

WOMEN'S EDUCATION & CAREERS - THE HIDDEN AGENDA

TUTOR - CLAIRE HILLER

EED - 858

EDUCATION PROJECT 1

ELIZABETH GRIFFITHS DAVIES

Submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirement of the
Education Project for the Master
of Educational Studies Degree at
the University of Tasmania

CONTENTS

	INTRODUCTION	Page 3
1	SEX-SEGREGATION IN THE AUSTRALIAN WORK FORCE	Page 15
2	WOMEN'S SOCIALLY DEFINED ROLES IN THE HOME AND WORK PLACE	Page 32
3	GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION	Page 75
4	GENDER INEQUALITY IN GIRLS' EDUCATION	Page 94
	CONCLUSION	Page 126
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	Page 142

INTRODUCTION

Women's liberation, feminism and gender equality are terms which have been bandied around for decades, yet have women's roles in society really changed? Where are the executive business women in Corporate Affairs? Where are all the female Principals in schools? Why are girls still opting for subject choices and careers in only five main areas, such as community services, retail trade and property? Why are women leaving successful careers to have children and then opting for lesser part-time work? Why are women still working in low paid sex-segregated jobs earning less than their male counterparts? Why are women choosing to do the majority of housework? Are the nineties the decade of true equality? What hidden agenda prevents women from achieving their potential in education and careers?

This study will explore the research on women, their careers and educational opportunities which reveals that in Australia's sex-segregated society they are a very unequal part. It reveals that women's hidden agenda lies in their dual roles of performing unpaid work in the home, rearing children and working in salutory low paid sex-segregated areas of employment.

Society's social construction of gendered roles for women and men is examined in terms of their being in direct opposition to one another, with the emphasis of the private sphere of the home dominating women's lives and the public sphere of paid work dominating men's lives. (Connell, 1987, Oakley, 1990, Sampson, 1991, and

Maclean, 1992).

In everyday situations, gendered practices of defined femininity and masculinity occur which maintain the patriarchal order. Western societies are characterised by 'emphasized femininity' and 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1987, p.184) which are socially constructed and promoted in our culture through the media and marketing arenas. Thus, it is important to comprehend the manner in which gender is organized on a single structural fact - the global dominance of men over women and forms of femininity and masculinity, which are bipolar opposites, and interrelate on this global level of dominance in order to come to terms with women's plight in the home, in educational opportunities and career prospects. Hegemonic masculinity is constructed in relation to the subordination of women and other subordinated masculinities. The most important feature of contemporary hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual and closely connected to the institution of marriage. (Connell, 1987)

All forms of femininity in this are constructed in the context of the overall subordination of women to men and there is no position in which femininity is similar to hegemonic masculinity among men. Thus the social power remains in men's control and leaves little area for women to develop any power relationships over other women (Connell, 1987, p.186).

Emphasized femininity is a cultural construction which compliments hegemonic masculinity highlighting women's complicity and subordination in order to please men's desires and includes a sexual passivity and total

acceptance of motherhood and domesticity.

Women's reproductive and child rearing roles allow men's dominance and the separation between the public realm of work for men and the private realm of unpaid domestic work and childcare for women. The sexual division of labour in the family is structured on gender lines and is generally defined by the husband's power in relation to the wife's circumstances.

The family, therefore, is built in relation to power in which men are more powerful than women and women more powerful than children which is seen 'as part of a God given natural order which guarantees the sexual division of labour within the family' (Weedon, 1987, p.38)

The concept of 'gender order' (Connell, 1987, p.183) to define society's historical and constructed pattern of power relations between men and women and their definitions of femininity and masculinity is considered. The sexual division of labour, power relations between men and women and sexuality which is interwoven into social life are the three major structures of gender relations which lead to the domination of patriarchy. The sexual division of labour in the home and work place is part of the gender-structured system of our society which involves production, distribution, consumption and also sexual politics.

Hegemony is an essential part of social power in society in which force, such as organized violence as in the

military service, and control, such as organized control which occurs in institutional organizations and governments occur, thus allowing men to assert their power over others and, in particular, women.

The social pattern of desire is defined by masculine and feminine which are diametrically opposed to each other. The gender construction of feminine and masculine involves inequality in social relationships of a heterosexual couple in that a heterosexual woman is regarded as a sexual object of desire and a heterosexual man is not (Connell, 1987).

Even in marriage, in which the wife is considered the controlling member, it is not publicly acknowledged, thus maintaining a facade of men's authority. This implies that on a global level in society, women are subordinate to men which is different from the local situation in which the reverse may actually appear to occur.

Gender is implicit in daily discourses, constituted through reading, talking and learning acceptable forms of behaviour. Gender is embedded in these dominant discourses and is almost invisible in the way in which it is created and maintained. It pervades stories and is implicated in our culture by establishing maleness and femaleness in early childhood. People have been divided into males and females in society through means of identification. This dualism of male-female is considered to be a natural fact, rather than something

that was socially constructed, which has been learned to be seen as natural. Thus children learn to become members of society as they actively take up their assigned gender as their own. As they associate with discourses of maleness and femaleness, they soon position themselves into the category systems through which gender is constituted. Through the bi-polar categories of male and female which are in opposition to each other, children learn to make sense of their world. (Davies, 1993)

The female/feminine and male/masculine category has its origins in the two sex models, in which the first model saw male and female as the same, but placed women in an inferior position because of the interior position of their genitals. The two sex model defines women in terms of natural inferiority and oppositeness to men, thus sameness was discarded and people were embodied more definitely as male and female.

The social rule and structures of society discriminate against women in the way men position them as inferior or objects of sexual pleasure and desire and people who have no rights. Therefore, as girls and boys learn to become male and female, they learn the appropriate patterns of desire. As young girls learn these patterns of desire, they are voluntarily taking up the available subject positions in the patriarchal gender order, thus becoming 'other'. (Connell, 1987)

In the ensuing project, I intend to use feminist post-

structuralist theory to look at the way women are positioned unequally to men in society and the effect which our patriarchal society has on their lives, in terms of their subordination in the sex-segregated home environment and work force, the education system and the way it disadvantages girls. I link this with the influence of gender and use feminist post-structuralism to help deconstruct these social constructs which have contributed to women's oppression. Feminist post-structuralist theory offers a multiple number of discourses from which women can position themselves and this is explored throughout the ensuing chapters.

Post-structural feminism with its alternative theories of discourse and subjectivity is proposed for the deconstruction of the existing patriarchal system in which men dominate and women submissively follow. This radical discourse advocates the removal of gender roles as we know them and a multiple number of alternative discourses and subject positions which the individual can choose to take up. (Weedon 1987, Davies 1991).

The socialist feminist discourse of total equality in the work place, in the home and in child rearing is also discussed as another solution to the women's inequality. (Segal, 1990).

However, it is important to look at the construction of gender and the development of hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity in our patriarchal society, in order to see how women are positioned and also deal with

post-structuralist theory, which Weedon (1987), Connell (1987), Davies (1991, 1993), Gilbert (1991) and Coward (1984, 1992) believe offers a solution to people to allow them to deconstruct those existing practices which our society firmly holds as fixed and unbending.

A major aim of feminism is to rethink the sexual division of labour in society in order to create equality. The post-structuralist approach gives a practical approach to theorize women's oppression and provides feminists with a way of conceptualizing the relationship between language, social institutions and individual consciousness which reveals how power occurs and how appropriate changes can be made. Thus feminist post-structuralism believes that gender is a social construction in discourse, which is based on subconscious and conscious emotions and does not accept general theories of feminine psyche or biological concepts of femininity which are linked to female sexuality or motherhood.

Feminist post-structuralism theory addresses the issues and origins of social power and deals with the way in which social relations of gender, class and race may be altered. It addresses discourse, subjectivity and power by revealing the existing power relations and meanings which do not need to remain fixed, but can change in all forms of social and political practices.

Feminist post-structuralism then is a mode of knowledge production which uses post-structuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and

strategies for change. Through a concept of discourse which is seen as a structuring principle of society, in social institutions, modes of thought and individual subjectivity, feminist post-structuralism is able, in detailed historically specific analysis, to explain the working power on behalf of specific interests and to analyse the opportunities for resistance to it. It is a theory which decentres the rational, self-present subject of humanism, seeing subjectivity and consciousness as socially produced in language, as a site of struggle and potential change (Weedon, 1987, p.40).

Thus feminist post-structuralist theory provides a framework for my project which allows me to look at the way women are positioned in unequal terms in a patriarchal society, revealing the male/female dualism as a social construct. This, in turn, has a profound effect on their careers in terms of achievement and creates conflict between the private sphere of the home and public sphere of work. Feminist post-structuralism allows the deconstruction of the dualism by uncovering the origins of power which has held women and other subordinated groups in place. By revealing the discursive structures through which people have learned to position themselves and recognising how oppression is achieved, people can take up alternative discourse and subject positions, thus changing them. Deconstructing concepts, as such, become political acts by revealing often invisible and repressive politics. The conceptual tools which post-structuralist theory requires for this are subject positions, subjectivity, the speaking subject, all of which are used to produce an alternative understanding through which people take up gendered positions.

The study also examines the educational opportunities for girls in their schooling which continue to be a very limiting factor in career choices. Thus girls do not always take their subject choices seriously because of their belief that they will marry and have children in their early twenties. Therefore, the need to study and have a career appears to be less important. Gender discrimination in the teaching profession is also investigated as teaching is such a female dominated profession, yet few women teachers hold positions of authority and power.

Gender relations are a major structure of all institutions in the form of 'gender regimes' (Connell, 1987, p.120), schools being a good example of small, formal organizations in which politics of curriculum, subject choices, administration, school discipline and teachers' hierarchical organization occur. Gender patterns occur among students which are hegemonic, involving power and aggression, which is one of the most common forms of heterosexual masculinity and the others are subordinated. Sexual discrimination occurs in the curriculum and conflicts over teacher promotion reflect the imbalance of sexual politics in Australian society generally. Sexual division of labour amongst staff occurs, as it does with classroom interaction amongst students. Social inequities are reproduced through teacher attitudes towards students and the different expectations teachers have of students' abilities, such as the likely futures of boys and girls which are subtly

revealed in teaching practices. This gives some impression of the institutionalization of gender. (Connell, 1987)

In secondary schools, the construction of femininity and masculinity continues the process which originated in the family and was reinforced in the primary schools.

Some of the contradictory messages teenage girls receive concerning appropriate future choices, such as paid/unpaid work, create a double bind for them and are central to maintaining gender relations and the sexuality discourse regarding gender stereotyping of girls and adolescent/femininity conflicts. These conflicts define and construct femininity in order to regulate sexuality in a conventional way leading to marriage and motherhood which is consistent with the, 'to have and to hold discourse and monogamous relationships' (Gilbert and Taylor, 1991, p.19).

The romantic discourse is considered to be one of the fundamental props of the male/female dualism. Central to learning to become male or female as we currently understand these terms, is learning the appropriate patterns of desire. Despite the fact that the romantic texts can be read in a number of ways, generally the sub-text projects compulsory heterosexual coupling which maintains the male/female dualism. Thus as one takes up the current discourses, the male/female division is proposed in sets of binary oppositions. (Davies, 1991)

Schools represent formal organizations in which gender is institutionalized and basically maintains women's place under the patriarchal system. Gender is also used as a segregating factor, particularly in single-sex schools. It is often the hidden curriculum of subtle, unexamined messages which are transferred through the school process which can be as powerful as the official curriculum. School texts and resource materials transmit dominant gender ideologies in which women are represented as invisible, passive, under-represented in paid work and concentrated in low-status occupations. Contemporary texts still contain narrow, stereotyped portrayals of sex-roles.

Gender ideologies are central to reproducing gender relations and by gaining more understanding of the workings of them at an individual level, answers may be forthcoming explaining women's complicity and subordination in the home, work place, school and society in general. (Gilbert and Taylor, 1991)

As long as hegemonic discourses constituting masculinity in opposition to and superior to femininity continue to prevail in a society which is structured on the basis of an assumption that females are not equal to males, boys will continue to dominate in schools, harassing girls and girls will continue to under perform. (Davies, 1993, p.200)

The link between girls' complacency in their schooling and gender inequities in the education system, such as the curriculum and classroom practices, is considered and the teaching profession as a whole examined in terms of the way 'the system' discriminates against girls in

schools and excludes women teachers from achieving equality in a large proportion of the available hierarchical positions. (Yates, 1993)

Through post-structuralist theory, new alternatives and strategies for girls and boys can be created based on different conceptualizations of the process of becoming a gendered person.

CHAPTER ONE

SEX-SEGREGATION IN THE AUSTRALIAN WORK FORCE

This chapter examines the effect of Australia's sex-segregated work force on women's careers in the way it inhibits their employment choices by placing the majority of women in low status sex-segregated jobs in the secondary labour market.

It explores the historical link between the gender division of labour in the home and the development of the modern housewife, particularly in the way women's roles are centred in the private sphere of the home, completely separated from men's roles which are centred in the public sphere of paid work. Hence, the scenario, a woman's place is in the home!

Society's patriarchal order is considered a contributing factor to the plight of women's progress and careers, in the way gender ideology overlaps into all aspects of society, perpetuating gender-role normalcy, through the nuclear family, thus maintaining women's lack of power and independence.

Women's change from permanent full-time work to part-time work is also discussed, particularly in the way in which industry giants exploit part-time work by replacing it with less secure casual work.

The issue of unequal pay for women in comparison to their male counterparts' average earnings is examined along with the lack of security of superannuation for

women.

All these issues play a significant part in the hidden agenda which thwart women's progress towards equality as they attempt to enter or re-enter the Australian work place.

It is the issue of sex-segregated work in the home which has such a direct influence on women and their aspirations towards their careers, on which there is particular focus. Studies to date have focused solely on women at home as an issue or women in paid employment, but it is the inter-relationship that one has on the other, which will be examined throughout this study.

Australia is world renowned for having one of the most gender segregated work forces in the Western industrialized world with 85 per cent of women workers concentrated in five main areas: community services, wholesale and retail trade, finance, property and business. Half of all working women are semi-skilled and most female university students take up teaching as a career. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990, Oakley, 1990, Sampson, 1991)

Gender-based explanations of labour market segmentation have been given, stressing that one constant difference between the sexes is founded firmly in the gender division of labour. A major factor which contributes to sex segregation in the work force is the emphasis of

gender division of labour in the home. It is the social relation of house work and the effect it has on women's access to paid work which needs to be addressed. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990)

In fact, gender divisions exist in the areas of work, employment and education as well as the home. 'Industrial capitalism is the economics and social system in which the present alienation and oppression of women as housewives has arisen.' (Oakley, 1990, p.156). This existing order of patriarchy is continuously reinforcing the separation of men's and women's roles and maintaining their difference. Society also portrays a myth that the traditional gender-role pattern of the division of sex-segregated labour, relies on the survival and maintenance of the existing social order. The modern role of housewife originated from industrialization in which men's lives and occupations extended into the outside world and women's lives were restricted to the space of the home. Thus men separated from their families and differing roles emerged within a family. Therefore, a woman became a non-employed, economically dependent housewife and a man became the bread winner or main salary earner, supporting his wife and children.

This division of gender roles was exacerbated in England as a result of the 1891 Factory Act which prohibited women working four weeks before and after child birth and the 1895 Factories and the Workshops Act which prohibited overtime for women. It was this protective

legislation which led to the creation of the modern housewife role - the main occupation for married women. (Oakley, 1990)

Further in most industrialized countries, a housewife has no right to financial benefits. These benefits come indirectly through marriage. Thus the term 'housewife', is one which belongs to industrialized society in which gender-roles were divided between domestic life and productive work. Marriage in Australia in colonial times was characterised by the sexual division of labour between husbands and wives, a derivative of British customs. The family was the woman's responsibility and again, separate from the economy and society, the key to the social organization and order. By the mid nineteenth century, colonial women spent the majority of their time looking after children. Therefore, most colonial women lived and worked outside the system of power and decision making in the political arena and were in no position of power at all. Marriage also represents inequality because women are not equal with men because marriage actually defines a woman's place in society, unlike a man's place. The male-female roles are roles of opposition, rather than differentiation. Terms such as 'husband and wife' indicate a patriarchal structure. (Alford, 1984 and Oakley, 1990)

There are discriminatory policies in western society, regarding the patriarchal assumption that women's biological difference from men places them in very different social roles. Since modern industrialization

the meaning of home implies 'family' rather than 'work'. The term 'family man' exists but 'family woman' is a redundant term because 'family means women' (Oakley, 1990, p.61). Therefore, the roles of parents in relation to children is a myth of social constraints which intervenes between the biological and the cultural gender-role differentiation. The gender-segregated work myth claims that the traditional feminine-masculine role pattern is a necessity in order to maintain the existing social order. 'These expectations about natural femininity structure women's access to the labour market and to public life' (Weedon, 1987, p.3).

The ethologist view that a gender segregated work force with women as housewives and men as 'non-housewives' has a biological link which allows the division of labour by sex to become a persuasive tool.

The modern family emphasizes that difference in terms of 'mothers' and 'fathers' roles, so much so that the two are not interchangeable because the mother's role is to rear the children and the father's role as breadwinner is derived from his occupational role. Therefore, men who take on the duties of the women, would be called 'substitute mothers or helpers' (Oakley, 1990, p.68).

In Western society, motherhood is the main feminine gender role which parents and others teach their children. The myth of motherhood, together with gender segregation of work, emerge as the major sources of women's oppression because both myths confirm women's domesticity and their continuing psychological identification with the world of domesticity. Thus the myth of motherhood denies any paternal responsibility

towards the children's upbringing. The father's work does not pose a problem to child rearing, only to the mother's. In a family in which both partners work, only the working mother deals with the childcare because society believes it is her responsibility. Again, there appears to be implicit differentiation between parental roles, in that the father comes first, followed by the children. However, for the mother, the reverse occurs with the child coming first, then the husband with the mother last. Therefore, women are expected to abandon their personhood for the sake of their maternity. (Oakley, 1990)

Although the family unit as the nuclear family is being questioned more, it is the male occupation which determines the family pattern. As an institution the family which prescribes gender-role normalcy in which there is one man, one woman and children. (Spender, 1992).

There are strong economic, childcare and social pressures for the normalization of the family unit. Within the gender-role structure of the family, women are reduced to a common social type: the housewife-wife-mother (Oakley, 1990, p.70).

So despite women's educational professions as doctors, lawyers, educators or factory workers, they are all considered the mother of Mr. X's children or Mr. X's wife, domestic worker and the centre symbol of his family. For example, a study by Yeandle also reveals that women's employment is defined as secondary to the needs of the family and domestic chores take precedence over outside work. Their paid work in the public arena

still enables them to perform home duties as well. Often their income is defined as supplementary to their partner's wage, thus women's paid work is secondary to the role of mother and housewife. Another study reveals that professional women would reconsider their job, subject to their children's needs, despite the fact that some of these women were involved in high powered jobs in politics, obstetrics, dental surgery and public administration, which would have taken many years of hard work to accomplish. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990, and Wilson and Gayton, 1993)

It is important to realise that the gender division of labour which exists in the home also exists in the work force. Therefore, when women re-enter the work force, patriarchy, far from being weakened is redefined because the women are taking on the responsibility for the majority of childcare and house work chores. Thus the gender ideology which defines women as feminine in terms of mothers and housewives and men as masculine and breadwinners, remains constant. As women move into the labour market without challenging the gender division of labour, their work is defined as secondary to their primary role as mother and housewife. In fact women are taking on an extra job which becomes a double burden. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990)

Feminists agree that the division between the public world of work as the man's domain and the private world of home as the woman's domain is one of the most obvious manifestations of gender division of labour. It is the

link between women's responsibilities in the home as mother and housewife which is connected to their experiences in the labour market. Despite the fact that married women are returning to paid employment, the traditional differentiation between men's and women's roles continues to occur in patterns of work-careers. Women's defining role is a domestic one and it is interesting to see women in our culture occupying the traditional feminine and domestic sectors of teaching, nursing, retail sales and factory work making domestic products. Most professional women are teachers, nurses or lawyers and nursing makes up 90 per cent of female occupations in all western societies. In fact, only 18 percent of women work in the professional and para-professional categories. The majority of women, 79 percent, engage in regular part-time work (including regular casual), which is an indication of the way women attempt to slot paid work around family commitments.

In fact, part-time work is considered the main reason for avoiding changes in gender roles between men and women in the home. There is no change for the man and a minimal one for the woman because she continues to complete all her other roles as mother, wife and domestic worker with a minor alteration made to her position as a member of paid employment. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990, Cockburn, 1991 and Oakley, 1990).

It seems that part-time work is a central issue in analysing women's participation in the labour market. There also appears to be a disproportionate location of

part-time employment in the areas of low skills and low status work. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990)

The exploitation of women part-time workers is believed to be gender specific within the terms of women's subordination to their husbands and responsibility for their children. Women are part-time manual workers working in totally sex-segregated jobs, earning less money and working too few hours to qualify them for sickness benefits, superannuation or leave loading. One report went as far to say that women in part-time work are members of the most exploited and poorly paid groups in the work force.

Industries exploit part-time work by viewing it as an opportunity to reduce operating costs in a more competitive market. In order for employers to gain flexibility, they select women as part-time workers, who are not protected by legislation, state insurance and welfare policy. (Cockburn, 1991)

Claims are also being made that part-time home based work is being established in order to enable women to combine family and work. Women who work in the textile industry in this way are being underpaid by working long hours for very little return. They are not entitled to worker's compensation and often are at risk of not being paid at all. (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992)

In 1989 the Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated

that home based work was extending to clerical areas in computers and word processing, as well as textiles, and that 43,000 women operated in home-based clerical and word processing work. There are also large numbers of women who work from their homes in domestic chores, sewing or assembling products for manufacturers or agents. These women again work at very low rates which are slotted in amongst their other domestic activities. A disproportionate number of women in this type of work are Asian and Moslem homemakers.

Home working and part-timing are not freely-chosen, life enhancing options, but are the result on the one hand of ideological and material constraints on women and, on the other, of the profit motive of employers (Cockburn, 1991, p.82).

The main difficulty facing unions was to locate home based workers, to check their working conditions.

WOMEN AND UNEQUAL PAY

Research reveals a connection between the high number of part-time positions for women in often low status, poorly paid and highly segregated areas of the labour market. It also appears that part-time work is structured to provide a minimum of part-time positions in the primary sector of the labour market. Analysis of this research also reveals women's choice for part-time work is the 'key determinant of their poorer labour-market position' (Baxter and Gibson, 1990, p.94).

However, a decade ago, other research warned that part-time work was a barrier to women's equality in the paid work force and often masked unemployment. A South

Australian survey of part-time workers, revealed that most part-time workers receive inferior wages, 25 per cent less than their male counterparts and they lacked career structure and protection from union and industrial award coverage. Further studies also reveal that in several developed countries, a large proportion of women are working part-time but the monetary gap between men's earnings and women's is significant. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990 and Cockburn, 1991)

Gender remains a main issue in the way the work force is structured. Despite two decades of equal pay legislation, five years of anti-discrimination legislation and affirmative action initiative, there seems to be little change in the extent of industrial and occupational segregation. In fact, there are now fears that women's domestic role could drive them more firmly into 'a distinct domestically-defined, place in the labour market' (Cockburn, 1991, p.104).

Since 1968 Sweden has attempted to eradicate gender differentiation by abolishing barriers in all public organizations, yet there remains a marked and traditional differentiation by gender, suggesting the deep seated and persistent conflict of the dichotomy between feminine and masculine roles. In Britain and the United States of America, there appears to be similar distinctions between traditional masculine and feminine roles of employment. (Cockburn, 1991 and Oakley, 1990)

The Labour Government in Australia has implemented strategies aimed at removing barriers which limit women's job opportunities, through the introduction of Public Service Reform Act 1984 and the Sex Discrimination Act 1984. The Equal Employment Opportunity Act in 1987 was passed as a result of a statistical study of women in the work force which revealed women were disadvantaged in the work place in comparison to men, with lower pay and fewer managerial positions. This act provided a legal framework to address the disadvantages facing women in the workplace. In 1992 the Affirmative Action Act (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) was amended to include Catholic and most Independent Schools. (The Office of the Status of Women, 1990)

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal, Constitutional Affairs (1992) pointed out that discriminatory practices have prevented women from joining superannuation schemes. Women's broken employment and lack of portability have disadvantaged women by their very design because they operate on the basis of full-time, unbroken employment, thus not catering for women's employment patterns. Therefore, women are less likely to collect any benefits because of their early departure from the fund. In fact they do not ultimately claim their retirement benefits, rather they subsidise men who do.

The Committee also claims that some industries are substituting part-time casual workers in the place of

permanent full-time workers, which may create an 'underclass' of workers in industries who do not earn the same wages or receive the same benefits as permanent employees.

Historically, casual employment was regarded as a supplement to and not a replacement of, a permanent work force. Evidence to the Committee indicated that casualization of the work force was increasing and in August 1990, represented 19.4 per cent of the total work force (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992, p.33).

However, there appears to be an increasing trend towards casualization of the work force as a substitute for employing permanent full-time and part-time workers.

The Committee also reveals that women make up the majority of part-time and casual positions in the paid work-force within a limited range of occupations. Again, it was found that women choose part-time and casual work because it combines well with the unpaid work in the home and the responsibility of childcare. It claims also that women part-time workers are employed on an ad hoc or contractual basis as casuals, rather than on a permanent basis. Thus casual workers who make up the majority of part-time employees are rarely protected by industrial awards, lack security of tenure and do not receive non-wage employment benefits to which permanent employees are entitled.

Equal pay legislation in Britain has not remedied the unequal distribution of earnings between men and women. In 1988, for example, Statistics in the Equal

Opportunities Commission's First Report indicates earnings of female manual workers have deteriorated.

There has been criticism of the role of the Equal Opportunities Commission, claiming it is not strong enough in Britain and well behind the European directives. In fact the United Kingdom and Germany seem keen to block directives about rights and benefits of part-time workers made by the European Community. There does not appear to be the same forward-looking, socially responsible practices and employment legislation in Britain and women are often paid less than 75 per cent of a man's earnings. In 1991, the Employment Appeal Tribunal in Britain, ruled that women were unable to challenge under the equal pay legislation if they were paid less than men. (Neuberger, 1991)

Despite the fact that Equal Pay legislation was ratified in 1972, women still remain underpaid in comparison to men. Men are still privileged to undertake shift-work and receive overtime benefits which are often unavailable to women. In fact, in Australia, women's wages are 83 per cent of that of men and after overtime, bonuses and over-award payments which men earn, women earn only 67 per cent of average weekly earnings.

Superannuation policies have disadvantaged women who have not worked continuously and have been unable to make their own substantial contributions. In fact, the old age pension is a safeguard to women and as women currently make up the majority of old age pensioners, it

is important that it retains its value and is not rendered worthless. (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992)

For women who experience divorce and who are dependent on their partner's superannuation, it is extremely difficult to establish any income of a similar type. The Committee also feels compulsory superannuation by 1995 raises many concerns for women. Many part-time and casual employees will have to make superannuation contributions from relatively low incomes, thus competing with other priorities, such as childcare and housing commitments. (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992)

Australian women in 1990 earned 83 per cent of the average earnings of Australian men, and women from Aboriginal backgrounds earned less again. Statistics from the United Nations that women own less than one per cent of the world's wealth, yet women are working harder and becoming poorer each year. Despite the efforts of feminism over the past twenty years, it has been unable to halt the decrease in women's wealth and working conditions. Women are rewarded for their work by either low pay or no pay. Thus the Equal Pay Act legislation of the 1970s is still unable to reduce the increasing gap between women's and men's pay. (Faludi, 1991 and Spender, 1983)

In Australia, the Dependent Spouse Rebate which in its existing form, totally undermines women's domestic work and child caring roles, perpetuating a stereotype of dependency because the benefit does not recognize their role. Rather, it is paid to the husband who is already economically independent, thus reinforcing patriarchal power and sex-segregation in our society. (The House of Representatives Standing Committee and Constitutional Affairs, 1992)

The general consensus is that there are no improvements to Australia's sex-segregated work force in the foreseeable future. Gender roles which are socially defined have a large impact on women, particularly when they retain the traditional gender role of staying at home to look after the children and forsake furthering their careers. It also appears that family responsibilities have a huge effect on women and their career paths. Although society's perception of the structure of the family unit with one partner working in the paid work force and the other resuming the responsibility of the home, no longer represents the majority of Australian families, there is a belief that the work force's lack of flexibility is a major equity issue for women and an economic issue for business. (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992 and The Tasmanian Women's Consultative Council, 1992).

The gender division of labour in the home and work force is seen as a contributing factor which reinforces

patriarchy by defining women's roles primarily as mothers and housewives and their jobs in the work place as secondary or supplementary to their partner. This not only reinforces society's patriarchal order in which the nuclear family perpetuates gender-role normalcy, but confirms the maintenance of women's lack of power and independence.

Barriers such as unequal pay for women, exploitation of part-time work by industry, in place of casual work, lack of superannuation or flimsy superannuation packages form the hidden agenda as they together impede women's career prospects and their hope of equality.

As women move back into the work force, they pose little threat to the gender division of labour. Rather, they strengthen the gender segregation as they return to the traditional feminine and domestic roles in the work place as teachers, nurses, lawyers, domestic workers or employees in the retail industry. Often their return to the work force is to lower paid jobs which provide little challenge or few career prospects in order to fit in with family commitments.

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN'S SOCIALLY DEFINED ROLES IN THE HOME AND WORK PLACE

This chapter focuses on the issue of women's unpaid and undervalued contribution to society as homemakers, whereby they suffer disempowerment and discrimination as individuals both in the home and upon returning to the work force.

Society with its narrow definition of paid work and the influence of the patriarchal nuclear family as a dominant discourse, perpetuates women's subordination and complicity in their roles as mother and wife. The conflict that arises for women as a result of this dual role maintains the practice to which women have succumbed of downgrading their career opportunities in order to slot paid employment around their major occupational role as child rearer and domestic worker.

Definitions of masculinity and femininity are considered with regard to society's perception of motherhood and several associated myths which attempt to confirm the notion of good mothering are examined. These myths of motherhood and the gender segregation of work are constructed as factors which contribute to women's oppression.

Post-structuralist feminism is examined offering alternatives to the way in which women view themselves in order to become free of societal expectations. Post-

structuralist feminism is one discourse which offers women an alternative subject position to motherhood, their role in the family and place in society. It can free women from their conflicting roles of unpaid domestic work and complicity in down-grading their careers in order to bear a double burden.

Men's roles are examined in terms of their contribution to family life and unpaid work and the differences between part-time work for both men and women are also explored.

Society's role in providing women with support for their interrupted careers in order to have children and their successful return to the work force is investigated in terms of employer support, superannuation, paid maternity/paternity leave and childcare assistance.

SOCIAL DEFINITIONS AND WOMEN'S UNPAID WORK

There are dominant discourses which exist in society and social definitions of a woman's place in the home. In our existing structure of social institutions, women are caught up in the conflicting definitions of their roles as wife and mother and of the desirable function of the family. Femininity is so structured that women are told they should feel fulfilled by carrying out these tasks.

Definitions of masculinity and femininity are associated with traditional concepts of masculine and feminine work. Therefore, a woman is a mother/housewife who

gives all her time and energy to the children and the man is a father who spends all his time in the paid work force. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990)

A housewife and a woman are one and the same: they are subject to deprivation and oppression in relation to the position of the dominant group in society (Oakley, 1990, p.156).

Women's unpaid work is not considered 'proper work' or counted as economic activity. There is also the perception that women who leave the paid work force to rear children are not recognized by the community for their contribution. Raising children is considered something that comes 'naturally' to all women. Consequent to this is a lack of financial recognition by governments for the work women do in the home. The Census does not collate information about the contribution of women, neither is this information included in the national account. Thus, the traditional areas of women's work is rendered invisible. (The Tasmanian Women's Consultative Council 1992)

There are about 3.2 million women in Australia, who do not work on a part-time or full-time basis, yet many of those women care for children or the elderly and therefore are involved in unremunerated work. In fact, it is estimated that homemakers contribute an estimated \$90 billion per year to the economy. However, society does not consider rearing children in economic terms, thus creating the belief that paid workers are greater contributors to society than unpaid workers. (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992)

Australia currently follows accepted international practice by excluding the value of unpaid household work from the measurement of gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the National Accounts (1990, p.18).

'Power is measured in terms of the husband's and wife's relative contribution to the family income' (Baxter and Gibson, 1990, p.45). Men have more power in the home as the chief breadwinners and this gender division of labour continues into the work force. Thus men delegate low status jobs to women. As domestic labour is undervalued and unrewarded, the partner with the most power, generally the male, delegates it to the other, generally the wife.

Women's main responsibility for housework increases the likelihood of women being in the secondary labour market but this does not affect men in the same way. Therefore, there is a link between paid and unpaid work for women, but not men. Housework has been trivialised in an attempt to ignore the amount of time women spend doing it. In fact, until recently it has remained a largely un-researched area. Housework differs from most other work because,

it is private, it is self-denied and its outlines are blurred by its integration in a whole complex of domestic, family-based roles which define the situation as well as the situation of the housewife (Oakley, 1990, p.91).

The role of a housewife has no defined boundaries and many variables. Thus society views a woman as a combination of mother/wife which all inter links into housewife. The housewife and childcare image is played

down and portrayed as undemanding - another false myth.
(Oakley, 1990)

Society is structured in such a way that the patriarchal system shapes people's lives and differentiates the lives of men and women.

A woman's domestic identity constitutes her as a disadvantaged worker, while being a low income earner and subject to male authority, thus diminishing her standing in the family (Cockburn, 1991, p.17).

Employment statistics omit the job of house worker which reinforces the domesticity of women's jobs. Yet 73 percent of domestic work in the home is carried out by women. Women's labour remains invisible in the same way childbirth and housework have been kept off the literary agenda. Men are very reluctant to recognise the amount of effort required for domestic chores and childrearing, considering those tasks too menial. A similar technique is used in contemporary times by the publishers of Home magazines to effectively repress any idea of domestic labour, which just disappears in the images of immaculate, clean kitchens and spotless rooms cleverly concealing the long, tedious hours spent by women behind the scenes to achieve such sterile and immaculate homes.
(Coward, 1984 and Spender, 1989)

WOMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF MOTHERHOOD

There is still the assumption that motherhood and childbearing are the prerequisites for a woman's self-fulfilment, that a childless woman has not fulfilled that 'essential biological, natural act' (Weedon, 1987,

p.130) and that women on the whole have a social and economic role to play in the home which is seen to be in their best interests.

Society portrays a number of myths about motherhood, the role of parents, housework and childcare which all help to maintain women's identity in the home environment. Thus for most women, housework, is the major occupational role today and employment does little to alter the status of work load of being a housewife. However, the myth of motherhood is the most persuasive of all and the least questioned. If the housewife or wife role changed, the maternal role would be more difficult, because a woman's place in the family lies in maternity now and for always. Thus the circle of three - 'children need mothers, mothers need children and women need to be mothers' (Oakley, 1990, p.157) - are pronouncements which recur time and again in popular fiction, pseudo-psychology and by the so-called 'experts'. Mother-child and child-mother are intrinsic and naturally meant to be together. This myth is the most powerful of all because it reiterates and affirms traditional forms of behaviour. This concept is confirmed with the explanation that there is a common sense assumption of a range of discourses and social interests which claim children need their mothers. This common sense knowledge is often subject to change and contradictory, relying on a naive view of language which is transparent and undistorted by 'ideology'. (Weedon, 1987)

Women are socialized early about the process of feminine gender-roles which stress maternity as the only destiny for them and the psychoanalytic theory which gives a 'pseudo-scientific backing' (Oakley, 1990, p.187) emphasizing the cultural importance of the role of women as parents. The aim of this theory is to keep women in their place with children. Often individuals, in this case women, are unaware of having a choice, because at an early age specific discourses about motherhood, family life and childhood are inserted into daily life which becomes a socialized pattern that is often hard to change. Thus gendered subject positions occur as a result of appearance, behaviour and rules of conformation, reinforced by punishment. (Oakley, 1990 and Weedon, 1987)

Female pleasure and modes of femininity are culturally produced practices in which subjectivity and women's identity are created in a manner of desire which surrounds them. These positions of subjectivity and identity make it extremely difficult to change because women are constantly being lured by discourses which reinforce male power and privilege, so much so, that female dissatisfaction is constantly recast as 'desire' (Coward, 1984, p.16). Visible cultural constructs of femininity and female desire are only one part of the story.

Society's definition of motherhood as feminine fulfilment which is supposed to consume women with beauty and joy creates a conflict of meaning for many

women. Motherhood leaves some women feeling totally inadequate and wrong because their interpretation of it does not comply with the accepted one, thus placing them under greater pressure. They may fear being labelled 'unnatural', therefore keeping their traumatic experiences of motherhood quiet. So women's conspiracy of silence remains, often including childbirth experiences which may put other mothers off by disclosing their alternative female reality. Women who disclose true feelings about motherhood, rename it and make it consistent with their own experience. (Spender, 1992 and Rich, 1989)

There appear to be many devices in a patriarchal society which invalidate women's experiences of the 'joys of motherhood' by defining them as 'unfortunate victims' (Spender, 1992, p.65) or the exception.

There appears to be a mystique surrounding motherhood in which young women have a very romanticised perception, prior to becoming mothers. This is often reinforced through teenage fiction, girls comics and women's magazines through their powerful format which engages with the construction of femininity by preparing girls and young women for their fate with the ultimate experience of winning over a man, having a child and living happily ever after in an ideal family. These textual devices are based on the classic fairy tales of the happy-ever-after solution and place girls into ideological positions and practices which reproduce femininity which is central to the family. (Oakley,

1990 and Walkerdine, 1984)

'The desire for motherhood is culturally induced and the ability to mother is learnt' (Oakley, 1990, p.201). Therefore, a woman who chooses not to be a mother is considered by society as not 'feminine' and seen to be rejecting womanhood as well as motherhood. Women without children are depicted as lonely and to be pitied because they have deviated from their natural gender-role. The single, professional business woman is constantly reminded that her biological clock is running out and too much independence leads to workaholism. (Oakley, 1990 and Faludi, 1991)

It is evident that Mothering literature powerfully stresses the overwhelming importance of women's commitment to mothering and undervalues other forms of care services. A large amount of literature on mothering places an exaggerated focus on the differences between women and men and idealises the maternal and feminine ways of behaving. This means there is little emphasis placed on the contradictions and conflicts experienced by women within feminine identity or on false categories created by gender, as well as a disregard of social practices other than bonding because they impinge on gender inequity. (Faludi, 1991 and Segal, 1987)

In fact, maternal instinct has been a popular phenomenon for a long time, inferring all women have this instinct. Threats of lack of bonding and irreparable damage are

some claims which are made if the biological mother gives the responsibility of childcare to another person. In addition, most research emphasises the role of the mother rather than the father, thus society places all the responsibility of childbearing into the mother's hands. (Oakley, 1990)

It is very difficult for women to make progress and change their lives when society is working against their interests and well-being. There appears to be a backlash against feminism, in which men and the powers in authority attempt to undermine women's progress to equality by infiltrating all aspects of Western societies, from the political arena, educational institutions, film industry to contemporary psychology. (Faludi, 1991). The media continues to mislead people by stating that feminism has achieved its aim, and women are very unhappy and exhausted. Therefore, it is the media which is responsible for the return to family life of the new 'feminist' woman and the sexual masochist.

Feminist post-structuralism allows women to choose between different accounts of reality on the basis of their social implications. Individuals give meaning to particular discourses which constitute their consciousness and the particular positions they hold in order to identify ourselves. People may have grown up within a particular system of contradictory meanings and values and taken up alternative ways to reconstitute more appropriate meaning to suit their experience. The dilemma for many women is that the function of the

family creates conflicting definitions of motherhood and the organisation of the family. Therefore, a woman who may feel inadequate and a failure in the discourse of motherhood may realise that her feelings of failure are socially produced conflicts and contradictions which many women experience in many social situations. The woman is exposed to structured demands of childrearing set under the patriarchal nuclear family which makes her feel an inadequate parent. Her defined role as mother in this patriarchal system expects her to cope alone with the child's welfare which is a social and historical development in the organisation of work as we know it.

The contemporary definitions of woman as mother conflict with the other subject positions she is expected to assume. This gives her a new subject position from which she is able to make sense of her situation and realise it is the subject position as mother, which is the cause of the contradiction and as a mother she is subjected to a range of contradictions at great emotional cost. (Weedon, 1987). This could certainly help women who feel guilty about being inadequate mothers and help them realise the unrealistic pressures which are being placed upon them by the traditional discourse of mothering. At least they can choose another more appropriate discourse which will improve their situation.

However, guilt seems to take its greatest toll amongst mothers who work. Not only are they made to feel

inadequate by others, particularly other women, but always at the back of their mind is the concern as to whether they are doing their best for their children, thus reinforcing the myth that mothers are the only ones who can help their children. The institutionalized child syndrome is another guilt trip aimed at women who work. Women who combine motherhood and work often come across women who resent their combination of care of children and paid work. Many women judge mothers, believing their rightful place is in the home.

Melanie Klein, a psychoanalyst, believes ambivalence breeds guilt which in turn fosters masochistic submission. (Coward, 1992). Perhaps this explains why women comply to the traditional sexual division of labour in the home because any attempt to break with traditional structures seems to be accompanied by guilt. Perhaps this also underlies the reason why women give up their own interests when they have children. Sometimes they may feel they have to compensate for their guilt for having wanted something for themselves. So they take on the trappings of traditionalism by doing all the domestic chores and control all aspects associated with running the house while their partner is at work earning the money. (Coward, 1992)

The feeling of not contributing financially has a two fold effect. It devalues the women's chosen role and can lead to misdirected guilt. Often women devalue their own work and feel inadequate, overlooking the importance of nurturing and educating their children.

Thus they place an extra burden upon themselves as an indirect form of punishment in an attempt to make up for lack of power and monetary reward. Research indicates that women who are not economically independent have less power, therefore feel obliged to do more domestic work. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990)

There appears to be subtle social coercion pervading Australian society which makes women in the work force feel guilty and women in the home feel worthless, idle or unfulfilled. Women often feel that they have to defer to sectors in the community in order to gain approval, or that their work is valueless, invisible, only reinforcing negative stereotypes. The analogy of guilt being like a faithful old dog that cannot be shaken off is apt. Women, specialise in it! Guilt is remorseless and makes it hard if one supports conventions that feminism is critical of, such as being married or staying at home to look after the children. Even if women enjoy themselves, they feel guilty or otherwise take on their partner's inadequacies because they do not enjoy their work, therefore, women cannot enjoy their situation either. (Coward, 1984 and The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs 1992)

Feminism sees a masochistic form of femininity is acquired through the family in which women constantly defer to men and to men's definitions of how things should be which borders on oppression. Another important point is that no alternative system other than

the patriarchal nuclear family is offered as an alternative in society. (Weedon, 1987)

It is apparent that society places a great deal of time, money and effort into promoting particular views about the world. The feminist post-structuralist theory can help alleviate this situation, because it looks at subjectivity, discourse and power to show that it is possible to discover how established meanings, values and power relations came into being. It looks at whose interests they support and where the weaknesses can be changed if enough pressure is brought to bear. Social and political areas can be applied to it in order to create change. Therefore, post-structuralism in the theory of language, subjectivity and power for knowledge helps feminists by offering a productive framework for understanding the mechanisms of power in our society in order to make changes. The political aim of post-structuralist theories is to change the patriarchal structures in which men and women live. (Weedon, 1987)

However, society can be constantly created through discursive practices in which the power of those practices can be recognized, maintained or altered, by generating new ones, for example, refusing certain discourses such as men's oppression or women's submission in in employment or family discourse.

Women can see the entrapments through known discourses which allow them to focus on the contradictions in their experience as a creative source of new discourses,

rather than one of failure. Therefore, they can accept their position as mother and still feel comfortable that they need time to fulfil their own needs, be it in the form of a part-time job, full-time work or recreational activities. (Davies, 1991)

THE EFFECT OF FAMILY LIFE ON WOMEN

The happy family image dominates our society through the media with the message to keep families happy, emotionally and socially secure with the traditional mother and father figures, despite the fact that one third of marriages end in divorce and family breakdown. Family is the main place for gender, but it is also viewed in the wider context of work, leisure and public life. Our understanding of gender and the role it plays in the nuclear family is centred around the formation of the sexual division of labour and current norms of femininity and masculinity. So the family places a 'natural' gender issue on the way a marriage occurs, the manner in which children are socialized in the home and throughout society in general. (Weedon, 1987).

The family is an institution in which power, economics and emotion occur. The traditional sexual division of labour within the family and home is also structured on gender lines and is well entrenched. Generally it is defined by the husband's power in relation to his wife's circumstances. (Connell, 1987)

It has been stated that the family produces people and

'stabilizes adult personalities into socially approved moulds of wife-mother-housewife and husband-father' (Oakley, 1990, p.61). The emphasis on people-production has a direct impact on women and is clarified in the importance of gender-femininity and masculinity being an essential part of the modern family. 'Gender differentiation between the roles of female and male is the axis of the modern family's structure' (Oakley, 1990, p.62).

There is also the concern parents feel for their children to be 'normal' because normality is required in the work place and the family. Often socially defined normality results in parents accepting the meaning of dominant definitions of gender difference. Therefore, in a society which is gender-appropriate, child-rearing becomes the accepted norm and the extended family and friends all play a part in exerting social pressures on new parents to conform to acceptable behaviour. Thus child-rearing and education emphasise certain socially defined feminine and masculine qualities. (Weedon, 1987)

The family as an institution is a prescription for gender-role normalcy; one woman, one man and more children. Families in which children are adopted or single parents reside, do not fit into the agenda and suffer stigma and ostracism (Oakley, 1990, p.70).

Feminism has been responsible for opening up the boundary between the private and public structures of the family unit and by bringing in reforms to improve conditions of women and children in the family through

payments to supporting mothers, increased awareness and legislation regarding domestic violence and improved childcare arrangements. Feminism has been accused of threatening the traditional family, but in fact has undermined the unequal balance of power between family life and patriarchal control which has existed in the traditional family home. (Alford, 1984, Eisenstein, 1991 and Neubergen, 1991)

MEN'S ROLES IN FAMILY LIFE

If we look at men's commitment to family life, it is interesting to note significant differences in parenting roles. Men have more free time than women, but are less involved in helping their families. There are also clear differences in the types of unpaid work done by men and women. 92 per cent of women's unpaid work is spent in the home with childcare, cleaning, cooking and shopping as opposed to 8 per cent of men's unpaid time. Men spend most of their unpaid work in outdoor tasks. 'The division of domestic tasks between husbands and wives was seen as a crucial indicator of the strength of the traditional family' (The Office of the Status of Women, 1991, p.13). Thus women do housework and men do not. Gender-role attitudes for men and women affect their participation in housework.

A large proportion of men abrogate their family responsibilities, despite the fact that they are generally financially better off than their partners. Women often face the threat of poverty when their

husbands desert them, leaving them to support the family. Statistics in Britain reveal that 57 per cent of men do not keep in touch with their children and this declines to 47 per cent over ten years. Other British research reveals that men with young families work the longest hours and that often they work overtime in order to compensate the loss of their partner's earnings. It appears that married men under the age of thirty with young children, work four times as much paid overtime as married men of similar ages without children. This is often the time when women need the support of their partners, particularly as this time with young children can be very stressful. It appears that this patriarchal excuse of economic values overrides more personal ones, which makes it difficult for women, when society makes this practice acceptable. (Alford, 1984, Sampson, 1991, Spender, 1983, Neuberger, 1991 and Cockburn, 1991)

Studies indicate that men give less help to women during the childbearing stage of marriage, therefore the psychological pressure of coping virtually on one's own places a heavy burden on women. Other research confirms that the more children in the family, the less assistance men give in the home and the more work women do. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990 and Oakley, 1990)

The structuring of most jobs and inflexible working hours makes it very difficult for men to share the load of family responsibilities. Men generally are affected by these rigid requirements and make up the main group of society. (The House of Representatives Standing

The dilemma of women's low paid salaries in comparison to men's salaries is a large factor preventing them from job sharing. Thus women are confined to the home, prevented from entering the paid work force. Men are not encouraged to share the family responsibility and the unpaid concept of work in the home does not provide any incentive for them. Again, there seems to be a relationship between men's lack of involvement with family and help with domestic chores and women's expected roles as housewife and mother in the home. Despite this 42 per cent of working women have children, thus posing a huge challenge to the assumption about 'traditional' Australian families. (Cockburn, 1991 and The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992).

It is interesting to note that men's housework involvement increases only when their wives are full-time paid employees. However, women who work part-time in the work force, do as much housework as full-time homemakers and childcare is considered the woman's responsibility, regardless of her work. Thus gendered roles are divided between domestic life and productive work. It seems men like to help with housework, rather than take responsibility. However, blue collar workers feel more threatened by this idea of assisting with domestic tasks, as it does not fit the stereotype 'macho' image. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990 and Oakley, 1990).

Research in Britain and Australia has found that women are still performing 80-90 per cent of domestic chores. Thus it appears that the roles within the family have not changed very much, despite the fact that more women are in the work force. In fact, it has been observed that men's outlook, their priorities and contribution in the home have not altered. The only difference is that men are thought to be doing more domestic work than previous generations. (Coward, 1992, Faludi, 1991 and the Australian Bureau of Statistics 1991)

It is also interesting to note that women's perception of the amount of work spent by their partners on childcare tasks appear to be quite inaccurate. Women perceive that their partners spend an equal proportion of time in childcare roles. In fact only 12 per cent of men spend time with routine childcare tasks. 87 per cent of men on the other hand accurately stated that their wives spend most of their time with their children. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990)

I am interested in this inaccurate perception that women have of their partners and cannot help but wonder if some collusion occurs in order to protect men, to make it appear that they are conforming to society's opinion that men are doing more housework, thus perpetuating the image that men are 'good', devoted fathers and supportive of the concept of equality.

Many women still take the sole responsibility for

childcare and providing care arrangements for their children. Yet it appears to be socially acceptable for men to continue pursuing their career uninterrupted, ahead of family commitments. The focus on women's childcare roles has again deflected debate from men's commitment to their families in relation to their careers. As working hours have decreased, leisure time has increased, men's roles and responsibility in the family are generally overlooked. However, women do not always encourage men to help with the domestic chores because it threatens their one domain of power and even when women do return to work, they attempt to organise domestic life in order to prevent further family upheaval. Rather than altering the household division of labour upon returning to work, women tend to take the full brunt of it. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990 and Sampson, 1991)

It is thought that women acquire the wrong power as centre of the family which can leave them unprotected against new pressures, such as economic insecurity. The maternal bond and feminine values only offer women power on a short-term basis. The economic power which is acquired by the man working outside the home is significantly related to the household organization. Thus the bigger the income gap between husband and wife, the less the man's contribution to housework. For the more liberated and enlightened couples, household labour is more equally divided, with men performing more household chores and women decreasing their involvement. Thus as the income gap decreases between the two

partners, the more time men spend on housework. It is time for men as fathers to take their share of the domestic work in the home and free women once and for all of the 'double burden'. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990 and Coward, 1992)

WOMEN AND THEIR INTERRUPTED CAREERS

70-80 per cent of Australian women will have children, thus their careers will be interrupted on a number of occasions. Therefore, women's participation in the work force is dominated by their role as mother and worker. It is felt that women have been bearing a double burden for decades in the time of supposed equality, but equality is not occurring on the home or work front. (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs 1992)

Women tend to follow a typical three phase pattern of employment - full-time domesticity to rear children, which is generally followed by employment on a part-time basis. Women also concentrate on occupations which reflect the conventional feminine roles. 'Marriage and motherhood represent the goal of the feminine role, while a career is the goal to which the modern role is oriented' (Oakley, 1990, p.78). So women are pressured into contradictory roles to achieve intellectually and yet feel the need to underachieve in their role as a woman.

Some feminists view maternity and domesticity as the

basic impediments to women's equality and promotion in the work force. Women continue to be subordinated as a result of their economic dependence on men and their position of unpaid labour. (Cockburn, 1991)

Thus the social relation of housework and the effect it has on women's access to paid work and the amount of time spent by women in paid work, is related to the amount of time spent by women on domestic matters. Women who work in full-time positions in the work force spend less time in domestic work than women in part-time jobs and full-time home workers, thus the gender division of labour remains in place with the home and paid employment. There is very little employer recognition of family responsibilities and improved access to childcare is needed in order to cater for women re-entering the work place. As women have attempted to achieve equality in the work place, they have met with resistance through the established patriarchal structures through such practices as inadequate childcare services, little employer recognition of family responsibilities and other inflexibilities and lower pay which have limited women's attempts to re-enter the work place successfully. (Faludi, 1991 and Spender, 1992 and The Tasmanian Women's Consultative Council, 1992)

Women's direct link with the division of work in the home has a real influence on their careers in the paid work force. Family life, husband and children take priority over their careers. Women's ambivalence, their

lack of competitiveness and ambition are seen as other factors inhibiting careers. (Weedon, 1987, Coward, 1992, Baxter and Gibson, 1990)

DIFFERENCES IN PART-TIME WORK FOR WOMEN AND MEN

Part-time work, therefore is viewed as the ideal solution for women, allowing them to earn money for the family and themselves and still have time for domestic work. Most women choose part-time work as a result of their domestic responsibilities and others work out of economic necessity. Other professional women want to continue along their career path, often selecting part-time work as a happy compromise between career and family. In doing so, they elect to accept their work situation in the knowledge that their prospects of promotion are negligible. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990).

Of the 60 per cent of women who work, 40 per cent select to work on a part-time basis. Part-time work appeals to women because it is flexible, allowing family commitments to still be undertaken. This double burden of combining two jobs is a major issue for Australian women. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reveals that 80 per cent of women would like to work, but family commitments and inadequate childcare are the main reasons given for preventing this from occurring.

On the other hand, more than half the number of men, who work part-time do so, in order to further their

education. Therefore the profile of part-time workers differs dramatically by sex. The typical male part-time worker is working in the short term to finance his education. The typical female part-time worker is fitting paid work around her familial and domestic responsibilities, presumably, over a longer time span. 50 per cent of the men who participate in part-time work are between the ages of 15-24 years, yet only 13 per cent of women working part-time are in that age category. Men nearing retirement form the other age group who choose to work part-time. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990)

Part-time workers generally consist of married women whose desire is to divide their time between the home, family and work. Some women undertake two part-time jobs in order to bring in extra money for the family because some part-time jobs pay so little. Women often claim economic reasons for returning to work as well as factors such as self-identity, self-confidence and time and space away from the home. Family commitments (married with children) are a significant reason relating to women's participation in part-time work. Thus 35 per cent of married women work in part-time positions in the secondary labour market. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990 and Cockburn, 1991)

It appears that married women experience more constraints than men in their employment, which reinforces the different meanings domestic responsibilities have for men and women, in terms of

their activities in the paid work force. Married men with children perceive domestic responsibilities not to be an issue for them and see few constraints on their work. Thus the inter link between the public and private sphere remains quite separate for men. Women, on the other hand, are totally restricted in their job by domestic constraints with the private sphere interfering with the public. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990).

There also appear to be differing definitions of work in male and female jobs. Women consider 'flexibility of hours' (Baxter and Gibson, 1990, p.80) refers to part-time work, but men interpret it to refer to overtime. Therefore, as men spend longer hours in paid work than women, there arises a sex segregation of the labour force in the type of jobs men and women generally do.

Women who work in paid employment either full-time or part-time take all the responsibility of organising childcare or occasional care as well as the domestic labour. Employers also fail to recognize and assist women in their conflicting circumstances of work responsibilities and family. Some women leave the paid work force because these constant hurdles seem insurmountable between juggling their job, children and housework. Other women give up their original careers and downgrade their positions to one in which they have less responsibility and pressure. (The Tasmanian Women's Consultative Council, 1992).

It is clear that women are unable to enter the paid work

force on the same level as their male friends. Married women with children encounter more gender-based disadvantages in society because they assume more of the domestic and familial responsibilities than men. They choose to compromise their position, by selecting poorer jobs with less promotional opportunities in order to survive. One study reveals that working mothers in general look after sick children and only 10 per cent of father's care for ill children, despite original agreements by them to share the responsibility. (The Tasmanian Women's Consultative Council, 1992)

Part-time work is also subjected to the tag of not being 'real work' in comparison to full-time work. There also appears to be fewer entitlements for accessibility and eligibility for long service leave, paid study leave or superannuation schemes for part-timers.

WOMEN'S COMPLICITY

It is significant to note that women continue to put up with social situations which continue to oppress them. Despite the fact that feminist theory has deconstructed the family analytically and feminist practices have undermined it politically, warning women of the traps of the traditional patriarchal family, women still seek it out with gusto in the 1990s. (Coward, 1992)

Feminist writings are numerous, raising public awareness surrounding myths about family life, concerning sexual fidelity, loyalty, marriage and everlasting love. The

cold reality of rape in marriage, domestic violence and high incidence of divorce has been exposed. The myth of motherhood and women's unconditional love and submission to men has clearly been revealed in order to make women more aware of patriarchal traps.

The new state of post-feminism equality and the rush back to the home of successful businesswomen to 'cocoon' is part of a huge backlash against feminism which has infiltrated all aspects of Western society from the political arena, educational institutions, the film industry to contemporary psychology. Single professional business women are constantly reminded that their biological clocks are running out and too much independence will lead to workaholism. It appears that the New Right has devised deliberate political tactics internationally to defend the family as its terrain with feminism as its foe. Feminism is blamed for the increased divorce rates, abortions and downfall and loss of traditional family values. The New Right maintains the polarisation of good versus evil - lesbians, homosexuals, women in the paid work force, and those women in non-traditional jobs, being the problem. It wants to see a reversion to the conventional nuclear family with the man in the position of power and the woman's position, one of submission. (Eisenstein, 1991 and Faludi, 1991)

In fact, organised feminism has not won over all women and statistics reveal that the patriarchally organised family is here to stay. It appears that women in the

1990s are repeating the actions of women in the 1950s but with some differences. The women of the 1990s are well qualified and are choosing to leave their jobs. Perhaps feminism's message has underrated the pleasure women experience in the responsibility of rearing children. (Coward, 1992). This is a valid point and many women do enjoy the change and challenges of children. However, there seems to be a fine line between a woman's responsibility for her child's welfare becoming a total commitment - for life. It is often the hidden agenda, such as loss of independence, loss of career and loss of identity and full responsibility for the child, day in day out, which turns the rosy picture somewhat sour. For many women, the total overwhelming experience of motherhood is so great that it often takes years to regain control over their lives. Even then a new set of 'guilt trips' may take over. But often women deny the hardships and trials they experience with young children, claiming that it was the best thing they had ever done in their life, again reinforcing the motherhood conspiracy of silence and complicity. The media also uses 'trend stories' to deliver its message, claiming it represents public feeling. Trend journalism, repeated often enough, becomes authoritarian, despite the fact that it lacks factual information. The aim of the female trend stories of the 1980s was to find a man, get pregnant and bond with children. It seems a return to the gender trademark with the media pushing images of new abstinence, the new femininity and the new monogamy. The 1990s articles reveal why women forego their careers which are well

supported by films which attempt to make motherhood appear to be very cozy, at the same time, denouncing abortion. The message of this backlash is that feminism has made women free and equal, but at a cost, which has made them dreadfully lonely and burnt-out super women. (Faludi, 1991)

However, inequities still exist in our society, despite the work of the feminist movement over the past twenty years. Western society is still competitive and individualistic, with roles based on authoritarian images between men and women, which create further division between men and women. It appears that the more conservative the government in power, such as Right wing parties, the more difficult women's plight because often the first areas to be cut are welfare and childcare. (Segal, 1990)

Also a backlash by men over time attempts to thwart women's rights to succeed, to the degree that it appears not to be political and not to be a struggle at all. It is most powerful when it becomes private and lodges inside a woman's mind, turning her vision inward, until she begins to enforce the backlash on herself. In this matter, social constructs are subtle and pressure applied by other women onto women is the most effective means of keeping them in line. So the traditional roles of women submitting to the feminine role of motherhood is one to which career women finally succumb. Hence in the 1990s more women in their late twenties to mid thirties are leaving work after many years as successful

people, to fulfil society's ultimate expectation of having a child. (Faludi, 1991).

Society continues to claim that childbearing and motherhood are the best times of one's life, fulfilling life's greatest satisfaction. Society is also keen to bandy around the message that feminism has served its purpose, that all has been achieved with equality for working women, laws for sexual discrimination and gender equity programmes being established in schools to rectify any existing problems. (Oakley, 1990)

WOMEN'S AMBIVALENCE TOWARDS WORK

British research reveals that 45 per cent of women who downgrade their position from full-time to part-time work after having a child, experience downward mobility. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990). Women's choices to downgrade their career expectations and leave their careers occur as a result of their general ambivalence towards work, once they have children. Research indicates that women's sense of career is not fundamental to their identity, which explains their ambivalence in giving up work or downgrading their job status. Women also feel that this is a deeply held female attitude which is constructed by society well before the birth of a child. Therefore, the conflict of priorities a child creates, makes it easy for them to discard matters which previously had been very important. Thus it is not maternal feelings which relate to women's ambivalent attitudes, but more the expectations of 'maternity'.

(Coward, 1992). Perhaps it is the social construct of gender and femininity equalling female role which means women rearing children is perceived as the natural discourse. The post-structuralist discourse could add a new dimension to alter this limited perspective.

It is apparent that women experience different attitudes and feelings towards their work than men. They shy away from competitive situations at work and display different responses in their working environment, often feeling alienated. Women have been taught they should not necessarily be the best. (Coward, 1992). This notion of difference between women and men is dealt with in more detail in the chapter on Gender Inequality in Girls' Education. It is interesting to note the differences between boys and girls and the similar attitudes between girls and women, particularly as evidence indicates that in co-educational schools, girls under perform academically.

Women also appear to be ambivalent about power which is fundamentally contradictory to the idea and idealisation of being female. Research indicates that women are morally different from men and operate within an ethic of care for others, not within a morality of rights as men do. To want power is to be like a man which threatens the social and moral order which is organized around the difference. (Davies, 1991)

Women do not like confrontation and avoid it with men, by retreating into the privacy of family life and taking

on board their individual problems. Instead of confronting society for its nonchalant attitude towards children's well being, women choose to uphold the conventional aspirations of being submissive. A woman's upbringing conceals the male contempt towards her because it is embedded in the double-standard of the woman being the peacemaker and optimist who often prefers to ignore or smooth over the 'rough' patches in marriage, rather than confront the problem. Women hate confrontations and avoid them on most occasions. (Coward, 1992 and Spender, 1983)

Therefore, women are complicit in preserving the old traditional forms of femininity within the family where their aim is to please men by their submissiveness and at the same time protect them, thus reinforcing the stereotypes. (Coward, 1992). Many of my friends have succumbed to this pattern of work, family commitments and often submissiveness. Not only do their careers take second place over their children's well-being, but everything else seems to take priority as well.

Often women's own childhood experiences have a big influence on them as carers, particularly if their childhood was unhappy. Some women can become obsessive with their children and overreact in order to provide their every need. The sense of being needed as a mother challenges women in a way a career does not. Women can use motherhood as an escape from work and career as these may have created competitive situation in which they do not feel comfortable. On the other hand,

mothering often brings out the best in women, thus exposing the huge gulf between individualism and professional work and altruism of the maternal bond. Women may not be the slaves of men, however there is a great danger they will become the slaves of their children. Not only that, women attempt unrealistic goals taking on board the domestic work and mothering and compromising with part-time work, in preference to challenging the existing societal expectations and patriarchal structures. (Coward, 1992)

Despite the progress feminism and women have made in the area of the paid work force, a large majority of women who work part-time in the secondary sector remain disadvantaged. Women who consider full-time employment find it more difficult organising domestic chores but 83 per cent of married women fit paid work around the needs of the family and home in the form of part-time work, predisposing them to secondary labour market positions.

Thus for women, domestic labour responsibilities affect paid work participation. The same relationship does not hold for men (Baxter and Gibson, 1990, p.2)

It seems that women's problems are as great as before, but to complain is considered to be an embarrassing feminist habit, because society perceives women have already achieved their so-called feminist destinies. Therefore the 1990s women do not complain. Instead they worry about their children and partners in the hope they are progressing at a higher standard than their own generation. The old inevitabilities of traditional

family life which feminism challenged have returned. Today's women are similar to previous generations of women who were involved in conspiring to ignore unpleasant feelings outside the family by denying their presence. Thus gender-role socialisation, family responsibilities, career selection, occupational and industrial segregation, poor union representation, lack of promotion, rates of pay, job security and lack of benefits of superannuation are some of the reasons for women's disadvantaged position in the labour market! Women are trying to do too much and accommodate all the contradictory expectations of achieving the 'unrealistic ideal' (Coward, 1992, p.180) of unpaid work and paid work. Too often they attempt to be super women and solve social problems with individual answers. Social solutions, are necessary to solve women's dilemma rather than individual answers. If women attempt to cope with the heavy load placed on their shoulders by society, as individuals, they will pay a heavy price. Individually, women are isolated. To date the idea of women entering paid work has been accepted by society, but more needs to be done to actually allow women to do so on an equal basis, after having had children. (Coward, 1992 and Yates, 1993)

CHILDCARE AVAILABILITY AND SERVICES

There is evidence that childcare arrangements and accessibility have a big impact on women returning to paid employment more so than men, thus reinforcing society's attitude that mothers are the prime carers of

children and the notion of childcare being 'womens business' (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992, p.69).

The accessibility of childcare, the number of hours a woman works and the ability to make long term commitments, all play a part in affecting women's ability to become employed in the work force. Childcare agencies need to be flexible in order to cater for the variety of employment options, including part-time work, casual and shift work or occasional care. At present there is inadequate provision of childcare facilities. By the year 2000 affordable, quality childcare will be available to employees to assist with childcare services. The concept of childcare in the work place needs to be looked at more closely, if women are going to be given equal opportunity in the work force. A major issue facing women's return to the work force is the lack of work-based childcare facilities and employer's inflexible attitudes about job sharing or part-time work. (The Office of the Status of Women, 1990 and The Tasmanian Women's Consultative Council 1992)

Inadequate childcare facilities exist in Britain with only 2 per cent of the estimated population of children under five in day care places. In fact little incentive is given to encourage women to return to the work force on full or part-time basis. Until now, women and their families have carried the double burden of childcare and

domestic work instead of employers and governments.

Work-based childcare is still in its infancy and existing childcare facilities need to be dramatically improved to cater for the needs of all types of jobs in which women and men are involved. There is a growing need for more work-based childcare places and some corporate groups are developing in-house childcare programmes. Employers need to address this issue seriously if equality of women is going to be achieved. Guidelines for financial and management public sector are being adopted by employers to provide suitable childcare from within their current budgets. Also an accreditation scheme has been developed to ensure quality childcare is available through a National Accreditation System. (Baxter and Gibson, 1990 Neuberger, 1991 and The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992).

Both the private and public sector of options for childcare services are being encouraged, be they in the form of employer-based childcare, community based childcare or creche facilities. Employers may sponsor childcare services for their staff. Indeed, for full-time mothers, occasional care is difficult to acquire and can be costly as it is not subjected to relief. Thus, there is a need for government guidelines to be more flexible to assist all women. The commercialisation of childcare is one solution to the childcare situation. (Eisenstein, 1991 and The House of

Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992).

In Sweden, the social democratic government leads the Western nations with its improved gender equality in the organised labour market by making women more economically equal. Sweden and other Scandinavian countries are committed to equal opportunities with improved welfare and childcare facilities. The 1987 Swedish Marriage Act specifies that housework and childcare are to be equally shared by spouses. Swedish fathers are also able to take leave in order to look after sick children. Sweden leads by example, with men and women being allowed nine months leave to look after their child at 90 per cent normal pay and further leave on a fixed grant until the child is nineteen months old. Either parent can work part-time or less hours until the child is ten years old. (Cockburn, 1991 and Segal, 1990)

However, the political context in other countries does not alter matters as far as men becoming more domesticated because only one in five Swedish fathers uses parental leave to care for young children. Finance is a reason often given because men earn more than their spouse. Social feminists believe male power over women is centralised through state policies which make women caring for others in the home financially dependent upon men, as well as being embedded in other structures of the work place and the home. (Segal, 1987). There is a need, however, to alter the dominance of the traditional

full-time job, in which the husband generally supports his wife and children, in order to allow women the opportunity to re-enter the paid work force. By improving part-time work opportunities for women, more men may be attracted to part-time work, thus allowing shared responsibility in the private sphere of the home. They feel there is a need to create a different 'division of labour' (Baxter and Gibson, 1990, p.103) which suits both male and female ideologies, rather than look at full-time paid work dominated by traditional male values and perspectives.

Part-time work as a solution to unemployment is also a viable option for our society. It would allow men and women time to both work and also share the responsibilities of childrearing and domestic work. I believe this would help women gain equality in the work place and home. This would give both men and women more free time and an opportunity to share childrearing equally, thus lessening women's existing burden.

The granting of paternal leave has helped to eliminate barriers for women in Australia. The Arbitration Commission agreed to allow unpaid paternity leave to male employees who have worked continuously for twelve months. However there is the need to ensure that maternity leave provisions are protected in order to allow women equal access in the paid work force. Thus the Government can allow structures to be implemented to improve the domestic sharing pre-requisites by allowing a choice for parents. Paternity leave is a valuable

step to equality, however, realistically only few women will elect to return to work in the first year of their baby's life, particularly if they choose to breast feed. (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992 and The Office of the Status of Women, 1990)

Sweden's example of part-time work or less hours until their child is ten years old provides a more realistic and on-going sharing of nurturing roles. Perhaps maternity/paternity leave could be extended over a two year period, in which both female and then male partners could equally divide their time rearing their child for the first two years of life.

Special leave is another issue which is needed to allow parents to deal with their child's illness without risking career or job prospects and share family responsibilities. At present, there is little care available for sick children, which places working women in awkward positions in which they often feel forced to lie to their employer in order to take their own sick leave to care for their ill child. Once again, fathers leave organisation of these matters to their partners. In Sweden workers are given seven days annual sick leave to cater for sick children or relatives. This type of sick leave however does not exist in Australia at present, but would provide a satisfactory solution. (Segal, 1990 and The Tasmanian Women's Consultative Council, 1992).

Therefore, there is the need to have more flexible work hours to balance and assist with family responsibilities. This in turn should help individual workers and economic productivity. The Department of Industrial Relations recommends that employers, unions and professional bodies make the necessary industrial awards, amendments and work practices to assist with family responsibilities and also to encourage work environments to develop flexibility for male and female workers. The male structures of work schedules and administration organization remain unquestioned and childrearing is idealized in order to keep the traditional values going. Therefore, women need to confront men so they do not avoid responsibility to provide equal help with domestic chores on the home front. Women too often make excuses for them which does not further their cause. They also need to confront society with men's support to provide work-based childcare if they want to be equal in the work place and improve their place in the home. (Coward, 1992)

Women's role as homemakers in a patriarchal society place them in positions of disempowerment and subservience. Society gives them no financial recognition and expects them to abide by their expected roles primarily as mothers and homemakers. These women earn no money and are totally dependent on their spouse. Even the Dependent Spouse Rebate is paid to the husband, rather than the wife.

If Women's careers are interrupted as a result of having

children, they seem to be complicit in selecting generally part-time lower paid, sex-segregated jobs. Thus the emphasis is on the family, around which they slot work. Their pay is often considered a supplement to the chief breadwinner - the husband.

The myths of motherhood abound in society placing women in conflicting positions of guilt, torn between their family role and their own careers. Men's role in family life reveals that despite equality being the catch-cry of the 90's, men really do very little in helping in the area of unpaid work. In fact, women bear the double burden, leaving men with the delusion that they think they are doing more to help with domestic chores.

Society's role in assisting women's return to the work force needs to be far more responsible. Employer-based childcare facilities and better sick leave provisions for sick children need to be considered and a more flexible paternity/maternity leave arrangement needs to be addressed.

Post-structuralist feminism is one positive avenue which women can use in order to break down societal expectations and feel free to assert their independence in selecting jobs for which they are qualified.

The link between paid and unpaid work has ramifications for society as a whole. It appears that for most women, the private sphere of the home which includes childrearing and domestic work, is their major

occupational role around which paid employment is slotted. Until all these problems are overcome, there seems to be little hope of women achieving their career potential and equality with their male counterparts, in the home and the work place.

CHAPTER THREE

GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION

Teaching is one profession in which there is a preponderance of women. However, it appears that few women teachers hold senior positions in comparison to their male counterparts. This anomaly is explored further with regard to the promotion of women and men teachers within the education system and, in particular, the Tasmanian Education Department.

The differing attitudes of women teachers in regard to promotion are considered, as is the difference in career enhancement within the first five years of teaching between men and women. Also the discrepancy in the number of years of service for promotion for men and women teachers is explored. The implications of gender bias within the organization of the education system are investigated, particularly in the light of renewed emphasis on gender equity in Australian schools. As women teachers appear to be in lower ranks of the education hierarchy, the moral dilemma is raised about the genuineness of the education system's belief in true equality for girls and boys. The issue of gender inequality within the total education system appears to continue to be perpetuated from the ranks of the teaching profession right through to the level of the students.

The implication of women teachers leaving the teaching profession to have a family is considered in the light

of their promotional opportunities and their return to the work force. The different conditions and opportunities offered by part-time as against full time teaching are also explored.

The effect of the 'glass ceiling' is discussed in relation to the difficulties business women experience in being promoted to senior management positions. Reasons and attitudes which may prevent women's further advancement are considered and Australia's male dominating 'mateship' and its networking are also explored.

The implementation of Equal Opportunity Programmes and Sexual Discrimination Acts is examined in terms of improving and preventing indirect discrimination against women resuming the careers of their choice, returning to their original level of employment, or achieving promotion within the public sector.

These issues appear to be vital to the success of women in establishing their careers to an optimum level.

School teaching is one of the most female - intensive professional occupations in Australia and it is increasing. There seem to be more female teachers in the primary, special and high schools and across the Catholic school sector (McKenzie, 1991, p.71).

Women teachers' careers in Australia have been shaped by the cultural, economic and historical constraints which have influenced women's lives as early residents on this continent. As the focus in the early settlers time was

on men, so too does the present state of teaching and careers appear to be in the hands of men. This is reinforced by the fact that teaching is also one of the most sex-divided professions in Australia. There is also a perception that men are more competent in administrative tasks and carry more authority and seniority within schools. Women, on the other hand teach, but few consider teaching as a career. (Sampson, 1991)

Despite evidence of changing attitudes to marriage and work for women, there is considerable evidence which reflects that women who are in higher positions in school are more likely to be single. The inference for this is that women who are married find it hard juggling their paid job, promotion, family, housework and marriage. In the Tasmanian Education Department, there is evidence of a gender bias in the promotion of teachers, with over 75.5 per cent of male teachers being in promotional positions in comparison to 24.3 per cent of female teachers. Less than 9.1 per cent of Principals are women and less than 21 per cent of Vice Principals are women. (Maclean, 1992)

There appears to be a clear dichotomy within the Tasmanian education system that women dominate the teaching profession, yet men hold most senior positions and administrative ones.

Therefore, gender is influential in affecting women's careers by their under representation in most promotable

positions in the Education Department and by the length of time they take to achieve equivalent promotion positions in comparison to men. Single women seek promotion more readily than married women and women with families. Gender bias appears to be perpetuated through the whole of the education system. (Maclean, 1992 and The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992)

Research on the process of career enhancement of young teachers in their first five years of teaching, reveals that 61 per cent of men, but only 45 per cent of women were given organizational and administrative tasks. Not only is it obvious that young women teachers do not equally share administrative tasks with young, male counterparts, but also sex-stereotyping of administrative tasks occurs. Women teachers are given organisational tasks in the classroom and library, while the men arrange across-curriculum school activities, assist with the time-table and convene various school committees. Thus male teachers experience greater career enhancement process in administration, while the female teachers are stream lined into other 'lesser status' roles. As women have not been given these administrative tasks as part of their apprenticeship to teaching, they do not feel they have the expertise required to manage in areas of school hierarchies. (Sampson, 1991)

The career profiles of male and female teachers holding the same promotion positions in primary and secondary

schools reveal that on average, men are promoted more quickly than women.

	PRIMARY		SECONDARY	
	WOMEN YEARS	MEN YEARS	WOMEN YEARS	MEN YEARS
Senior teacher	11.9	9	10.1	8.9
Vice Principals	16	13.7	18.7	16.5
Principals small schools	13.2	9.5		

Table 1 (Maclean, 1992, 123)

Teachers' perception of gender is a very real issue in the way a teacher is promoted. It appears that women aspire to Vice Principal generally as the highest position. The tension between looking after the family and going to work is so great for women, that they consider principal status too much responsibility and or alternatively, believe they do not deserve a position of such power. (Maclean, 1992)

Older women teachers are given more administrative tasks than younger women. The socialisation process tends to influence women's choice in not applying for promotion. 63 per cent of women name leaving the classroom as an important reason not to apply for promotion as opposed to 46 per cent of men. Women see administrative duties as totally divorced from the classroom which is similar to their view of pursuing a career in teaching - a complete separation from the classroom and students. Women are also prevented from attending courses or

administrative in-service courses of their choice because of the strong male network within schools. (Sampson, 1991)

Over the last two decades necessary changes have occurred in legislative procedures to deal with the outmoded, stranglehold of seniority as a rationale for promotion. Prior to this, women suffered discriminatory practices by losing all promotional status and were forced to resign upon having children. They were then expected to recommence the long haul up the hierarchical ladder upon their return to teaching. If the promotion system in teaching is changed, it would not disadvantage women in their efforts to gain promotion as a result of the gaps which may exist in their work histories. (Maclean, 1991 and Sampson, 1991)

Of the women who had continuous service over a twenty five year period, none reached the highest level in the teaching profession because there was a perception in the community that women were unsuitable school leaders. Men had careers in teaching and women taught. This concept continues to flow into the education system today. In fact, not until the 1980s did most Australian states offer women a career in teaching as a vocation in which they could be given some professional responsibility. It was not until 1988 that a woman became a Director General of a government education system in one Australian state. There is evidence throughout Australian government schools that stereotypes exist of men as competent leaders and

decision makers and women as being incompetent in these areas, thus men are given more opportunity earlier in administrative duties in a school. (Sampson, 1991)

Women teachers' working life is generally classified as non-linear and does not follow the usual career path. Women's disrupted work histories, for rearing children, is still one of the main reasons for lack of promotion. Therefore, in the traditional sense, women are not seen by employers as displaying a high level of career commitment which has traditionally been required for promotion. Another alternative, is that the promotions system may have a formal or informal bias which favours the promotion of men, rather than women. (Maclean, 1991)

Research reveals that women teachers have lower career aspirations than men in wanting to reach promotional level. Women's limited success perspective regarding career and promotion does not alter over time, because women are more family orientated than career minded and often judge an occupation according to the ease with which it can be integrated into family life. There is also evidence that women consider their husband's career ahead of their own. 54 per cent of women teachers were unprepared to seek promotion because they considered their partner's career more important. It is interesting to also note in the light of this information, that 67 per cent of men and 61 per cent of women consider women's jobs as equal to their own, yet more women perceive constraints on their careers.

(Sampson, 1991)

Therefore, marital status is also seen to be a link to women's promotional patterns. Once married, women tend to put family considerations ahead of a career or promotion. This attitude is thought to be one reason explaining the under-representation of women in higher-status occupations, not only in teaching, but in any other occupation. There appear to be more unmarried women who hold top positions in the teaching hierarchy. (Maclean, 1991)

Another gender-role issue affecting women's careers is that of the private sphere of the home which includes child rearing and domestic work. Household duties are not equally shared by men and women, despite the increasing family contributions by women in terms of earned income. Many Australians still regard child nurturing and provision of daily household chores as 'women's work' and this constraint definitely affects women teachers against the choice of more time-consuming career pursuits. (Maclean, 1992 and Sampson, 1991)

Society still views children as women's responsibility in the 1990s. Many women become exhausted, struggling against career systems in which they failed to obtain promotion on the grounds of their gender. Women who had careers and at a later stage had children, regarded retirement from their careers as a temporary measure, until their children attended school. However, the difficulty facing these women in returning to the work

force was obtaining access and updating of their skills over that five year period. (Neuberger, 1991)

Women teachers tend to adopt a 'limited success' (Maclean, 1992, p.195) perspective throughout their career, especially once they have children, because they are reluctant to move and unsettle the family. Thus their children's education and their spouse's job are considered more important. Interestingly, men adopt an unlimited success perspective once they are married, and are far more prepared to be mobile in order to gain promotion.

Although part-time work or job-sharing and career-break schemes are becoming more available to women as a way of helping them through the childrearing years, it is also a pathway which impedes their career progress. Not only is the career-break scheme of five years' absence from work thought to be an impediment for promotion, but a double standard occurs, as men support women in the scheme, but refuse to take leave themselves for fear of ruining their career prospects. Hence women's dilemma! Despite the fact that marriage in past years influenced the work roles and career promotion patterns of women, the same situation still appears to be occurring today. Women continue to put their family considerations ahead of pursuing a work career or promotion. (Cockburn, 1991 and Maclean, 1992)

Women teachers did not elect to participate in any in-service training courses outside school hours because of

family commitments, thus home duties again are considered more important than work outside the home. Women continue to be locked into the traditional gender roles placed upon them by society and they continue to pander to the nuclear family in which the man and children are of primary consideration, thus sacrificing their own career prospects. Research reveals that women teachers have sole responsibility for children for more than four hours per day. It is also interesting to note that women teachers who no longer have children living at home spend more time on housework than men. 88 per cent of women compared to 65 per cent of men perform three or more tasks for themselves and others. Thus women teachers choose against promotion because of extra-domestic responsibilities. (Sampson, 1991)

Also, women's lack of self-perception and leadership ability or administrative experience also play a part in affecting their promotion and career path. They definitely do not aim as high as their male counterparts. Research reveals that 42 per cent expect to remain classroom teachers, in comparison to 15 per cent of men. Despite the fact that women have strong beliefs in their own abilities as teachers, only 17 per cent sought to become Principals or Administrators in regional or departmental offices as opposed to 44 per cent of men. Men also apply more often for promotion than women. (Sampson, 1991)

There are also differences between promoted male and female teachers' views on teaching. Promoted female

teachers are more interested in staff-pupil relationships and pastoral care to individual pupils, whereas men are more interested in economic security, holidays and then staff-pupil relationships. Men primarily seek promotion for monetary gains, whereas women seek promotion in order to influence the curriculum. (Maclean, 1992)

Some examples of existing discriminatory practices which affect women teachers gaining promotion include, inappropriate and irrelevant questions relating to women's personal lives, such as starting a family, childcare arrangements and preparedness to participate in after-hours in-service training (often without provision for childcare facilities), no provision for dependent sick leave, lack of advertising of all promotional positions and no set procedure to fill short term or long-term acting positions. In 1990, The Affirmative Action Act was introduced to ensure that all women be given an equal chance to compete for jobs when they arise, but the problem remains that women have to wait for those positions to become available and men who have existing jobs and who are in promotion positions will not be removed as a result of the Act. So once again therein lies the dilemma for women! (The Office of the Status of Women, 1991b)

On the issue of geographic mobility, it seems that women teachers are prepared to transfer residence in the initial years in order to seek promotion. However, often their partner's job takes precedence over their

own promotion. Once female teachers marry, they become less geographically mobile than men. In the case of women teachers who are promoted, they feel it is more important to work in a desirable work location than continue to follow further promotion for their career. Men are more competitive for promotion than women and achieve promotion at a faster rate as mentioned earlier. Job transfers for men occur in a vertical line, rather than on a horizontal basis which is more in keeping with women. Generally, male teachers who serve in the Education system and agree to move between schools on a regular basis, are rewarded with promotion. There is a general consensus amongst teachers that school teaching as a career is good for men because of their potential security and for women because, it suits 'their maternal temperament' (Maclean, 1992, p.187), combining well with home duties.

Women do not make the most of opportunities in the work force, striving for promotion because they are exposed to a conflict between alternative gender roles. The gender roles are based on a biological basis of sex which defines them with characteristics appropriate to that sex. Culturally, people are pressured to be either masculine or feminine. However, modern society attempts to create equality for females and males on the one hand as they strive to achieve their full potential, and on the other hand, it strengthens and increases the differentiation between masculinity and femininity, by centering around women as the mother, wife and housewife and masculinity around men being the breadwinner and

head of the family. Therefore, men are defined as people with careers and women are defined as women with short-lived careers who look after children and take care of the domestic work.

The number of part-time teachers is increasing with more than three quarters of part-time teachers being women. Part-time teachers are at present ineligible for promotion, so once again, women's careers are being placed on hold within the teaching profession. (McKenzie, 1991). At present in Tasmania, women who have been on leave as full-time teachers and who have elected to return to teaching on a part-time basis are locked into that load permanently. Women, who elect part-time work in order to combine family and career, at the same time are restricting themselves to part-time work for the remainder of their career, in which no further promotion can take place. Men, on the other hand, experience no such dilemma.

Part-time jobs for women in the Australian Public Service are generally limited to lower grades within occupations which are either basic, non-transferable or unskilled. Part-time workers are less likely to receive as much training and promotion than full-time ones and there exists a lack of career structure for part-timers. It is also noted that permanent part-time workers do not move to higher positions, but more often are moved sideways in a similar fashion as the female teachers. (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992)

'THE GLASS CEILING'

The question as to why there are so few women in corporate executive jobs and in educational institutions was raised on the Australian programme, Four Corners, 'The Glass Ceiling' in October 1992, which effectively brought out the biased attitudes of men preventing women from succeeding to top executive positions. The programme revealed that thirty years after the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1960s, only 3 per cent of Australian women hold executive positions out of 50 per cent of women in the work force. There appears to be an invisible barrier preventing women reaching senior management positions. It appears few women are represented in management positions in either public or private sectors. Some changes are occurring at lower levels with women moving into junior management, but few women are on boards of corporate management.

Australia's culture of mateship ostracises women as a great deal of networking takes place at sporting meets such as football and rugby finals and reinforces the fact that Australia has one of the most gender-segregated work forces in the O.E.C.D. countries. Senior management will not allow women to take risks or make important decisions.

Women are still the primary care givers and they need to establish another system which allows greater flexibility with employers. New policies are required. The Sexual Harassment and Sexual Discrimination Acts of

1984, ban discrimination on the grounds of sex, marital status and pregnancy and further changes to the Act in 1992 have occurred to ameliorate the plight of women with children. The attitudes of chief executive men and the organization of our culture is extremely slow in changing. Men have to see the value of women in top level positions. In economic terms, big business has to change its cultural attitudes as well as its political laws.

However, despite the implementation of Equal Opportunity programmes, there is a need to address direct and indirect discrimination which prevents women resuming careers and achieving promotion in the public sector. For example, in Australia and Sweden, more women participate in higher tertiary undergraduate courses, but they are not in proportion to the share of senior positions of employment.

In addition, women have also been under-represented in Australian politics.

Since 1901 there have been 430 people elected to the Senate, only thirty four of whom have been women. 849 people have been elected to the House of Representatives, sixteen of whom have been women (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992, p.160).

In the first forty years of federation, no female held a position in either the House of Representatives or the Senate. In other countries, 38.5 per cent of women hold seats in Sweden, 34.9 per cent in Denmark, in comparison to 6.7 per cent in Australia, the United

States of America and the United Kingdom. (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992)

There is the belief that equality will come only when there are the same number of women in public offices as men, particularly at the decision making and policy levels. Only when women make up 50 per cent of the politicians, doctors, lawyers, engineers, business executives and bureaucrats, will the problem of the two sexes being segregated with different interests and different status be solved. (Spender, 1983)

Despite the fact that there is a preponderance of women teachers, only a small proportion hold positions as executives and leaders in schools and educational administrations. Despite changing attitudes, gender still is an influential factor, whereby women continue to be under represented in occupations of higher status and are less likely to achieve access to higher positions. Therefore, the teaching profession reinforces the broader Australian concept of a sex-segregated work force in being one of the most sex-divided professions in Australia. These patterns of discrimination existing in educational circles illustrates how difficult the patriarchal pattern of male domination over women will be to change. Not only have we seen gender discrimination in the secondary labour markets but evidence indicates a similar pattern in this primary area of the labour force. Men teachers dominate the hierarchical positions in education with

women holding the lower status positions.

Women teachers not only experience consistent discrimination but also the link between the gender division of labour in the home and its overlap of gender division in the work force does affect women teachers' opportunities for promotion and the type of work they take up in schools whether part-time or full-time. Women teachers are given less opportunity to gain administrative experience within their first five years of teaching. They also appear to be less ambitious, prefer classroom teaching as opposed to administrative tasks and place their promotional opportunities secondary to their husbands work and their children. Women tend not to consider teaching as a career in the same way as their male counterparts.

The Tasmanian Education Department discriminates against women teachers by refusing to promote them on an equal basis to men; women take a greater number of years to achieve the same promotional level as men and women teachers tend to move sideways into a similar position instead of up the hierarchical ladder. Thus the situation emerges with women dominating the classroom arena and men the senior positions.

Women teachers also appear to be complicit by not applying for promotion as often as men. Despite moves to change the promotion system in order to give women teachers an equal opportunity in promotion, the dilemma exists that the men who already are in senior positions

cannot be removed!

However, despite making any changes in the promotional system, women tend to put their family first before their own careers, choosing against promotion. More women teachers are choosing part-time work and by doing so are ineligible for promotion, thereby inhibiting their careers.

Within the Australian Public Service, a similar pattern of discrimination is apparent. The phenomenon of the 'glass ceiling' which is a clever patriarchal ploy, again limits women's promotion in corporate management jobs. Few women are given the opportunity to move into senior management and Australian men's mateship ostracises women from being a part of their business decision making which occurs often at social sports meets.

Sexual Discrimination Acts and amendments, Equal Opportunity programmes have had little effect on women's accessibility to promotion in the public and private work sectors. Again hidden beneath Parliamentary Acts which are meant to create equality for women, lies male patriarchal power, like an invisible glass ceiling, thwarting women's prospects to improve their own careers.

In the light of these findings, it is necessary to return to the School arena in order to explore the plight of girls within the education system and

investigate the gender issues which affect them.

CHAPTER FOUR

GENDER INEQUALITY IN GIRLS' EDUCATION

Previous discussion has suggested that gender divisions exist in the world of work and the home and overflow into all areas of education: the curriculum, the teaching profession and in the general interaction between girls and boys. The effect of these gender divisions on girls' education is examined and the way in which girls appear to be disadvantaged and placed in an unequal position throughout their schooling is investigated. The different theories and concepts of gender are considered as educationalists examine girls' approaches and reactions to the curriculum and their overall position within the education system.

The specific role teachers play in reinforcing gender stereotypes is discussed in their different treatment of girls and boys with regard to teaching practices and expectations. The influence of popular cultural texts on girls, in the form of magazines and comics, also plays a significant part in the construction of femininity. Images of femininity which influence girls' desires at a subconscious and conscious level are highlighted. Feminist stories and alternative approaches to new discourses and feminist classroom practice are then discussed revealing ways in which feminine notions of gender may be deconstructed by girls.

It is now common knowledge in Australian schools that gender inequality exists, placing girls at a disadvantage. Government bodies and schools are implementing gender equity programmes and policies in order to rectify this problem. New South Wales and Queensland are attempting to develop different mainstream educational solutions to the gender issues. In South Australia a number of 'major action research projects dealing with specific groups of girls' has been sponsored. (Yates, 1993, p.18).

School culture transmits strong messages about the value placed on participation of girls and women in the life of the school and the wider society (The Australian Education Council, 1993, p.33).

At a national level, one of the key strategies supporting change in school management would be to establish staffing procedures which allow women to hold school leadership positions. It is imperative that women are seen to be recognised in schools as Principals and Administrators and figures of authority in order to break the existing double standard of society in which men hold positions of power generally over women, thus perpetuating the view that boys are more important than girls, as indicated in the previous chapter on women teachers.

There has been very little information about the history of women and of their feats. Thus the education curriculum has helped to maintain the oppression of women and girls, by creating the feeling that they are 'inferior' and have not accomplished anything.

Schools need to recognise their part in being responsible for maintaining the inequality of women and girls. Upon leaving school, there continues to exist limited jobs for girls which reflects the subject choices of girls at school. (Yates, 1993)

Examination of the education curriculum reveals sexism in which students receive a bias and limited view of the role of women in society. Despite the efforts of the Government since 1975 to broaden options, by increasing participation of girls in maths, science and technology, only limited success has occurred. Thus there is a need to look at more deeply entrenched ideologies in our society. For example, research indicates many parents view boys' education and their job prospects as more important than girls'. Parental attitudes and aspirations favour sons as opposed to daughters. Although parents' believe their aspirations are similar for girls, in practice, boys receive more support and encouragement. Parents often reinforce very different behaviours between their children and are unconscious of the differing type of treatment their children experience. (Delamont, 1980 and Yates, 1993)

It is also important that parents realise that children's perceptions of gender can stereotype them from a very early age which can affect their potential education, social and career opportunities. The parents' different beliefs and influences which they offer their children prior to formal schooling are often so subconscious that they result in girls believing

certain types of learning behaviours appropriate to them which differ from boys. Therefore, the children have developed different sets of skills, abilities and knowledge which they bring to school. (Langridge, 1990)

Girls and boys learn at a very young age their place in an unequal society through daily behaviour in which male power and dominance are given value and women's femininity, intuition and nurturing are devalued. It is these gender constructions which serve to form the basis of inequality between women and men.

Young boys' behaviour in school reflects power and dominance, but is often dismissed as innocent play by adults who do not acknowledge it. School boys' use of offensive signs to female teachers are equivalent to adult male sexual harassment. If teachers and parents acknowledged that young boys were learning to use sexuality as a way of exerting power instead of being silly, they would treat the situation quite differently. (Clark, 1990 and The Australian Education Council, 1993). Masculinity in our society is defined as the antithesis of femininity. One important distinction in boys' views is that they quickly dissociate themselves as 'not girls' and 'not feminine' (Connell, 1987, p.184).

As children grow older, they learn highly gendered forms of discourse, yet with very little knowledge of the others' interests. This results in their responding to each other in a narrow, gendered framework setting the

scene for future interaction. (Clark, 1990)

There is also the issue of girls being offered very little career training prospects because their belief is that their real destiny is to marry and raise a family in their early twenties. However, it is the problem of girls in school under performing and psychologically predisposing themselves to lesser results in subjects such as maths and science which is causing educator's concern. Evidently girls fear success in maths and science because it conflicts with society's feminine gender role. The impact of 'fear of success' with girls, reveals the relationship between private and public life and how adolescents conceive their futures. (Clark, 1990, Cockburn, 1991 and Yates, 1993)

Girls seem to be caught up in the conflict that to be feminine, their behaviour must be emotional, sympathetic and exclusively feminine, rather than dominant, competitive or ambitious like men. The underlying message for girls in magazines is to succeed in academic work and to please the family or uphold school reputation. The aim is to please others, by doing the right thing, such as helping mothers in the home and at school, by being clever in class. This reinforces evidence from research which indicates that girls' performance is a result of trying to please. At a maths conference, girls who excelled in maths-related careers in the United Kingdom admitted they were more concerned about combining careers with domestic work and future family. Another gender pattern occurred with

examination results and tests, in which girls did not keep their results, suggesting they undervalue their work. (Oakley, 1990, Walkerdine, 1984 and Yates, 1993)

Also girls' achievement in maths and science appear to be a different type of educational issue. Gender inequality is not an issue about girls failing in school, rather, the focus is on different experiences girls have in school and how their outcomes develop. The emphasis on changing girls' aspirations to be more like boys is also questioned, because boys are not encouraged to become aware about parenting and fatherhood. (Yates, 1993)

Maths and science in girls' comics are depicted as boring subjects, despite the fact that the heroine is good at them. It appears that the arts which symbolize the romance theme encompasses all the excitement. This textual splitting between romance and excitement posits the arts as the desirable goal for girls and the absence of desire for the sciences which are boring,

The themes which appear in the comics act as powerful signifiers keying into struggles which are central to the production of femininity and female sexuality (Walkerdine, 1984, p.97).

Relationships in which a woman is more successful publicly than her partner seem to be rare and the chances of the relationship failing are a lot higher. Leder's analysis of print media reveals that cultural reasons explain girls ambivalence about success in maths or other ambitions. It also appears that there is a

belief that girls have to work harder than boys in order to succeed, that success is not something girls strive for, rather it just happens and girls have to balance interpersonal relationships with success. (Yates, 1993)

At tertiary level women are entering more straight science courses and also medicine and law courses, but few are selecting engineering or physics. Women who attempt non-traditional work training, still encounter a number of difficulties including student and teacher preconceptions, harassment to discourage girls from moving into non-traditional areas of employment and lack of prior training. The Australian Maritime College in Tasmania each year has at least two females entering the engineering course, but to date, none of the women have completed the course as an engineering graduate! (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992)

Indeed, women in education still choose traditional feminine alternatives, with three quarters of them taking higher degrees in arts or legal studies, while more than 50 per cent of men choose computer science or science.

Harding's research into science education claims that feminine and masculine identity is formed in early childhood at a deep psychological level and concluded boys who select science subjects differ in personality from girls. If science continues to be dominated by men who lack emotional maturity, it will not deal with human

and social elements of work and continue to be presented 'factually' with abstract laws, thus remaining unattractive to girls. If science is presented in a more integrated way, interspersing more human concepts and caring information, it will have more appeal to girls. (Yates, 1993)

Research has also reinforced that girls have more limited and stereotyped career aspirations than boys with the aspiration of marriage and children being in the forefront of their minds. Another survey indicates that women are critical of the societal and work force situation and feel strongly that their careers should not be sacrificed. This is a more realistic attitude, but again there appears to be a reluctant acceptance on the part of women, that society dictates their course and future in life. (Yates, 1993)

Education has an important role in either entrenching or removing barriers to girls. Boys and girls still select traditional career choices and there is a need to develop a professional development course for teachers in gender equity in order to ensure that the learning environment is as positive for girls as it is for boys. School policies and curriculum play a large role in girls educational and vocational preparation. There needs to be more recognition of women in school curriculums at primary, secondary and tertiary levels to help boys and girls see their achievements. (The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, 1992)

In order to overcome curriculum inadequacies, it is necessary to deconstruct the social and institutional structures which maintain men's dominance and discover reasons why girl's and women's experiences and achievements have been excluded from general knowledge events. It has been considered that a comprehensive curriculum be developed which empowers girls providing them with a wider range of post-school options.

Women's inequality in society and their patterns of paid work and lack of post-school education need to be investigated. It is important to recognize how schooling has contributed to women's inequality in the home and heavy responsibility of housework and childrearing matters.

Schooling plays a large part in reproducing aspects of our culture in which the curriculum distorts knowledge by exaggerating men's importance and diminishing and excluding women's contributions. Inequality occurs when women experience harassment, intimidation and restrictions in their daily social routine. Examples of this behaviour can occur when boys make derogatory remarks to girls which embarrass and create an immediate fear of failure. Therefore girls often underplay their abilities in order not to be noticed or 'show up' the boys.

The discourses available to boys in society give them the right to put girls down. Girls, on the other hand,

do not have the same access to put boys down. Gender based harassment by boys is based on unequal power and can be implicitly sexual. Examples in the primary school yard of boys chasing girls, kissing them, flicking up dresses are sexual practices connected with male hegemony over girls and often parents and teachers in schools do not regard this form of play as a problem. Female teachers also are subjected to sexual harassment by both male students and male teachers.

CREATING A MORE BALANCED GENDER-SENSITIVE CURRICULUM.

Education needs to broaden the attitude to work, including both paid and unpaid work. In the past, many women's experiences have been minimised because education has only focused on paid work.

Work education needs to examine the historical forces underlying,

the evolution of paid and unpaid work; the gender-segregated nature of training options and the work force; the cultural perceptions of work and particularly the relationship between the social institutions of work and family and the implications of domestic and family responsibilities on women's lives and careers (The Australian Education Council, 1993, p.29).

The curriculum should prepare both girls and boys for both paid and unpaid work because at present the domain of unpaid work remains gender-segregated and one in which girls mainly will enter. In suggesting curriculum reforms it has been thought to implement programmes which teach boys and girls skills which are necessary in

maintaining a domestic situation and include the underlying ethic of shared male and female responsibility in the home situation, household management.

One of the key strategies supporting the broadening of work education is to develop a curriculum for all year groups which critically examines the gender distribution of work in families, households and paid work and the relative values attributed to these different kinds of work by society. Schools need to ensure that boys are given work experience in non-paid work, such as parenting, community work, or caring for the elderly and domestic responsibilities. Educational planners have not addressed the interchangeable sex roles of partners in relation to family practices, so that boys and girls learn to take equal responsibility in the private as well as the public domain. The issue of women returning to work has been accepted more readily but the practical logistics do not allow them to pursue their career on an equal basis to men.

More information is required about socially produced gender differences, such as experiences girls have at school and how they differ from boys. The school curriculum should address issues of marriage and child-rearing as many girls see them as a central part of their future. There is also the need to address the issue of girls aspiring for both career and family, particularly in relation to balancing the two and dealing with the tensions associated with them.

In one survey on aspirations of men and women, it was revealed that domestic life is a more central issue for women than men.

This difference is related to the realities of how adult society actually works and how girls and boys relate to this (Yates, 1993, p.53).

On a more positive note, evidence indicates that the higher a woman's education, the more detached she is from the housewife image. However, there is a need for a more balanced 'gender-sensitive' curriculum for boys and girls with a more thorough knowledge of women and men. (Oakley, 1990 and Yates, 1993)

Women's right to better education, to hold professional jobs are masculine privileges which society concedes to women, but in this society, men not women still hold the main power and prestige in government and it is men who make the 'norm' and women the 'inferior sex'. So in today's education system, the history of women and the education of women continues to be a separate topic, set apart from education in general. Women's studies groups and women's education exist in library catalogues, but no such entry exists for 'men's education'. Therefore, a curriculum which adds 'women's' issues in as an extra or reforms for girl's choices to mirror boys' needs to be reconsidered, as it is not dealing with the overall message. Curriculum reformers need to look at the issue of sex and the differences among girls in school and develop new insight and approaches to schooling and the way in which students may learn subjects such as

computing and science.

There is a need for large-scale research to explore observable gender differences which may give teachers new insight. Qualitative research is preferred so that events and actions are understood within their whole context. New research has focused on the curriculum and reveals how taught knowledge controls and shapes children and other work focuses on culture of adolescent learners and how values and problems affect different learners causing different reactions to school and what it offers which leads groups to inequality.

THE INFLUENCE OF POPULAR CULTURE ON GIRLS

There appear to be dominant codes within gender and there is a need to understand why different girls take them up. Therefore, there is a need to look at the social messages presented to girls, such as the meaning associated with being a 'good girl'. This poses a dilemma for girls who actively accept society's messages about sex roles. For example girls face the conflict of wanting to achieve academically in order to fulfil the school and family honour on one hand, and on the other, wishing to comply with the expectation of femininity, which promotes an ambivalent attitude to work and success in order to be subservient to boys. (Yates, 1993)

Post-modernist theory reveals another approach to the development and action in relation to dominant codes

within gender. These researchers are concerned with the power of desires and fantasy which is conscious and unconscious. Fantasies of the romance theme subvert girls' reality of marriage to be 'they lived happily ever after'. The statistics of divorce, the need to be independent and equality in the home and work place are completely overlooked. Stories in girls' comics relate to fantasies about family, sexuality and deal with private injustices and endurance which win out in the end. The comic stories present the girls all as victims of harsh, personal circumstances and cruelty. The solution offered to the heroine is to be selfless, helpless and accepting of their fate. The stories romanticise poverty and make it desirable. The main narrative device which makes these harsh incidents acceptable is that they are unbelievable both geographically and socially. (Walkerdine, 1984)

The issue of cruelty being presented to the reader in the form of fantasy, actually romanticises hardship and emotional situations which advocates a passive, rather than active response to violence, displacing anger and hostility towards others. The heroine is rewarded by her suffering and her silence. Thus the value system which the text is implying to the reader says that if you suppress your emotions you will be rewarded with the desired family structure. Therefore, the message being presented to girls is that the heroine wins if she is passive and helpful. Anger is wrong and girls exist for others by solving their problems. (Walkerdine, 1984)

Adolescent girls' magazines outline the romantic resolution of desire by portraying romance rather than sex as the key to sexuality. Boys comics on the other hand, deal with actions of public bravado, fights against injustices. The identities in girls' comics which are gender-specific are created to deal with characteristics such as good girls are selfless, repress anger and bad girls are jealous, horrid and positioned in various ways to be punished. Thus comics do not reveal the reality or truth of life and their groupings of meanings provide a way in which gender differentiation occurs.

These features of cruelty and victimization are seen as characteristics which are responsible for women being passive and sexually submissive in our society. Some representations of female sexuality infer that women are the passive victims of violence, particularly in photographs in which girls pose in a submissive way which has connotations of sexual desire.

The post-modernists believe that girls, boys and adults act from a number of 'discourses' or patterns of cultural meaning which are systems of meaning built into the language itself, not just stereotypes or ideals. It appears that children negotiate their way as they make sense of our culture, learning language and social competence, discovering that in our society, females and males exist with a wide range of qualities which are in opposition to one another, such as weak/strong, active/passive. Therefore, a young girl may not always

act in a passive manner, but may still want to display her cultural competence as a female. The cultural categories of gender-roles, male-female, overpower children's own experience. (Coward, 1984, Davies, 1989 and Yates, 1993)

It is very important to understand the cultural practices which define correct femininity and masculinity and create places for them. Naughtiness in boys and girls is comprehended and acted out in different ways which reveals important relationships between theories and practices which reflect multiple, contractory positionings of young girls. Fairy tales which make up a large part of story for young children also have a gender bias, reinforcing the traditional narrative in which the male is the protagonist and the female, a passive onlooker. (Gilbert, 1989 and Walkerdine, 1984)

The traditional narrative structures offered in children's stories dominate their experience. As children hear traditional narrative, they learn to recognize themselves and others as they are locked into their own gendered narratives. They interpret their own positionings in the world through the characters, plots and metaphors. Many children's stories depict women in a mundane, gendered world of domestic scenes or a fantasy world in which their reward is being beautiful. More possibilities are available to men who are depicted as clever, powerful and strong. Feminist stories are considered to be an important resource for the

imaginative construction of subject positionings outside the traditional gendered relations. They attempt to provide narrative structures in which new solutions to existing conflicts are presented. However, this is difficult to achieve and often the main focus is on new images, rather than confronting issues and conflicts which gender creates. (Davies, 1991)

The romantic mythology of princes and princesses plays a significant part in building feminine patterns of safety, desire and power of belonging. Amongst the characteristics which girls allow the romantic myth to develop is a sense of self as a passive instead of active subject.

...reading practices that go beyond generic stereotypes are not easily achieved because generic patterns are so well known and recognisable, connecting easily with the cultural mores of our lives, that they almost come to pass as almost natural and invisible orderings of the world (Gilbert, 1991, p.45).

Counter-sexist stories in isolation and non-traditional role models do little to overcome the problem of gender equity. Children have already established gender correctness and therefore, a strong female character will be rejected if she does not meet the requirements children feel necessary for being female. Thus, the characters in these stories do little to broaden their views of gendered behaviour. Alternative literature and images for girls may be contradictory and conflict with the word as it is socially constructed and understood by them, thus making their struggle more problematic. For example, alternative feminist literature which places

girls in traditional roles usually given to boys, may cause an alternative vision to the reader, but on the other hand, create more resistance to the feminist alternative. (Clark, 1990 and Walkerdine, 1984)

Children need a conceptual framework which allows them to accept and understand non-traditional messages that people who act outside their appropriate gender recognise this and expand what is positively acceptable to other like gendered people. (Davies, 1987)

It would seem, then that it is possible to shift the metaphors through which narratives are constructed and to provide alternative relations of power and desire and at the same time to relate these shifting images to the narrative structures that the children already understand (Davies, 1991, p.68).

However, there is always the threat of the pre-existing structures of the traditional narrative preventing children from hearing new forms of narrative. However, it is important from the feminist point of view that the female hero becomes independent and does not rely on a man for happiness, so that she can make her own choices. Through children's responses to feminist stories, the accomplishment of genderedness is a central and complex task as a child attempts to become a normal member of society. (Davies, 1987)

In order to solve gender inequity there is a need to look at the construction of gender by girls and boys and to recognise the effect of assumptions about appropriate masculinity and femininity. As long as gender remains the main defining feature of a person, and as long as

'maleness' and 'femaleness' are considered to be opposites, the logic of equality will be defeated. Post-structuralist theory which is a radical discourse can solve the male/female dualism by thinking beyond the 'masculine', 'feminine' structures with which we are currently associated today. It is far too simple to place people into one of two groups by linking female and male dualism to reproductive organs or sexual capacity. Children need to be encouraged to position themselves in a number of ways by separating the concept that masculinity does not equal hegemonic masculinity; that females and males are free to take up either male and female positionings. Thus in this new world, feminine and masculine qualities may be celebrated, but without the fear of restrictions being placed on them to be exclusively one or the other. (Clark, 1990, Davies, 1990 and 1988)

Society needs to respect the right of the individual identity of people and their right to take up a variety of positionings, some of which would previously be deemed contradictory, yet which become currently appropriate within their narrative and interactive structures. Society also needs to extend the meaning of boys' and girls' roles so that their liberated behaviours are accepted as normal ones and not be a misreading of gender. Feminist stories are important and assist children in recognizing these behaviours. In this way girls and boys can develop to their full potential in school and society by adopting a number of positions according to their choice. Feminist stories

can help children hear, read and write beyond the established masculine genres which traditional narrative imposes and identify the stereotypes in stories. By learning to read against the grain, children will be more aware of the options available to them and gain access to feminist writing which attempts to reconstruct the world. This concept in breaking the dualism created by gender categories is a radical alternative, but one viable option which is available to improve the situation in our society, for girls and women, at the same time benefiting everyone. It could allow a freedom of real equality never yet experienced by all in society. (Davies, 1991)

It is only by studying the present cultural practices which deal with conflict and resolutions that an understanding of the hidden agenda is gained. In this way, work can be achieved on developing alternative fictions and fantasies in order to produce other dreams. (Walkerdine, 1984)

Gilligan's work which identifies different types of intellectual development associated with gender, suggests that women's thinking is permeated with an interpersonal responsibility to care for others. Women think about real life effects and develop a model of rationality and moral reasoning based on ethic, caring and responsibility. Men have a model based on ethic of justice and rights.

The theories of women and knowledge which focus on reflexivity and the relation between knowledge and knower have implications for schooling. They may

illuminate how girls receive and understand school knowledge and the unease they may feel, notwithstanding having apparent success (Yates, 1993, p.68).

These theories could influence guidelines for curriculum reforms so that students can look at knowledge as being socially produced and therefore consider the 'hidden curriculum' of subjects taught in school. Feminist research has drawn attention to being more aware of the differences among women.

THE ROLE OF TEACHERS IN GIRLS' EDUCATION

The role of teachers and the part they play as they interact and assess girls' work is important in dealing with gender inequity in education. The curriculum also needs to be addressed. Numerous studies on teachers reveal that teachers discriminate against girls, often unintentionally in class by giving them less time. This occurs from kindergarten upwards through primary and secondary school and reflects the way in which our society is structured to favour boys. Boys learn from a very early age that males are perceived to be more important, so they demand more attention at school, take up more time and space in the classroom and the playground. Evidence reveals that teachers spend two thirds of their time talking to boys in the classroom and boys control the agenda of discussion. (Spender, 1988 and Yates, 1993)

Teachers still encourage behaviour which fits their

expectations of that appropriate to girls and boys. Co-education in primary and secondary schools equals education for and on behalf of the boys because they demand more of the teachers' time in the classroom and in disciplinary situations. In fact, the primary school is regarded as the key place in which regimes of gender-specific behaviour are produced through habitual beliefs and practices, such as conventional explanations regarding differences in behaviour between girls and boys. The structures of discipline and control in early childhood education, all have a strong influence in shaping gender. (Clark, 1990, Gilbert, 1989 and Whyte, 1988)

Teachers also interact differently with girls than boys in the classroom. They also have different expectations of boys' and girls' abilities in various subjects. Evidence reveals that teachers learn boys' names first and then only the disruptive girls. The inconsistent beliefs teachers have about children, varying from the one that there is no differentiation between the sexes, to the concept that differences between girls and boys are a part of nature leads to the two distinct 'categories of female and male. The natural differences are assumed often in an unacknowledged way and are invoked to justify things as they are. This is an 'incorrigible' process which treats girls and boys differently because it is so deeply entrenched into people's thinking. (Clark, 1990 and Robinson, 1992). Perhaps this reflects the different approaches research has used over the years in studying the differences

between girls and boys which has resulted in this confusion for teachers.

In computer studies, teachers do not encourage girls to participate fully in classroom activities and many girls complained because they did not have equal access to the equipment as in the boys' case. Teachers also reinforce stereotyped assumptions about gender abilities of boys and girls. Teachers interpret students' actions according to their gender, thus helping one group to achieve and another not to, for example boys are high achievers and girls are low achievers. Other studies reveal teachers have lower expectations and achievement levels for girls, such as computer studies and science teachers reinforce the belief that girls are not as capable as boys. (Robinson, 1992 and Yates, 1993)

In England identical essays were marked by teachers and those with boys names received higher marks than those same papers which had girls' names. Other studies reveal teachers treat boys and girls differently again in a more indirect method of essay marking, by using criteria and styles of assessment which favour boys more than girls. Other research in maths, reveals that girls' marks were discounted because they followed 'the rule'. (Yates, 1993)

Many interactions between teachers and boys are disciplinary, rather than pedagogic. Attention-seeking boys are the main culprits in the classroom disruption. Often the quieter girls are forgotten or left to their

own devices. The behaviour of the girls generally is not a problem. However, when girls do misbehave, teachers find them difficult to deal with because these girls do not conform to appropriate feminine behaviour. Male teachers find it more difficult to admit they have discipline problems and generally subject boys to aggressive bullying tactics, which they felt to be the most effective. Teachers use the 'good girl' image as a standard measurement of 'good student behaviour in classes' (Robinson, 1992, p.20). Often the 'good girls' are relied upon by the teachers to maintain order and discipline. The reliable girl is asked to run errands or oversee the class in the teacher's absence. Teachers reinforce 'good' behaviour through praise and responsibility, thus reinforcing highly gendered stereotypical behaviour expected of girls. This seems to fit again with highly gendered feminine behaviour in which the discourse is adopted of trying to please, by pandering to others, being submissive on the teacher's behalf and at the girls' expense.

It seems female teachers use different approaches to discipline such as negotiation or counselling on individual levels. Students consider these alternatives as 'softer' methods and feel female teachers work harder than their male counterparts because they lack the same physical presence in the classroom, reinforcing the perception that female teachers have difficulty controlling a class. Research of classroom practices and girls' learning, with a focus to discipline, claims that students feel female teachers cannot control the

class as well as male teachers. They also believe that female teachers have to work harder than their male counterparts in order to control a class. Female teachers need to acquire a stronger grip of language skills because they cannot rely on their physical size to discipline. (Robinson, 1992 and Yates, 1993)

The structures of authority also convey that male teachers are more powerful than female teachers and this is reinforced by the power structure at home and school. Hence, boys do not like being reprimanded by female teachers. Teachers also hold a different attitude toward boys and feel their often loud, challenging behaviour is expected, even natural and therefore, they are more lenient. Teachers' choice of options of discipline are more difficult to deal with 'bad' girls, but 'bad' boys were caned. (Clark, 1990 and Robinson, 1992)

Aggression is one of the main qualities used in comparing and defining masculine and feminine behaviour. There are distinct sex differences in parental treatment of aggression which often includes the use of double standards with boys being allowed more physical freedom than girls. Boys also receive more physical discipline than girls and are not encouraged to be quiet or passive and girls, not loud or aggressive. Thus aggression equals boys and passivity equals girls. (Oakley, 1981)

Perhaps as educators we need to break down the perceptions that exist about the term 'control' and its association with masculinity, to be able to alleviate some of the confusion that surrounds the concept of 'discipline' for many students

(Robinson, 1992, p.33).

The secrecy and stigma teachers develop around discipline restricts teachers sharing their concerns with others formulating more positive strategies which they develop over their teaching careers. (Robinson, 1992)

In high schools in particular, there appear to be priorities in teaching style and approach to discipline. Discipline is the first priority, followed by the teaching subject and finally the student. If a teacher experiences trouble controlling a student, she is sent to the Senior Teacher, who may send her to the Assistant Principal, who in turn can pass her onto the Principal for punishment. On many occasions I felt a failure as a teacher because I could not control particular students. The lack of support and the unspoken language I sensed from my senior teacher was depressing, to the point that on occasions, I kept the disruptive student in the class, rather than seeking help from him. The emphasis of control was paramount in my teacher training, so much so, that in my first few years of teaching, I was so strict, that I did not realise how oppressive my classes were and later on vaguely wondered why the students did not laugh very much or seem to enjoy my lessons! It took many years to overcome this discipline issue. In more supportive schools there is more student-centred learning and teachers are more democratic in the classroom, encouraging more student participation and responsibility.

DIFFERING APPROACHES IN STUDYING THE SEX DIFFERENCES

Research has altered considerably in its approach to studying the sex differences. Although there has been a lot of criticism for focusing on sex differences, there seems to be the need to look at girls' and boys' different experiences at school, with special emphasis being on inherent differences. In the 1970s it was considered negative to focus on girls and boys as different groups because differences between girls and boys was thought to reinforce inequality. So education had to be non-sexist in order to be effective, thus making no assumptions about sex differences. Thus single sex schools were considered out of place and methods which used gender as a form of organization such as school roles was considered inappropriate.

Another theme over the last two decades on gender and schooling focused on girls' relation to school and the way in which it differed from boys. However, the criticism was that teachers and researchers alike made too much of the differences or too little of them, in order to see how inequality occurs in schools. Other research studies were criticised for exaggerating results, by giving too much emphasis to differences between gender or de-emphasising this, plus it became difficult to test empirically. (Yates, 1993)

More recent research has focused on the culture of girls and boys and their reactions to the curriculum and

school environment to see how supportive they were. Again, there was need for caution about the amount of difference between students. For example, treating unequal groups as different can lead to educational disadvantage, in turn leading to inequality, such as self-esteem groups. Self-esteem programmes which are based on personal and individual needs fail to deal with the way gender issues are culturally constructed and how they oppress girls. By focusing on the inadequacies of girls, however, infers that they are the problem, which is completely misleading. The focus needs to be on the processes and structures in our society which oppress and constrain girls. It is the gender categories and definitions of femininity and masculinity which need to be addressed. (Gilbert, 1989)

There is a need to know more about socially produced gender differences, such as the type of girls' differences and how they differ from boys. Today, research suggests the failure to explore or acknowledge differences only reinforces male dominance and male knowledge as being the norm, thus treating women as other and making them more like men. There is a need to focus on girls and understand the strain placed on them in education and the curriculum.

Some of the different ways educationalists have attempted to deal with gender differences - such as Spender, Sarah and Dugdale and radical feminists advocate an on going need for girls and women-centred education in separate institutions. Thus, the call back

for single sex schools for girls in particular, in order for them to achieve their potential. Others would advocate a move back into a more 'balanced gender-sensitive' curriculum for girls and boys with a more thorough knowledge of women. A post-structuralist view is another solution when gender is no longer an issue and femininity and masculinity are not conceived as organising frameworks. (Connell, 1987 and Davies, 1989)

Recent post-modernist work indicates complex patterns of cultural and psychological meanings within which actions are set. Many researchers are concerned with the effect of all boys' schools and their attitudes to girls and women in general. In Australia, teachers and researchers see the need for government regulation and support on gender equality in schools. The Government is attempting to centralise and transform education into a unified system. (Yates, 1993)

It is clear that teachers, schools, students and the curriculum are permeated by a culture and history and that these have treated sex and gender as something of wide-ranging significance. It is also clear that the way in which gender does permeate teacher's assumptions and arrangements of schooling are not necessarily immediately obvious (Yates, 1993, p.109).

Despite the obvious differences in the way girls approach subjects like science and maths in school, they perform well, particularly in the arts area.

..that not being deficit in their capacities is not the same as being disadvantaged. The experience of girls does replicate that of subordinate classes and racial groups in the way of their 'otherness' is treated as inferiority and in that lesser futures have been expected of them (Yates, 1993, p.109).

One interesting point is the need to address the education of boys and its contribution to sexual inequality. A great deal has been spent on attempting to rectify the supposed inadequacies of girls.

Gender inequality in schools places girls at a disadvantage. Despite the introduction of gender equity programmes in schools, the curriculum and teachers continue to reinforce gender bias against girls. Co-educational schools favour boys because they demand more of the teachers' time both in pedagogic matters and disciplinary action. A different approach to the discipline of boys and girls is often adopted by teachers. Female teachers need better language skills in order to negotiate and counsel students, rather than rely on their individual physical presence to discipline, as men do.

Parental attitudes also favour boys, as parents tend to have higher aspirations for them than for girls. Hence children's perception of gender stereotype and differentiation are established at a very early age.

Primary school continues to set the scene for regimes of gender-specific behaviour. Schooling appears to be responsible for reproducing aspects of our culture through the curriculum which distorts knowledge by emphasizing male importance and dominance and diminishing women's efforts. The historical bias of men's feats in comparison to women's feats in the

curriculum is very pronounced. Children continue to see men in positions of authority and power in schools, unlike women, who generally maintain classroom teaching positions. Thus girls' career aspirations still remain more limited than boys' because they uphold society's expectations of a woman's role with marriage and family as the ultimate experience. Girls tend to underachieve in subjects for fear of appearing to be too competitive and ambitious which conflicts with society's view of feminine behaviour.

Messages of the romance fiction, comics and fairy tales also reinforce gender bias by portraying girls in the traditional narrative in which the female is passive, weak and an onlooker as opposed to the male who is the protagonist. These traditional narrative structures dominate children's experiences as they learn to recognize themselves as male and female, locking them into their own gendered narratives. Also these cultural practices define correct femininity and masculinity so that boys' and girls' behaviour is understood and acted out in different ways.

The education system needs to empower girls by providing a wider range of career options. The school curriculum needs to broaden its attitude towards the work concept to include paid and unpaid work. By implementing programmes girls and boys can be provided with the necessary skills to maintain a shared responsibility in household management by looking at the gender distribution of house work and child rearing in

families. Domestic life appears to be a more central issue for women than men. Therefore, boys need to experience non-paid community work in their schooling.

As long as gender remains the main defining feature of a person, equality will be very hard to achieve. Post-structuralist theory offers a solution to the male/female dualism, by thinking beyond the feminine and masculine structures in which children position themselves. Feminist stories can help children recognize these behaviours and help them read and write beyond the existing masculine/feminine genres and stereotypes by learning to read against the grain and reconstructing their world. Children need a framework to understand non-traditional messages and educationalists need to keep open children's forms of narrative. Only by breaking the dualism of gender categories can girls and women improve their circumstances in society and take up positions on an equal footing with boys and men. Therefore, alternative fiction stories and fantasies need to be written.

CONCLUSION

Women's education and careers are influenced by Australia's sex-segregated society in which 85 per cent of women workers are employed in the traditional feminine and domestic roles as nurses, teachers, domestic workers or employees in the retail industry. Not only does this lock women into these sex-segregated jobs, but there seems to be little hope of any change occurring in the future. As long as gender defines women and men in terms of the male/female dualism, equality will not be achieved for women. The gender division of labour in the home and the work force is seen as a contributing factor to women's inequality which reinforces patriarchy in our society by defining women's roles primarily as mothers and housewives and their careers in the work place, as secondary or supplementary to their partners'. The nuclear family perpetuates gender-role normalcy and confirms the maintenance of women's lack of power and independence.

The teaching profession reinforces the broader Australian concept of a sex-segregated work force by being one of the most sex-divided professions. Despite the preponderance of women in the education system, men hold the majority of senior positions.

Society's inter-connection between women's assumed roles in the home and the work place continues to place them in conflicting positions, so that the domestic

environment of the home and family takes priority over women's careers. Therefore, women's decision to work part-time, after having children also reinforces their gender segregation, posing little threat to the gender division of labour. As women return to the work place, they continue to perform the majority of housework while their husband's/partner's role barely alters, thus strengthening the patriarchal society.

Industry and business continue to take advantage of women's plight, exploiting them further by reducing their pay and security, as they replace part-time work with casual work in the home or work place, where there is little redress for union representation or secure superannuation.

The unpaid work and voluntary unpaid work women do in the home and community is not recognised in terms of their contribution, their remuneration and acceptance of their role in society.

Women's non-linear working life does not follow the usual career path of men, and their disrupted work history is one main reason for their lack of promotion within the primary areas of business and other professions. Employees do not view women as highly career-oriented or committed workers and continue to favour men.

Women's complicity in accepting society's definition of femininity is revealed in their willingness to be more

family-oriented than career minded and still judge an occupation in terms of the ease with which it can be integrated with family life. For men, marriage creates an unlimited perspective as far as their career is concerned.

Young girls throughout their schooling still perceive constraints on their careers as they contemplate their vocation and consider its workability with raising a family. Schools from kindergarten through to tertiary institutions place girls at a disadvantage in terms of gender bias, limited curriculum and cultural constraints of the female/male dualism. Co-educational schools support boys more than they do girls, as teachers give boys nearly two thirds of the available teaching time. Girls are locked into the feminine/masculine traditions through romance fiction, fairy tales and comics which reinforce girls' subservience and reaffirm boys' dominance. Boys' acts of sexual harassment against girls often are overlooked by teachers and excused as being 'playful' as teachers adopt different levels of acceptable behaviour for boys and girls. Teachers' assessment of girls' work is often more critical than that of boys' again placing girls at a disadvantage. Despite the introduction of gender equity programmes in schools, the education system continues to reinforce gender bias.

Women's accessibility and return to the work place and updating of their skills are other difficulties women encounter. They often experience problems arranging

adequate childcare, a lack of support from employers, loss of confidence and choose less skilled and lower paid jobs. Men have careers and women have short-lived careers, domestic work and childrearing. Business women's promotional opportunities in corporate executive jobs encounter the invisible patriarchal barrier, 'the glass ceiling', preventing them from further success. Even thirty years after the women's movement set out to gain equality, only 3 per cent of the 42 per cent of women who make up the work force hold executive positions. Changes seem to be occurring slowly at the junior management level, but no such trend is occurring on the boards of corporate management. Australian men's culture of mateship effectively ostracises women from the business network as discussion of business affairs occurs regularly at sporting meets. Men are reluctant to allow women to become decision makers and to take risks. In economic terms, business men need to recognize women's worth and change their hegemonic attitudes.

All these issues represent women's hidden agenda which represses women's progress and prevents them from achieving equality in education and equality in their careers. Perhaps the belief that the segregation of the two sexes will only be solved when women make up 50 per cent of the politicians, doctors, lawyers, executives, engineers and teachers, is a valid one.

A restructuring of our society, by creating a society prior to patriarchy maybe a solution to women's

inequality. The implementation of paid employment for women as homemakers and childcarers would help women become more financially independent. However, it is their disproportionate responsibility for domestic work and caring roles that disadvantage women in society. (Cockburn, 1991).

There is a need to address the importance of men's roles in taking a more equal part in the domestic responsibilities of the home and childrearing. Therefore, the structure of the work place needs to become more flexible and adapt to the needs of all people if equality for women is to eventuate. Men's relationship to their work and career in the public sector has to alter, so that they regard employment in the same way as women have done through the years, as transitory. No-one should be working a 45 hour week or a 50 year wage earning life.

There is a need to create a different division of labour in society which allows both women and men a more equal time frame. Childcare needs to be regarded as an area to which society is committed and recognised as an economic and productive viability. The lack of job opportunities and the restructuring of places of employment are tending towards short-term employment or contract work for shorter periods of time. Organisations need to develop greater flexibility within employment to allow men similar opportunities to women in terms of nurturing leave replacing maternity or paternity leave, thus allowing both partners a chance to

fulfil their childrearing responsibilities. This will help eliminate the sexual division of labour and support the idea of men becoming involved in full-time childrearing.

The socialist feminist idea is another progressive one that men and women share the care and rearing of children and is one I would personally endorse. Feminist writers do believe that gender equality will develop a better world for all. Shared parenting alters power relations between men and women, parents and children, allowing everyone a happier egalitarian life. Trade unions have an important role in allowing men and women to have greater involvement in childcare and paid work. Conditions in the work place for women working on a part-time basis need to be better regulated, thus preventing exploitation of their labour. (Segal, 1990).

Men and women need to take equal share in the responsibility of childcare and domestic work so that nothing is assumed to be male or female. A hegemonic masculinity gives power to men and emphasized femininity gives passivity, nurturance to women which creates an unequal relationship. Men and women must have equal share in all tasks, thus breaking down the old pattern of expected gender roles. The economic changes in the work structure still pose a huge barrier before this concept can be put into practice and total reorganisation of the work place is required.

An egalitarian world in which both parents rear their

children, both have part-time jobs and share the domestic work in the home needs to be established. The Swedish Marriage Act which specifies that housework and childcare be shared equally by spouses, is a good example for Western countries to adopt and is a step closer to equality for men and women. Gender polarities need to be forgotten in a public world of employment and politics free from gender hierarchy, where women and men participate together at work and in the home as a co-operative force. The socialist feminist view point is to change the economic and political structures so that society meets the needs of all carers and dependents, and barriers between private and public sectors will be more easily traversed. There will be shorter working hours (part-time), allowing work for more of the general population, thus reducing unemployment, also adequate incomes to provide economic independence for women and men, publicly-funded welfare and suitable childcare facilities which will allow women to lead active lives with more free time for leisure or their own needs.

A new vision of socialist feminism is to create links between the work place and the lives of people in the home and the community. At present people both in the work place and the home are systematically deprived of their freedom to control their own lives. Schools and other public institutions need not be run in a way which denies choice, autonomy or control. Families should be included in the broader section of the community and people need to have a sense of belonging. 'The feminist critique of the family should symbolise all that society

values' (Segal, 1990, p.237). There is a need to fight for minimum wages, shorter working hours and an independent income for those caring for dependents in the home. There is also a need to acknowledge the distinctive sexual reproductive capacities, but not allow these differences to create sexual contrasts of stereotyping women and men as has usually occurred. Only in a public world of employment and politics free from gender hierarchy, where women and men participate together in the work place and home as a co-operative, will women be equal and the patriarchy of male oppression end. (Segal, 1990).

A wonderful vision. However, it is evident that these reforms are going to be far more difficult to implement in countries where more conservative parties are in power and the private sector of employment is larger, thus making regularisation of employees' rights more difficult to monitor. Also in times of economic recession, government public service jobs are generally the first to receive cuts and women in casual and part-time work are also more likely to lose their jobs.

Two alternatives to changing gender relations are possible, according to Connell, (1987). The first advocates the abolition of gender as a social structure, by disconnecting the link between social practices and reproduction. Thus there is no celebration of biological difference, nor a denial of it, rather a complementary function in reproduction. This would eliminate the basis for gender inequities and categories

of heterosexual and homosexual would disappear, as would character structures of femininity and masculinity. Therefore, the deconstruction of gender becomes a possibility as the criteria of political practice is separated from the social practice and reproduction issue, which minimalises the biology of sex in social life. The consequence of deconstruction and abolition of gender brings with it an open-endedness and a loss of the types of structures, but also a very different world whose desirability is difficult to ascertain. However, a gender-structured society at present produces constraints, enormous inequalities and often violent submission and oppression in everyday life.

The second alternative is to reconstitute gender by restructuring, thus rearranging gender orders. The fashions in the 1930s and 1960s have played with gender recombinations with the development of 'unisex' styles and gender ambiguity.

Restructuring conception would admit a cultural elaboration of difference and similarity in reproduction, though with the weight of power divisions of labour and rules about cathexis lifted off it. The culture could attend to and celebrate the nuances and variations of conception, gestation, birth and suckling, growth and ageing (Connell, 1987, p.290).

By restructuring cultural elements, new conditions for practice would occur, such as different patterns of relationships between adults and children, allowing access for gay men and women to take a part in raising children. Sex inequality based on biological difference could be eliminated so society could gain practical

equality which has never occurred. Thus women and men work together free of fixed cultural and psychological patterns and relationships based on equality rather than gender inequality may develop quite differently.

This construct of an egalitarian form of life is not considered as a future, but rather as an historical possibility. If it were ever to occur, the practice and projects in which recomposition were undertaken, would have to be part of a politics which deals with oppression in all forms, setting no limits to the principle of equality for humankind. In doing this, we would collectively create a future which is environmentally and physically safe, historically open and rich in experience. Women and men have the knowledge and resources to share childcare roles and domestic work and men could freely elect to rear children as a full-time occupation and women could choose to continue on their career paths or choose not to have children at all.

Feminist post-structuralist theory offers women another viable solution as it looks at issues of social power and how the social relations of gender can be altered. Post-structuralist feminism deals with the historical, social and cultural subject position of femininity for women and their overall network of social power, so that their biological sexual difference is not fixed. It also can deal with all discursive practices by analysing the effect of the structures involved and the type of power relations they produce and reproduce. Meaning

from a feminist post-structuralist perspective can never be fixed, with each new reading taking on a new meaning and constantly changing. Challenging the patriarchal society and its cultural constructions of gender, people, in particular women, can change and reject the discourse allowing them to deconstruct gender and become open to a number of alternative subject positions and meanings which have different political implications.

The family does not have to take the form of the patriarchal nuclear family, with the father as dominant figure over wife and children. An alternative may be the extended family including friends or relatives, or include single parents or gay couples. Thus the nuclear family can be deconstructed and open to a discourse in which the individual's concept of self is open to continuous redefinition which it is constantly shaping. Post-structuralist feminism offers alternative discourses to everyone by deconstructing patriarchal positions of power in education, the work place and the home.

A liberating aspect of post-structuralist thought is that it allows people to recognise a number of discourses in which they can position themselves differently. They can also see the entrapments through known discourses and it allows them to focus on the contradictions in their experience as a creative source of new discourses, rather than failures.

On other occasions one can feel free to move beyond the set of interactive and discursive practices in which the metaphysical nature of

'male' and 'female' is clear to oneself and those with whom one lives out the new narrative structures and metaphors of one's life (Davies, 1991, p.139).

This gives children more flexibility to act according to gender appropriate ways or be free to take up positionings once associated with the other sex and gain access to a discourse of feminine or masculine, which previously would not have been permissible.

Post-structuralist theory creates new strategies for girls and boys in the process of becoming a gendered person, by looking at different conceptualizations. Children are introduced to a discourse and storyline in which they can see how gendered people are constituted, by viewing the methods in which culture and history have produced gendered people. Children can be given opportunities to be producers of culture, as readers and writers who create their own discourses available to them. Children learn to know themselves through stories which they learn from various discourses of social groups. The ability to interpret the social world as it occurs around them is necessary, as is the cognition of language learning, of which they need to be a part in order to experience what it is to become a member of the correct social group and be socially competent.

As school appears to be the starting point for the reproduction of gender relations, it also can represent the place for change and intervention. School curriculum at present fails to account for the variety

of ways in which femininity is constructed in our society. Teachers need to be aware of the conflicts and contradictions presented to girls regarding their future, sexuality, age and maturity. They need to avoid labelling and demanding stereotyped behaviour appropriate to girls and boys. Gender-inclusive curriculum allows a cultural studies approach by drawing on experience of family and the students' own future, inequality and treatment of popular cultural texts. By transforming patriarchal gender relations and critically analysing social constructs of femininity as a first step to changing gender relations, it is possible to refashion feminine concepts.

The gaps in the curriculum and classroom can be explored in order to reconstruct gender and introduce an alternative approach to popular cultural texts, thus 'fashioning the feminine' (Gilbert and Taylor, 1991, p.1) in a number of ways. Girls can take up different subject positions in relation to dominant patriarchal discourse which enable them to decide on their own view of femininity.

Feminist discourses are one avenue to explore, but feminist post-structuralist discourse can be more effective and can only be achieved through personal experience which confronts the unconscious. New gender relations cannot develop through children and writers alone because it is the structures of society which need to be changed.

Political changes, equally radical to the changes

in patterns of interaction envisaged here between teachers and children, need to take place. Patterns of exclusion on the basis of sex still need to be addressed (Davies, 1993, p.200).

Children not only need to be exposed to feminist texts, but be able to interpret those texts based on their own experiences. They need to comprehend the feminist storylines and recognise the sexist texts, deconstructing them by using their own knowledge and incorporating this into the text, recognising the category groupings which allows them to position themselves differently in the text. By recognising the repetitive cultural patterns of stories which they take on as their own, they need to be able to see the author's intention as a person and what cultural assumptions and storylines she is trying to create. It is the author's authority which needs to be interrupted and reconstituted through the telling gaps in the stories and the unspoken messages. Children need to create new authors who break the messages and open up new possibilities by becoming authors themselves.

The power of traditional storyline creates oppressive gender relations allowing them to appear natural and correct, such as girls wishing to look beautiful and boys wanting to be strong and heroic. Children, therefore, need to develop the ability to read against the grain which requires an understanding of the dualism and the inevitability of the gender order.

The male/female dualism and all the associated binary metaphors through which it is created, solidified, made natural must be deconstructed, opened up towards the possibility of multiplicity. Such openings up must occur in language, in

individual psyches and in the material and symbolic structures in which we are all embedded (Davies, 1993, p.200).

The ability to imaginatively create alternative solutions to replace the existing texts which make up a sexist world is fundamental to the deconstruction of written texts. Writing plays can help students work together constructing new ways of being, thus removing a lot of the old limiting thought systems. Retelling their story through fiction, which involves moving into a different context from the present moment can help students develop new constructions. Thus original experiences coupled with current discourses create tension, but open up new avenues of expression and seeing. By recognising the constitutive power of discourse, capturing the discourse in the act of shaping knowledge or desire and engaging in a collective process of re-positioning, re-writing and re-naming oneself in relation to coercive structures, one can apply a different definition of agency.

Post-structuralism attempts to discover the process through which a person is subjected and constituted and yet turn the practice against the constraint. People are subjected to a process of subjectification rather than being socialised into a social world.

Concepts from post-structuralist theory are drawn on to allow a different way of reading/seeing/understanding gender which opens up new possibilities (Davies, 1993, p.13).

Post-structuralist and social feminisms could help solve

existing problems by removing gender polarities and deconstructing domestic roles to represent equal responsibilities. By using socialist feminist ideals combined with post-structuralist feminist theory of removing gender polarities and deconstructing the male/female dualism of gender, women and men will achieve greater flexibility to take up various discourses and achieve equality. This also provides solutions for women's dilemma of the 'double burden' of combining domestic work, childcare and work. Girls will have a better chance of equality in their schooling and work.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALFORD, A. Production or reproduction?
Melbourne: Oxford University press
(1984)
- BAXTER, J. and
GIBSON, D. Double Take: The links Between
Paid and Unpaid Work
Canberra: Australian Government
Publishing (1990)
- CLARK, M. The Great Divide
Melbourne: Curriculum Corporation
(1990)
- COCKBURN, C. In the Way of Women
London: Macmillan (1991)
- CONNELL, R.W. Gender and Power
Sydney: Allen and Unwin (1987)
- COWARD, R. Female Desire
London: Paladin (1984)
- COWARD, R. Our Treacherous Hearts
London: Faber and Faber (1992)
- DAVIES, B. 'The Accomplishment of Genderedness
in Pre-School Children', in
Pollard, A. (ed) Children
and their Primary Schools
London: Falmer Press (1987)
- DAVIES, B. Frogs and Snails and Feminist
Tales: Pre-school Children and
Gender
Sydney: Allen and Unwin (1992)
- DAVIES, B. Shards of Glass
Sydney: Allen and Unwin (1993)
- DELAMONT, S. 'The Formative Years: Nursery,
Infant and Junior Schooling' in
Porter, p. (ed) Gender and
Education
Victoria: Deacon University (1986)
- EISENSTEIN, H. Gendershock
Sydney: Allen and Unwin (1991)
- FALUDI, S. Backlash
London: Chatto and Windus (1991)

- GILBERT, P. Gender, Literacy and the Classroom
Victoria: Australian Reading
Association (1989)
- GILBERT, P. and
TAYLOR, S. Fashioning the Feminine
Sydney: Allen and Unwin (1991)
- LANGRIDGE, C. 'Gender Equity' A Discussion Paper
for Primary Principals, Education
Department, Tasmania. (1990)
- MACLEAN, R. 'Teachers' Careers: A Conceptual
Framework' in Maclean, R. and
McKenzie, P. (eds) Australian
Teachers' Careers
Victoria: Australian Council for
Education Research (1991)
- MACLEAN, R. Teachers' Careers and Promotion
Patterns
London: Falmer Press (1992)
- MCKENZIE, P. 'Profile of the Australian Teaching
Force' in Maclean, R. and
McKenzie, P. (eds) op.cit (1991)
- NEUBERGER, J. Whatever's happening to Women?
London: Kyle Cathie (1991)
- OAKLEY, A. Housewife
Victoria: Penguin (1990)
- Office of the Status
of Women, 'National Agenda for Women - Mid-
Term Implementation Report on the
1988-92 Five Year Action Plans,'
Canberra: Australian Government
Publishing Service (1990)
- Office of the Status
of Women, 'Juggling Time: How Australians
Use Time'
Canberra: Department of the Prime
Minister and Cabinet (1991a)
- Office of the Status
of Women, 'National Agenda For Women -
Implementation Report.'
Canberra: Australian Government
Publishing Service (1991b)

- ROBINSON, K. 'It's ALL Because We're Girls - An Exploration of Classroom Practices and Girls' Learning with a Focus on Discipline' Report to the Education of Girls Unit, Department Of Employment, Education and Training.
Canberra: Australian Government Publishing (1992)
- RICH, A. 'When We Dead Awaken: Writing As Re-Vision' in Eagleton, M. Feminist Literary Theory
Oxford: Basil Blackwell (1989)
- SAMPSON, S. 'Women Teachers' Careers' in Maclean, R. and McKenzie, P. (eds) op. cit (1991)
- SEGAL, L. Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men
London: Virago (1990)
- SPENDER, D. There's Always Been A Women's Movement
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (1983)
- SPENDER, D. Man Made Language
London: Routledge and Kegan Paul (1992)
- The Australian Education Council 'National Action Plan for the Education of Girls (1993-97)'
Canberra: Curriculum Corporation (1993)
- The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs Half Way To Equal
Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service (1992)

The Tasmanian
Women's Consultative
Council

'Women as Carers In Tasmania'
Report of the Tasmanian Women's
Consultative Council to the
Minister Assisting the Premier on
the Status of Women
Hobart: (1992)

WALKERDINE, V.

'Some Day My Prince Will Come:
Young Girls and the Preparation for
Adolescent Sexuality' in McRobbie,
A. (ed) Gender and Generation
London: Macmillan (1984)

WILSON, A. and
GAYTON, E.

Critical Choices
Hobart: Artemis (1993)

YATES, L.

The Education of Girls
Victoria: ACER (1993)