppositions reminiscent of those expressed about the industrial revolution in the turn of the last century (Gimpel, 1995). Whether we approve of it or not, High Technology is going to influence every manner of our life. From the mobile ultrasound machines in the villages of India and their effect on the balance of male and female population in that country to the mobile phone explosion in Africa, globalisation of technology is ushering a new age of international culture and a unifying pattern is emerging from the chaos and confusion of a global society.

The Culture of Technology

In establishing whether technology is gendered or not, one must first define technology. This definition and the relationship between science and technology in particular has been the subject of interesting debate over the last decade (Bender & Druckrey, 1995). The term technology has acquired broad applications over the last century. From the application of science to industry to information technology; from reproductive technology to communication; from defense to medicine; this term has been used to refer to different areas of our collective endeavors. Technology covers diverse entities such as knowledge, know-how, artifacts, products, and information.

While at the beginning of the industrial revolution, technology was by and large an extension of muscle power and as such it was masculine, nowadays technology is about information and communication which inherently could be termed feminine. Broadly defined, technology is considered to include development, implementation, objectives, motivation, drive, and action. This includes what it is, what it does and how it does it.
From this point of view and from the historical perspective of its development, technology has been mainly men’s domain in all its aspects such as its development, implementation, regulation, objectives, expansion, and direction. The majority of the political and scientific decision makers influencing the pattern of technological developments and the economic rationale behind it are men. There is no wonder therefore, that technology in most parts reflects the so-called ‘masculine’ qualities. Technology, notwithstanding its positive and unifying effects on some areas such as medicine and telecommunication, is by and large economically or military driven, aggressive, powerful, environmentally indifferent, complex, destructive (defense technology), socially unconscious, inhumane, and is inspired by what could be done rather than what needs to be done.

Technology: A Source of Oppression or Liberation?

There are opposing views about the effect of technology on women. There are those who assert technology is a tool of domination invented by men (Cockburn, 1985) and those who think technology could be liberating (Liff, 1988). This is due to the wide range of technologies and their varying impact on women. Reproductive technology, for example, was hailed by Shulamith Firestone as liberating (1970).

The debate over the role of technology in society has been ongoing for the last one hundred and fifty years and extends far beyond gender division issues (Snyder, 1996). It covers vast topics such as environment and social impact, division of labour, workplace change, and division of power. Likewise the role of science is questioned. Is it the creator of our problems or their solution? In both cases there seems to be two diametrically opposing views. The pessimists who blame science and technology for all our ills (Gimpel, 1995) and the optimists that promise technology is going to solve most of our problems (Toffler, 1980). There is no doubt that both camps have plenty of evidence to support their case. This, once more, is due to contrasting character of differing technologies such as defense, medicine, communication, and transport. History, however, has proven that both sides have a rather exaggerated view of reality. While science and technology have failed to deliver the highly overestimated promises of the optimists, they have contributed to improvements in many aspects of our lives.

What will benefit humanity in general and women in particular at this point in history is not to get rid of technological advances but is to modify their emphasis, to adjust the motivation behind their development, to harmonise their environmental impact, to guide their direction, and to make them more humane. This might ultimately tip the balance of events in favour of the optimists and make technology a source of liberation rather than oppression.

Technology and Women in the Workplace

There are numerous studies on the impact of the introduction of advanced technologies on women in the workplace. While the earlier works were concentrated on office automation and the way it impacts on women (Hartman et al., 1986-1987), recently other areas have received some attention as well (Wajcman, 1991). The case of office automation is unique in a sense that its major impact has been related to women’s secretarial work. It is interesting to note that in the absence of competition and intimidation from male colleagues women have gained new skills and competencies and mastered the know-how of word processors and spread sheet
applications. Other technological adaptations, however, have mostly put women in a disadvantaged position.

While many of the technological adaptations adversely impact a technologically uneducated workforce, men and women alike, women are particularly disadvantaged purely because of their historical lack of involvement in technology development, adaptation, and implementation. Women’s alienation from technology is costing them dearly in the balance of power in the workplace. Decision makers of technological innovation and its introduction and adaptations to the workplace are mostly men and as such they are well placed to be in charge of its implementation and operation.

A More Balanced Technology and its Positive Effect on Women

The aggressive, swift, and at times uncaring technological developments have alarmed and alienated many people from all strata of life. The need for a change in the emphasis from economic and military rationale to human concern is evident. There is no doubt that activities such as nuclear tests in Mururoa under the umbrella of technological development indicate a total lack of environmental and social consciousness on the part of its instigators. This is technology’s most impertinent, inhumane, and hostile face.

While there has been an ongoing debate and rift amongst feminists about technology and gender, little attention has been given to the fundamental and crucial changes necessary to the science and technology culture, direction, and impact. This fundamental need must be acknowledged by the technologists and scientists. This change could be brought about through a technology based on a balance of subjectivity and objectivity; logic and intuition; mind and emotion; economic rationale and social justice; progress and environment; machine-based and human-based; science and spiritual values; and men and women’s values. This process of change would, no doubt, be slow and arduous since it involves radical cultural and attitudinal changes which means obliterating age old practices and convictions. A universally drawn and agreed code of ethics or oath of conduct for scientists and technologists could bring technological advances, innovations, and inventions more in accord with environment, nature, people and their needs.

One essential element in this process of change is women’s involvement in technological advances. The challenge of reconciling women and technology has interested many researchers and social reformers. To this end, there have numerous failed initiatives over the last two decades (Van Nostrand, 1993). One point of view of the promoters of these initiatives is that women were the only target for change, men and technology were unchallenged. The challenge of involving more women in the technological fields goes beyond affirmative actions and encouragement of girls to take math and science at school. The Australian experience has shown that girls’ interest in math and science at school does not ultimately translate into a career in engineering. Girls who have the educational background to do engineering choose to follow law, medicine, or other professional interests. The challenge is therefore twofold. On one hand the challenge is to change the culture of technology, to make it more socially relevant, environmentally friendly, and human-based; and on other hand is to attract more women to the developmental stages of the advanced technologies through affirmative actions and encouragement. These two processes are mutually empowering and complimentary.

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Conclusion

As the twenty first century approaches, the post-industrial era is experiencing a new wave of technological advances in form of information and communication technology. While historically the masculine culture of technology has been attributed to its function as a substitute for muscle power, present day technology is gender neutral in its application. However, the term 'technology' covers more than artifacts and their functions, it also include knowledge, information, purpose, design and development motivation, drive, and impact. As such technology is still, in most part, men's domain and reflects masculine values.

Introduction of advanced technologies in the work place, by and large, puts women in disadvantaged position because their alienation from a technology which is removed from their concerns, ideas, and values.

Two mutually enforcing processes are suggested to enable bridging the gap between women and technology. Firstly, creation of a new technology culture which is socially relevant, caring, environmentally friendly, justice driven, human-based, need driven, simple, and peace-making. Secondly, attracting more women in the developmental stages of technology. These two processes should go hand in hand to create the interest and attract women to technology which in turn will help the necessary change of culture.

The future of technology, what Willis Harman calls ‘The second industrial revolution’ (1992), calls for a wholeness where all the apparently opposing dualities are equally valued and integrated into all aspects of technological developments – mind and matter; subjectivity and objectivity; scientific method and intuition; science and spiritual values; men and women; economic rationale and social justice; progress and environment; logic and emotion.

References


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ETHICS OR LEADERSHIP –
THE 90S DILEMMAS OF LEADERSHIP FOR EFFECTIVE
ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING IN THE NEXT MILLENNIUM

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Abstract

In higher education we are surrounded by change that is demanding different profiles and
missions for universities all over the world. Handy (1995) refers to the change as
discontinuous and discusses the need for new forms of organisation and management to help
us negotiate the change. The promotion of collaborative leadership and participatory decision
making has become popular in many organisations, including universities, as a way of
negotiating the challenge of change. However, these approaches often pose difficult dilemmas
for managers. Managers may seek to promote self determination and collegiality but at the
same time they are held accountable for a range of departmental outcomes. Drawing on the
author’s experience as manager of an organisational development project, the paper examines
some ethical issues that could face managers in higher education should they adopt
collaborative leadership practices.

Key Words: ethical dilemmas, self determination, collegiality, managerialism, SMART
Project.

The Challenge of Change in Higher Education

Higher education has not escaped the changes that have confronted many other institutions,
private businesses and public sector organisations all over the world. Over the last ten years the
pressure has increased for universities to become competitive in a global education market
made possible by the advent of sophisticated communication technology. Noble (1994)
describes wide-scale changes that have affected relationships between staff, and between staff
and students, that have accompanied the introduction of a managerialist culture. Competitive
universities have developed service cultures that affect traditional balances in staff student
relationships. There have been increased pressures to provide services that are tailored to
student profiles that are characterised by diversity in backgrounds, abilities, nationalities and
expectations. Academics are pressured to produce high quality and extensive publications of
their research. New universities that have built their strength in teaching undergraduate
programmes now find themselves in an unequal competition with established universities for
research dollars and postgraduate students. There have been changes to funding patterns and
increased demands for university managers to make the dollar go further. Perhaps not
surprisingly, a study by Roche (1996) found that four out of seven staff experienced the change
as crisis. Brazil (1995) notes that Australian universities now face a massive dilemma of
whether to keep faith with their 800 year old mission of cultivation of intellect and pursuit of
knowledge or bow to the will of government that increasingly seeks to control.
Parker and Jary (1994) suggest that managers in academic institutions need to find ways to enable responsible autonomy in the academic workforce (who increasingly resist being managed) whilst maintaining accountability for the diminishing departmental dollar to a wide range of stakeholders. Lindsay (1996) comments on the conflict between managerialist practices that regularly challenge the traditional right of academics to engage in collegial decision making. Lindsay argues for an integrative model of leadership that ensures accountability (that managers demand) but still maintains academic autonomy. James (1996) makes a case for leadership that nurtures participative democracy so that people, irrespective of their status, can become leaders in their own right and feel connected to the organisation.

Some managers in higher education are already experimenting with alternative participative management models that have proved effective in other areas of the public sector and private industry. However, we need to understand the process of change that accompanies transition to alternative models of organisational management that embrace participatory and transformational frameworks. Somekh (1995) notes that participatory approaches are accompanied by moral dilemmas for the manager of the change. The dilemmas revolve around the issues of individual governance and self determination. Based on the personal experience of the writer, this paper will introduce some of the dilemmas. As stated by Lindsay (1996) the paper assumes that leadership is integral to management but is not a role that is the exclusive prerogative of managers.

Transformational and Traditional Models of Leadership

As noted by Perrow (1986) traditional models of leadership are based on classical management theory that assumes organisations are machines that can be run with military precision. Such an organisation will be rule bound, have a clear distinction between the planners and doers, and be very limiting in terms of creating opportunities for employees to be involved in planning and actioning change. Managers who adopt this kind of leadership, are likely to be limited in their ability to adapt to changes occurring within and external to the organisation (Bennis, 1994). Centralised authority, and accountability mechanisms, which characterise a managerialist approach, are likely to lead to passivity on the part of employees of the organisation and low levels of organisational commitment and performance (Senge, 1994). It would be expected that organisations that enable such a model of leadership would be over-managed and have a tendency to focus on completion of current tasks, rather than focusing on future visions and promotion of flexible leadership. As noted by Lindsay (1996) there has been an increase in the use of a traditional managerialist models in Australian universities over the last decade.

In contrast, transformational models of leadership (Bass, 1990) assume that anybody can be a leader; leadership can be learned; and that leadership proceeds from involvement in organisational change and increased competencies. The Women In Leadership (WIL) programme at Edith Cowan University displays several of the dimensions of a transformational model of leadership. Pyner (1994) describes the capacities of leadership as encapsulated in the WIL model to encompass:
• being a strategist (understanding existing power structures; analysing organisational culture);
• having a public voice (understanding the use of language; forming alliances; making recommendations);
• to work and identify competence (knowledge of organisational structures; development of scholarship);
• being a creator of environments (knowing the history of the organisation; maintaining ethical standards; time management).

Organisational Management Models That Enable Transformational Leadership

During the last decade the learning organisation and action learning concepts have become popular vehicles for transforming management visions from Weberian (top down management) models to more participatory approaches. The WIL model makes implicit assumptions about management and leadership, that compliment those of the learning organisation and action learning frameworks.

The Learning Organisation and Transformational Leadership

The assumptions that underlie the learning organisation differ in many fundamental ways from classical models of organisation and management in that they acknowledge the importance of holism and synergy in relation to people and organisational development (Pedler, 1991; Weinstein, 1995; Senge, 1991; Senge, 1994). They also assume that the first step in negotiation of change is increased awareness (making the unknown, known) at both individual and group levels. Senge (1991) emphasises the need to recognise the interrelationships that exist between people and events in systems and the impact of change over time. It is also assumed that organisational learning results from shared mental models and visions that develop in a climate of trust and collaboration.

Action Learning

Action learning is a process that is integral to development of personal leadership, and the basis of reflective practice. Zuber-Skerritt (1995) presents several models of action learning. All models assume that learning is a cyclic process that engages the learner (usually as part of a group or set) in a process of observation, reflection, interpretation and action. In addition, Mumford (1991), McGill and Beatty (1992) and Weinstein (1995) indicate the central role of action learning sets (or teams) in support of individual and organisational learning. A set adviser (or manager) is needed to maintain the integrity of the learning process and help participants develop a common understanding and tolerance of other perspectives.

Participatory Decision Making

Common to the above leadership models is the need for participatory and collaborative approaches to change. Many managers support the need for transformational leadership models. In doing so, they need to nurture structures and practices that enable employee participation (that results in development of individuals and the organisation) whilst at the same time they
have to produce results that satisfy all the stakeholders. To obtain such a balanced outcome could be perceived as an impossible task.

The SMART Project

The SMART Project is a participatory action research project that is located in a new university in Western Australia. The project builds on the WIL model and embraces values of a learning organisation. In doing so it also draws on the adult learning and systems literature. The SMART Project (Self Management and Reflective Practice in Teaching and Learning) assumes that development occurs when organisations harness their intellectual capital in order to negotiate the journey of change. The model that underlies the SMART project assumes that teamwork, networking, mentoring, self management of change and reflective processes are critical in the pursuit of excellence and quality in higher education. The SMART project has three aims that are:

- To improve quality in teaching and learning;
- To introduce a learning organisation culture into the organisation;
- To develop a holistic framework for continuous organisational and staff improvement, including developments in areas of teaching and learning.

The 1995/6 program of the SMART project involved fifteen participants drawn from general and academic staff designations. During 1996 participants formed action learning teams that worked on a range of topics related to teaching and learning. The 1996 program was also supported by five project sponsors and eight mentors from across the university. The coordinator of the SMART project is responsible for facilitation of organisational learning through the provision of structures and tools that reinforce the process of critical questioning at individual and group levels. Facilitation of the reflective process is also a large part of the mentor role. To date, the SMART Project has achieved significant organisational development and self development outcomes. At the organisational level, some of the outcomes have included computer packages and hard copy manuals that improve student and staff access to information; surveys that focus on the nature and quality of the work environment; a resource package for clinical tutors; and a staff development package.

At the personal level, participants' achievements have included skills in communication, research design and analysis, report writing and public speaking, strategic negotiation of their work environment. As a group they have developed skills in critical reflection and teamwork. The project has also developed a comprehensive process framework for organisational development (including teaching and learning) that is being refined in 1997.

Many issues have arisen in the SMART project that are an inevitable part of a process that involves transition to alternative models of management. The issues present cultural and personal challenges for managers and employees. The challenges are reported elsewhere (Roche, 1997). As manager of the SMART project I have also confronted two major ethical dilemmas in nurturing personal leadership and organisational learning that focus on the right to self determination and the associated responsibilities. Managers who embrace collaborative leadership styles could experience similar dilemmas. These dilemmas raised the following

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questions: Are self management and participation processes of empowerment or exploitation?
Is collegial decision making a mask for coercion?

Ethical Challenges in Transition to Transformational Models

In my role of manager of the SMART project I have struggled with several ethical dilemmas that focus on issues of empowerment and control. Transformational leadership models that encourage self management and collaboration make the basic assumption that employee self determination will maximise empowerment and result in development of the organisation and the individual. There is an implicit assumption that the roles of the manager and employee will change to accommodate the model. This assumption has implications for the process of decision making and control over agendas. I will discuss the issues in relation to the manager and participant roles and implications of these dilemmas for managers in higher education.

Support That Empowers or Controls?

In the SMART project, it has become clear that the role of manager is multifaceted and fluid as determined by the needs and circumstances of the staff who are engaged in the change process. The role of manager includes leadership, liaison, monitoring, spokesperson, promoter, conflict resolver and negotiator roles. In the collaborative model of the SMART project the manager is a partner and mentor whilst still having supervisory responsibility for the change. Within this role the challenge is to enable participants to control their own change agendas so as to empower, whilst nurturing responsible leadership capacities and maintaining accountability to sponsors of the project.

As overall manager of the project, I have learned to avoid being drawn into a content mentor role. In a content mentor role, the mentor acts as an expert and advises on the best way to tackle the problem and provides solutions to the team. An over-reliance on this role could be disempowering for the teams and defeat one of the major development objectives of the overall project, that is, to undertake research that is emancipatory. There is a need to provide support as groups learn to engage in circular questioning (a part of reflective practice) and as they tolerate the ambiguity of the unknown. Both of these activities present intellectual and emotional challenges to self managed teams. There is no easy solution to this dilemma of providing appropriate support that promotes skills in reflective practice and responsible decision making. It is likely that as we develop more flexible work models, managers will need to balance facilitation of the process of change (a process mentor role) and facilitation that controls change agendas (a content mentor role). This will avoid the situation where self managing groups present an image of empowerment but in reality they are being exploited to take on extra responsibilities over which they have no jurisdiction.

In the role of manager, yet partner in the change process, I have had to stop and reflect on the invidious position in which I often found myself. I am a supervisor of the change, but I have no right to influence the action learning project agendas. Whyte (1991) and Somekh (1996) report similar dilemmas. In emancipatory participatory research the principal researcher has to be prepared to lose control over the research as part of the process of developing commitment, understanding, and overall empowerment of the researcher participants. In organisational contexts this requires that managers with a participatory style develop a tolerance of ambiguity.
This could be another stress on managers who are confronted by the ambiguity of discontinuous change in higher education. In addition, managers in higher education are likely to be more constrained than we have been in this research project. They are required to continually produce documented results that conform to the organisation’s strategic goals and to produce, often within shorter timelines and diminishing budgets. They may not have the full support of their supervisors who cling to Weberian models of management. In times of dwindling resources, there is also a risk that managers may feel more secure by controlling, rather than enabling, their work groups, even though this may result in greater long-term costs than benefits for all concerned. Likely outcomes of this could be a disempowered and fragmented workgroup with no ownership of the process, and loss of opportunities for development of employee commitment and ownership of change.

New Roles for Employees – Empowerment or Exploitation?

Whilst dealing with the dilemmas of my role, I have had to be sensitive to the fact that many of the participants (as self managing employees) were similarly challenged by the new roles in which they found themselves as members of collaborative and self managing teams. In the SMART project there are a number of women participants, who are accustomed to taking direction from others rather than taking the initiative themselves. During the whole project it has been important to encourage people to step outside their usual follower roles and to nurture the development of leadership behaviours. People have become risk-takers and conducted activities that would normally be outside the scope of their usual work. The challenge has been to support individuals to accept personal responsibility for the decisions that they make. They have been encouraged to recognise that additional responsibilities are a positive aspect of growth and empowerment. The additional responsibilities have required participants to negotiate new priorities with their managers so that they can spend time on their projects. In some cases participants have had to seek resources for their projects and to find ways of managing their time more effectively. In overcoming these challenges participants have learned many skills. They have increased access to high status managers in the organisation and have created a public voice for themselves. However, I often find myself asking whether the added responsibility and work is exploitation of a group of lower paid people in the university, or whether it is empowerment. The challenge for managers, therefore, is to maximise the potential for empowerment and minimise the risk of exploitation in satisfying a multitude of stakeholder demands.

Collaboration – Coercion or Collegiality?

Several times I have found myself confronting dilemmas that arose from conflicting stakeholder demands, concerning evaluation of the project outcomes. The project participants (SMART Project, 1996) have found, as Weinstein (1995), that many of the individual and group outcomes have resulted from their learning how to critically reflect and collaboratively problem solve. However, changes at these levels are often intangible and cumulative and may not be amenable to objective evaluation. One of the major assumptions of the SMART project is the primacy of the process of learning that is an integral component of effective organisational learning. There were many useful project outputs, which have been mentioned earlier in this paper, which included teaching resources and staff and student supports to facilitate the teaching and learning process. The two surveys of the quality of the work environment
increased our understanding of the experience of re-structuring and management styles, as well as the ways in which employees maintain a balance between home and work life. Many of the projects represented a first stage of a larger on-going project. However, the project funders, required evidence of tangible teaching and learning outcomes from the project that had a dollar value. This is a realistic requirement, given the increasing need for financial accountability in universities. In order to satisfy the demands for objective data I presented participants with several requirements for documentation of their team and self-development projects. To demonstrate accountability participants were asked to document the planning, evaluation and outcomes of the project. They were also asked to make a presentation of their project to the university at the end of the year. The documentation was helpful to participants in the processing of their projects. They also learned skills of written and oral reporting, programme planning, evaluation and public speaking. However, the processing of data, document preparation and development of a public presentation was enormously time consuming for participants and, for some, very stressful. At the start of the project none of us was aware of the time that would be involved and in some respects this aspect of participation was, therefore, involuntary. I questioned myself several times whether people felt they had been coerced into undertaking these activities under the guise of collegial and collaborative decision making.

Summary

It is unlikely that the circumstances I have described are unique to the people and the situation. It is more likely that the dilemmas I have raised will recur many times over as managers practise participatory leadership for negotiation of change in higher education.

There is a need to facilitate empowerment and safeguard against exploitation and coercion whilst meeting the needs of a wide range of stakeholders. It is recognised that sometimes managers and their employees will be unable to maintain the balance whereby collegiality and autonomy are maintained, because of imposed unanticipated changes that are non-negotiable. This challenge may be too difficult for many managers to overcome. However, Somekh (1995) suggests strategies that could resolve these moral dilemmas. The strategies require that the manager has a clear future vision and seeks opportunities to be gained from imposed decisions that initially seem unpalatable. Managers who wish to safeguard collegiality and empowerment, whilst minimising the risk of coercion and exploitation, require open and honest communication. They need to stand firm and resist pressure from their supervisors to engage in actions where the costs are so high that the employees and their rights to self-determination will suffer. Somekh (1995) is, therefore, suggesting that managers embrace the values, assumptions and strategies of learning organisations and reflective practice cultures. Will this challenge be too difficult and risky for university managers in organisational cultures that are traditionally slow to respond to change? Can we afford not to be involved in leading cultural change that embraces participatory leadership. If we don't, many universities will not survive the next millennium.
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WOMEN IN ENGINEERING: BREAKING THE GLASS CEILING

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Abstract

Engineering is one of the traditional starting places for corporate managers, yet women professional engineers do not seem to be making this shift to management. There has been a number of studies targeted at women in undergraduate engineering programs, but little study has been done of the dynamics of career paths to determine why women engineers are not making this transition.

This paper examines one of the factors that derail women engineers from the traditional career path (the work/family dilemma). It explores the role of the industry culture in the work/family experience and shows it to be undermining the responses of organisations to affirmative action requirements and creating barriers to the career progression of women engineers.

The changes required to minimize these hurdles are explored with the paper concluding that an essential element of the process will be the challenging of the engineering profession to adopt new ways of thinking about success and leadership (ways which do not exclude women engineers from senior management positions).

Key Words: barriers, career progression, engineering culture.

Introduction

Why aren’t women breaking the glass ceiling in engineering? The answer to this question, many people believe, principally relates to a supply problem that until recently there have not been many women engineering graduates, and therefore it is just a matter of time before these women will flow through the career pipeline to senior positions. As a result, the majority of work focusing on women in engineering has concentrated on the supply issues of attracting girls into engineering courses and making these courses more ‘women friendly’.

The figures show, however, that women in Australia have been graduating from engineering courses since the 1950’s and consistently so since mid-1970. The proportion of women in engineering courses has steadily increased from 3.3% in 1980 to 13.2% in 1994 (Lewis, 1995), resulting in over 3000 women graduating as engineers in the 1980’s. Even though these figures are quite low by comparison to other professions such as commerce and medicine, they do show a steady supply of women engineering graduates for the last twenty years. If women engineers follow the same career paths as their male counterparts, then you would expect to find a number of them filling senior roles within organisations.

Instead organisations report that the turnover rate for women engineers is twice that of men, and women engineers in senior positions are still a rarity. For instance, the Institution of Engineers membership in November 1995 contained only 22 women amongst 4427 senior members and fellows (0.5%) and the Association of Consulting Engineer Australia, ACEA, reported a high level of membership amongst senior management in the consulting engineering
industry yet it reported only one female member as of June 30, 1996 (out of 946 members in 447 member firms). Of the forty-three female Victorian consulting engineers (or ex-consulting engineers) located in this study only one was a director or principal of a consulting engineering company that was not her own company. These statistics suggest that women engineers are being derailed from the traditional career paths followed by their male counterparts and as a result they are not being delivered through 'the pipeline' to senior positions.

One research-based explanation for the failure of women to rise through the ranks of organisations is that of Morrison, White and Van Velsor (1992). They explain the derailment of professional women in terms of the pressures that they experience in carrying out their work. They characterize any job situation as having three possible levels of pressure. With each additional level experienced by a woman there is a corresponding increase in the likelihood of derailment. The first level is associated with the job itself and both men and women experience this. Women, however, frequently experience an additional level associated with being 'a pioneer' (one of the first and/or most senior women in the organisation). For women with children there is generally another, third level, which most men do not experience (that of balancing conflicting commitments of work and family). Recent research indicates that women still play the role of the major caregiver in the majority of families (Wolcott & Glezer, 1995).

This paper explores the third level of pressure (the combining of work and family commitments) and examines the related barriers to the advancement of women engineers.

Research Approach

I conducted the research upon which this paper is based as part of the academic requirements for a Master of Business Administration at the Melbourne Business School in late 1995 and early 1996. In undertaking that managerial research project I designed the study to capture multiple perspectives on work/family experiences and this was achieved through:

- a telephone survey of engineering employers (35 participants);
- a mailed survey of Victorian women engineers (84 respondents);
- in-depth interviews with five women engineers who have successfully combined work and family; and
- my experiences as a professional engineer (10 years).

The aim of the research was to establish as broad a picture as possible of work/family experiences. I had a specific interest in seeing how different women respond to the work/family conflicts and hence selected the women for in-depth interviews based upon their variety of work situations (such as full time work, part time work, contracting, established own consultancy, director of a firm).

The research attracted a high level of interest from women engineers in the 30+ age group and 54% of the mailed survey respondents were from this age group (26% were aged 35+). Only one of the women engineers who participated in this research, however, was a director or a principal of a firm with more than five employees.
The Work/Family Experience

The study found considerable evidence in support of the proposition that women engineers are being derailed from traditional career paths by work/family issues. This evidence included the following:

A high proportion of companies, including 100% of large companies, reported employment of women engineers but only a small proportion reported employment of women with children.

Managers frequently reported women engineers leaving their organisation around the birth of their first child (either just prior to the birth, or within two years of returning to work after the birth).

Only one of the five women engineers interviewed had not had their career in a company derailed by the taking on of family commitments.

A number of women engineers mentioned work/family considerations in decisions to change employers, industries or careers.

Work/family considerations were reported as having considerable influence in decisions to change jobs by 70% of women engineer survey respondents aged 30+.

Further analysis of the data collected in this study found that there were two types of issues surrounding work/family experiences for women engineers. The first set of issues were feasibility related issues that need to be resolved to enable women with children to work (such as finishing work in time to collect a child from creche before the center shuts). The second set of issues was related to the engineering profession or industry culture. Once the feasibility issues have been resolved and there are no practical reasons limiting the career progression of women engineers, it was found that the cultural issues played a strong part in derailing women’s careers. These women often found their career progression severely limited or halted altogether and that they were permanently excluded from consideration for upper management positions. As a result they frequently moved into more technically focused positions.

You can imagine these two sets of issues as the two parts of an iceberg, with a small section above and a larger section below the water. The section above the water represents the feasibility issues that are the more obvious issues that attract people’s attention. The segment of the iceberg below the water represents the cultural issues (every body knows that it exists but it is less visible and its depth or extent of influence is unknown).

People perceived the effect of the underwater part of the iceberg, the cultural issues, in quite different ways. Some women engineers felt that the culture issues were so large and therefore, career limiting that they did not even attempt to sort out the feasibility issues. Instead they changed companies, industries or careers. Other women who had developed solutions to managing the obvious work/family feasibility issues, reported frustration and disappointment at their severely limited or halted career progression. They had found that the less obvious and
submerged portion of the iceberg, the culture issues, impacted heavily on their ability to progress within organisations. Organisations, on the other hand, reported frustration that they were unable to retain women engineers even though they had addressed the obvious work/family feasibility issues. These organisations, however, in addressing the visible portion of the iceberg had failed to recognise the significance of the far larger and submerged portion of the iceberg below the water (the culture issues).

The feasibility issues of work/family experiences were found to be currently under review by many organisations. That is, people are working with the part of the iceberg they can see and understand. As in any industry change there are leaders and laggards, but many of the organisations contacted indicated that if they were not currently doing so, then they were about to introduce more flexible work arrangements for all employees. Organisations were finding that it was not just women but also men who had to address work/family feasibility issues. This current scenario was found to be substantially different to the experiences reported by women engineers in addressing feasibility in the 1980's when they had to negotiate flexible work arrangements to suit their family commitments. The results of these negotiations were manager dependent and women reported changing employers in order to achieve satisfactory outcomes.

The cultural aspects of work/family issues, the underwater part of the iceberg, are less visible and more difficult for women and organisations to identify. The study found that there were three key issues in the cultural section of the iceberg: the long hours game; the understanding of equality of treatment; and the ‘androgyous’ engineer. Each of these factors is deeply entrenched in the engineering professional cultural mythology. They are, therefore, shared across organisations and the various industries that employ engineers. As a result they are also often believed in by the women themselves, creating an additional level of conflict as they struggle to resolve the issues internally, as well as externally, within their working environment.

The long hours game is a valuing of capabilities which is based upon working long hours (that is to say, quantity of hours not quality) and other endurance tests which require personal sacrifice. Family commitments frequently mean that women cannot work more than forty hours a week, or have no desire to do so. These women are therefore, automatically eliminated from the endurance tests necessary to prove toughness and worthiness for career progression to senior levels. The non-participation of women in the long hours game results in them being perceived as less committed to the organisation and also less capable (because they are not seen as tough enough). This situation creates prejudice in the evaluation of their capabilities by management, peers and the women themselves because it removes the focus of job performance from actual output and quality of work by assuming that the quantity of hours is directly proportional to quantity and quality of work. In addition women who do not play the long hours game are not seen as having the essential toughness characteristics required for leadership roles within the organisation.

The second factor is the definition of equality of treatment. There is a common understanding shared by engineers and management throughout the industry that equality of opportunity is defined as treating everyone the same, without recognition or understanding of the context or circumstances. Circumstances such as family commitments, however, can make equal treatment result in discriminatory and unfair practices that perpetuate inequalities.
The 'androgynous' nature of the engineer is the third key factor. Women have been accepted into the industry culture through the dismantling of its overt masculinity. An engineer has become a genderless term where previously it implied a male. Women engineers do not regard themselves as women engineers but as engineers. Likewise men think of themselves as engineers not men engineers. Women without children can and do successfully conform to an androgynous stereotype as readily as their male counterparts. The culture has therefore, taken on a pseudo-gender-neutral identity. In reality however, many masculine characteristics are still vital components of the stereotype of a successful engineer in leadership and management roles. The implicit gender of these characteristics is hidden behind the notion that they are characteristics of a successful engineering stereotype. Implicit with this gender-neutral stereotype is a valuing of conformity rather than difference.

It is hardly surprising then, that family commitments cause a clash of values for women engineers. Pregnancy and motherhood has the effect of suddenly raising the sexual identity of the female engineer to herself, peers and management. This highlights her difference from the successful stereotype and results in her commitment, management qualities and capabilities being seriously questioned and devalued. Difference is regarded as inferior.

These three aspects of the engineering culture, the part of the iceberg below the water and hence less visible, work together to create an almost impenetrable barrier to the career progression of women engineers with children. While they often do not affect the status of the women's technical capabilities, they do cause management, peers and the women themselves to devalue their leadership and management capabilities. These barriers are not organised responses to such situations but rather instinctive ones, shared by individuals throughout the industry. The fact that the responses are so widely shared highlights the strength and power of the engineering professional culture, with its core assumptions, norms and values shared amongst engineers working in so many different organisations.

Recommendations

The recognition by organisations of work/family feasibility issues as a problem for fathers as well as for mothers is an important one (necessary for the consideration of family commitments as a norm rather than as a women's issue). The introduction of more flexible work arrangements by the majority of organisations, even if it is only flexibility in start and finish times, will cause a shift in industry attitudes and before long many of the feasibility issues will be minimized or eliminated.

Addressing the work/family feasibility issues will not, however, remove all the hurdles for the career progression of women in engineering. This focus deals only with the visible part of the iceberg, that above water. It will eliminate some of the hurdles and allow more women with family commitments to remain in the profession but it will not result in their natural career progression through 'the pipeline' to senior positions. For this to occur organisations, and the engineering profession, will need to tackle the less visible submerged portion of the iceberg, the cultural issues.
In order to take the next steps women, management and the profession need to identify the
problems of the cultural issues and seek to understand them. Issues that need to be explored
include:

- developing a new understanding of equality of treatment, one that considers
  context and circumstance as essential elements for the fair treatment of all;
- encouraging merit-based promotion and an evaluation of capabilities as primarily
  based upon quantity and quality of work, rather than on hours worked;
- introducing the concept of the valuing and promotion of difference in sex, race,
  experiences and thoughts as an essential ingredient for a competitive business;
- increasing the understanding of the level of prejudice commonly found in the
  assessment of women's capabilities; and
- developing a more sophisticated and broad-based concept of success.

There are however, a number of barriers to organisations and the industry in general taking the
next steps. Firstly, there will be a lack of strong business drivers while organisations perceive
this problem purely as a women's issue (women comprise less than 10% of engineers in most
organisations). Secondly, the current political thought is to rely on market forces to drive
industry change rather than regulation so legislative drivers are being weakened. Finally, the
isolation of women engineers themselves does not encourage the raising of such issues for
discussion on an organisational or industry wide basis. Instead, it encourages the women to
face the work/family challenges individually rather than thinking about the issues in collective
terms.

For the next steps to be taken there needs to be a change in the way these issues are talked
about at individual, management, organisational and industry wide levels. There needs to be a
process that reintroduces to the engineering profession a discourse of personal and family
issues, of nurturing people and service, and of alternative ways of being successful men and
women (Sinclair, 1994). After all, if there are not acceptable alternative models of success for
men how can alternative models of success ever be acceptable for women?

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Notes

1 The University of Melbourne had its first woman graduate from an engineering course in 1944.

2 Amanda Sinclair has used this analogy at the Melbourne Business School to illustrate culture in her MBA classes.

3 Androgynous is used in this sense to indicate that ‘an engineer’ is a genderless term, referring to either a male or female.
NO REGRETS: AN EXAMINATION OF REASONS FOR SENIOR STAFF LEAVING THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC SECTOR

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Abstract

This paper examines the reasons why senior women and men are leaving WA public sector employment before their normal retirement age. Research was carried out to identify the factors influencing the decision to leave and, in particular, to determine whether the data showed any consistent differences by gender. Twenty senior women and men who had left within the previous five years were interviewed. These senior people of talent and experience would normally have been expected to complete their careers in public service. Interviewees were asked to respond to factors shown in the literature to be relevant. Analysis of the data suggested no significant gender differences in the subjects' responses to external factors such as remuneration. Neither was there a significant gender difference in responses to quality of life issues. Both men and women identified a perceived loss of professionalism in public sector employment. Internal organisational factors, however, were highly significant in the women's decisions to leave.

Introduction

Across Australia efforts to increase women's participation in senior positions, in both the public and private sectors, were initially introduced primarily for reasons relating to social justice. More recently, the evidence suggests that there are important business and economic reasons for introducing a greater variety of management styles and building a management cohort which better reflects the broader Australian community. The recent Karpin report, a three year federal Government sponsored undertaking, argued that diversity was an essential for business success in a more competitive global environment (Karpin, 1995). Similarly, the American Glass Ceiling Commission noted that 'it is not only a matter of fair play, but an economic imperative that the glass ceiling be shattered' (1995, p. 5).

Despite considerable efforts over the last decade to increase the proportion of women in senior positions in the Western Australian public sector, there have been disappointing results. From 1988 to 1995, the number of women in the Senior Executive Service (SES) has increased from 9% to 11% of the total even though women currently represent 55% of the total public sector workforce.

Indeed, in the private sector, there has actually been a reduction in the numbers of women at senior levels. Women are finding other outlets for their energies. For example, by far the largest number of new small businesses are started by women. The research question of interest to the author, therefore, focused on why women might be turning their backs on organisational
life, particularly in the Western Australian public sector, and whether the reasons for doing so were different to men.

There is an abundance of literature which examines the reasons why women fail to reach senior positions in organisations at the same rate as do their male counterparts and why women seem to be leaving promising careers in government and in business. A brief literature review appears at Appendix One.

Data Collection and Analysis
Recent literature in the areas was used in developing the methodology and conceptual framework for the research question. In particular, the work of Professor Amanda Sinclair of University of Melbourne, Professor Judi Marshall of the University of Bath and Dr Clare Burton, former Director of Equal Opportunity in the New South Wales Government, provided important perspectives.

A sample of ten men and ten women (level 7 and above) who had voluntarily left the Western Australian public sector within the previous five years was selected for interview. As far as possible, women and men were matched according to the last agency in which they worked to get a reasonable spread of central and operational agencies.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the respondents in the period November 1995 to January 1996. Each subject was asked about the main reasons for their departure from the public sector. They could then elaborate on these through a set of prompting questions. Interviews ranged in length from forty-five minutes to over two hours reflecting, to some extent, the complex and emotionally charged memories which these questions provoked for some of the interviewees.

The interview questions were designed around factors which, on the basis of the literature review, the authors believed would be pertinent to answer the research question:

- career improvement
- sense of achievement
- family circumstances
- levels of stress
- organisational culture
- personal and organisational values and principles

Each respondent was also asked to provide some demographic data, summarised in Table 1.
Table 1:
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample of Women and Men Leaving
Western Australian Public Sector Employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age at Leaving</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>47.3 years</td>
<td>42.7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>39 to 55</td>
<td>34 to 51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Highest Qualification</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Public Sector Service</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>21.3 years</td>
<td>21.5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>13.5 to 36</td>
<td>13.5 to 33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Last Agency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operational</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average time at last agency</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td>8.5 years</td>
<td>10.7 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range</td>
<td>1 to 28</td>
<td>1.5 to 33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average last level achieved</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1 or higher</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L7 to L9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average number of years since left public sector</strong></td>
<td>1.7 years</td>
<td>2.4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living with partner</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average number of dependent children</strong></td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New Career</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Own Business</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Established Organisation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The average age at which the twenty people interviewed had left public employment was 45 years with women, on average, older than the men. In their mid to late 40s, these senior officers would normally be considered to be in their most productive years, occupying positions of leadership in the public sector. All had tertiary qualifications and 70% had obtained a postgraduate qualification.

With over twenty years of total public service, on average, the people in this sample had achieved senior levels within the public sector, with six of them having reached level C1 or higher. The men in the sample had somewhat higher classifications than the women.
The last agency in which the officer was placed was not necessarily the agency with which they had the strongest professional ties, but an agency to which they had been seconded, or placed following a restructure, or an attempt to achieve personal development. The average time at the last agency was about nine years, but the range for this period of time shows considerable variation.

It was of interest that, whereas all men were living with partners, four women were not. The average number of dependent children which the women had was only 0.8, considerably less than their male counterparts at 2.3. Most men had partners who took a leading role in the care of children.

Another factor noticed by the researchers was the differing patterns of employment post-public sector. In most cases the men had gone on to jobs of greater seniority and remuneration. This was not the case for women, a number of whom had left secure public sector employment to take up ventures of considerably less security and inferior remuneration. Eight of the men but only three women had taken positions in established organisations with the security and benefits associated with employment of that nature. Of those three, two were in organisations which one could describe as female dominated and 'value driven'. The third has a national reputation for equity initiatives. In general, the women's work experience had been more varied, both in the number of organisations worked for and the variety of responsibilities undertaken.

The authors subjected the interview material to a content analysis. Initially it was planned to cluster the issues into three groups – career improvement, quality of life and organisational culture. Upon detailed analysis of the data, however, the authors concluded that four categories were necessary, allowing differentiation between culture which can be seen to be externally driven versus the micro-culture of a specific organisation. The following list summarises these issues.

- Career Improvement
  - Promotion and Remuneration
  - Sense of Achievement and Autonomy

- Quality of Life
  - Stress/Illness
  - Work/Family Balance

- Public Sector Culture
  - Politics/Professionalism
  - Government Agenda

- Organisational Culture
  - Bureaucracy
  - Leadership/Management Style
  - Isolation/Being Marginalised
Discussion of the Findings

In the following discussion about each of the factors, frequent reference is made to specific comments by the respondents. The women have been identified as F1 to F10 and the men M1 to M10.

Career Improvement – Moving up the Ladder

There was no significant difference between women and men in their identification of issues related to career improvement although different perspectives can be identified. Most respondents indicated that salary alone was not a major consideration. There were greater perceived opportunities for personal and professional growth in an environment outside the public sector. In objective terms, however, the men respondents had secured alternative careers with significantly more financial reward and security than the women.

Promotion and Remuneration

Men more frequently reported frustration with existing salary and rank classifications within the public sector. M3 felt that remaining in his department was not ‘compatible with my personal and financial ambitions’. M4: ‘My career had plateaued; the public sector didn’t reinforce and reward individual endeavour sufficiently ... "dickheads" were promoted, rewarded’. F3: ‘There are gross inequities across the public sector regarding work value and work load’.

The women reported frustration about their career prospects, seeing few opportunities for them to obtain the promotion they believed their abilities warranted. Because of this, many decided to look outside the public sector. F4 wanted to be her own boss: ‘I was not prepared to wait indefinitely for the tap on the shoulder’. F5 had ‘sought promotion without success’ and had been ‘actively headhunted’ for her current position.

Sense of Achievement and Autonomy

Achievement needs were identified as important. F9: ‘I had outgrown my job and needed a new challenge’. F6 was ‘bored’ and believed she had been ‘sidelined and marginalised’. She felt ‘blocked professionally and had reached a career plateau’ where she would become ‘atrophied’ if she stayed in her department. M5 felt ‘professionally stymied’. M2 felt ‘a lack of autonomy’ and was unable to use his ‘initiative and abilities to get things done’. M4 also wanted ‘self development and autonomy’. Similarly, M6 commented that ‘professional people need autonomy in their work’.

Traditionally defined, career improvement was not a key factor in making the decision to leave for many of the respondents. M6: ‘I did not leave for money or status’. His new position has a total package which represents a drop from his public service position. M7 had been in an organisation which was downsizing – ‘I wanted security and permanency and control over the career decision’. M8 also indicated that having control over the decision was a critical factor. F10 had spent a number of years in an acting position where men acting for shorter periods had their positions advertised (also mentioned by F1). She has moved to an insecure financial situation which cannot be defined as career improvement ‘unless sanity is career improvement’.

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Quality of Life – Leaving as a Lifestyle Decision

Quality of life issues were important to both women and men in making their decisions to leave. Although stress was not the main reason given for resignation, it featured in most respondents' comments. Senior management in the public sector can be highly stressful and while, in general, the respondents indicated they were handling this stress successfully, the authors noted that a significant minority had experienced serious illness in the period leading up to their decision to leave. Dissatisfaction with the current balance between work and family also arose as an issue in a number of the interviews.

Work/Family Balance

A number of respondents found the long hours their work required to be incompatible with the need to spend more time with their partners and children. M9: 'I realised I was not part of the family when they were setting the table for three in a family of four'. M6: 'I wanted to be more of a participating parent'. M8: 'I was looking for a better balance in life between working, family and other things... life is a continuum and I want a different sort of retirement... planning my way into old age'. F4 reflected that 'after the age of fifty you start to wonder what is going to happen for the rest of your life' and had decided she wanted to spend more time with her husband.

An inability to control the number of work hours created anxiety for some senior managers with school age children. F3 found she was working up to 70 hours per week. F5, as a single parent, found it difficult to cope with the organisation's expectation that she would attend early morning and weekend meetings.

Stress and Illness

A number of respondents discussed the problem of stress, although the cause of the stress was not always so much the amount of work, but rather its nature. For example, M5 commented that 'my stress was associated with frustration about being unable to contribute'. Similarly F6, although she felt able to cope with heavy workloads and deadlines, commented that 'my distress came from the personal politics in the organisation'. Since leaving the public sector F7 has found that, despite the fact that she continues to work very long hours, the quality of her 'career life' has improved. 'The relationship between the hours worked and their importance is more acceptable... serving an agenda I did not share was stress inducing'. F4 suffered from exhaustion and felt she had no time to think in the job. Similarly M2 felt 'I got consumed by the job and became disenchanted, despondent and depressed'. M1 commented that 'being disempowered because of the political guessing game is stressful'. F1 became stressed during a radical restructuring process but felt 'I could not admit to work stress' despite crying jags and being on anti-depressants. F8 also found her stress resulted in severe depression. At the time she left the public sector F9 'felt physically, emotionally and intellectually dead'. In her new role she comments: 'I feel I have come alive again'. F10 found the job exhausting but 'most of the time I was able to shut out unpleasant realities'.

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Public Service – Lost Professionalism?

A consistent theme among a number of interviewees was a sense of frustration that their ability to provide professional support and advice to Government had been severely curtailed, compromising their image of themselves as ‘servants of the public’ and working in ‘the public interest’.

Politics vs. Professionalism

There were numerous comments about a perceived decline in the ethos of ‘public service’, that increasing politicisation of public sector agencies, under governments of both political persuasions, was undermining their professionalism. M9: ‘I see a decline in ethics in the public sector as a growing problem’. M2: ‘Dealing with Ministers was disillusioning’. F7 felt frustration with ‘the role of Ministerial advisers, their relative youth and inexperience, their lack of historic and strategic knowledge’. M8: ‘There was too much intrusion of politics and political pressure for more rapid change... the speed of implementation was too fast and changes moved on too wide a front... we lost the ability to manage effectively’.

High performing staff felt their job satisfaction was reduced, their professional advice not wanted or heeded. Lack of genuine access ‘to Ministers about critical issues was identified as a point of concern. M7 was frustrated by ‘doing things for political and not business reasons ... I was being asked to compromise my professional integrity’. M1: ‘Political processes were dominating and taking precedent over rational processes’.

Decision-making at Ministerial level was perceived to be driven by short-term political expediency rather than the longer term best interests of the community. M1: ‘There was a tension between the policy and operational parts of government with the ‘politocracy’ fighting for favour with each other ... This resulted in a public sector disease characterised by ambiguity and schizophrenia’. He felt ‘there was no reciprocation of loyalty’ from Ministers.

For a number of respondents there followed then, a sense that their achievements were only temporary and unappreciated; even successful initiatives were vulnerable to political whim. M6: ‘I wanted to build something that would last over time... I was tired of building and having to resort to Machiavellian strategies to preserve my achievements’. F7 felt that her position did not draw on her expertise and ‘marginalised my capacity to make a difference’. F8 commented that ‘things seemed to be demolished as easily as sand castles by a wave’.

Implementing Government Agendas

Respondents commented on apparent contradictions in the policy implementation process. Politically driven initiatives were introduced at a speed which made them almost impossible to manage and resulted in counter-productive outcomes. Although agreeing with the government’s philosophy on competitive tendering, F3 felt ‘the pace was too fast and support to manage the process was not there’. Downsizing and outsourcing left ‘too few staff to even manage the external contracts’. F4 was frustrated that because of frequent restructures, ‘the goals posts kept changing’. F7: ‘The perpetual restructuring required in the organisation was destabilising for people and their anxieties made things hard to manage’. For M8 government-mandated change
at too great a speed ‘took the fun out of work’ and forced a dramatic change in ‘management style to cope with the new requirements’.

Many respondents reported concern about the future of the public sector. F9: ‘Although there is always compromise between individual professionalism and government ideology, it has gone too far the wrong way’. F5: ‘There is a fine line between the political and the practical. You have to have a clear sense of your own values’. F8: ‘Many people continue to have passion about what they do but their capacity for this is being damaged’. M5: ‘Greater government control makes it much harder for public servants to reflect an independent professional point of view. Reforms have tended to promote sycophancy which works against giving tough hard headed advice to politicians... It is disturbing [that] weak Ministers would get the advice they wanted to hear rather than what they should hear’.

Organisational Culture — Women at the Top: Marginalised and Alone

As previously noted, both men and women respondents reported feeling they had reached a career plateau within the public sector which had nothing to do with their talents and abilities. Constant downsizing and restructuring of agencies was perceived to have created highly political environments in which successful game-playing was more highly rewarded than delivery of high quality results. Reduced opportunities to act professionally and to see tangible results from their efforts was a significant element in producing stress and job dissatisfaction leading to their decision to leave public sector employment. On these general factors there is no significant difference in the responses by both women and men.

The element, however, which clearly differentiates between them is the internal culture of the organisation. Interestingly, the male respondents made relatively few comments during the interviews about the cultures of the organisations from which they had come, whereas this area dominated the discussions with women. Most men indicated they had been quite comfortable within the culture. M7 referred to ‘the great team of people on the executive’.

The Frustrations of Bureaucracy

A number of respondents referred to the frustrations of bureaucracy within the public sector. M3 saw ‘a watch dog mentality’. M10 described it as ‘territory riding by peers and subordinates’. M4 referred to ‘too much bureaucracy and pomposity’.

Leadership and Management Styles

It is obvious that there is a wide range of cultures within public sector agencies. Although, on the whole, men were more comfortable and expressed positive support for the leadership and management they experienced, some found it frustrating. M2: ‘I had clear values and principles which were at odds with what was going on’. He described the organisation as having a ‘masculine culture characterised by competing interests’ but which was ‘highly political and risk averse’. It was not ‘open, collaborative or supportive’. Similarly, in his organisation, M9 became angry with a style of management based on ‘favouritism’. M10 felt that there was a ‘strong talent bank which was allowed to run down’ in his agency.
Women respondents expressed enormous frustration with organisational game playing as they saw it. F1 put it bluntly. She resigned because she had had 'enough of the crap'. She saw men appointed to positions for which she had applied and whom she believed were less able than herself.

In her department F2 thought that 'people thought in straight lines and could not see the big picture... no one could be open and honest... A climate of fear prevailed. There was a lack of trust where everything had to be justified'. F5 did not find managers in the organisation supportive. She was told she was 'too aggressive' and discouraged from using her initiative: 'I had to adopt a very passive style'.

Some of the women recognised that they tended to be more task-oriented than men. Certainly they did not enjoy expending energy on activities which detracted from their main responsibilities. On reflection F6 remarked 'I was Pollyannaish, very task-oriented and didn't think enough about organisational politics'. Similarly, F8 thinks now that 'I was ridiculously optimistic and na\"ive'. F10 wonders if 'women tend to be less interested in being strategic, are more responsive and intuitive'. She saw her practice of 'managing downwards was a disadvantage in the promotion stakes'.

In commenting on their male colleagues in senior positions, many of the women were frustrated, with some exceptions, by what they saw as their limited interpersonal skills and inability to appreciate or accept the value of different management styles, particularly those which encouraged openness within teams rather than competition.

F1 felt there was a lack of real leadership, no corporate identity and a high degree of competition in her organisation typified by 'lots of little boys' games'. F8 remarked that her agency was populated by 'competitive individuals trying to get ahead and happy to succeed at other people's expense... people spend a lot of time politicking and demolishing'. F10 felt that, in her management style, she was 'open with information, trust and delegation of responsibility but this style was not modeled elsewhere [where] information was treated as power'. F10 felt that, in her management style, she was 'open with information, trust and delegation of responsibility but this style was not modeled elsewhere [where] information was treated as power'. F9 argued that management 'is driven by a cult of personality and personal ambition'. F4 was frustrated by what she saw as a 'divide and rule tactic' on the part of the CEO. F7 felt she had to 'work through the distractions of the old boys' network'. She commented that 'the political imperatives from above combined with the ingrained culture left a narrow road to tread'. F3 felt that she had been 'bullied' by at least one colleague in her organisation. F5 reflected that a six month stint in one particular organisation 'set back my self confidence by two years'. F8 expressed an opinion that 'women who manage to get ahead do so by not showing their more typical female behaviour'.

A number of women reported that the values and principles they saw expressed through the senior management of their workplaces did not accord with their own and that this was an issue of considerable personal anxiety.

F10 observed that 'women's style of management is a significant issue; it is often at odds with the organisation's culture. Women and men have different networks and different working behaviours'.

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In a reflective vein F8 concluded that

women tend to think holistically while men like to carve up organisations, compartmentalise themselves and create hierarchies and fiefdoms... Women operate from the premise that people will work well if left to themselves while most men seem to think that things will fall apart if this occurs and keep trying to take control, organise, restructure, and so on. Economic rationalism suits men because it demands breaking things up rather than bringing them together.

With sadness she wondered why so many ‘senior men leave their hearts and souls at the door’.

Isolation

Women felt isolated within the ranks of senior management in their organisations and the pressure of work meant they found it difficult to develop support networks in the broader public sector. All the women respondents indicated they had, on occasion at least, felt marginalised by the dominant culture. The women managers also reported that one of the main reasons for staying as long as they did in a difficult situation was the personal support they received from the immediate work team, in contrast to a more hostile reception they perceived in the organisation at large.

F6 and F8 always felt like outsiders. F6 perceived ‘active hostility on the part of the dominant culture... a nasty environment’ in which she occasionally felt ‘physical fear and veiled threats... if I had been less energetic I might have survived better’. F10 did not ‘feel valued or recognised’. F9 did not see her organisation as ‘value driven’. She felt ‘professionally isolated’ and found it impossible to practice her own values and principles. She believed she had been deliberately alienated from the decision-making process and that there was a ‘lack of collegiate support from peers’.

Summary of Findings

Themes have emerged in this research which should be of concern to public policy makers in Western Australia. It is generally assumed in the broader community that people leave their employment in order to find a ‘better’ job with improved salaries and conditions. This study, however, does not fully support this conclusion, at least in the case of senior women and men leaving public sector employment in Western Australia. It raises questions about whether current trends in public sector management will compromise the ability of public agencies to attract and retain high quality professionals. It also confirms the findings of studies in other countries and the private sector about the significant impact of male-oriented organisational cultures on women’s career decision-making.

(i) On the whole, both women and men respondents expressed disquiet with their lives as public sector employees and felt that it had altered in a way which was contrary to their sense of professionalism. The decision to leave was not taken in haste; most had considered it for some time. Despite the problematic aspects of the post-public sector employment chosen by some, all respondents reported that they preferred their current situation and did not regret their decisions to leave.
Of the four variables analysed, there appears to be no significant difference between women and men on three of those. As other research findings suggest, a concern to improve the quality of family life was common to both groups. Similarly, both women and men expressed some frustration with their career opportunities in the public sector and both groups expressed disquiet with the perceived downgrading of their professional roles as public servants.

An apparently dysfunctional culture in many organisations within the public sector is a major issue. There are significant differences between women and men in terms of their level of comfort or discomfort within the micro culture of individual organisations. Women are looking for work environments in which they feel accepted and where their contributions are valued. The homogeneity of most senior executive groups and the limited range of management styles among their members create an environment in which many senior women feel marginalised and unsupported. As the statistics indicate, women represent a very small proportion of those in senior positions. An individual may well be the only, or one of only two or three, senior women in an organisation. It is therefore not surprising that many of them leave to work in small groups, solo employment or within largely female organisations, as did all but one of the women in this research.

Some women noted that the necessity to place so much time and effort into surviving within their organisations made it less possible for them to become involved in "Big Picture" issues. This is exacerbated by the perception that male senior executives exclude women colleagues from significant decision-making processes. Such behaviour provides further evidence of organisations failing to use well the talent available to them.

There was a perception that work and family matters in the public sector, at least at senior levels, were becoming incompatible and that family life was suffering considerably because of the excessive pressures of work.

Conclusion

It must be of concern to government as an employer when each one of this group of twenty respondents indicated they had 'no regrets' about their decision to leave public sector employment and, in general, had found the quality of their personal and working lives considerably improved by doing so; this, despite the fact that for some, remuneration was both reduced and less secure.

There were numerous positive comments about 'life outside'. F7 pointed out that in her current role her 'decisions and accountabilities are directly related to organisational purpose'. F9 has found that her new employer is 'an agency that lives out its values' and where 'politics is just a contextual factor'. She feels recognised for her skills and abilities and her loyalty is appreciated. M3 is pleased to be in an environment where one can 'achieve tangible results which are measurable'. Similarly M10 feels that in his present position there is a more 'direct link between effort and outcome'. M8 finds the 'greater autonomy and flexibility is enormously satisfying'. M4 believes that in the private sector he has 'a greater sense of
urgency about outcomes but is also more able to control the process'. There is a greater 'variety of stimulation'. M5 is pleased with the greater 'personal and professional freedom' in which he can reflect his own interests and values; 'it is worth a lot to have that'.

In general, those still working in organisations find their new work environments are much more supportive. F3 noted, however, that she no longer has a career but rather 'a business'. Some respondents remarked that the skills developed in the public sector had been very valuable. For example, M1 indicated that he has 'not come across a situation in the private sector which has been more difficult for management than what was previously faced in the public sector'.

Nonetheless, the loss of talent from the public sector is an issue which has important consequences to the quality of leadership and the bank of knowledge and experience which the public sector has traditionally represented. As F5 noted, the public sector 'can't afford to lose people with a feeling of public service'. It could be argued that the senior managers who successfully find alternative careers are those with the energy and initiative which the public sector can least afford to lose. Research shows clearly that there is also a significant cost to replacing senior personnel.

In a time of enormous change government employers face a significant challenge in building organisations which offer professionally and personally fulfilling work environments in which individuals can continue to grow, where their achievements are valued and recognised, and in which they believe that they can make a contribution to the community.

Appendix 1: Literature Review

Rosin and Korabik (1995) carried out a study to explore the sex differences in managers’ workplace experiences. While outlining limitations to the validity of information currently available, they found very little evidence to suggest that there may be sex differences on positional attributes such as lesser responsibility, leadership, time flexibility and so on. Differences between female and male careers were explored by Stroh, Brett and Reilly (1992) who found that, although the women were of similar education as the men, working in similar industries, there were still significant disparities in women’s and men’s salary progression and geographic mobility.

Obstacles in management perceived by a sample of intermediate and senior women managers in public and private sectors in Ontario and Quebec are reported by Andrew, Codere and Denis (1990). These obstacles included attitudes of colleagues (26%), images of women (12%), and informal male networks (11%). Family responsibilities only rated as 5%. Garland (1991) reports an American Labor Department’s eighteen month study of promotion practices which found that entrenched attitudes prevented women from moving up the corporate ladder. Frustration with career progress and not the call of home and child accounted for most departures by female professionals.

Another study highlighting differences between female and male managers is reported by Hede and Ralston (1993). These authors report on a survey highlighting differences between 477
female and male managers on past and future barriers to their career progress. Women and men were found to be equally likely to rate career as less important than non-work life, indicating that the glass ceiling effect is not due to gender difference in the relative value placed on career. A study commissioned in Australia by the Women's Employment, Education and Training Advisory Group by Ramset and Bellambi (1994) finds that factors such as women being treated differently, not fitting into the corporate culture, lacking career paths and mentors, being excluded from male networks and having a different manager style to be important.

The issues relating to why women leave organisations is the central theme of another body of research. A theoretical perspective is offered by Marshall (1994) who states that some successful women are expressing ambivalence about membership of the organisational world. They are disillusioned with competitive cultural norms and high-pressure lifestyles. Still (1994) reports that some major Australian organisations are becoming concerned that their top women executives are leaving for self-employment or lower status roles. A few organisations have realised that culture may be a precipitating factor in the women's decision. Still outlines steps which women need to take to reach their full potential such as altering their mode of operating from a 'victim' mentality, deciding whether to share power or get the male managerial culture to yield power.

These organisational factors influencing women's decision to leave are predictably evident in a male dominated industry such as mining. Smith, Crowley and Hutchinson (1993) examine why women consider deserting a workplace they strove so hard to enter. Some of the problems identified from these women's working experience included poor communication skills of managers, lack of career pathways for women, the need to develop a 'critical mass' of young women, not fitting into the male-oriented organisational culture, the need to be unfeminine and to adopt stereotypically male behaviours, and the generally poor skills of managers.
References


