

Review Article

Mapping the (Invisible) Salaried Woman Architect: The Australian Parlour Research Project

Karen Burns, Justine Clark and Julie Willis

The (invisible) salaried woman architect: The Parlour project

During the 1970s, feminist historians highlighted ‘women’s invisibility’ in written histories and argued that these absences exposed structural biases in history writing.¹ Through mainstream history and its privileging of particular topics and institutional structures, history’s very objects of inquiry threatened to perpetuate women’s invisibility. For example, although women had been political participants throughout history, they had organised and operated in informal ways and their practices were marginalised within the historical record.² For some historians, it was not simply a task of adding women in and correcting exclusion with inclusion. Instead, writers invented new subjects and unknown topics and drew on unfamiliar sources in order to enable ‘the prevalent structures and experiences of women’s lives’ to be recognised and accorded the same level of interest as men’s stories.³ The trope of invisibility governed both history writing and contemporary political action. Historian Joan Scott joined historical inquiry to present-day protest by declaring that ‘women’s subordination – past and present – was secured at least in part by their invisibility.’ ‘Making women evident’ became a political project.⁴ The idea of the ‘salaried architect’ has particular resonance for feminist projects driven by concepts of historical invisibility and the bias and privileges of the dominant historical narrative.

Footprint has invited writers to consider the category of the ‘salaried architect’, particularly those

architects in the service of bureaucracies. This special journal issue retrieves a domain of ‘invisible’ architects, and our paper offers a distinctive focus on the topic by exploring the gendering of the salaried architect. We begin by drawing attention to the over-representation of women as salaried architects in both the historical record and contemporary practice. Moving beyond this demographic outline, the paper studies women architects’ everyday work in the office.⁵ Focusing the gaze of historians and theorists on the office rather than the building site provides an important shift of attention that challenges them to conceptualise the production of buildings within the organisation of the architectural workplace. Mythologies of design genius are countered by an analysis of the conditions of production. Furthermore, investigations of work and gender reveal an even less visible topic: the stratification of architectural professionals through labour hierarchies. Women are over-represented as employees and part-time workers, with lower earnings and reduced status. As we will argue, these absences and delays can be explained by the theory of ‘accumulative disadvantage’, a term denoting the uneven but persistent and accumulating impacts of gender stereotypes on individual careers. Finally, this paper describes some of the activist programmes founded by Parlour. We will explain how these initiatives work to transform the everyday office lives of women in architecture.

Research on women architects and their daily labour must strive against a double invisibility: it

has to contend with both low numbers of women in the profession and a dearth of information on the quotidian practices of the office. The environment in which many architects spend their working lives remains obscure, and office life is generally omitted from accounts of buildings, design, or narratives of architecture's symbolic meaning. In order to discover the hidden workings of gender and the architectural office, this paper draws on a large inquiry undertaken by a team of researchers that investigated women and the Australian architectural profession during 2011–2014.⁶ As part of a broad study, the research project mapped the micro practices of the workplace. By studying transactions, exchanges and tacit practices, we came to understand how particular professional and institutional rules and unconscious processes limit women's participation and delay career progression. We theorise the everyday practice of architecture by drawing attention to work cultures, hierarchies and rules. The architectural office is a site for producing, distributing and maintaining work 'norms' and identities. These norms include beliefs on how work should be organised and distributed, and involve mechanisms that produce and reinforce powerful mythologies of the 'ideal' architectural worker.

The figure of the salaried woman architect dominates the larger history of women in architecture and still forms the majority experience of female architectural professionals. Historical scholarship has confirmed the presence of women in the design and construction of architecture and attested to their later qualification as architects when the professionalisation of architecture progressed in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁷ From early pioneers, women increasingly became active members of the profession in many Western societies, their presence encouraged by the establishment of formal, institutionalised architectural education. Their small numbers reflect the difficulties such women faced in joining the profession, but individual stories of architectural engagement were not, by definition, ones

of overt discrimination. Digging far enough into the historical record reveals these women architects, usually working quietly in a large firm or on their own, carving out a place for themselves within the profession and earning the respect of their clients, colleagues and peers.

To reveal the history of women architects, the researcher needs to delve further than the 'named' architect and, in doing so, calls into question the standard practices of architectural historiography, where the named architect of a work, be it a partnership or individual, is considered the author of the work. For the history of women architects is, in many instances, the history of architects working for other architects – the hidden labour force that fuels the profession and its production. The historical record of the profession consists of evidence that is commonly left behind: professional journals, reports in the popular press, photographic collections, drawing collections, and manuscript and archival holdings. Architectural activity by individuals is largely understood through the tropes of named architects – owners of firms – rather than those who work for them, simply because these are the names attached to buildings. Only in the details of drawings and job lists can the keen observer determine the other hands that contribute to such works.

The question might be why women were – and are – more likely to work for another architect. Prior to second-wave feminism, the answers lay in social expectations or gender norms that had a significant limiting effect on women's full participation in every aspect of the architecture profession. Women lacked capital or access to it due to their exclusion from inheriting capital and obtaining bank credit, which limited their capacity to start and run businesses. They faced gendered assumptions or structures that limited their access to potential clients (such as men's clubs or public bars). They faced assumptions about their physical and mental capacity for the demands of architectural practice,

or about their predilections for certain types of architectural practice, which tended to pigeon-hole or propel them towards domestic practice, interior design or 'caring' institutional work, such as welfare buildings and hospitals. Women also faced expectations that, for many, dictated their enforced departure from the profession upon marriage and/or childbirth, underscored by a lack of social services to support a continued engagement with their career. The capacity to marshal capital and clients and to undertake significant risk are the factors that enable architects to begin, and to control, their own practices – factors that probably continue to play a major role in the career decisions made by contemporary women architects. Working for someone else was, and remains, the safe option in the volatile world of architectural work.

The project

Footprint's call for a study of 'salaried architects' positions itself against the canon's roll-call of individual signatures by focusing on the larger organisational structures of 'inconspicuous offices and unexciting departments'. Our research on women within the organisational structure of the profession also moves beyond individual names. Instead of representing architecture as a collection of designers and design, our project presents a demographic portrait of the profession. Focusing on demography transforms the categories we bring to bear on architecture. Instead of searching for key buildings or names, architects are sorted into gender categories and then further sorted by age, employment level, owner or employee, salary, weekly hours worked and full or part-time status. These categories construct a social portrait of the profession.

Introducing gender, a social category, into a discussion of architects and architectural practices displaces design 'talent' as the criteria for historical notability. Instead of asking how architecture shapes the social practices of everyday life, we inquire into how architecture operates as a social practice: who

is included and excluded, promoted and rewarded, noted and ignored. Gender as a category of analysis reveals stark differences between men and women's participation in the profession. By focusing on cohorts we mask individual identity and suppress accounts of buildings and offices as the expression of key individuals. Examining the group instead of the individual brings structural patterns and privileges to the fore. Everyday social practice operates within the profession. The social is not an exterior world but an internal dynamic.

In the 1830s, the British government introduced large-scale statistical mapping as civil servants worked to better know, administer and (many would add) control its population. Statistical mapping makes a population visible. Our gendered architectural demography exposes gender differences within the profession and allows us to see architecture's distinctive differences from university populations, other professions and society as a whole. The graphic shown in Figure 1 provides a key evidence base.⁸ [fig. 1] Firstly, we can map the participation rate of women in the profession when compared to women within university architecture schools. In October 2012, women comprised 21% of registered architects in the Australian Commonwealth, but this registration figure is much lower than the 44% graduation rates of women architects in the period 2005–2010. A comparison with the 2011 census data unearths a slightly more promising insight into women's participation in architecture. The census maps women and men who self-nominate as architects, and here women working in architecture comprised 28% of the overall category – the 2011 Australian census includes 4,138 women who identify as architects, yet there are only 2,079 registered women architects in the profession's official institute and registration rolls. Half the women working as 'architects' participate in the profession outside formal means of recognition, in comparison to 27% of men.⁹ [fig. 2] The census brings mixed news. It's cheering to know that there

Employee / Owner (2011 Census)

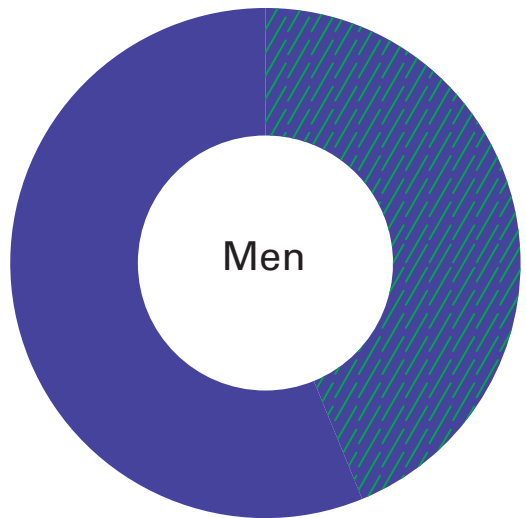
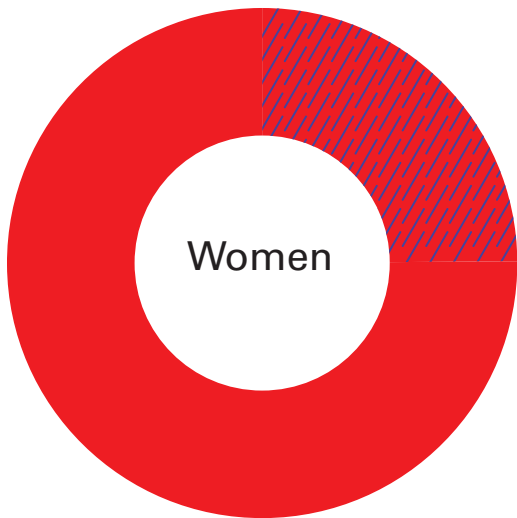


Fig. 1: Employees and owners. Data compilation and analysis by Gill Matthewson. Source: 2011 Australian Census.

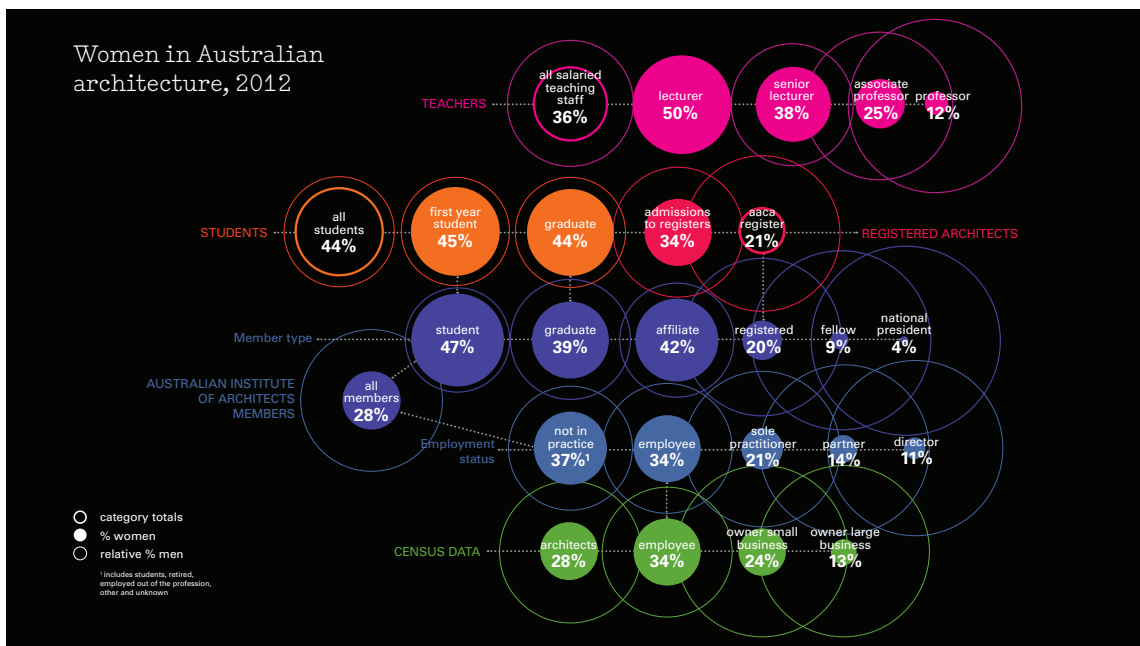


Fig. 2: Women in Australian Architecture (2011). Data collection and analysis led by Gill Matthewson, with data visualisation by Georgina Russell and Catherine Griffiths. Sources: University schools of architecture; State registration boards; Architects Accreditation Council of Australia combined register, 2012; Australian Institute of Architects, Architecture Schools of Australasia Handbook, 1988–2013; ABS 2011 Census of Population and Housing, customised data, code Architect ANZSCO 232111; Paula Whitman, *Going Places: The Career Progression of Women in the Architectural Profession*, Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology, 2005; Julie Willis, *A Statistical Survey of Registered Women in Australia*, Adelaide: University of South Australia, 1997.

are more women in the profession than are officially mapped, although it raises the issue of a continuing gap between school and work participation rates. Women's over-representation in the informal group has significant implications: being registered gives greater access to the traditional power structures through which reputations are made and influence obtained. This is also one of the principal means of attaining professional visibility.

Secondly, we can map women across professions. When we examined comparable professions we discovered that architecture was exceptional in retaining lower numbers of women. In law women comprise 46% of legal professionals, and in medicine women make up 36% of the overall professional group. And, lastly, we might map architecture against a map of Australians. In Australia, women are 51% of the overall population. Australian architecture does not reflect civil society or correlate well with other professional groups.

Comparing the two categories of male and female participation rates presents a stark gender differential but offers little insight into how this disparity comes into being, or where men and women are clustered in the profession. The 2011 Australian Census data can be used to offer a more fine-grained account of demographics by age, employment position and salary level. This material identifies the importance of life stages and age cohorts beneath the larger categories of male and female architects. We discovered that women cluster at the younger end of the profession.¹⁰ This is not surprising, because at a certain point in the career journey the shared profiles of men and women architects rapidly diverge. In the 2011 census, men aged 25–29 comprise 53% of the workforce, but at age 30 the number of men increases to make up 63% of the profession. The proportion of women in the profession reflects graduation rates until age 30, after which there is a significant decline.¹¹ The disappearance of women

will be discussed in the next section, but here we will focus on a further stratification of the profession and how it reflects the gendering of participation.

The majority of architects in Australia are employees, 62.3%, an increase from 2006 when 58.6% of architects were listed as employees. In 2011, women comprised 76% of employees, while 10.9% were owner / managers of incorporated enterprises, and 12.1% owner / managers of unincorporated enterprises. The architectural profession is unusual amongst Australian professions in its high rates of owners / managers – 36.7% compared to 14% for other professions – and architecture appears to be an industry dominated by smaller enterprises. The Parlour surveys indicate that women who are directors of practices tend to lead small practices.

Our project was driven by an initial inquiry into women's under-representation at senior management levels and in leadership positions, but we aimed to map and record the voices of women at the top, middle and bottom of the profession. Nevertheless, any portrait of women in Australian architecture is the result of writing contemporary history from below.¹² If the 2011 Australian census records that 76% of women architects describe themselves as employees compared to 56% of men in architecture, lumping women architects into one category does not map stratification amongst women. [fig. 3] Female architects are scarce in the upper levels of the profession, and since most women are employees rather than directors, women generally experience different workplace power relations and exercise different professional agency.¹³ The public representation of women in architecture and the voices of women architects are dominated by women leaders, just as the public representation of men in architecture is dominated by the voices of male leadership. Noting the salaried woman architect majority acknowledges the experiences of many and raises, of course, the broader issue of the

Women's slice of the pie

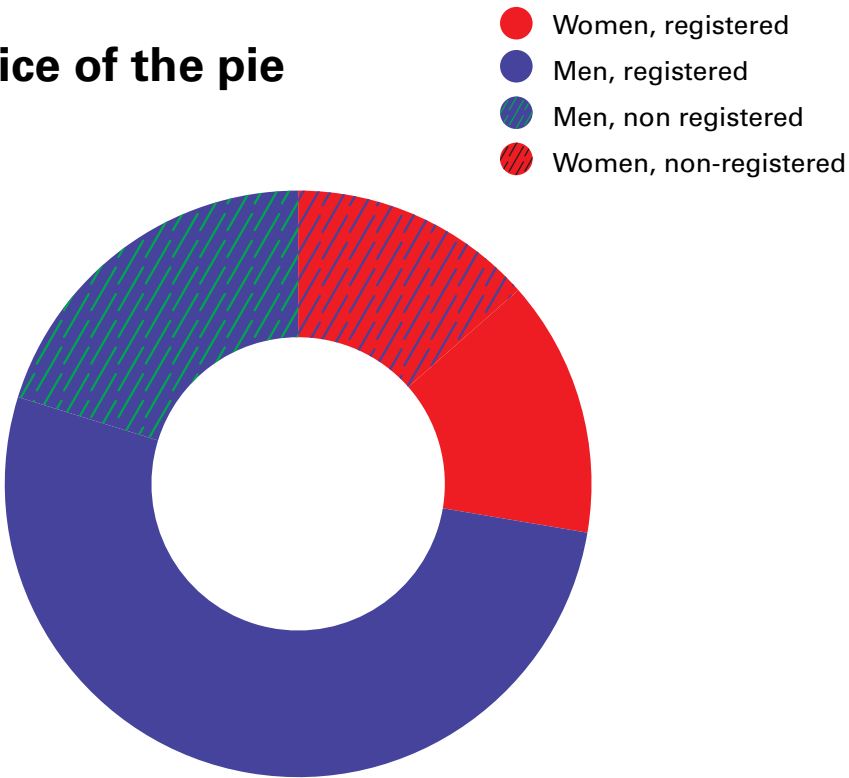


Fig. 3: Women's slice of the pie, registration data combined with information from the 2011 Census. Data compilation and analysis by Gill Matthewson.

differences between the general category 'woman' and the differences between women.

Written narratives of women's professional lives are caught between the large social structures of gender and the particular texture of individual life stories. Feminism argues that gender is formed and experienced in the everyday, and that 'experience' is central to feminist analysis, but tension remains between the specificity of singular experiences and the general characteristics of groups of women. Feminist theory has long acknowledged conflicts between the political strategy of speaking on behalf of all women in order to press for gender equality, and the range of differences amongst women.¹⁴ These difficulties form a central dynamic of feminism, which still posits everyday experience as a primary field for analysis: a place where structure and individual account interleave.

One way to better include the silent majority in discussions and portraits of the profession is through large-scale online surveys. We conducted two surveys. The first of these, 'Where Do All the Women Go?', aimed to establish a broader portrait of women's participation, to which twelve hundred women responded. The second survey 'And What About the Men?' asked an identical set of questions to which 900 men responded. The surveys took an expanded view of what constitutes architectural engagement and activity, and captured those working in non-traditional ways within architecture, including a substantial number of women working to all intents and purposes as architects within conventional practice, but without being registered. The survey also sought information about those who had either moved sideways into allied fields or 'left' architecture.

Our findings confirm those of earlier surveys in Britain and Canada, but a much finer grain is added to the picture by augmenting the formal architectural measurement of school and registration and

institute rolls with data from quite different sources, drawn from the census and our own surveys.¹⁵ This new detail enables us to identify pressure points for women, and to map the differences between male and female careers in architecture. Variation in women's working lives is under-theorised in architecture, where data is invariably organised around the category of 'Women' as a starting point.¹⁶ Our project seeks to address this by developing a theoretical framework through which we might discuss difference as well as similarity. Two ideas are useful in framing the heterogeneous nature of women's experience in architecture: firstly, the recognition that disadvantage and advantage are both cumulative, and, secondly, the idea of a career as a journey marked by key career turning points.

The notion of accumulative advantage and disadvantage is a powerful concept for explaining the delays or acceleration of individual careers. Very few women in our survey reported an illegal incident of sexual discrimination or sexual harassment. Discrimination occurs in much more informal ways, beyond the definitions enshrined by law. Instead, the instances of discrimination experienced by our women survey respondents were more cloaked: the withdrawal of leadership roles in project work when a woman architect began an IVF programme, the accidental discovery of gendered salary discrepancies for the same roles, or the failure to be considered for leadership opportunities. Together, these incidents reveal a pattern of slow erosion of equity.

Our research inquiry was interested in progress and delays as we sought to explain the barriers and pathways that constructed women's march upwards, downwards, or their stasis within office structures. Whilst a snapshot focus on statistical data is useful, a longer-term model of women's working lives across time is important for developing a meaningful analysis of women across the decades. A parallel study of women in the construction industry aimed to describe women professionals through their

career journeys, and this idea has been usefully borrowed to analyse women in architecture.¹⁷ The 'journey' structure can highlight seminal events and turning points, and it allows for the accretion of incidents and responses. Such a narrative framework enables us to incorporate the multiple intersecting factors that work to disadvantage women, a multiplicity that is not easily captured in a crisp 'problem and solution' message about gender problems. Although conventional models of storytelling – such as the narration of historical change – often focus on decisive events with causal consequences, in order to make sense of women's careers we have to conceptualise the problem differently. One frame for doing this is the idea of 'everyday sexism', a pervasive, frequently low-level form of discrimination.¹⁸

Constructing accounts of women's careers over time as they intersect with key career milestones and life events also allows us to account for variations in experience of gender disadvantage and the use of gendered explanations to account for individual experiences. Anecdotally, we have noticed a profound 'feminist belief gap' between many students / recent graduates and women in their 30s and above. This can be accounted for by the structuring conditions of women's experience as they begin their careers in architecture. Many young women have spent years in educational institutions with strong administrative provisions for gender equality. This is not to suggest that no gender discrimination occurs within the secondary schooling or university system, but much stronger systems of governance do prevail.

When women leave university and move away from these heavily managed bureaucratic systems, their careers unfold in complex ways. Women's advancement in key professional fields and the factors producing or inhibiting career progression have been studied and theorised by Professor Virginia Valian. She argues that success can rarely be attributed to one breakthrough event, but that

'success is largely the accumulation of advantage, the parlaying of small gains into larger ones.'¹⁹ Just as success accumulates, disadvantage similarly accumulates through small, incremental occurrences. This thesis of accumulative advantage and disadvantage allows us to incorporate the many different moments of missed opportunity that our women survey respondents reported: the small gendered salary gap, the failure to be offered leadership on a project, the gendered distribution of tasks, the inability to find meaningful part-time work after returning from a maternity and childcare break. These may all be micro events but they cascade.

This theory of everyday micro events acting as the builders of accumulative disadvantage needs to be supplemented by a theory of key career turning points – our second framework. Having children and caring for them is one of the major career turning points for many women in architecture. It is perhaps no coincidence that men and women's careers diverge after the age of 30, when a woman's career coincides with the lifecycle of pregnancy, childbearing and childrearing. Conflicts between clock time and care time, or office time and home time can be discerned if we consider the broader context of work patterns.

Architects work long hours. Data gathered from the 2011 census records high levels of overwork and long working hours in the Australian architectural profession. In an analysis of the data gathered in late 2011, of those who self-nominate as architects, 32% of men aged 40–44, and nearly 35% of men aged 55–59, work 49 hours or more per week. Just under 30% of men aged 60–64 work 49 hours or more. Only half the number of women reported working more than 49 hours a week: 11.92% of women compared to 26.35% of men, making a total for all architectural workers of 22.37%.²⁰ Architecture diverges from other Australian professions in its high rates of overwork (40+ and 49+ hours per week), which are several percentage

points higher than other professions.²¹ Particularly telling is the data on working hours and the availability – or lack – of part-time work. This reveals that architecture is less supportive of part-time work than other professions, and our survey responses suggested that the low levels of part-time work and the drive for long hours impact particularly on women.²² [fig. 4] In architecture, office time dominates people's working lives. The data on work hours can be tied to the micro stories supplied by architects as responses to our survey. These stories suggest that the preference for full-time work, the long hours culture in architecture and normative gender ideals have significant negative effects on the careers of women caregivers.

Women respondents were riled that the survey did not ask directly about children, although it did ask about caring responsibilities. Stories about the impact of children on careers dominated many of the open-ended survey responses. Some respondents declared that care and career were incompatible. 'Architecture + babies + no options' said one woman and another respondent declared: 'Children and major corporations do not mix.' Women architects parenting young children described their careers as 'slowed down', 'shaky', 'on hold', 'stalled' and 'unsupported'. Several of the respondents puzzled over the impact of a fairly brief period of maternity leave of six months on a subsequent career slow down.²³ Gender ideals and gender norms come into play.

When we first began this project we encountered a folkloric belief that women's disappearance from the profession could be attributed to their child-bearing responsibilities alone. This is a particularly pernicious narrative that can exempt architecture from changing its working culture. Women's continuing participation and presence in the profession is a more complex issue than maternity and childcare. If the problem is envisaged as a purely biological issue, women's 'disappearance' can be externalised as a societal issue: women have babies and

provide the greater share of care. The impossible reconciliation of an architectural career and childcare is sometimes blamed on construction industry schedules: architects explain that their hands are tied by clients and builders, who expect consultations on a demand basis rather than according to an agreed timetable. In these accounts, the problem is seen as external to the profession, and the profession adopts a passive, 'feminised' position of having no agency to change the situation. Importantly, survey anecdotes and knowledge sharing at our consultation sessions have also unearthed architectural offices that provide a positive range of working structures and methods, and this knowledge has gone into the Parlour Guides to Equitable Practices, to be discussed below. Nonetheless, Immediate Past President of the Australian Institute of Architects Paul Berkmeier has noted a 'resistance to other ways of working' in the profession.

The issue of discrimination within the profession cannot be tackled if women's lower rates of participation are explained away by their biological role as mothers. As Valian's work discovered, childless women in other professions experience slower rates of progression than men. Even in workplaces 'where nothing seems to be wrong, where people genuinely and sincerely espouse egalitarian beliefs and are well intentioned, where few men or women overtly harass women', they still experience slower rates of advancement. She argues that we need a much more widespread understanding of how we all share a 'gender schema': a tacit mode of categorising and understanding the world through assumptions about gender and its attributes. These kinds of everyday cognitive structures are useful and not necessarily sexist but 'sexism steps in when values are attached and prescriptions imposed'.²⁴ Through evidence gathered from experimental psychological studies, Valian argues that both women and men are likely 'to overvalue men and undervalue women'. These presumptions affect our perceptions of competence – such as having a

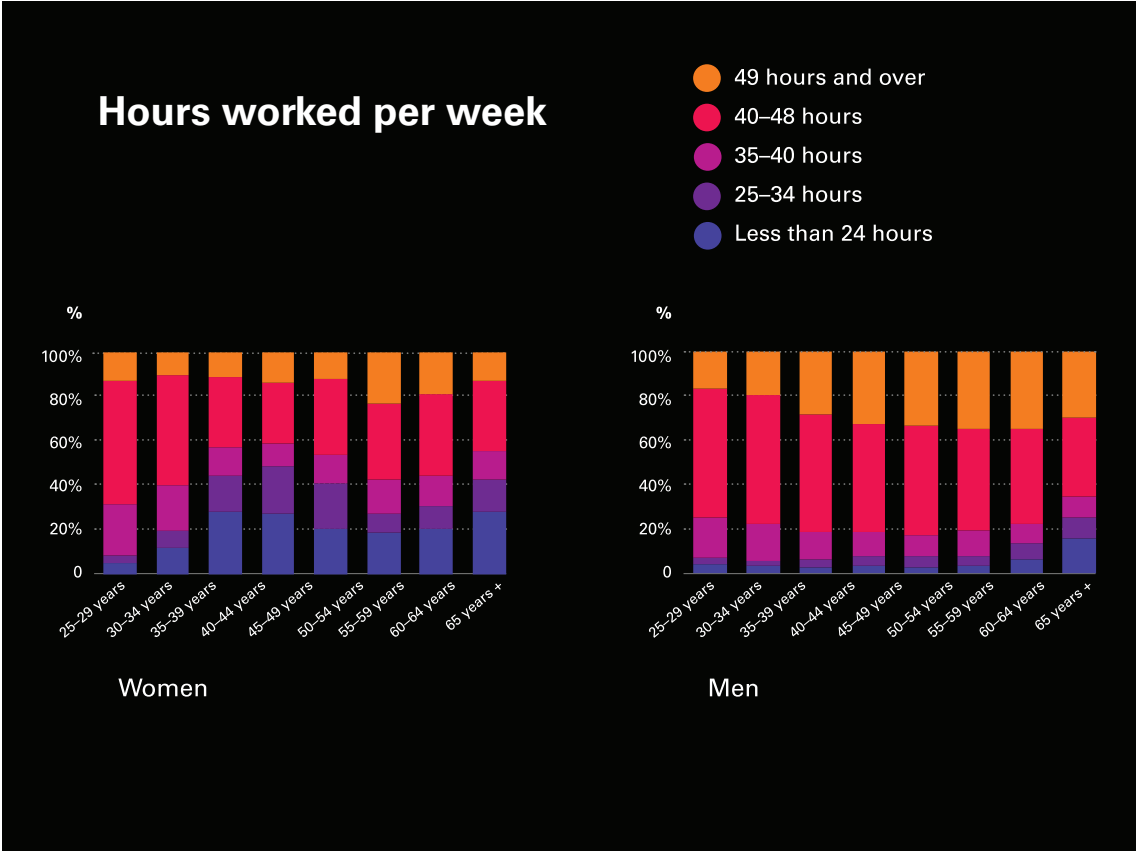


Fig. 4: Hours worked per week, 2011. Data compilation and analysis by Gill Matthewson. Source: Australian Census.

higher threshold of competence to judge one gender rather than another. These values affect 'the ability of women to benefit from their achievements and to be perceived as leaders'.²⁵ The 'gender schema' concept deserves to be more widely disseminated to explain stubborn and subtle discrimination, and account for the kind-hearted and the adamant.

Our surveys furnish anecdotal evidence and offer a fine-grained understanding of how workplaces operate through gender channels. Accounts from the workplace floor document the everyday operations of gender bias and norms and fill in the gaps between the statistical graphs. For over thirty years we have pondered why so few women remain in the profession after architecture school. Individual stories are portals into the daily grind of gendered relations.

Outcomes

Research and activist politics were linked at the project's inception, and media platforms became a central means to collect and disseminate information. Our project has pursued a number of activist outcomes in order to support gender change in architecture. This has happened incrementally as we disseminate the findings of the research. Some of the working patterns that impact most severely on women's career progression – and indeed their ability to stay in the profession at all – are based on perceptions about women and work, and in mythologies about architecture and labour: 'You can't be a part-time architect'; 'Women are less ambitious'; 'There is no gender pay gap'; or 'The only way to be a successful architect is to sacrifice all to the work.'

Although clearly ridiculous, such disciplinary myths and perceptions are slippery and persistent. Nonetheless, our research has provided the evidence to start disassembling these mythologies, and our activism has revealed a strong appetite for change among significant sections of the profession. Justine Clark developed a specific presentation addressed to these mythologies, but the project of

'attitudinal change' has also been confronted in two other ways.²⁶

Information has been shared and published via our public platform 'Parlour'. The Parlour website was developed and continues to be edited by Justine Clark with support from the rest of the research team.²⁷ Parlour was launched a year after the research began as a place for women in Australian architecture to speak. It had multiple aims: to disseminate the research findings beyond academia; to offer a space for the architectural audience to reflect upon the research; to promote discussion and debate; to publish informed, provocative opinion; and to present a more complex, diverse view of what an 'architect' is.

In establishing Parlour, we were highly aware that there had been many reports on women in Australian architecture over the years, all of which had made excellent recommendations, yet few of these had been followed. We realised that if our work was to have a widespread impact we had to create a strong demand for it – a demand that would mean our reports and analysis could not be left to moulder on an institutional shelf. We had the advantage that our work was unfolding at a significantly different historical moment than earlier researchers had encountered. Nowadays, new media and social media offer wider possibilities for building a larger coalition and stronger consensus around the issue of gender reform. As other scholars have noted, the Internet offers social movements a further means of building a collective identity, disseminating information and achieving mobilisation, as well as acting as a lobbying mechanism for social and political change.²⁸

By November 2014, over 80,000 individuals from 3,836 cities and 172 countries had engaged with Parlour. Surprisingly, 38% of our participants come from outside Australia, enabling us to build connections with similar activist projects elsewhere. This expanded involvement has also added

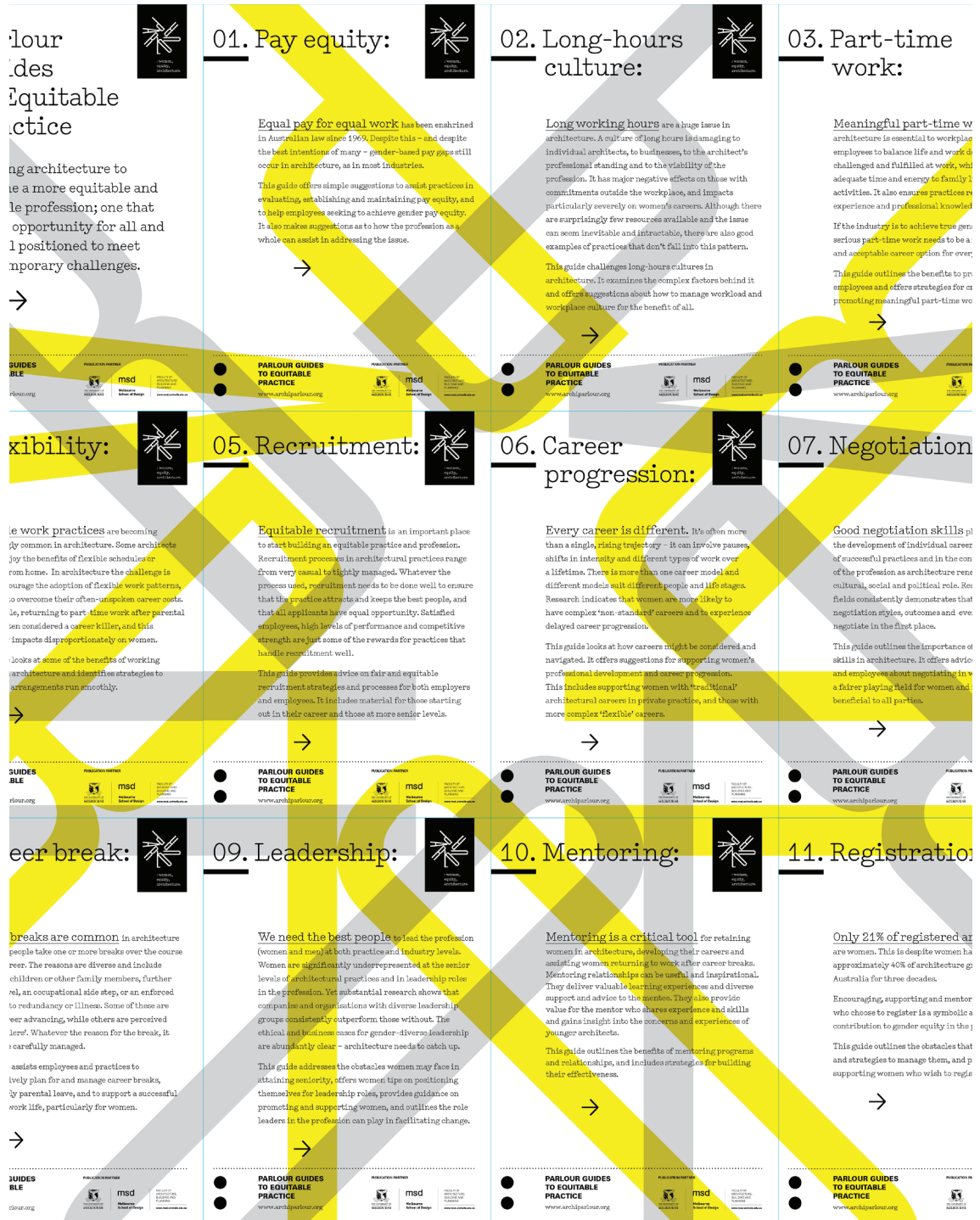


Fig. 5: Covers of the Parlour Guides to Equitable Practice. Graphic design, Catherine Griffiths.

significant impetus and credibility to our campaign within Australia. We have continued to expand our Australian audience and, in doing so, have made gender and labour issues much more visible in the wider professional community. We publish opinion pieces on the workplace and architectural culture – some based on personal experience – and we alert readers to findings from studies of other professions. Inadvertently, perhaps, we have become a benign public watchdog on gender issues. As one architect commented recently, ‘Parlour has put the profession on notice.’

Reports from other professional fields and Virginia Valian’s research recommend transparency, structure and accountability as ways of advancing gender equity in the workplace. Recruitment, interviewing, promotion, pay, leave and project opportunities can all benefit from being more clearly structured and making their procedures and outcomes more transparent. To this end we have developed a series of eleven guides, the Parlour Guides for Equitable Practice. Topics include long hours, part-time work, recruitment, flexibility, career progression, negotiation, and leadership. [fig. 5] Each guide employs about nine to eleven pages to outline the issue, establish why it matters and provide strategies for change. This last section is addressed to multiple audiences: individual employee architects, employer practices, and institutional and professional bodies. Importantly, the guides acknowledge that different parts of the profession have different types of agency, and suggest that all of them can take a proactive role in facilitating change. The guides arm individuals, companies and organisations with the skills, knowledge and systems to activate these varying types of agency. This encourages the profession as a whole to attend to the work and labour practices of architecture – to see them and take them seriously, rather than looking straight through them.

Parlour aims to put women and gender at the

centre of discussions on the future of the profession – another kind of visibility. In 2013, we held a one-day workshop: ‘Transform: Altering the Future of Architecture’. Attended by two hundred architects, it addressed the question: ‘If architecture was more equitable would it also be stronger?’ Together, Parlour, the Parlour Guides and the Transform workshop have placed issues of workplace flexibility, reasonable working hours, broader definitions of the profession, and more diverse career pathways after architectural training at the centre of current debates about the future of the profession. These issues have moved from being ‘women’s issues’ to becoming issues of concern for a far larger constituency. We have built consensus by focusing on these key issues and, in so doing, moved our agenda from the margins to the mainstream.

The initial research proposal foresaw certain outcomes, notably a Gender Equity Policy for the Institute of Australian Architects, and the compilation of information from parallel professions on effective structures for gender change. But one of our most important initiatives, the Parlour website, emerged as the project progressed. Parlour became a central means for collecting grass-roots information on the profession and the operations of the office. We undertook the large-scale online surveys via the Parlour website and gathered other information from the census, a little-used demographic resource, as well as collecting statistical data from more mainstream institutional bodies, such as architecture schools and the Australian Institute of Architects.

The final significant outcome of the project to be noted here is the first Australian Institute of Architects’ Gender Equity Policy, developed over the course of a year by key members of the research team.²⁹ The policy formally acknowledges the underlying structural issues that result in inequitable opportunity for women in Australian architecture. It sets out an agenda for change and is obliged to monitor and report on progress.

Australia has a strong tradition of 'state feminism'. With the reforming Labour government of the early 1970s, key women's agendas were institutionalised through legislation; for example, the establishment of bureaucracies and budgets for specific new areas of state intervention, such as childcare and women's refuges.³⁰ Moving gender change into the Institute provides enormous legitimacy for the idea of structural gender inequity. Even if the policy has varied impacts within the broader profession – and we don't yet know what these will be – it establishes standards for the major industry body itself to adhere to. Now the Institute must begin by sorting out its own house.

Presenting the profession with a new, nuanced picture of itself has had multiple effects. It has provided many women architects with a larger and more visible context in which to understand their own career trajectory. This sense that they are not alone has been empowering for many. It has also helped architects, practices and institutions to see and recognise the systemic, structural issues at play in women's careers. Lastly, the process of making these statistics, stories and analyses visible – and indeed visualising them through striking graphics and presentations – has also helped us to convince sections of the profession that there is, indeed, a problem. This is the first step to initiating change.

Notes

1. Judith Allen, 'Evidence and Silence: Feminism and the Limits of History', in Carole Pateman and Elizabeth Grosz, *Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory* (Sydney: Allan and Unwin, 1986), 174.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Joan Scott, 'Feminism's History', *Journal of Women's History* 16, no. 2, (2004): 10–29.
5. Work has been a key topic for feminist historians. For a brief discussion see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, 'Placing Women's History in History', *New Left Review* 1, no. 133 (May – June 1982): 23–28.
6. LP 100200107 'Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession: women, work and leadership' led by Associate Professor Naomi Stead (University of Queensland).
7. See, for instance, the work of Lynne Walker on British women architects: L. Walker, 'Women in Architecture (1671–1951)', in L. Walker, ed., *Women Architects: Their Work* (London: Sorella Press, 1984), 7–28; L. Walker, 'The Entry of Women into the Architectural Profession in Britain', *Woman's Art Journal* 7, no 1, (1986): 13–18; and L. Walker, 'Women and Architecture', in *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women and Design*, eds. J. Attfield & P. Kirkham (London: The Women's Press, 1989), 90–105; and numerous contributions on US women architects in S. Torre, ed., *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1977).
8. The project's statistical survey was compiled by Gill Matthewson within the larger project directed by Associate Professor Naomi Stead. Gill worked with research assistants Kirsty Volz, Georgina Russell and Chandana Rajanna to compile and check the statistical map. See Gill Matthewson, 'Appendix A: Women's involvement in the Australian architecture profession: building a clearer and more inclusive picture', accessed 8 July 2015, http://archiparlour.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Appendix-A_womens-involvement-in-the-architecture-profession_sml2.pdf. See also <http://archiparlour.org/updating-the-numbers-at-school/>; <http://archiparlour.org/updating-the-numbers-part-2-at-work/>; <http://archiparlour.org/updating-the-numbers-part-3-institute-membership/>; and <http://archiparlour.org/the-half-life-of-women-architects/>.
9. In contrast, 10,836 men in architecture are identified through the census and there are 7,877 registered male architects. This correlates with membership data from the Australian Institute of Architects. As Gill Matthewson points out: 'A minimum 65% of the women members are in membership categories that indicate they are definitely not registered architects.'

- These categories are: affiliate, graduate and student. With the male membership only a minimum 33% of the men fall into these same definitely-not-registered categories. Overall, 42% of the total membership is in these definitely-not-registered categories. This reminds us that the profession is larger than any count of registered architects can give us, but it is even larger for women.' See <http://archiparlour.org/Updating-the-numbers-part-3-institute-membership>.
10. For example, although women make up 26% of members of the Australian Institute of Architects, over half of these women are either student (29%) or graduate members (24%), in contrast with one third of male members (17% students, 12% graduate). This is also evident in the registration statistics. Looking at the New South Wales Registration Board data, Gill Matthewson notes that 'in NSW the greater proportion of women are in the younger age groups: 77% of the practising registered women are under the age of 50, and 60% of the men are over the age of 50'. Gill Matthewson, 'Appendix A: Women's involvement in the Australian architecture profession', 8–11.
 11. Gill Matthewson and Justine Clark 'The "Half Life" of Women Architects', Parlour, 15 September 2013, accessed 8 July 2015, <http://archiparlour.org/the-half-life-of-women-architects>.
 12. 'Writing history from below', is of course a famous phrase from labour history. For a recent summary and review of new directions in this field of scholarship see Katrina Navickas, 'What happened to class? New histories of labour and collective action in Britain', *Social History* 36, no. 2 (2011): 192–204.
 13. Julie Connolly et al., 'Appendix C: Architects in Australia: A snapshot from the 2011 Census' (Melbourne, Parlour, September 2013), 8.
 14. Sneja Gunew, 'Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct', in *Feminist Knowledge: Critique and Construct* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), 30–31.
 15. Ann de Graft-Johnson, Sandra Manley and Clara Greed, 'Why Do Women Leave Architecture?' Technical Report. (Bristol and London: University of the West of England and Royal Institute of British Architects, 2003), and *Consultations & Roundtables on Women in Architecture in Canada*, assembled by Eva Matsuzaki with assistance from Patricia Gibb and Imbi Harding (2003).
 16. New online survey technologies have made the process of large-scale surveys much easier. Earlier studies often worked with small survey samples. Val Caven's terrific research had a sample size of 49. See Val Caven 'Constructing a career: women architects at work', *Career Development International*, 9, no. 4/5 (2004): 518–531. Ten male and female architects are interviewed for Mary Shepard Spaeth and Katarzyna Kosmala's 'Identification through Disidentification: A Life Course Perspective on Professional Belonging', *Architectural Theory Review* 17, nos. 2–3 (2012): 216–233. Fowler and Wilson's landmark study interviewed seventy-two architects (both male and female), and used the analysis for the basis of their essay, Bridget Fowler and Fiona M. Wilson, 'Women Architects and their Discontents', *Sociology* 38, no.1 (2004): 101–119.
 17. Shu-Ling Lu and Martin Sexton, 'Career Journeys and Turning Points of Senior Female Managers in Small Construction Firms', *Construction Management and Economics* 28 (February 2010): 125–139.
 18. Karen Burns, 'The Elephant in our Parlour: Everyday sexism in architecture', Parlour, 20 August 2014, accessed 8 July 2015, <http://archiparlour.org/the-elfphant-in-our-parlour-everyday-sexism-in-architecture/>.
 19. Virginia Valian, 'Sex, Schemas, and Success: What's Keeping Women Back?', *Academe* 84, no. 5 (September/October 1998): 50–55.
 20. Julie Connolly et al., 'Appendix C: Architects in Australia', 20.
 21. Ibid.
 22. The census data shows that 28% of women architects are employed part-time (as compared to 12% of men and 17% of all architects). This compares with 38% of women professionals as a whole and 26 % of all professionals. 'Appendix C: Architects in Australia'.
 23. This section draws on a brief analysis provided by one of our researchers. See Sandra Kaji-O'Grady, 'The

- open-ended responses in the Parlour surveys: Three views', *Architecture Australia* 103, no. 5 (September/October 2014): 65.
24. Virginia Valian, 'Beyond Gender Schemas: Improving the Advancement of Women in Academia', *Hypatia* 20, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 198–213.
 25. Ibid.
 26. Justine Clark, 'Six Myths about Women and Architecture', Parlour, 6 September 2014, accessed 8 July 2015, <http://archiparlour.org/six-myths-about-women-and-architecture/>.
 27. Including Karen Burns, who came up with the name. Its striking visual identity was designed by Catherine Griffiths, while Peter Johns of Butterpaper advised on and built the website.
 28. See Wim van de Donk, Brian D. Loader, Paul G. Nixon, Dieter Rucht, eds., *Cyberprotest: New Media, Citizens and Social Movements*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2004); Mary Joyce, *Digital Activism Decoded: The New Mechanics of Change* (New York: International Debate Education Association, 2010); and Shae Garwood, *Advocacy Across Borders: NGOs, Anti-Sweatshop Activism and the Global Garment Industry* (Sterling, VA: Kumarian Press, 2011).
 29. The policy was developed by the Australian Institute of Architects' Gender Equity Working Group. Research team members Naomi Stead, Amanda Roan and Justine Clark sat on this group and were instrumental in assisting with the preparation of a draft policy. See <http://archiparlour.org/australian-institute-of-architects-gender-equity-policy>.
 30. Marilyn Lake, *Getting Equal: The History of Australian Feminism* (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1999), 253–28.

Biographies

Karen Burns is an architectural scholar based at the University of Melbourne. Karen is co-founder of Parlour: women, equity architecture and participated in the Australia Research Council-funded project investigating gender equity in Australian architecture.

Justine Clark is an architectural editor and honorary research fellow at the University of Melbourne. Justine is a co-founder of Parlour: women, equity architecture and participated in the Australia Research Council-funded project investigating gender equity in Australian architecture.

Julie Willis is an architectural scholar based at the University of Melbourne. Julie is a co-founder of Parlour: women, equity architecture and participated in the Australia Research Council-funded project investigating gender equity in Australian architecture.

