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Proceedings of the sixth international women in leadership conference: vision in leadership: women redefining power

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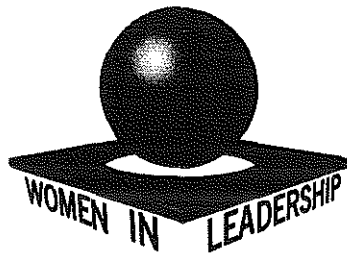
WOMEN IN
LEADERSHIP
PROJECT

SIXTH INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE 1997

*Vision in Leadership:
Women Redefining Power*



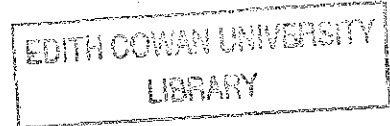
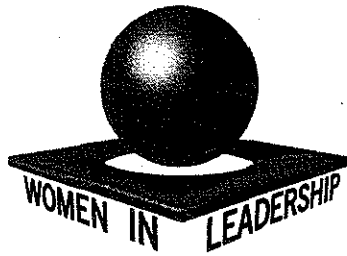
EDITH COWAN
UNIVERSITY
PERTH WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Errata: Preface

Please note preface should read

Held at the Esplanade Hotel Fremantle, from the 19th – 21st November 1997 the Sixth International Women in Leadership Conference focussed on the theme Vision in Leadership; Women Redefining Power.



PROCEEDINGS
of
THE SIXTH INTERNATIONAL
WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP
CONFERENCE

*Vision in Leadership: Women Redefining
Power*

EDITORIAL COMMITTEE

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The Sixth International Women In Leadership Conference

19th - 21st November 1997, Fremantle, Western Australia

The International Women in Leadership conference attracts internationally renowned speakers as well as a wide audience from across the nation. The Conference is at the forefront of organisational and leadership research and provides a means of personal interaction with preeminent female researchers and leaders in Australia and overseas. Such interaction deepens the understanding of the leadership capacities of women and of leadership in organisations, knowledge which is central to the intellectual work of the Women in Leadership Project. Held at the Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, from the 25th-27th November 1996, the Fifth International Women in Leadership conference focused on the theme: 'Ethics or Leadership? The 90's Dilemma'.

Since its inception in 1991, the Women in Leadership Project at Edith Cowan University has developed a strong national reputation for its expertise in identifying and responding to the challenges which face women who work in the higher education sector. The project is particularly known for creating forums which publicly showcase the leadership capacities of women across a wide range of professions and sectors. To date, the Women in Leadership model has been used as a benchmark for similar programs established in 20 universities in Australia and New Zealand.

The principal objective of the Project is to strategically engage women with leadership processes, knowledge and activities. Apart from the annual conference, the project organises collegial programmes, mentoring programmes, Springboard workshops, seminars for the Greenleaf Centre (Aus & NZ), a public lecture series, carries out consultancy work for corporations, publishes the *International Review of Women in Leadership*, and carries out research in the field.

Women in Leadership programs are guided by the Women In Leadership Model, *Dimensions of Leadership*, which acknowledges four critical capacities for leadership: having a public voice, being a creator of environments, acknowledging ones own work identity and management competencies, and utilising strategic skills and knowledge.

WOMEN IN THE LAW

Gail Anderson
Clayton Utz

Abstract

In an era of greater equal opportunity the legal profession is still dominated by a strong masculine culture that actively blocks the entry of women into senior management. These gender barriers most often occur at the time of a woman's career development and advancement into the upper echelons of partnership or senior management.

It is a profession that continues to be fee driven with a strong emphasis on loyalty, dedication and commitment but with little thought given to the demands of a family. Women are therefore often channelled into the 'softer' areas of law, not seen as high achievers and perceived as taking a conciliatory line which is at odds with the traditional adversarial nature of the profession.

Statistical evidence indicates that more than 50% of law graduates in Western Australia are women with a similar number entering the junior ranks of the profession. However, those reaching partnership within a law firm continue to hover around a disproportionate 6%.

This paper will focus on the role of the woman lawyer within the profession, discuss the cultural and social barriers that continue to prevail, examine discriminatory rules in existence and highlight the deficiencies that exist to accommodate the needs of the professional woman. It will also suggest and open for debate a number of strategies to enhance the position of those women to gain greater recognition within their chosen career path.

Keywords: gender barriers, legal profession, career development, discriminatory rules

In my role as the Human Resources Manager of Clayton Utz, I am frequently reminded that equality can and does exist between the sexes. I see this equality in the 300 applications I receive each year from law students seeking vacation clerkships. I see this equality in the 60 students I interview for the limited number of positions available. I see this equality in a similar number of applications I receive each year for articles of clerkships. I also see this equality in the junior ranks of the legal profession. However, closer examination of the situation five to ten years after the completion of the articles year tells a very different story for women in the law and highlights the glaring disparities which exist within the hierarchy of the profession.

This paper will focus on the role of women lawyers within the profession, discuss the cultural and social barriers that continue to prevail and examine the discriminatory practices in existence. It will also suggest and open for debate a number of strategies to enhance the position of these women to gain greater recognition within their chosen career.

Since the 1970s we have seen a move away from traditional domestic roles and maternal responsibilities, a significant growth of women in the workplace and a higher number of women entering the professions. As a consequence, there have been increasing demands on institutions to recognise women's potential and to give them a greater role in decision making. This has placed the onus of change on institutional culture, policy and practice. Issues such as workbased child care, sexual harassment, the potential for enterprise bargaining to improve the position of

working women, work and family issues and flexible working conditions are some of the items now on the agenda (Pratt, 1994).

Women continue to be under-represented as partners and sole practitioners and over-represented as employee solicitors in relation to their total representation. Statistical evidence indicates that more than 50% of students entering law schools are female and similar numbers enter the junior ranks of the profession. In Western Australia only 6% of those women constitute partners in law firms. In New South Wales the figure is 13% which is considered to be better than in most parts of Australia. A comparative study of the 500 major law firms in the United States revealed a figure of 14% of women partners (Kirk, 1994; Malcolm, 1994; Kirby, 1997).

Statistics provided by the Australian Law Reform Commission for 1994 on the judiciary revealed that only 7% of all federal judgeships were held by women. The figure was 6% for State judicial officers although there has been some improvement with the appointment of women judges to the Supreme Courts of Western Australia and Victoria.

Although these issues are being addressed, the tendency in the workplace today still continues to operate on the premise that workers in senior roles are men and have the full-time domestic support of wives. The legal profession is no exception. The assumption therefore remains that lawyers can devote their entire energy to the practice of the law and be dedicated to the increasing demands and responsibilities of seniority. Women often do not fit into this stereotype and are perceived as a problem if their needs vary to accommodate their shifting responsibilities. The workplace can become a hostile place for women who continue to carry the bulk of family responsibilities, something which society often assigns to them. The structure and working arrangements of the legal profession are such that they invariably favour those who do not need to take extended breaks from work or who are able to put in long hours. Although advances in information technology enable part-time work to be performed from home, I do not believe this is yet seen as a viable alternative to lawyers sitting in their offices (Summer/s, 1994; Kremmer, 1995).

A masculine culture continues to dominate the legal profession and can actively inhibit the progression of women in senior roles. Although legal obstacles for women's participation in the profession were removed in 1911, barriers of a less visible kind continue to impede their rise to power and leadership. This often occurs at the crucial time of women's career development and advancement into the upper échelons. They may be faced with decisions on child bearing or their aspirations to seek partnership. A decision in favour of the former will inevitably cause a temporary halt to those aspirations.

In a recent paper given by The Hon. Justice Michael Kirby entitled "Women Lawyers – Making a Difference", he made mention of the relatively few women who had appeared before him exercising a 'speaking part' in the eighteen months since his appointment to the High Court. During that time he heard from at least 200 barristers but only six women advocates had risen to the podium. He questioned the reason for this. It is his considered opinion that top women advocates are quickly identified and appointed to judicial office, often before their full potential as counsel is reached (Kirby, 1997, p.5).

Justice Kirby went on to say that

“having seen men and women advocates in the most complex appellate cases over more than 13 years, gender as such, is neither qualification or disqualification. It is, and should be, completely irrelevant to a person’s capacity to communicate and to persuade. The examination results of law schools throughout this country clearly demonstrate that gender is irrelevant to intellectual capacity. If anything, the top graduates in law today tend to be women. So far as commonsense and practical nous are concerned, women can certainly bring a new dimension” (Kirby, 1997, p.7).

Although inequality at senior levels of the profession is recognised by people such as Justice Kirby, there continues to be slow progress in the areas of discrimination and harassment. As recently as September 1996, the New South Wales Law Society was still refusing to adopt a non-discrimination rule recommended by its equal opportunity committee for inclusion into its professional conduct rules. The recommended sentence was

“A legal practitioner must not, in the course of practice, discriminate against any person on the basis of sex, race, marital status, sexual orientation, age, mental or physical disability ... and must not sexually harass a colleague, staff member, client or other person” (Bagwell, 1996).

This proposal was in response to actual complaints from female lawyers and legal staff and was seen as a mechanism for women to make complaints without undertaking what they perceived was committing “career suicide”. It seems ironic that a self-governing profession that concerns itself with justice is loathe to adopt such a rule (Bagwell, 1996).

So why is there such a poor representation of women at senior levels in the legal profession? First, a law firm culture emphasises loyalty, dedication and commitment. There can be a perceived lack of commitment should a firm expect a required number of billable hours to be worked which cannot realistically be met. Also, there is often the assumption of an unbroken lifetime of commitment to full-time work. Both commitments are at odds with child-bearing plans and changing family responsibilities. Failure to meet these criteria and conform to the general standards set by male colleagues can adversely affect the financial and career goals of women. A preparedness to accept less autonomy in one’s work is also a compromise expected of women in a part-time capacity.

In Australia over the last ten to twelve years there has been a fall of approximately 10% in the number of women employed by the private sector of the legal profession. This fall has been largely compensated by a rise in the number of women lawyers working in private corporations. This statistic raises the question as to whether people in the corporate sector are more willing to make adjustment and accommodate changing work patterns which the legal profession has found difficult to adopt (Kirby, 1997).

Second, women are often channelled into perceived ‘softer’ areas such as administrative law and family law. These usually remunerate at a lower level, thereby affecting their financial contribution. In a profession where fee-earning capacity can influence salary, bonus payments and promotion, an active barrier can therefore exist if they fail to meet the financial targets set by

their employers or supervisors, either through the direction of their practice or for lifestyle reasons.

Third, there remains an attitude that women are not equipped with an aggressive approach and would rather take a conciliatory line, which is at odds with the traditional adversarial nature of the profession. According to Professor Chris Adam of the Graduate School of Business at the University of Sydney, "women do manage in a more collegial, co-operative way, and if a corporate culture is not built that way, they'll opt out and set up their own company or move to another sector of business".

Finally, there can exist a narrow and conservative client base in some areas of the law which promotes a rigid and conservative environment, often hostile to women professionals. The legal profession, probably more than many, still operates on the 'old boy' network. It has been suggested that clients are sometimes hesitant to offer the most prestigious work to women. We may question whether this hesitation has foundation or is a reflection of stereotyped perceptions. The limitations on this prestigious work, and the inherited attitudes of a Bar dominated by men since its inception, may also appear unwelcome to women who traditionally do not share the same background, attitudes and assumptions (Kirby, 1997).

Is it just a matter of time before the cultural climate changes to embrace women fully into the professions? Some would agree, while others would have us believe there is a real commitment needed to diversify leadership and to take deliberate steps to change assumptions and behaviours. In support of this latter argument, I would suggest a number of strategies.

First, there is a need to select and groom high-achieving women for advancement. This already exists in the corporate world for men. Some means of achievement are through access to employer-funded higher education, merit based appointments to key assignments or positions rather than through tokenism, promotion to male-dominated positions, for which women are adequately qualified but have traditionally been excluded in the past. Such actions are likely to involve profound cultural changes within organisations but are a necessary adjunct to effective management and a sincere and enlightened approach to laying the foundation for the future direction of policies and practices.

Second, there is the need for a well structured career planning process to ensure the development and continuity of leadership. Such a programme should incorporate women in order to provide diversity and link career planning to the grooming of high potential talent at the lower levels of the organisation. It should be a non-discriminatory policy for both genders and provide the basis for a long term career path.

Finally, to prevent losing highly talented women after investing significant resources in their training and development, a strategy should be implemented to improve the performance and management review process. This would provide greater feedback and identify early warning signs of disaffection. It also allows reinforcement to high achievers that they are a valued member of the organisation.

In addition, women reflect the demographics of the consumer marketplace. That is, they represent more than half of the adult population and an increasing share of the buying power. With the growing number of women in the workplace and with access to high levels of education, their demands will shift and they will not continue to accept male dominated business environments and decision making. Women have different life experiences and look at issues from a different perspective. They bring greater diversity to senior management decision making and can contribute to a wider range of views.

Generally, women still perceive the need for a superior performance to prove their ability in a predominantly male business environment. They tend to become inhibited by the fear of failure, risk taking or making unpopular decisions that expose them to criticism or ineptitude. They often undervalue their skills and experience, tend to wait to be asked to apply for senior positions and believe that, if they do their job well, they will be rewarded. However, this is not always the case. To be competitive in the corporate world you must believe you can do it and be seen to be capable of achieving these heights.

Unless women push for changes to work practices, greater job flexibility and a shift within the hierarchy of their professions, the status quo will remain. Not only will a change in organisational culture be necessary, but also a change in society's attitudes, away from the stereotype of men being the main providers and women in support roles. In a truly conservative and traditional environment, the urgency for change must be identified if the gender issue is ever to be addressed. Not until equality is recognised will women come some way to achieving their professional goals.

To this end, a powerful new national voice in the law was launched at the Australian Legal Convention on 19 September 1997 – Australian Women Lawyers. Its patron is Justice Mary Gaudron, the only woman on the High Court. In her address to the convention, Justice Gaudron spoke of the challenges women have faced in the profession over the last century. She went on to say that

“to assert that women were different, with different needs, would have been construed as an acknowledgement of incompetence; to question the bias of the law would have been to invite judgment as to one's fitness to be a member of the profession. And thus, very many of us became honorary men” (Meertens, 1997).

She welcomed the formation of the Australian Women Lawyers in that it acknowledged that women were in fact different and had a right to be so (Thompson, 1997).

With the support of women who have reached the pinnacle of their career, such as Justice Mary Gaudron, women in law will make in-roads and slowly alter the ethos and culture of the profession. This may not be a smooth transition but it will allow future generations to break further new ground and make their own special contribution.

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The Old Fashioned Ways are Sometimes Still the Best: Using Consciousness Raising as a Tool for Assisting Minority Leaders Develop Emotional Resistance

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Abstract

This paper describes one of the learnings to emerge from five studies undertaken by the author during 1995, 1996 and 1997. The learning was about the importance of consciousness raising as a tool for developing leadership capabilities among women. While the primary purpose of the studies was to examine the ways in which women and other members of minorities, socially construct leadership, it became clear as the studies progressed that consciousness raising was an important part of the way the women in these studies both developed the ability to lead and also how they continued to act as leaders in difficult and sometime hostile environments.

It was found that many of the techniques employed by the leaders who took part in this study were reminiscent of consciousness raising as described in the feminist literature of the 1960's and 70's. It is argued in this paper that the use of consciousness raising as a leadership development tool and as a support mechanism may assist women and other minority members to remain as leaders in organisations and may encourage others to take up leadership roles.

Keywords: participatory research, qualitative research, social construction

Introduction

"Women's liberation is the first radical movement to base its politics - in fact, create its politics - out of concrete personal experiences. We've learned that those experiences are NOT our private hang-ups. They are shared by every woman and are therefore political." (Morgan, 1970, p. xx)

For a number of years I have been interested in exploring how members of minority groups experience being a leader. This interest is based partly in my own experience of leadership but also in the stories told by my friends and colleagues, who describe the experience of leadership as being emotionally draining, personally confronting and conceptually difficult. One approach that I have taken is to explore the socially constructed nature of leadership using a modified form of the collaborative research method known as memory work (Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault, and Benton, 1992) and this paper is based on five of those studies. I will describe these studies, focussing on how some of the techniques used by the participants to help them understand and change their construction of leadership bore a strong resemblance to traditional consciousness raising techniques as described in the feminist literature of the 1960's.

It is argued that the use of consciousness raising as a leadership development tool and as a support mechanism may assist women and other minority members to resist the stress, ambivalence and dissonance created by being leaders in organisations and may encourage others to take up leadership roles.

Description of the studies

These five studies were undertaken by groups of people who found leadership problematic. In each case, people chose to be involved because of their interest in exploring both their personal experience of leadership and the ways in which that experience was socially constructed. The first study was undertaken by five middle class women (mainly academics). The second study was undertaken by seven young women (aged thirteen to seventeen) who were leaders of sporting teams. The third study involved six young people (aged sixteen to twenty) who were members of committees whose membership was dominated by adults. The fourth study was undertaken by seven women (aged twenty-two to thirty), all professionally qualified, who work in non-traditional jobs or industries (engineering, mining, petro-chemicals, football and surgery). The last study involved people with disabilities who chair committees dominated by people without disabilities. I was an active member of the first and the last of these studies and adopted the role of co-researcher with the other participants. I acted as a facilitator and scribe for the other three groups but did not actively participate in their discussions.

Methods

In this section I will briefly describe the principles upon which memory work in general and these studies in particular were based. A more detailed description of this research method and its strengths and weaknesses can be found elsewhere (Boucher, 1995; Boucher, 1997; Boucher and Smyth, 1996).

The main ways in which these studies differ from the majority of research on women and leadership is that they are collaborative in nature. Stanley (1990, p. 9) describes collaboration as "researchers and their subjects being on the same critical plane", where the worldviews of both the researcher and the subject hold equal significance and the task of the researcher is to understand the view of the subject and to build theory that makes sense in the world of that subject. Researchers such as Haug (1987) go further, describing a research setting where the differentiation between researcher and subject disappear altogether and the research is undertaken collaboratively by a collective. These studies were undertaken by collectives using a modified form of Haug's (1987) memory work approach.

In broad terms, memory work involves three phases, the collection of written memories, the collective analysis of the memories, and a reappraisal of the memories using a range of theories from various academic disciplines (Crawford, Kippax *et al*, 1992).

Phase 1: The collection of written memories

Haug (1987) is very prescriptive about how each member of the collective should write her/his memory, and gives a set of explicit instructions:

- write a memory,
- of a particular episode, action or event,
- in the third person,
- in as much detail as is possible, including even "inconsequential" or trivial detail,
- but without importing interpretation, explanation or biography.

Phase 2: Collective analysis of the memories

Whereas phase one involves the self talking to itself (writing one's own memories) the second phase involves the self responding to itself and others (Crawford, Kippax *et al*, 1992).

Once a number of memories have been discussed, the collective began to look for similarities and differences between the memories and for continuous elements among memories whose relation to each other is not immediately apparent. Members particularly questioned those aspects of the events that do not appear amenable to comparison. We attempted to avoid, however, autobiography or biography.

The analysis of the memories aimed to uncover, firstly, the common sense, the common understanding, contained in them. The memories were theorised as cross-sectional examples of common (social) experience. The specific events contained in the memories do not matter, what is important is the social meaning embodied by such events in general (Crawford *et al.*, 1992).

The collective then examined the memories as a whole and identified the cliches, generalisations, contradictions, cultural imperatives and metaphors they contained. They then discussed theories, popular conceptions, sayings and images about the topic. Haug (1987) pays particular attention to cliches, writing that they act as an obstacle to understanding. It is through the rigorous examination of popular meanings, images and cliches that culturally approved ways of avoiding those things that have become personally and collectively problematic can be unearthed (Crawford *et al.*, 1992). Finally, members of the collective examined what was not written in the memories (but what might be expected to be).

The total experience exposed the processes involved in the making of a common sense of the actions described. This examination suggested revising the original interpretation of the common patterns, in light of this greater depth of understanding, and the analysis continued by moving from individual memories to the cross-sectional analysis and back again in a recursive fashion. Exposing these processes of construction raised the possibility of modification and transformation of the common sense understandings.

Typically, at this stage in the analysis, new triggers or cues are suggested by the group members and Phase 1 is set in train again. More memories are generated, using the same or a different cue (Crawford *et al.*, 1992).

Phase 3: Theorising from the memories

This phase is where the material provided in Phases 1 and 2 was examined and further theorised. The memory work group evaluated its own attempts at theorising. New models of theoretical understanding that had been developed by the group were tested against the memories, and adjusted accordingly. Members of the group checked that the models made sense in terms of new memories being generated by the group. Earlier, simplistic understandings were abandoned in favour of understandings developed after a number of iterations of the process. Theorising was informed by other knowledge, models and theories group members brought to the process.

Although this description suggests a linear process, Crawford *et al.* (1992) make it clear that the three phases are not so easily distinguishable and describe the memory work process as recursive. This was certainly the case in these studies. Specifically, the studies aimed to explore leadership by looking at it as a social construct and through the analysis of memories, to develop some tentative notions about how these groups of leaders construct leadership and the ways in which it might be helpful to change those construction. Social construction in this context means:

- (a) what members of minorities know as leadership, and
- (b) what meaning they make of their leadership behaviours (Walderkine, 1986).

The aim was to develop a conceptually dense, multi-faceted picture of how members of minority groups socially construct leadership, a picture that doesn't try to ignore or simplify the complexities of their experiences, thoughts and feelings.

These studies were an attempt to apply to the study of leadership, some principles of feminist research. These included collaboration, critical reflection on and analysis of, the research process, and paying attention to the consciousness raising impact that doing the research has on those involved in the research (Fonow and Cook, 1991; Stanley, 1990). By doing this, it was expected that a very different view of leadership would be discovered, a complex and multi-faceted view that was based in the experience of the people involved in the study and from which they (rather than some other person called a researcher), could develop theory.

Because it takes an activist approach to research, the outcomes of memory work (the theories) potentially offer people different ways of acting and being in the world, ways that enable them to more actively participate in the formation of their social relations. The issues tackled and the theories generated may not be revolutionary in nature, but aim to make new linkages between experience and theory. The people involved in these studies were able to build theory that helped them gain insights into, and change the ways they operated as leaders in groups where they were a member of a minority group.

Findings

Suddenly they all realised that they all shared the same problem, the problem that has no name. They began hesitantly, to talk about it. Later, after they had picked up their children from nursery school and taken them home to nap, two of the women cried, in sheer relief, just to know they were not alone. (Friedan, 1965, p. 17)

The theories and learnings about leadership developed by some of the groups referred to in this paper have been reported elsewhere (Boucher, 1995; Boucher, 1997; Boucher and Smyth, 1996) and will not be described in this paper. What I want to focus on here are some of the processes used by the groups as they explored their memories, shared their experiences and developed theories and new ways of acting. As a result of being actively involved in the memory work process myself (as a member of two of the groups) and having spent time with members of the other groups watching and listening to them explore their experiences, I became aware that while each group's approach was unique, some interesting similarities were also obvious. Each group appeared to go through one or more periods of discussion, characterised by the sharing and affirmation of each other's experiences that bore a striking resemblance to consciousness raising.

Grieve (1994, p. 16) describes consciousness raising in early women's liberation groups in Australia. "Each group went through a 'consciousness-raising' period, where discussions were held on women's difficulties and problems, the point being to draw out the ways in which problems experienced individually were in fact common problems, socially produced."

In the same ways that consciousness raising was useful to women in the 60's, the process was useful to the people who took part in these groups. It enabled them to jointly affirm their experience of being a leader and to discover that the difficulties they experienced were shared difficulties.

I've never talked about my feelings about working in such a male environment before.
I've never talked about it because I thought it was just something I had to put up with

and no one would understand and nothing could be done. But just talking about it and knowing that it happens to other women too makes me feel so different and maybe we can just help each other work out if it is worth putting up with ... (Jenny, personal trainer for professional footballers)

They were able to analyse the ways in which the socially constructed nature of leadership created ambivalence for them.

I know I should want to be a leader because I'm good at it and God knows, we need leaders in the disability movement, but there is this voice in my head that tells me that I'm a girl and I should just get married and have kids and leave all that leadership shit to the men (Mandy, social activist).

They were able to discover that their personal experiences were an outcome of social prejudice, discrimination and bigotry – that the personal was political.

I've never thought much about the way the guys at work treat me. I just assumed that it came with the territory, you know, a woman trespassing into men's territory. But it's not right, and they should not be able to get away with it (Beth, geologist working at a mine).

They could jointly articulate the ways in which the dominant discourse negatively influenced their perceptions of leadership and what leaders do.

As you were talking I was thinking about how much we just take in ... what we see on television and in the ads and everything ... and even what we learn at school... like all the people we learn about, all the leaders are men and even the women teachers teach us about the men ... (Danielle, aged 16).

They could discuss ways in which they could act differently and gain support and encouragement when they tried new behaviours.

When I thought about doing this, I rang Elsa [another member of the group] and she really encouraged me to try it. I know if I had just been on my own I would have said don't bother, just sit back and take it, because I don't have the guts most of the time to stand up for myself. Most of the time I just let them talk over me, but this time I made them stop and I said that I had something important to say. If they want me to represent the young members and tell them what they think then they have to take what I say seriously. And they listened and I think they took some notice this time (Tania, young member of an athletics club committee).

In the same ways that Friedan (Spender, 1985, p. 8) described women in the 60's as challenging the right of men to "encode knowledge about women", the members of these groups challenged prevailing knowledge about leadership and developed new models that more accurately depicted their approaches to leadership. One particularly important part of the process for members of all the groups involved claiming the right to 'know' what leadership was and how it should be done, in ways that felt right to these people rather than the ways leadership is described in the dominant discourse.

I never thought of myself as a leader because leaders are always big and strong and in control. The boys are always picked as leaders. I was really shocked when the coach asked me to be captain because I just thought it would be a boy. I don't think I really know how to be a leader because I just haven't done it much before. I know how the

boys are when they are captain and I really don't think I can act like that ... I don't want to act like that (Angela, aged 13)

These models could then be used by group members to study their own leadership behaviour, measuring their successes and failures as leaders against standards that they themselves had set, rather than the standards set in the dominant discourse, standards that to these people, were foreign, unsettling and sometimes offended their values.

I really don't want to get into all those winning and losing games. I don't want to be a charismatic leader. Most of the time I don't even want people to know I'm the leader. I just want to get on with getting things done - working together because we share the same values and we respect each other and what we are working for (Maria, community leader).

Gone was the distinction between theory and practice as people began to "do liberation" (Spender, 1985, p. 69). Group members were supported as they began to discover the ways in which their perceptions of leadership were socially constructed. They were encouraged to think intensely about how they really wanted to lead. The group's consciousness raising activities then led to action as the people involved discovered the ways in which they could change their behaviour and become more authentic, more true to themselves and their own ways of leading. Successes in leading in different ways were shared with group members and celebrated. The success of one group member would give the others courage.

I always thought I just had to try and be like everyone else, but I knew I thought about things differently - but I thought I must be wrong and they must be right. But here, some people think like I do, and even when they don't they still say that it is OK for me to do things my way. If others can stand up to people and say what they really think, then I think I can too, because even if it doesn't work, I'm being who I am (Vella, engineer).

Conclusions

The processes adopted by the people taking part in these studies indicate that consciousness raising is still an invaluable tool for helping members of minorities discover the power that comes from their difference. It is a tool we can use to help young women discover the ways in which their thinking about leadership has been perverted by the dominant discourse. It is a tool that women in non traditional professions can employ to help themselves develop emotional resilience. We can use consciousness raising groups as a tool to help women in social movements and community organisations to take up positions of leadership and to support them in their struggles for change.

We can use consciousness raising as a management development activity, helping women managers resist the dominant male construction of leadership in organisations and providing a supportive environment where they can come and seek advice, share their experiences and have them affirmed, draw on the expertise of others and gain courage from the examples set by other strong women.

As Germaine Greer (1970, p. 328) so eloquently put it:

The key to the strategy of liberation lies in exposing the situation, and the simplest way to do it is to outrage the pundits and the experts, by sheer impudence of speech and gesture, the exploitation of cliché 'feminine logic' to expose masculine pomposity,

absurdity and injustice. Women's weapons are traditionally their tongues, and the principal revolutionary tactic has always been the spread of information.

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The Disappearing Femocrat: Fact, Fiction or Misogynist Fantasy?

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Abstract

The disappearing femocrat is fast becoming a reality in the Australian State. Reasons for this are complex and include shifts in the structural, political, cultural and theoretical climate around feminism and femocratic practice. This paper explores the declining role of femocrats within the Australian public service in light of:

1. shifts in the Australian bureaucracy towards corporate managerialism,
2. increased ministerialisation of policy,
3. the theoretical engagement in feminist work with post-modernism, and
4. the political climate in both Federal and State spheres

This paper presents findings from research which analysed the changing nature of bureaucratic practice as evidenced through the discourse of senior policy officers in Education Queensland. The research was conducted in the education department in 1996 and, in particular, examined how corporate managerialist frameworks were repositioning equity and social justice agendas and those who worked in this area.

Keywords: feminism, bureaucracy, managerialism, restructuring.

Introduction: Theorizing the State

An engagement with the Australian State is a necessary precondition to understanding shifts in public administration, public policy, social justice, equity and femocratic practice (Brown, 1992).

The Australian state is changing and with it the gendered nature of its practice. Restructuring of State institutions around the ideology of economic rationalism and liberal individualism has changed the emphasis of bureaucratic practice from a process/rights orientation to an outcomes/market led perspective (see Taylor *et al.*, 1997; Yeatman, 1990; Lingard, 1995). The meta-narrative of economic rationalism works to legitimise those categories associated with the economy and to exclude claims based on social, cultural and moral connections (Yeatman, 1990 p.102). Contextualising shifts in the administrative and ideological position of the State serves to identify a "crisis of the State" - that is to say, an increasing inability of the collective institutions and apparatuses of government to actually do their job" (Smyth, 1995 p.169).

This increasing inability of the State to accommodate the pressures of post-industrial society has seen a shift in the form and content of bureaucratic practice that is being felt on the position and practice of feminist work. Shifts in power relations within the State will be examined specifically in Queensland education looking at changing bureaucratic modes of practice. This is then linked to developments in feminism and implications for femocratic practice is discussed.

The State: A Terrain of Shifting Discourses/Bureaucratic Restructuring Inside the State.

Australia has been active in the restructuring of the Australian federal State from the time of the Hawke Labor government in 1983 (Lingard, 1993, Yeatman, 1993a). From this period, the emergence of corporate federalism begins. Lingard (1993 p.26), using the theoretical work of Offe, suggests that the State is in a constant balancing act of ensuring the "continuity of capital accumulation, while simultaneously ensuring its own legitimacy and that of the broader social structure by responding to democratic policy demands". The argument follows that as structural conditions related to times of economic restraint lead to efforts to decrease demands on the State, restructuring becomes linked to moves to downsize departments, link policies to economic outcomes, and to outsourcing. The aim is to reduce demands on the State from sectors of the population, using markets as the mediating force to effect those reductions.

How are Femocrats Repositioned in This Environment?

The shifting place of feminism and feminist practice within the state can be seen in three areas: structural, political and cultural/theoretical shifts. Lingard's (1995) work documents the changed political and cultural climate for feminist work and femocratic practice after the Queensland State Labor election in 1989 and advocates the importance of structural, political and cultural support within the state. In the late 1990s, the position of support has changed on all three fronts.

The sample referred to in this paper consisted of six senior policy officers (one male and five female) from central office and two regional policy officers (both male). The group, although small in number, had extensive experience and displayed a depth of understanding of educational policy and practice in Queensland. The policy officer sample while small, was articulate, had thought long and hard about the issues of restructuring and was located amidst the contradictions and ambiguities described. The richness of data resulting from these interviews served to overcome concerns related to the actual number of interviewees. It was possible and indeed desirable to 'do more with less', that is to closely read and analyse the 'polyvocal' nature of each interview transcript, rather than give brief attention to a larger number of transcripts (Ball, 1994; Lather, 1991).

The policy officers came from a cross section of directorates in central office. This was designed to show the purchase social justice, equity and corporate managerialism had in various parts of the state bureaucracy. While it could be expected that a rhetoric of social democracy would be evident in directorates related to equity and social justice, investigating the rhetoric in directorates more closely aligned to restructuring agendas provided insights into meta-narratives associated with corporate managerialism. Information could then be found on tensions and contrasts in legitimating discourses across directorates. Four of the five female senior policy officers worked in areas directly related to social justice and equity and could be said to loosely fit with Sawyer's (1990, p.xv) definition of femocrats as feminists who take on women's policy positions in the bureaucracy.

Structural Changes

One of the major structural changes in the State has been the move from a bureaucratic model based on process to a corporate managerial model based on outcomes (Considine, 1988; 1993). Femocrats have adapted well to the policy conditions of the bureaucracy with its emphasis on rules and procedures. They have credentialled themselves to fit with the technical and meritocratic requirements of the system and have generally been well placed to influence policy

in this sphere. Liberal feminism has successfully engaged with the State to win a number of significant legislative achievements and has impacted on the democratisation of the administrative state in the structuring of recruitment and promotion procedures to be more representative of the population (Yeatman, 1990 p.39). Work in redefining merit, in workplace support for those with parental responsibilities and in general access and equity are central to liberal feminist positions (see Bacchi, 1990).

Feminists, however, have been less successful in establishing a strong hold within new managerialist frameworks. Partly, this has occurred as a result of the tenuous links made between equity, justice and outcomes. While Apelt (cited in Limerick and Lingard, 1995 p.2) claims "that the achievement of equal employment opportunity underpins and enhances educational outcomes", making a direct link from EEO to outcomes is still quite contestable in education and fails to account for the complex nature of educational achievement and measurement. However, Liff and Wajcman (1996) suggest that the push in current EEO programs in America to link diversity to effective management practices provides new possibilities for femocratic practice.

In Education Queensland, Respondent 2 reported that change of government linked to bureaucratic shifts resulted in the social justice strategy failing to be effectively translated into outcomes both within central office and in schools, even though there was:

also a cultural shift from all government departments particularly, moving from reporting on inputs and processes to reporting on outcomes and that rhetoric has become a dominate rhetoric (Respondent 2).

While there may be spaces for some change to the status quo (see Yeatman, 1996), differing equity agendas are supported only in so far as they fit the performative and measurement requirements of corporate managerialism, rather than agendas in their own right (Webb, 1997; Woodall *et al*, 1997). The subsequent data show that minimal understanding of diversity still exists within Queensland education and that feminism is losing ground in a new managerial arena where claims on outputs and on outcomes hold greater weight than procedural correctness or quality of process.

The tensions between the discourses of process and outcome have tended to be ignored in a managerialist climate focussed on accountability and outcomes and with diminished attention to process. As social justice outcomes take less of a priority at a central bureaucratic level, even if evident, the process by which goals of social justice and equity are achieved are less visible under corporate managerialism. Respondent 2 explains:

In these agendas the emphasis you will see quite visibly is on the social justice and equity target groups but mostly in terms of outcomes. There are still highly contestable assumptions underpinning that ... in the advice that is going out from the department at the moment is looking at outcomes, not processes, as though there is one or the other, whereas we as a quality movement actually look at processes. If you want to improve outcomes, you improve processes (Respondent 2).

The dichotomous way in which these agendas are structured leads to the focus being on either outcomes or process. Consequently, process as a necessary pre-condition to the achievement of satisfactory outcomes becomes obscured. The shift from a bureaucratic model based on procedure and rights, to a corporate managerialist model, emphasising the economic, competition and entrepreneurship has major repercussions for the way public administration is enacted. Considine (1988) argued that the move from bureaucratic organisation to corporate

managerialism does not constitute a major paradigm shift. However, for those State workers who view a major component of their job as addressing issues of justice and equity, going from a set of rules and procedures based on correct process to a competitive, outcomes model constitutes a major shift, both in the discourses and ideologies on which to base their policy work, and on the opportunities for practice.

Yeatman (1994 p. 289) suggests the new public management is designed to respond to three related contemporary dynamics:

- 1 increased social and cultural complexity;
- 2 increased uncertainty;
- 3 increased democratic expectation of government and all kinds of service where individuals and/or their particular communities of interest ask that they get to participate in the design and delivery of the service.

There is clearly a call for more representation in educational decision-making that has been responded to in devolutionary and school-based management agendas. At the same time, there has been a corresponding shift at central office away from resourcing and promoting those directorates that support inclusive practice, particularly in the gender equity area:

when you actually look at what's happened in the restructure, the only units that were affected were the gender equity unit and the cultural equity unit (Respondent 3).

The structural changes reported such as downsizing, loss of corporate memory, shifts in the type of policy analysis and long-term program work, have resulted in significant demoralisation and uncertainty for those working in central office.

Budgets have been frozen, positions have been frozen... there has been so much demoralisation and so much uncertainty that you couldn't say that effective work has been done ... there hasn't been the scope to do forward planning and to develop long term projects or even a long term vision, because nobody knew where they were going to be (Respondent 3).

A further shift involves the move of policy work from the central arena to the local.

I think in terms of survival of the people who are left in there doing this work, they're really going to have to be looking at trying to work on a much more micro level in schools situations, and in some ways that shift has already started to occur ... So I really think for the next several years perhaps, there is going to be less focus on those huge state wide initiatives and more focus on maintaining a presence, holding some ground. But when we get the chance to go forward again, there will be a lot of ground to be made up that has been lost in the meantime (Respondent 3).

This shift from the central to the local is typical of many policy environments where 'mainstreaming' of equity issues has meant the loss of a strong, central focus. Devolving equity agendas to smaller, local units-where often the resources and expertise to develop this work is lacking, can be detrimental (see Milligan *et al*, 1994; Rivzi, 1994). Research (Kenway, 1995a; Wylie, 1994) suggests that education becomes more conservative and curricular becomes narrowed with devolution. Kenway (1995a p.36) adds that while there are feminists at the centre, policy documents will still include gender reforms. However she suggests that this top-to-bottom form of communication has led to "a drift of activists and activism from the local to the centre". This has resulted in *quietism* and *conservatism* in schools, which offers little challenge to gendered school practices (see Hargreaves, 1994 p. 189).

Kenway's (1995) analysis supporting a strengthening of feminist activity at local sites offers timely strategic directions in facing the reality of structural, cultural and political change. However, without a strong central femocratic position, maintenance and development of socially just institutional practices will be limited.

Political Change

Political control in the form of greater impact of Ministerial directives into schools has been on the increase in recent years. Lingard (1996 p. 82) suggests new managerialism strengthens policy control by Ministers and concentrates policy power upwards.

In Australia, there is greater political involvement in management and policy implementation procedures.

Since the change of government and a minister who came in with a very strong policy agenda that was specifically attacking gender, not specifically attacking social justice across the board... and then plugging into that anti-feminist backlash in education ... there was a big shift in focus (Respondent 3).

While some shifts can be traced through both Labor and Liberal governments, more recently, there has been a significant move away from policies specifically identifying women's needs in the Howard Liberal government at the federal level. Issues of inclusive language, failure to reappoint heads of various women's units and trends in industrial and award restructuring (see Yeatman, 1993), which have serious consequences for Australian women, have evoked heightening concern amongst women in policy positions in government, but little support or commitment from government.

Respondent 8 contrasts the focus of devolution under a State Labor Government and the effect on social justice. The centralised messages of reform in 1992 promoted social justice strategies, whereas in 1996, the focus shifts to managerial reform.

In 1992, I would say it was the height of activity in the area of social justice and there were high hopes by a lot of us in here who were involved in policy development. ... but if you look now it's almost the reverse. The policies are there, they still exist, but that's not talked about. It is almost like the reverse. what is seen as the high status thing really, is the school-based management, and the implications for principals. at a kind of mandate or official level, you can have both of these areas existing, the notion of devolution and the notion of social justice policy. But what actually happens in practice changes over time and different emphases occur, so it's that usual huge gap between policy and practice (Respondent 8).

The importance of high level commitment and support for social justice is highlighted here (see Burton, 1995). While it may be politically unwise to actively work against equity initiatives, policy progress can be undermined in other, no less effective, ways.

All of the [equity] policies are still in place. ... the language of those policies had changed. So the content is still the same, but all the 'musts' in the policy, for example, have magically transformed into 'shoulds'. And in the context of devolution, there has been a real pulling back from the notion that at a central level there can be any mandated requirement of principals to do anything. And it's much more now in the context of advice, rather than a demand that principals conform. ... everything that was previously mandated has now become a good idea (Respondent 3).

Limiting the scope of equity agendas is also achieved by labelling them as particularist. While the policy officer in the following section did not wish to be seen as opposing equity work, he clearly saw it as one of many demands facing schools and not as a basic underlying framework which should be incorporated into all school practice. The fact that the equity directorate was 'full of women' apparently was cause for concern and showed an inability to be 'objective' and 'balanced' about the agenda:

... at the structural level, I think one of the difficulties with those directorates and there is still an equity branch within the HR directorate in central office ... the unfortunate thing is that it's full of nearly all women... so it hasn't really got a balance. ... what happens is that you get people at a policy level ... who live and breathe a particular area and they have a particular hobby horse, and while I respect that, they can turn people off by thinking that that's the only thing that you should worry about in your schools. ... it can also turn people off when they get it rammed down their necks, when you go overkill, overboard. ... And the other thing that I think it has done is made some areas fairly resource rich at the expense of other areas as well, and that can cause some ill feeling. (Respondent 7)

The ill feeling referred to here may be the backlash from the 'What about the boys?' agenda (Mac and Ghail, 1996; Kenway, 1995b; 1996). Increasingly gender equity work is seen in terms of resources for girls at the expense of boys. Many policy officers referred to the uptake of this debate and to a concern for boys in schools such as had never been shown for girls. Political rhetoric that frames this debate in dichotomous and competing terms has placed those interested in wider perspectives of gender construction in a position of spending much of their time on the defensive, justifying programs.

A final shift in the political environment concerns the position of women in organisations. The response to a question of femocratic resistance to political and structural change highlighted the precarious position of women within the bureaucracy.

I don't know that I would actually say that there are a whole lot of femocrats in education ... I mean I think there were a number of femocrats and I think a lot of them have been asked to leave or the situation has been made so impossible that they have left.

A lot of that talent has already been lost and they have been replaced by people who might be perceived to be political appointments, who have brought a particularly narrow view of gender and of women's issues and a particularly partisan view. So in the Office of Women's Affairs for example, there is a huge shift towards a focus on rural women, and very conservative types of rural women's issues as opposed to, for example, issues of poverty or issues related to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

... A lot of those people have just disappeared ... So a real rejection of Labor party initiatives and just a huge loss of talent and history and ability. You know that kind of corporate memory that allows you to actually go forward. (Respondent 3)

A significant shift shown here involves the rise of what I term the 'pseudo femocrat'. This is a person who holds a position within the State which is linked to feminist concerns, yet has attained that position on the basis of 'femaleness' rather than 'feminist' ideology. The appointment of conservative women, who show a lack of commitment to feminist issues or a narrow focus and understanding of feminist challenges to State practice, has led to a change in the nature and culture of femocratic practice within the State.

Cultural/Theoretical Changes

Further to this, feminism's theoretical engagement with post-modernism has led to a reaffirmation of difference; criticism of those who claim to speak for 'women' as a coherent category; less engagement with notions of oppression and discrimination; and more emphasis on agency, positioning, representation and diversity (see Weedon, 1987; Alcoff, 1988; Scott, 1988; Pierce, 1991; Nicholson and Seidman, 1995). While this has opened valuable ways to theorise many aspects of women's lives, it could be argued it has placed femocrats in a less influential position in new managerialist climates. With the ideological position of feminism being less cohesive, the argument could be made that feminism is losing ground as a political movement for change.

A second change comes from the shift towards the post-welfare state (Yeatman, 1990), resulting in the delegitimisation of calls on the state from particularised groups for services. The post-welfare state with its emphasis on outcomes and managerialism has reconstructed the relation between the public and private provision of services and has utilised the market as the arbitrator of provision (Marginson, 1997; Kenway, 1994; Knight *et al*, 1991). Feminists within the state have therefore been left without a constituency on which to call for support and without legitimacy in an environment where calls for specialised consideration are seen as working against the best interests of the 'citizenry,' who supposedly support lessening of demands on the public purse.

Linked to this is the corporate managerialist notion of the detached, generic manager; a position far removed from the traditional position femocrats occupy in the bureaucracy. Femocrats, by design, have close links with their constituency and are still regarded as political advocates of women in this sphere, despite the theoretical concerns. Given the contested nature of the category 'women,' the concern over a group of largely white, middle class women working for the interests of differing ethnic, racial and class groups; the shifting nature the term 'femocrat' has in the latter half of the 90s; and their location within the bureaucratic environment (Yeatman, 1990, Ferguson, 1984), femocrats are under considerable pressure. Repositioning women in the bureaucracy away from their constituency disperses their power and influence and moves femocrats closer to a model of corporate management. This may be the final disappearing act for femocratic practice in the bureaucracy.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined significant shifts in the position of femocratic practice within the State. While the case study was of Queensland education, similar shifts in public service management and femocratic practice can be seen in other State institutions. The 'femocrat' as a central agent of reform and democratisation of the Australian State is under threat. Structural changes of mainstreaming and devolution, political, cultural and theoretical shifts, have added to the disbursement and waning of this position. In its place, corporate managerialism has promoted the generic and neutral manager and systems where outcomes take precedent over process. The dangers for equity and social justice to 'fall off' these corporate managerialist agendas are readily obvious and call for the development of strategic new directions in feminist practice within the State.

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VISION IN LEADERSHIP: WOMEN IN ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract

I am an architectural historian. I teach nineteenth and twentieth century art and architectural history in the School of Architecture and Building at Deakin University. For the past few years I have been invited to give a lecture titled 'Visionary architecture' to our third year students. Finding visionary architects is difficult enough when searching for built projects. Most remain[ed] on paper. Finding inspiring forms and vision in leadership in architecture, when one discounts gender, is easier. I have found it difficult to find women in leading roles in the profession of architecture. Women are hardly mentioned, even in such recent publications as Jahn's *Contemporary Architecture in Australia*, or Jodidio's *New Forms - Architecture in the 1990s* in Taschen's World Architecture series. The history of architecture is written from a male perspective; the reasons are many. Women have not long been accepted in the profession, and even in 1955 the American architect Pietro Belluschi could not in 'whole conscience recommend architecture as a profession to girls'. If women have not been regarded as suitable to become architects, if they have been relegated to interior decorating, the domestic field or as delineators once they penetrate the professional barriers, then how can they become leaders, let alone inspiring visionary leaders, in their chosen field? Some women have opted to set up their own practices. Others have worked unnamed in the background. Some combine profession with motherhood. Still others have had their contribution relegated to that of consort riding the crest of their husband's/partner's brilliance. This paper explores the concept of vision in leadership in relation to women in architecture - as clients, in practice, design, writing and education. The search, just begun, is a challenging one of unravelling and revealing women in architecture.

Keywords: architecture profession, gender, review, history

Introduction

In 1922 the Australian architect Harold Desbrowe Annear posited that 'The value of a man is measurable by what he **can do**. The value of a woman is what she **is**.' (Desbrowe-Annear, 1922, p. 11). In 1936 Nora Cooper painted a much brighter picture of, and for, women in architecture:

There are several women architects in Melbourne, and the first thing which strikes one instantly about all of them is their entire freedom from any sex-consciousness or sense of competition with men. They study the same course and sit for the same examinations, and a hard, gruelling course it is, too. In fact, I should say that there is probably no other profession in the world in which difference in sex is taken so little into account. ... A woman is yet to design a notable public building in Melbourne, but this achievement is quite a feasible future event. In fact, Melbourne may quite likely live to see one of these days an established firm of women architects who successfully undertake and carry out all kinds of work (Cooper, 1936).

Cooper's eager optimism has not yet borne the fruit she expected. The proportion of women registered as architects crept from 1% in the 1930s to 4% in 1960, to 6.5% in 1990. The leap in women architectural graduates to 40.5% in 1994 is only slowly being reflected in registrations - up to 9.5% in 1995. In 1989, female academics in schools of architecture, building and design numbered only 8% (Brine, 1989, p. 6). About 35% of the architecture students at Deakin University, where I lecture in art and architectural history, are women. Hughes, the editor of *The Architect: Reconstructing Her Practice* continues to find the absence of women in the profession

difficult to explain, and sees the situation as symptomatic of 'a profound gender-related crisis at the base of architecture' (Hughes, 1996, p. x-xi). The experience of Jennifer Bloomer, who teaches and practices in America today, demonstrates that Desbrowe-Annear's belief, and not Cooper's, still holds sway:

In 1981, during my last week in architecture school, I went to an Honors Banquet at which I received the American Institute of Architect's Henry Adams Medal and Certificate for being the top student in my class. I dressed for the day with great care, in a new, rather extravagant, pumpkin - colored blouse with great, puffy sleeves. I arrived in the hall at the same time as the second-place student, who was dressed in a starched white shirt and striped tie. As we approached our table, we were introduced by our dean to the local AIA president, who was to present the awards. The president leaned across the table and heartily shook the hand of my classmate, saying, "Young man, you've got a job any time you want it at my firm. Let's talk after lunch." He then turned to me and said, "My, that's a beautiful blouse you have on." (Bloomer, 1996, p. 245).

When I began research for this paper, I discovered very little in our library specifically on the topic of women in architecture. As I delved into the few available texts it became obvious that research into women in architecture has been neither consistent nor sustained. There seemed to be a bulge in the 1970s, and another in the late 1980s into the 1990s. In 1973 Doris Cole in her book *From Tipi to Skyscraper* acknowledged that 'This history of women in architecture is intended to be only a first step in documenting and studying women's contributions to architecture. ... It has made me aware of how much more there is to know about women in architecture. ... Practically none of my information comes from conventional architectural books; women are rarely mentioned in such books' (Cole, 1973, p. vii). Little seems to have changed in the intervening decades. In 1989, Lorenz embarked on research for her book and 'discovered how little previous study had been undertaken on the work of international contemporary women architects' (Lorenz, 1990, pp. 6-7).

'Women in the Home' and the 'Art' of Architecture

It is extraordinarily difficult to see any relationship between the stereotypical 'woman in the home' and the art of architecture. The view that women's place is in the home doggedly persists. Yet the exact nature of that role is blurring around the edges. The space time routine of preparing an evening meal, a place ballet, taken from the People and Environment course taught at Deakin up until 1996, presents a stereo typical picture of Mum/housewife/nuclear family. Inadvertently it demonstrates the extraordinary time/people/task/mind management skills needed to run a household at tea time. Simultaneously SHE whips up an evening meal - three courses for five or six - keeps abreast of the day's news in a democratic state and nation - privatisation, constitutionalism, the stock markets - organises vegetables to be chopped; discusses the health survey being put together on aspects of adolescent sexuality: *Are teenagers today more tolerant of homosexuals than people of your generation?* ; calls cats in and feeds them; reads bits of another daughter's final paper for Archaeology on the inevitability of annexation of Egypt by Rome; talks to mum on the phone: the weather's wonderful for the washing, a birthday party is not forgotten, the local council regulations are impossible to comprehend; organises washing to be brought in and table to be set; husband arrives home, he's had a wonderful busy day and wants to talk about the inservice for new learning strategies for teachers; student rings wants an extension for an assignment; no wine in the fridge; third daughter running late - can dinner be postponed for thirty minutes? ... The design of the space is crucial to the smooth preparing of the evening meal, the appropriate appliances and their placement are seen as critical factors in

achieving efficiency. Or so we have been told by advertisers since the 1950s. The image of the ideal home still persists today. But how many women have been/are in a position to influence the shape of the space and the placement of fittings in which they work and/or live?

What exactly constitutes 'vision in leadership' in the art of architecture? The Oxford Dictionary defines vision as the faculty of seeing; imaginative insight into a subject or problem, etc; foresight and wisdom in planning. People usually have some sort of idea, conception, perhaps even vision, about what their ideal home would look like, and the scale can vary from that of a cottage to a retreat from the world, like the legendary Xanadu. Affordability comes into it somewhere too, although estate agents will sell 'the dream home' or everyone's Xanadu to any prospective client. In every Australian suburb ever larger houses sprawl over ever decreasing suburban blocks - each one of them someone's dream home. These houses may be 'dream homes' but they are not architecture, and most certainly not visionary architecture. In a recent interview, the Australian architect Glenn Murcutt said:

I get really saddened when I drive through streets and look at how people are living and I know they think they're happy and that they have the best standard of design and living in the world, but quite frankly it's poverty of spirit. There's no release from the walls, no wonderful connectedness between the inner living and the environment, no picking up on prevailing breezes, the scents of flowering plants, no knowing whether it's wet or dry, an easterly or westerly wind, no seeing the sky, the clouds and what's coming and what has gone. Most of our buildings cut us off from these things (Murdoch, 1996).

The Australian artist, Lloyd Rees, inspired many architecture students in the years he taught at Sydney University. Rees "saw architects as universal people, whether it be Michelangelo, Leonardo, whoever. He had the strongest belief that architecture was art, and the architect was both architect and artist, poet and sculptor, and one was privileged in life to be an architect and tread across all the arts." (Hawley, 1995, p. 32).

In the eighteenth century the visionary architect Etienne-Louis Boullée (1728-1799) dedicated his manuscript *Architecture, Essay on Art "To men who cultivate the Arts"*. He notes "What little attention has been paid in the past to the poetry of architecture" and states that "Our buildings - and our public buildings in particular - should be to some extent poems. The impression they make on us should arouse in us sensations that correspond to the function of the building" He calls "You who are fascinated by the fine arts" to "surrender yourselves completely to all the pleasure that this sublime passion can procure!" (Boullée, nd, p. 92). And argues that architecture is not the art of building, as Vitruvius would have us believe, but rather, that it is a 'product of the mind', a 'process of creation that constitutes architecture and which can consequently be defined as the art of designing and bringing to perfection any building whatever.' (Boullée, nd, p. 83).

In his book *Poetics of Architecture*, Anthony Antoniades puts it this way:

It would be a blessing to be able to consider architecture as play; to derive personal joy by doing; never to become careless and always to retain a serious attitude toward its technical, scientific, and social responsibility dimensions without ever giving in to a narrow one-sided or monodimensional focus on any one of the components. What we aim for ultimately is to have a work of utility become a statement of beauty as well as a cause for spiritual satisfaction (Antoniades, 1990, pp. 25-6).

The question is how can we reconcile the pictures presented by the 'place ballet' and 'making space' with the grand vision[s] of architecture?

Women and Architecture: a Plethora of Roles

Since I have been working on this paper I have been asked: Do women architects design differently from men? and, Can you tell if a woman has designed a building? Lorenz and Hughes have been asked similar questions. Hughes suggests that the questions are 'dumb' and/or 'dangerous', betraying 'a desire for a brand-new ... architecture that will save us all, a[nother] utopian architecture' (Hughes, 1996, p. xiii). Hughes's proposed solution is theoretical and complex. She argues that 'critical practice' must 'shatter the singular purpose and nature of architectural production into multiple practices for multiple architectures, pertinent to multiple genders' (p.xiii).

This paper has been a welcome opportunity for me to explore an area of architectural history and theory that has been inadvertently neglected in my own teaching. I teach predominantly nineteenth and twentieth century art and architectural history. I use generally accepted and respected texts, such as Frampton's *Modern Architecture: a critical history* (1992). A glance at the contents reveals the prevalent architectural historical construct, one dominated by the lone achievement of the hero architect. Blatantly obvious is the omission of the heroines who worked alongside or in tandem with the heroes. 'Far too often in the past inadequate credit has been given to, or demanded by, women architects and thus there continues to be generation after generation an element of surprise in their achievements' (Lorenz, 1990, p. 7). Lorenz's observation is apt.

Women in Architectural Partnerships

While I made every effort to mention the women partners in my units, there was always a deference to the male partner or principal in attribution. I had learnt it that way, the texts still write it that way, and in the hectic academic schedule there never seemed the time to do the extra research required to *rewrite* architectural history from a different perspective. A number of examples serve to illustrate the enormity of the problem, and document the variety and number of achievements that have gone unacknowledged.

Jane Drew and Maxwell Fry:

Lorenz briefly documents Jane Drew's significant work in Nigeria and India and notes her role in the centre of an international world of architects and architectural debate for forty years (Lorenz, 1990, pp. 30-33).

Anne Griswold Tyng and Louis Kahn:

Lorenz also discusses Tyng's important consultative role in Kahn's practice. Yale University's Art Gallery (1953) with its tetrahedral reinforced concrete ceiling system and exposed mechanical services has always been discussed as one of Kahn's major early works, exemplifying his 'servant spaces' theory - it was in fact designed by Tyng in his office (Lorenz, 1990, pp. 124-5; Frampton, 1992, p. 242).

Denise Scott Brown and Robert Venturi:

Scott Brown (1989) herself tells of the constant battle with non and mis-attribution of her work, with the underlying assumption about 'the men behind' modern architecture. I find that I too have promulgated this view and attributed the "duck" to Venturi, following Klotz's captions (Klotz, 1983, p. 155), when in fact the "duck" was Scott Brown's invention (Scott Brown, 1989, p. 241).

Aino and Alvar Aalto:

While Alvar Aalto has received the greater recognition, Goran Schildt argues that Aino 'was an extremely skilled, sure and patient draughtsman. ... In addition she understood the facts and limitations of everyday life better than Aalto, who at times flew high above reality. ... Alvar was able to let loose his architectural visions, for he knew that Aino would bring them back to earth.' (Schildt, 1982, p. 133). Tyng explains that 'together the Aaltos founded the furniture and design firm Artek, with Aino as its managing director. In a workshop, with her own hands, she created much of the famous "Aalto furniture." But she remains in the shadow of her husband and is mistakenly considered only the designer of interiors of buildings credited to her husband alone.' (Tyng, 1989, p. 177).

Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin:

Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin both worked in the office of Frank Lloyd Wright in America during his period as the main protagonist for the Prairie School. Between Wright, Mahony and Griffin there was, reputedly, always a lively interchange of ideas. In the years 1905 - 1909, Mahony was responsible for preparing much of Wright's work for publication and presentation, though Wright always denied co-authorship. Mahony and Griffin married in 1911. Their collaboration on many projects is documented, however architects and historians are unable to agree on the extent, or precise nature of the partnership. Anna Rubbo explains that the Griffins' careers are usually divided as follows: 'he was the architect, landscape architect and planner; she the renderer and designer of decorative detail' (Rubbo, 1988, p. 15).

Alison and Marcus Norris:

Alison Norris trained in Victoria in the 1930s and ran a successful Melbourne practice with Marcus for forty years. Nash claims that it was 'a unique relationship ... between a small husband and wife partnership and a large network of mining and resource companies' (Nash, 1997, p. 30). Whilst acknowledging the difficulties in unravelling individual contributions to the workings of a joint practice, Nash states that Alison Norris played a leading role in dealing with clients and in securing patronage which was vital for the survival and success of this small specialised and largely unknown practice (p. 41).

Maggie Edmond and Peter Corrigan:

Hamann writes that Maggie Edmond 'was hardly the clear-cut 'business partner' often seen in architectural offices. She also designed, developed and supervised the bulk of the smaller work that came in. A great many domestic alterations and extensions have been worked on by the office, and these far outnumbered the larger 'design' projects. In the majority of cases the contribution of both partners was significant and varied. It therefore seems appropriate to write of Edmond and Corrigan collectively when discussing the designs from the office.' (Hamann, 1993, p. 41). Yet there is an overwhelming impression that Corrigan is the more significant partner.

The full impact of women in these and many other partnerships is yet to be researched and assessed. What their individual vision for architecture was/is, what mentoring role they have played for colleagues and other architects and whether they were/are leaders in their profession needs to be more fully explored and documented. Whether they present a different 'face' to architecture as women has not as yet been investigated, although the three anthologies published in 1996, do open the field to many new ways of reading and interpreting women in architecture, architecture and feminism and women's practice (Agest, 1996; Coleman, 1996; Hughes, 1996).

Women as Architectural Clients

That women have also played significant roles as clients of architects, expressing a clear vision in their instructions to the architect, clearly collaborating in the design process and acting 'as catalysts for architectural innovation' (Friedman, 1996, p. 217) has been totally ignored by architectural historical writing exemplified by Frampton. Friedman writes that '[r]einserting gender factors into historical inquiry results in a narrative strikingly different from familiar surveys of architecture' (Friedman, 1996, p. 217). A number of the most important houses by significant 'masters' of twentieth century architecture were indeed designed for women clients: the Farnsworth house (1945-51) was designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe as a week-end house for Dr Edith Farnsworth; Frank Lloyd Wright's Hollyhock House (1919-23) was designed for Aline Barnsdall as part of an experimental theatre/arts complex envisioned by Barnsdall in Los Angeles; the Schröder house (1924) was designed by Gerrit Rietveld for Truus Schröder in Utrecht, Holland, and the Villa Savoye (1928-31) was commissioned by Mme Savoye from Le Corbusier. In each case however the creative, inspirational or facilitative role of the client has been ignored, or worse she has been held up to ridicule in confrontations with the architect.

The Farnsworth House:

The Farnsworth House combines the dynamic plan developed by Mies in Europe, with the structural clarity of the skeleton he explored in America. The Farnsworth House represents the complete opening of the structure. Glass is used on all sides of the house. Light entering from all directions makes the house virtually transparent. The house is raised slightly off the ground to overcome the seasonal flooding of the Fox River. Neither of these aspects of the design were entirely new however. What was new was the placement of the supports on the outside, in front of the horizontal roof and floor slabs, which therefore appear to hover above the ground rather than to be supported. In this way Mies achieved a floating feeling. Though practical reasons necessitated the raising of the house off the ground, formal concerns affirmed Mies's decision. Complete transparency would have totally destroyed the solidity of the house were it not elevated above the ground. Mies strove to unify the architectural space of the Farnsworth House with its natural landscape setting. The total unity he was striving for was only possible, however, if the

house - the enclosed three-dimensional space - lost its identity completely. Otherwise the idea could only be realised on a perceptual level. In contrast to Mies's ideal, the house stands wholly as an artefact in the landscape. There is no reference to the surroundings which form the great scenic backdrop. Further the house presented real problems in terms of practical living - in a mosquito invested site Mies argued that fly screens were detrimental to his aesthetic of transparency. Of even greater concern to Edith Farnsworth was the issue of privacy: the open plan combined with glass exterior walls presented a considerable challenge. The client felt that the architect gave no thought to her at any time. In 1953, '[a]sked to describe her experiences of living in the house, Farnsworth responds:

Mies wanted the partition closet five feet high for reasons of 'art and proportion'. Well I'm six feet tall. Since my house is all 'open space', I needed something to shield me when I had guests. I wanted to be able to change my clothes without my head looking like it was wandering over the top of the partition without a body (Barry, 1953, p. 266).

as a single professional woman and architectural patron, Farnsworth was given very little credence by the press or by the courts when she sued Mies for the enormous cost overruns.

Hollyhock House:

Stately yet endearing, even playful, the Hollyhock house is all at once oasis, paradise garden, rooftop promenade, lookout and retreat. It is also a theatre for the diurnal performance of sun and shadow, a place of peculiar enchantment. Yet only three of the forty-five buildings Wright designed for the heiress Aline Barnsdall were executed before she apparently lost interest in the project and donated the property to the City of Los Angeles. The house designed for mother and daughter with separate and communal spaces was individually tailored to specific needs. For instance the nursery suite featured a special indoor/outdoor play area for the child - out in the landscape, but safely enclosed - while the nanny's room was claustrophobically small in scale. This art environment also spelled loneliness and isolation. While Wright espoused organic theories of architecture, clients would not normally have expected rainwater to flow through the house to find its own level in the garden terraces! Perhaps it was the frustration of having to work with an arrogant self righteous if indeed visionary architect that made Barnsdall pull the plug on the larger scheme.

The Schröder house:

Gerrit Rietveld's House for Truus Schröder in Utrecht, Holland, an icon of modern architecture, is generally considered in the context of the De Stijl movement, and related to such artists as Theo van Doesburg. Discussion concentrates on colour, volume and composition and the translation of 2D formal concerns into a 3D structure. This unconventional house was built at the end of a row of traditional brick terrace houses, where it must have appeared as an apparition. Friedman notes that only William Curtis actually credits Schröder with design aspects, 'noting that "it seems probable that she inspired some of the more revolutionary aspects of the building like the openness of the upstairs 'free plan' and some of the ingenious built-in furniture." (Friedman, 1996, p. 221). The 'broader questions of gender' and 'social or typological convention' however are not addressed.

The Villa Savoye:

Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye, one of the most celebrated modernist buildings in architectural discourse, is generally portrayed as a pure prism-like form raised on stilts, glistening in a grass field, the very image of a machine for living in. Le Corbusier's temple in the landscape features an entrance ramp, a series of pilotis and Le Corbusier's characteristic slab construction. The original scale was developed in relation to the turning circle of the automobile. A complex interior was hidden by the free facade. An examination of the plans reveals the free use of the interior within a rigid shape: a ramp penetrates up through the entire building, a curving staircase provides another means of access, a curved sculptural screen partitions off the solarium, a bathroom with sunken bath and a reclining sofa of tiles exudes a preoccupation with health, a terrace roof top is 'planted' with objects. The first floor is encircled with ribbon windows. Open air terraces provide direct access to the landscape. From within the view is framed as an aspect of delight and surprise. Indeed the house was designed so that its occupants could enjoy the unspoilt landscape, the fresh air and sunshine, from the vantage point of the machine-age raised piano nobile.

We can sympathise with Mme Savoye's complaints when we realise that she could not occupy the house because of continued technical faults. In 1937 she wrote to Le Corbusier:

After numerous demands, you have finally accepted that this house which you built in 1929 is uninhabitable. Your ten-year responsibility is at stake and I have no need to foot the bill. Please render it habitable immediately. I sincerely hope that I will not have to take recourse to legal action (Benton, 1987, p.93).

From the perspective of the late nineties, we can both appreciate Le Corbusier's ideals and decry their impracticalities. Geoffrey Baker points out that the Villa Savoye's

... elevation above the ground, although sculpturally compelling, looks curious in its Poissy context. The inhabitants of suburbia in northern Europe have shown no desire for such disconnection from the ground; on the contrary, cellars have formed an integral part of house construction. The open spatial effect of the Savoye living room lacks intimacy and enclosure, a solution also rejected along with the roof terrace, ribbon windows and free facade. This demonstrates how architecture cannot be effective in a purely theoretical sense. It is a practical art, and Le Corbusier's Purist houses were grossly deficient: they cost too much, they failed to keep out heat, cold or leaks and they made no sense at all as signifiers of any consensus as to what is meant by *home* (Baker, 1995, p.287).

In these examples the distinction between architectural client and patron of the arts is blurred. All four were wealthy educated women who deliberately sought out outstanding contemporary architects to design their houses. The relationship between architect and client/patron is one of trust. In all cases there is a sense of betrayal, and the loss was borne by the woman in each example. Friedman demands of feminist historians and critics that they 'reveal, through research that begins with the individual lives and choices, the cultural conditions in which buildings are produced' and that they 'confront the relationships of power that structure the physical environment and produce the sociopsychological conditions in which the lives of men and women are lived.' (Friedman, 1996, p.230). I look forward to Friedman's new book on women clients and twentieth century architecture. Slowly the picture is not only being completed, but is being given a different inflection.

Eileen Gray - recognising and reassessing a modernist architect

Over recent years much has been written about the architect Eileen Gray (1878-1976). It is probably true to say that more has been written about her than any other female architect. Yet she was a most discreet private person, almost forgotten until 1972. Peter Adam, her friend and biographer, tells the story:

On November 8, 1972, at the famous Paris auction house of the Hôtel Drouet, where a sale was scheduled of Art Deco furniture belonging to the late dress designer and art collector Jacques Doucet, one curious item was listed in the catalogue: "GRAY [Eileen]. Le Destin. 4-panel screen in lacquer decorated with figures in green and silver on a red background." When this lacquer screen fetched the stupendous price of over thirty-six thousand dollars, newspapers for the first time in thirty-five years carried the name of Eileen Gray - in *Le Figaro*, in *Le Monde*, in the *London Times* and the *Herald Tribune*. Collectors and a few art historians took notice. People started to look for her furniture ... The search for the mysterious Eileen Gray began (Adam, 1987, p. 7).

While Adam's account is a responsible and sensitive biography of a woman's career, it is now imperative that Gray's work be seen, assessed and documented beside that of her contemporaries Le Corbusier and Badovici. Frampton mentions her name in a list of persons variously associated with the Parisian Neo-Cubist tradition in the 1930s (Frampton, 1992, p. 334). While research leading to biographies of individual architects is essential for a solid knowledge base, they must be understood in relation to each other and the world in which they worked. We already have one hierarchical history. In recognising women architects and disentangling their vision and contribution, historians should not construct another hierarchy in opposition. In the case of Gray care too must be taken that myths and notoriety do not take over.

Gray designed the house, known as E.1027 [1926-29], for herself on the rugged isolated coast at Roquebrune, Côte d'Azur, France. She believed the essential point of the design to be the complete independence of every room, the possibility even in a small house of everyone being able to be free, and if desired, entirely alone. Gray designed every detail of the house herself. She wrote that 'the maritime character of the house, (...) arose, inevitably, from the setting, from the materials imposed by this setting, and from the nearness of the sea.' (Hecker, 1993, p. 60). That Le Corbusier, uninvited, painted enormous murals in the house, published it as his own work, eventually bought the house and drowned in the sea below the house, have to a large extent hijacked serious critical analysis of the design and its architectural contribution (Colomina, 1996).

Debunking myths about women in architecture

Julie Willis has recently looked at women architects in Victoria, Australia, from 1905 - 1950. She rejects the 'myth' that not many women entered the profession. She argues that women did not only design domestic work, citing the examples of Ellison Harvie, Cynthea Teague, Jessica MacFarlane and Mary Turner Shaw. Willis challenges the idea of the sole practitioner in architecture, or the partner in a firm, generally the subject of "the conventional notion of success in architecture", that is the lone achievement of a hero architect, an architectural historical model which necessarily excludes the contributions of female and male practitioners of all mid to large sized firms. Willis argues that a different model is needed if large projects are to be understood as the work of a team of professionals. 'By concentrating only upon those women who fit within a traditional conception of success in architecture, historical discourse determines that there have been few practicing women architects'. Following this model, 'Feminists, seeking to uncover

female role models in architecture, have inadvertently reinforced the notion that there are few women architects'. Further, Willis sees that 'They have also reinforced the notion that women architects designed almost exclusively domestic architecture, as domestic architecture is the most common work undertaken by sole practitioners and very small firms'. Willis suggests that 'The contribution of women architects as a study can be conceived as an alternative understanding of the whole profession of architecture' (Willis, 1997, pp. 134, and 142).

Conclusion

As I come to conclude this brief and preliminary exploration of vision in leadership: women in architecture, I find now that I too am part of the system, a product of my education and training, drawn, as Coleman puts it "to 'professionalism' with its 'neutral' standards of rigour, critical objectivity and excellence" (Coleman, 1996, p. xi). Coleman continues

For the aspiring academic or practicing architect, professionalism *by itself* looks like a wholly adequate buttress against gender-based inequity. But as Susan Brando points out, the promise held out by professionalism - that is the means for being accepted on an even playing field where we are all simply and equally "human" - is unrealizable within our present system of social relations: "In a culture that is *in fact* constructed by gender duality ... one *cannot* simply be 'human' ... Our language, intellectual history, and social forms are 'gendered'; there is no escape from this fact and from its consequences on our lives" (Coleman, 1996, p. xi-xii).

How can the situation be changed to be gender inclusive? Is it just a matter of some diligent research? Can we now just go back and find all the women architects and fill in the gaps? Coleman suggests that this is not enough, that by doing so, the construct remains the same.

Rather, space and place must be reconceptualized. The question is: Will we theorists, critics, students, and practitioners of architecture participate in the work of generating "new perspectives, new bodies, new ways of inhabiting"? (Coleman, 1996, p. xiv).

This project has started me in a new direction by creating a new threshold of awareness. As I look around me I see great hope and much energy. As an architectural historian, I look forward to participating in a continuing dialogue to inclusively reconceptualise space and place, never losing sight of the art of architecture.

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Backlash and Feminist Resistance: The Postfeminist/Postmodernist Women's Movement

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Abstract

Backlash represents an anti-feminist response to the women's movement, but it exists in complex discursive forms which are not linear, and which do not necessarily emanate from purely "external" sources. The messages and the behaviours occasioned by backlash are sometimes overt and sometimes subtle, and are deployed by women and men, anti-feminists and feminists. Its motivations and forms also differ. But the dividing line has to do with differentials of power which the dominant discourse disguises and misrepresents.

This paper posits four kinds of backlash: rejection, appropriation, negation and deflection. Its key focus is on the effect that postmodernism and "the postmodern world" have on feminism through attacks on "identity politics" and the attempt to undermine initiatives to sustain a global movement of, and for, women.

Keywords: postmodernism, difference, representation, discursive power.

Introduction

The overt and covert anti-feminism we call 'backlash' still takes us by surprise in this so-called post-feminist era. Although feminists are only too aware of the misogyny that is a marked feature of patriarchal societies, it is easy to slide into the popular belief that women have achieved something approaching equality with men. Indeed, it appears that young Australian women consider feminism to be quite irrelevant to their lives. Our schools are apparently having to reaffirm boys' confidence as post-feminist performance anxiety is having serious repercussions on their ability to compete with today's young women.

But this situation is not simply the bequest of feminism; it is also the result of backlash. Australian women are told that they can have and do anything. Conversely, men are increasingly depicted as under siege as a result of feminism overplaying its hand. This view has its validity. Women *do* remain significantly disadvantaged, women *are* making advances in public empowerment, and men may well feel insecure as a result of these changes. These facts, however, take on different emphases at different times depending, of course, on who is advancing the argument being deployed. Moreover, as Foucault (1992) has shown, the assigned meaning of "facts" depends on the discourse in which they are embedded, since discourses create knowledges which are often in direct conflict with each other. Nevertheless, the conflict of "truths" used in arguments about gender is masked and naturalised so that it is easy to believe that the individual is confused or lacking. This paper demonstrates some ways in which this confusion of discourses and counter-discourses works to the advantage of dominant groups. In my selection of four examples of anti-feminist backlash, there is an emphasis on the fourth modality (deflection), as this is the most complex and the most topical concern of the (western) women's movement of the late twentieth century. Therefore, the final section of this paper examines the deflection of the feminist trajectory by means of the mixed reception of identity politics through which, I argue, the future existence of the women's movement is at stake.

The term "backlash" was reappropriated by the western women's movement and applied to hostile reactions by men to the advancement of women. It can be a useful way of describing contemporary patriarchal thought although it is something of an oversimplification. My first point, then, is that backlash does exist but that we cannot be entirely sure of its origins, nor can we entirely reject it as false and destructive. Subordinate groups (or, as I call them here, counter-discourses) themselves enact many of the behaviours of dominant groups but they enact them differently, with a different kind of authority. How, then, is it possible to identify backlash which is truly anti-feminist? One of the best ways may be one of the simplest - through a gut feeling that we are experiencing either overt anti-feminism or, more commonly, some kind of confusion in the implications for women.

To assist the process of analysis, however, I posit four kinds of backlash which operate neither uniformly nor sequentially. These are common responses to the threat of a powerful counter-discourse such as feminism. They are: **rejection, appropriation, negation and deflection**. These are also tactics of resistance, so that we see them practised by both anti-feminists and feminists. This leads to a second (qualifying) point: that although the macro- and micro-politics of both discourses and counter-discourses employ similar kinds of behaviours, they draw on different authorities. The dividing line is always a matter of power, of its possession or lack. In de Certeau's terms, theatres of action incorporate both strategies, which are essentially conservative, and tactics, which are subversive (1984, p. xix). Moreover, we all deploy both strategies and tactics, sometimes colluding with the dominant ideology and sometimes resisting. However, the ploy of merely turning an argument around and applying it to a discursive opponent as a counter-argument is usually just that - a ploy, and one that is almost always the prerogative of the dominant discourse which has far more influence to make it prevail. Thus, we regularly see feminists accused of sexist behaviour when they advocate affirmative action. And currently we are seeing the same strategy deployed by Pauline Hanson, who claims that indigenous people and non-white migrants are creating racist divisions in Australia. This "turnaround" syndrome is apparent in all four examples discussed in this paper.

Four Strategies of Backlash

The first strategy, rejection, refers to any form of overt attack by a dominant group on its opponents, and includes responses ranging from violence and abuse to less conspicuous behaviours such as ridicule and anti-feminist arguments. Patriarchal arguments present feminists as a threat to men, but also to the well-being of society in general (apparently synonymous). As with all backlash strategies, its strength is in its validity: feminism continues to overturn life-as-we-have-known-it, to the extent of demanding that men relinquish some of their social power. Backlash rejective attacks are therefore quite harsh, but at least feminism is acknowledged therein as a powerful influence. A classic technique of rejection is to misrepresents the power differentials between the two groups, making it appear as though both genders occupy structural positions of equal power (in which case feminists aspire to female supremacy).

A more subtle strategy than outright rejection, but equally effective, is appropriation. This is a very insidious move which implies, rather than acknowledges, the maturity of the opponent (only a movement with an established epistemology can be rhetorically appropriated into the dominant culture). Now that feminism is an irrevocable fact of western societies, popular culture is forced to succumb to its influence. However, in the act of appropriation the dominant group makes the

feminist victory seem much greater than it is by employing feminist rhetoric. Again, the demand is for feminism to be more considerate, apparently so that patriarchal "equilibrium" can be re-established. "Postfeminist" representations of assertive women persuade us that feminism has achieved what it set out to achieve, that everybody is happy with these changes, but, the argument goes, that we must now attend to the reaffirmation of men. This is presented as being in the interests of everybody, including (maybe even especially) women. Appropriation is very convincing and inviting. This is the dominant culture behaving like the good father (as opposed to the rejective father), maintaining overall authority in a caring and tolerant way and asking only a little consideration in return.

The next strategy, negation, is the discursive phenomenon that acts as though feminism never really happened, so the need to engage with it doesn't arise. This is apparent, for example, in the construction of role models, from Princess Diana to Elle Macpherson, which valorise such "attributes" as the glamorous (fetishised) female body, charm, youth and (preferably) vulnerability. In the face of negation, feminists (when they manage to surface at all) appear altogether excessive and unseemly, because they undermine the dominant culture's devotion to its own creations. When these creations are female role models, feminists appear disgruntled and, ironically, as opposed to other women. Again, the roles have changed places. "Ordinary people" apparently defend and respect women, whilst feminists attack and denigrate them.

The fourth backlash reflex is deflection, a mild word for the process of turning a movement back on itself in a way that creates internal friction and deflects attention from its original focus. But it is also an appropriately soft word, because if this *is* backlash (as I maintain it is) it is now the turn of the external source to disappear, so that the attacks are seemingly generated from within the counter-discourse itself. The following section discusses the current dynamics of deflection that operate within the women's movement, and the implications for the politics of voice and representation.

Strategic Deflection and Identity Politics

The women's movement is grappling with a very painful crisis reflected in the topical debates on identity politics, a highly complex issue that is coming to dominate the work of many feminist academics and activists, including my own, since it occasions a great deal of mutual- and self-censorship amongst feminists.

Feminism is a counter-discourse and, as such, could be described as a backlash to patriarchy. As a counter-discourse it bears the onus of continually having to rejustify and reinvent itself. If it wants to operate as a resistance movement it has to match the dominant discourse's propensity to dispel or destroy it. Patriarchy, on the other hand, can hide in its own light and remains, to most, quite invisible as a founding discourse. A dominant discourse creates its own rules, but very different rules apply to counter-discourses, whose members have to be accountable outside the movement and within it. Thus, women emerging as leaders must be true to feminist ethics as well as keeping the rules of patriarchal power, whereas men in leadership are expected to observe only professional and personal ethics. Patriarchy, it could be argued, has no comparable ethics of gender politics because patriarchy does not exist as a "politics" except in the minds of feminists. Proponents of a counter-discourse of feminism are expected to observe much higher ethical standards because they are cast in the role of the critic, the malcontent, the protester or reformer.

Often, their self-appointed standards are quite impossible to maintain and members fall into bickering and self-recrimination. The situation is largely created because redress political epistemologies tend to be rooted in moral grounds and their advocates are then expected to practise what they preach. However, liberationist discourses are utopian; they envisage an ideal world. Yet the visionaries themselves are not, of course, ideal people. Neither is their future-world perfectly planned. What, then, are the rules of a feminist utopia to which feminists must conform?

Second wave feminists have claimed that the traditional images of femininity have been constructed to the advantage of patriarchy, and that gender is a social construct attached to, and based on, biological difference. On this basis, "femininity" can be challenged and reconstructed. Yet the women's movement gives women a place from which to speak as *embodied* female selves - a place, therefore, that cannot easily be appropriated by men. Identity politics (in the case of feminism, the politics resulting from identification of women with other women) provide a protected space and "copyright" the female voice within that space in the interests of self-determinism for women.

However, postmodernism disputes biological determinism, instead upholding the claim originated by de Beauvoir (1972): that women are made and not born. Moreover, postmodernism as a founding discourse of pluralism and difference gives equal credibility to the various political voices of sexual, racial, class and cultural identities. As feminists have themselves pointed out, in line with Foucault, to define others is to oppress them. This accusation is now levelled against "white feminists" when they speak of gender as a totalising factor and, in doing so, create a new form of oppression for women who are not white, middle-class and heterosexual. Hence, the postmodern and postmodernist women's movement is now fragmenting into culture-specific identity groups - empowering to many who have formerly been silenced, but undermining a recognisably gendered voice for "women" as a homogeneous group. The force behind what used to be called women's rights now finds itself significantly occupied with what Kathleen B. Jones (1993) calls "border-patrolling" of internal identity politics and subject to a resurgent doubt as to whether gender is, after all, a basic factor in the struggle for power.

Whilst it is true that feminists of more privileged social groups must indeed avoid the further appropriation of other women's experiences, the restraining effect on newly-found feminist voices is having serious consequences. Feminism finds itself to be increasingly peripheral in the academy wherein it is either relegated to "women's studies" or to the fringes of theoretical debate in the form of feminist theory. Women's studies operate much like Little Italy in a multicultural city - a ghetto-ised discipline which invokes the model of tolerance by a larger community, although this does create an opportunity to nurture a sort of women's culture with some impunity. Feminist theory, for its part, is often side-tracked into grappling with the implications of the difference debate. Paul Smith wryly observed in a provocative "Men in Feminism" paper in 1984 that men are penetrating feminism, claiming, as Somer Brodribb (1992) also did a few years later, that this penetration occurs as a result of feminists over-subscribing to postmodernist theory:

This theory, as feminist theory itself has taught us to know, is implicated fully into the phallocracy: it helps invent, legitimate, and reproduce the male order. (Smith, 1987, p.34)

Feminist theorists, however, consider that to be the point: to subvert the structures in which feminism is an active part with a different point of view. Yet in "seeing through" phallogocentric theory, Smith observes, "feminist theory wants to indict the very structures which it knows uphold masculinity and femininity" (p.34) including the binarisms of men and women in which feminist theory stands as Other.

To be overly concerned with gender these days, regardless of any postmodernist rhetoric employed, is increasingly viewed in the academy as being locked in a time-warp of reductive dualities after the discursive moment has since given way to the much "cooler" (or is it hotter?) approach to multiple culture-specific "sexualities". The result, Brodribb (1992) claims, is that postmodernist feminists are not really feminists at all (in the sense of working towards the improved quality of life for actual women), but simply non-sexists, bandying words with the boys.

To be sure, the advent of queer theory, for example, which emphasises the multiplicity of sexual identities (as opposed to two mutually exclusive genders), is undoubtedly helping the work of the women's movement in breaking down traditional constructs of gender, thus avoiding the further oppression of doubly- or triply-marginalised women. But if feminists speak only for, and about, themselves they are rendered unable to pursue issues of gender as a basic factor of women's oppression because this means subscribing to a grand social narrative - a cardinal sin in the postmodernist universe in which the "metanarrative" of feminism is always suspected of being based on an essentialist premise. The danger is now that "good feminists" are reduced to developing a politics of self-interest instead of a political community. Indeed, many are calling for increased emphasis on local women's communities of common interest, and the abandonment of a concerted effort to maintain a global movement. Resistance itself is a problematic concept in postmodernism because "the patriarchy" or even "the mainstream," is no longer seen as a homogenised mass, if it ever was; yet the fact remains that popular culture still depicts it as such. This needs constant redress.

Postmodernism giveth to feminism and it taketh away. It holds the promise of a multiplicity of new and subsumed knowledges but in negating their unity it removes a good deal of their coherence as significant truths grounded in a theory of women's oppression by male-dominated societies. Feminists may speak of women like themselves but they are increasingly restricted from speaking of women in general, or working towards cross-cultural rights for women as women.

These effects are not incidental to the schemata of gender politics. Marxist Raymond Williams (1977) claimed twenty years ago that a dominant culture could only sustain a very small amount of new content (or what he called "emergent culture") at any given time. The rest of the dominant culture would then be "residual" - something formed in the past but still active in present culture. I find this a helpful model through which to conceptualise social change. Using it, we can liken a dominant culture to a human body in which foreign substances are accepted only when the principle organism is persuaded that the new element is a natural part of itself. In this case, when change occurs in mainstream ideology the counter-discourse has been appropriated and appears only in a well-digested form.

Foucault's (1987) theory of discursive power is not incompatible with these ideas. He also sees power as a relatively closed system which is not strong on the notion of political agency and leaves much room for active resistance from outside of the system. If we adopt this (rather pessimistic) view of social change, the feminisation of patriarchal culture is unlikely to end in real equality (let alone the unbridled matriarchal power that feminists are believed to demand). However, feminists can prove that changes regularly occur on a small and local basis, and that this adds up, over time, to a ground swell of overall change, although this change by no means signifies the end of patriarchy.

Conclusion

In relinquishing hope of total salvation from patriarchy, feminism must retain a notion of agency because, to quote Lyotard (1985 p.483) "invention is always born of dissension". Knowledge, he tells us, is not simply a tool of the authorities; counter-discourse "refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable" (p.483). Thus, a radical politics exists not simply to shift the centre, but to create the actuality of different ways of being by envisaging alternative models.

This paper has argued the existence of four types of anti-feminist phenomena which demonstrate that backlash is a very real political phenomenon. However, rejection, appropriation, negation and deflection are not the exclusive prerogative of dominant groups. Neither can we automatically equate the women's movement with resistance and patriarchy with backlash, because both trajectories are present in the dynamics of power. Thus, there is some flexibility in dominant culture and, conversely, reactionary behaviours are present in radical sub-cultures. But for feminists it is vital to hold to the point that power differentials remain significantly connected to gender. The desire to respect difference should not mean discounting hard-won knowledges of gender for fear of holding to outdated grand narratives. The discursive web may well be prone to running in all directions, but feminists cannot afford the luxury of doing so unless their actions speak from, and for, a "women's authority" overtly based in gender.

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AN EXPLORATION OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY COLLEGIATE GROUPS AS A WAY OF DEVELOPING A CRITICAL MASS

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Mythmakers

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Abstract

As part of the Edith Cowan University Women In Leadership Project a group of diverse women worked together on the issues around research for women. This Collegial Research Group was developed in response to the need to support and enhance research activity for women in the University. The programme included both academic and general staff with different levels of research experience and was facilitated by an external consultant. This presentation will describe the varied journeys of individual participants and the group as a whole.

Key issues for the group included maintaining commitment to the programme and its goals; questions of legitimacy and authority; vulnerability at numerous levels; and our perceptions of ourselves as writers. We were supported by senior women researchers who shared their journeys with us. A central theme for the group was the exploration of the model of action learning as a network of dialogue and feedback. This was applied by each of us individually in our writing and by the group in its support for the activities of its members.

Outcomes of the programme were numerous and included assuming the identity of the researcher, taking responsibility for developing a public voice through individual projects, and establishing a research support network, both within the group and the wider University community.

Keywords: women, collegial groups, research

Introduction

Our journey together started on 26 March 1997 in the Cottesloe Beach Hotel. Apprehension, excitement, insecurity, fear and anticipation were all present as the group of eight women (four general staff and four academic staff) were welcomed by the external facilitator of the 1997 Research Collegial Programme which had been set up as part of the Edith Cowan University Women in Leadership Project. The authors consider that they have travelled a long way since that first encounter. This paper will outline the organisational structure of the programme; highlight key aspects of its implementation; describe some of the impacts on individual participants; and identify features of the programme which made change possible despite the difficulties encountered.

Organisational Structure of the Programme

The Research Collegial Programme was designed to support women in developing their research profiles. It was open to both general and academic staff members. The participants were expected to make a considerable time commitment to the programme. We started with a two-day residential workshop in March and then continued with six one day meetings held over the

following three months. In addition members were expected to write about three pages between meetings.

The two-day residential workshop was a key component of the whole programme. During the first day we all voiced our own concerns, sharing commonality and respecting difference. We also examined our images of academic writers, the role of research as perceived by senior management and the place of the programme within this setting. In the evening our reactions were reflected back to us and explored more deeply through Playback Theatre. The second day was used to introduce the central theme of the programme, that of learning as a network of dialogue and feedback. The structure used was adapted from Robert Brown's work (Brown, 1994/5). Using this structure we looked back at the first day and forward to our own writing. We identified our individual learning styles and used these to examine and then make public our preferred mode of feedback. We then worked on our listening skills to help us provide feedback aligned to the needs of other group members.

The six follow-up days each contained two components, one outward looking the other inwardly focussed. In each session we were introduced to successful women researchers, many of them from Edith Cowan University. These visitors spoke frankly and informally about their own struggles, thereby providing us with insight, strategies, inspiration and role models. The rest of the day was spent exploring each other's writing and our progress towards individual goals. The framework of action learning through dialogue and feedback underpinned both activities.

Key Aspects of the Implementation

A key feature of the group was its self-selection. All participants therefore brought with them their own identification of individual needs together with a willingness to participate and an expectation of consolidation or change. Had this not been so, then the issue of compulsion and imposed change would need to have been raised early in the process. In the case of our group, self-selection also generated a very diverse group. The participants came from different disciplines, levels, experience and career paths. Between them they had degrees in political science, social science, physics and philosophy and their previous work experience ranged from mill operator in a gold mine to research assistant. They also brought with them various agendas derived from their immediate working environments in different faculties and divisions. This diversity contributed to the richness of the experience for the participants and provided a level of separation between the operation of the collegiate group and everyday work. In many ways this meant that it was easier to display vulnerability than it would have been had the group been more homogeneous.

The group considers that having a female facilitator external to the University was important. She brought with her an empathy with institutional gender issues without any identification with particular interest groups or factions. In addition, it encouraged participants to try to see their positions through the eyes of someone outside the institution and to place problems in the broader context.

The implementation of the framework of action learning through dialogue and feedback is inherently individual to any group. Three key features of our group were the participants'

willingness to engage personally in the process, as well as professionally; the group's ability to be flexible in its delivery of feedback; and the members' self motivation and clear sense of purpose.

The personal involvement was evident from the first session in which members honestly acknowledged their own fears and the difficulties they experienced holding an image of themselves as writers and researchers in the face of dismissal by peers and rejection by publishers. The facilitator maintained a safe place in which to name the unnamable and break the silence of oppression.

'Where language and naming are power, silence is oppression, is violence.' (Rich, 1977, p. xv).

This naming transformed the space from one in which we felt obliged to act the part of the 'women in an academic institution' to an authentic public space in which we could explore our insecurities and move on through them. Mary Belenky called these spaces "public home spaces, places where people work at the very edges of their abilities, constantly pushing each other's thinking into new territory, giving names to things that have gone unnamed, dreaming of better ways, discovering common ground and finding ways to realize shared dreams." (Belenky, 1997, p. xxiii)

As one member said, she found herself 'feeling doubting and surrounded by doubters'. This enabled us to work with our own conditioning, as women both in the University context and in the broader community. We honestly identified clashes of values and supported one another on our journey towards our expanding aspirations. In doing this we discovered for ourselves the truth

'That they can strengthen themselves through the empowerment of others is essential wisdom often gathered by women.' (Belenky, 1997, p. 47)

The session on listening on the second day was of crucial importance. In it we developed our identity as 'critical friends'. We explored what we, as individuals, needed by way of support and how, as listeners, we could provide appropriate feedback. In particular we learned to maintain our own curiosity and to ask questions rather than make suggestions. In this way we sought to identify and meet individual needs rather than imposing the group agenda on individuals. We learned by experience that, when a member missed this session, it was possible for them to come in and operate with their own strong role unvoiced and unnamed. The feedback they provided could then challenge, rather than reinforce, other members' identities as researchers. We also learned to respect the process and to voice our own curiosity about each other's work.

The diverse nature of the group raised an interesting issue of audience and helped us to address the paradox of writing. Writing is itself a very personal process yet publication makes this personal act public. The operation of the group made both aspects lived realities.

Personal Journeys

Although our journey together started in March, our individual journeys had begun much earlier when we volunteered for the group or were encouraged by others to be brave enough to participate. As we walked through the door on the first day we brought with us our own individual identification of need. It was a measure of the success of the venture that we were able to name a large part of these concerns early in the process and support one another on the road ahead. This section will tell the stories of some of the participants. It will focus on the needs that drew them into the group and the perception shifts that emerged from the process.

The issue for one general staff member was that of authority and legitimacy. Despite working in a research capacity, she saw her role as supporting and facilitating others' research rather than being a researcher herself. By contrast the group immediately saw her as a researcher in her own right. Her shift in perception over the weeks empowered her to successfully apply for an individual research grant of \$2500 and a joint one of \$48,000. Her ongoing perception shift has been far more wide reaching, as she now thinks and works with the power and vision of a researcher. The group grew with this success.

The issue of authority also came up for one of the academic staff. In this case it was not legitimacy of purpose but legitimacy of area. She felt a 'fraud'. Her PhD research area, rural women, was not taken seriously by many of her colleagues. This trivialisation of her research area combined with her part-time status generated a sense of marginalisation. The programme provided her with a group of 'critical friends' who appreciated the work she was doing and encouraged her to persist. The visiting speakers also provided inspiration and information that led to her successfully applying for two major research grants.

For this staff member, the group provided validation of her work and respite from her intellectual isolation. Again the group shared the problems associated with her applications and grew when they were successful.

A sense of physical and intellectual isolation was also the motivation for another general staff member. In this case her own sense of being a researcher was very strong with her PhD completed and her time devoted entirely to research. However she had recently moved to Perth and had no sense of being part of a research community within the University. The group enabled her to meet people concerned with research and to feel connected through more than email. For the group, her strong sense of herself as a researcher was an important element. Her ease with this identification paralleled with her honest discussion of difficulties, humanised the term 'researcher' and somehow made it more available to the rest of the group.

Intellectual isolation was also an issue for another academic staff member. She was at a point in her career where she needed to shift her research area to align it more closely with her teaching commitments. She was looking for peer support to help her make this choice. She was also looking for support to 'do research differently' as a woman. To her amazement the topic choice became instantly clear and her writing on the topic was considered highly and enjoyed by the group. Although in her case the initial motivation was isolation the issue of legitimacy was also tied in closely with her wish to move away from traditionally defined areas and ways of working.

Insecurity and isolation were issues also for another general staff member. She had just moved in to a new position with a strong research component. Here she found herself as the only senior woman in an isolated area undertaking a predominantly research role when her previous experience had been as a manager. The group helped her towards a clearer sense of her identity and provided a support network during this time of change. Her increased confidence was welcomed and celebrated by the group.

In addition two members left early in the process due to pressure of work and one member left as the nature of the support did not fit her current requirements.

Three common themes run through these stories. All participants needed to some extent to have their work legitimised by a group that they respected. All needed to discuss the process with successful women researchers and to be part of a group of critical friends. Existing structures within the University were not providing this support. The circumstances that led participants to this point differed from person to person but in many cases sprung from their interest in research areas which cross traditional boundaries. We should not have been surprised by this underlying theme as it has been observed many times before, (see for example Zuckerman, 1991 and Kelly, 1993). When this sense of collegiality was supplied by the group then it provided freedom to experiment and to grow.

Successes and Failures

Positive outcomes for participants crossed both scholarly and personal domains, revealing for some that the process of academic writing is significantly enriched by collegial support. In particular, the programme enabled participants to acknowledge, articulate and embrace the many levels on which they engage in scholarly activity. Although this knowledge may have been implicitly understood before the programme, there was an increased capacity to place the difficult aspects of the writing process in context thus redirecting the energy spent on such difficulties effectively.

For those who had experienced isolation within the organisation, the significance of the networks that have evolved from participation in the programme has been substantial. Such networks have not only provided collegial support and role models during the programme but have also raised the profile of the women participating and expanded their knowledge of the organisation.

A measure of success of the programme is the extent to which the effects are maintained after the formal programme stops. Although we all came to the programme with different perceived needs, we have found a commonality of experiences and aspirations which has provided the basis for on-going contact. The group met in 1997 to discuss our ongoing experiences and to prepare for this conference presentation. We are now planning to meet informally once a month in 1998. Thus to the question 'Has the group ended?' the core members would reply 'No'. We may even be back next year to present an update. In addition the research projects that were initiated during the period of scheduled meetings are progressing steadily.

A key element within the programme that led to this success was the early identification of needs, issues and vulnerabilities. The two-day residential component, at the start of the course, provided the time for this identification and the skill of the facilitator provided a safe space for it to happen. The framework of action learning through dialogue and feedback was sufficiently flexible to cater for the needs of individuals yet robust enough to hold the group together despite attendance difficulties experienced by some members.

The guest speakers from the institution provided a broader context for the programme. Not only did they provide valuable information about the research 'game' but they also enlarged the group by providing external reference points and wider horizons.

Pressure of work was a constant threat to the success of this project. It was not possible to schedule times that enabled all members to attend the whole of each session, however the group managed to accommodate this with remarkable good humour and ingenuity. In addition the pressures on individuals differed as some members were given time release for the sessions whereas others added it to already busy schedules. The early drop out of two members reflected this difficulty. This is a key issue which needed to be addressed more formally before the start of the programme.

Despite the difficulties, the programme was extremely successful at providing a group that was able to support its members. The group's multidisciplinary and crossing of academic and general staff boundaries were significant strengths. It thereby provides a model for the establishment of critical mass groups within newer universities struggling to establish research strengths without specific disciplinary concentrations.

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Women, Opportunity and the Gendered Culture ... The Women and Leadership Program at the University of South Australia

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the opportunities formally presented to academic and general women staff within the University of South Australia through the Women and Leadership program. The program was positively accepted by the participants and the University community in its first year in 1996 and has attracted a greater number of women in its second year.

The involvement of management and the removal of barriers to women's participation have been important strategies in the development and implementation of the program. The outcomes have included personal and professional development for women across all levels and areas of the University as well as achieving projects of corporate significance.

The paper draws on practical examples which occurred within this program and highlights the positive value which can be gained from a unified staff development approach which is aligned with institutional priorities.

Keywords: leadership, communication, strategies, culture

Introduction

In 1994 women in South Australia celebrated the centenary of women's suffrage. The Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act has been in place for more than a decade, as has anti-discrimination legislation such as the Sex Discrimination Act and various state equal opportunity Acts. In some respects at least it would seem that the rights of women are being recognised; that is, women are being permitted to take an equal place in society, education and employment. However, while women in the workplace are no longer easily ignored as competitors, they still do not enter the scene from the same starting place as their male counterparts. As recently as twenty years ago women were required to resign from permanent positions after marriage, and the prospect of promotion to higher levels of management was almost unheard of.

In western societies both men and women have been conditioned to believe that women's place is in the home taking care of family responsibilities, thus allowing men to assume their place as the breadwinners and achievers in the workplace. Workplace practices seem to constantly reinforce the idea that women are not equal to men and that concessions need to be made for them. Thus women can also fall prey to a victim mentality and a deficit model. The idea of concessions, that affirmative action means putting women into jobs they do not have the skills to perform and at the expense of talented men, is an argument used by both men and women. This argument can have a negative effect on women concerned about taking advantage of situations which will put them into direct competition with their male counterparts. They feel that it is an unfair advantage which they should not take. Strategies to educate women to understand the implications of affirmative action programs need to be put into place. Women should be given the opportunity to examine the impact and possible outcomes for them of these programs. Women move along a continuum from those who are largely uninformed about the possibilities available to them to those who eagerly grasp opportunities. The way forward for women wanting to take advantage

of the current situation is to recognise and understand the opportunities offered to them. In many ways equal opportunity and affirmative action for women concern both learning to seize opportunity and also becoming strategists.

The workplace environment needs to be carefully developed, monitored and modified so that the possibility of negative outcomes is decreased as opportunity is provided and accepted. There is evidence that the cultural change whereby women's contribution will be recognised and valued has begun. The workplace is beginning to value diversity in that valuing difference is seen as an important element because it is specifically linked to organisational culture and values (Thomas, 1990; McEnrue, 1993; Thornburg, 1994; Cope and Kalantzis, 1997). Joan Acker's work (1992) is particularly useful in theorising four sets of processes to analyse organisational cultures. The first focuses on the production of gender divisions which include organisational practices which produce gendered jobs, wages, hierarchies, power and subordination. The second highlights that gendering involves the creation of symbols, images and forms of consciousness which explain, confirm and sometimes oppose gender divisions. The third and fourth sets of processes combine social interaction and subjective interpretations, the interactions occurring between individuals to create social forms which enact hierarchical relationships involving alliances and exclusions in the workplace.

It is imperative for women to reveal, or have revealed for them, the gendered substructures of organisations which act as the limits to workplace behaviour and practices which clearly serve to reinforce gendered hierarchies of power. Women need to engage actively in challenging stereotypical images of themselves. This will not happen if women adopt a victim mentality, or if they begin from a position within a deficit model. Developing any program from a negative basis is setting it up to fail. Success comes from positive planning — and positive planning recognises the dangers develops strategies to negate these concerns and counter negative outcomes.

Agenda for Change

In a facilitative environment the negative outcomes against women who participate in affirmative action programs can be lessened or negated in a number of ways. There needs to be dissemination of information to introduce the program both at management level and within the wider institutional community, including educating the workplace community, gaining the support of management, and aligning programs with institutional priorities. If the program is developed through consultation with women such that it encourages and supports women, and with the involvement and support of management, women are more likely to approach the program positively. The program should give women strategies to recognise and grasp opportunities, to create their own career path, and to recognise and cope with any negative outcomes. Providing women with a safe environment within the program allows them to develop ideas, goals and strategies which they can take back to their workplace.

Leadership positions and positions of responsibility and power have traditionally belonged to men. At the University of South Australia we believe we are creating a positive environment in which women can develop their potential and have the opportunity of competing with men for leadership positions. This is being achieved through ongoing success in affirmative action planning. The University of South Australia was established in 1991 and adopted a strong commitment to equity and affirmative action. In 1993 it was the first university to appoint a Pro

Vice Chancellor (Equity). The University has consistently received the highest rating for its annual reports to the Affirmative Action Agency and is gaining considerable recognition for its affirmative action program and in particular its Women and Leadership program. While the affirmative action program has educated the University community and in general improved the working environment for women, analysis of information collected through individual reports and the monitoring and reporting systems of the University showed a need to further address issues concerning women's input to decision-making within the University, their position within the structure of the University, the value placed on their work and position within the University, and the development and advancement of their careers. In the last few years a number of documents have examined the culture of the University and provided information for the development of the Women and Leadership program. 'Women and the Politics of University Work: an Agenda for the Organisation' was a research project begun in 1994 by Elaine Butler and Lucy Schulz as part of the celebrations for the centenary of women's suffrage. In 1995 Clare Burton undertook *An Equity Review at the University of South Australia*. Two affirmative action three-year plans, which are part of the Corporate Plan of the University, have outlined a program to improve by practical means the place of women within the University. The annual reports to the Affirmative Action Agency enabled the Equal Opportunity Unit to monitor statistical data and highlight areas of concern within the University.

One of the objectives of our affirmative action planning is to motivate women and encourage them to identify and take opportunities, and thus to increase the recognition and acceptance of women's roles within the University. We believe that we have successfully developed and implemented our Women and Leadership program by establishing a positive and supportive environment focussed on opportunity. The evolution of the Women and Leadership program placed emphasis on anticipating and removing barriers to women's participation, creating a positive program for women in which they made decisions about their involvement and commitment, consulting and incorporating views from women across the University, and having the program accepted by the University community and by management.

The program was named Women *and* Leadership so that it stated the philosophy of the program - that leadership is a quality potentially attainable by all women and is not defined by position. This is further reflected in the goal of the program - to change the gendered culture of the University of South Australia towards including and valuing women's contribution. The components of the program were also carefully chosen as it was considered that the structure of the program would be important in relation to its reception by women and the impact on the gendered culture of the University. A public lecture series allowed access to national women leaders, while mentoring gave women a more personal and task-oriented approach to development. Collegial groups provided a safe and supportive environment for women to discuss problems and strategies while workshops on a wide range of topics provided both information and individual involvement. Project work and placements gave the participants the opportunity to gain experience at a higher level outside their immediate work area.

While it was acknowledged that there were several excellent programs already in existence, we felt that there were some elements of the programs which were potentially barriers to women's participation. Therefore some decisions made in the formation of the program at the University of South Australia were consciously different to the practices at other universities. The program would be open to all women at the University regardless of employment basis, level or position within the institution because leadership does not occur only in the designated leadership

positions and the current position of a woman within the institution is not necessarily a guide to her leadership potential. The program would be free of charge to participants as the necessity for supervisors to allocate limited financial resources could not only produce tension around membership of the program but also limit the opportunity of participation for many women. Calls for expressions of interest would be directed to the women to give them the opportunity to make their own decisions, and to recognise that the selection of women by supervisors may not always be an objective exercise and may be influenced by issues other than leadership potential. The women could choose their individual level of involvement in the program as the program aimed to develop the decision-making potential of women and allow them to make a commitment to the program. The aims, objectives and components of the program would be guided by consultation with a broad and representative range of women staff as it was recognised that many women of the University have experience, expertise and excellent ideas in the areas of professional development for women and the building of integrated programs for women. No limit was placed on the number of participants who could join the program and registrations were only declined when it became impractical to initiate new participants into a program which was already well underway.

It was hoped that these factors would remove some of the barriers to women's participation in the program. However, some barriers were related to attitudes which are apparent in many aspects of University life. They included women's feeling that they could not afford the time or would not be permitted to attend, their reluctance to approach their supervisor and ask for staff development training, and negative reactions from supervisors or co-workers about their participation in a women and leadership program or being part of a 'women's group'. These attitudes could affect women's participation in the Women and Leadership program, but they also affect their attitude towards and participation in other activities associated with the University. These attitudes certainly need to be addressed, and steps towards educating the University community about their commitment to staff development and other roles, both as staff members and as supervisors, are being developed outside the Women and Leadership program. Attitudinal change in this area may bring about greater participation in many areas of University life.

Approaches for Change

It was considered important to the success of the program that the management of the University be involved and that the program be in line with the Corporate Plan of the University. This was done in a number of ways. It was noted that the University did not have any unified staff development approach aligned with institutional priorities. The program was developed on a University-wide basis and the content of the program was in line with University objectives. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Equity and Academic Support) was the Chair of each of the three committees concerned with the development and implementation of the program and has taken an active part in planning and promoting the program. Other members of the Senior Management Group were kept informed of the progress of the program. The public lectures were free and open to all members of the University community as well as the general public. The series was launched by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Equity and Academic Support). A number of women were matched with mentors not in the program. Some of these mentors were senior staff and two women were mentored by members of the Senior Management Group. Project proposals were sought from supervisors and approval from Senior Management Group was gained for the proposals to ensure that they were in line with corporate strategies. When the registrations for the program were finalised letters were sent to all deans and managers of administrative units to inform them of the women in their area who were involved in the program and to seek their

support for those women. Newsletters were produced approximately every six weeks. While the main function of the newsletters was to inform the participants of the progress of the program, the newsletters were also distributed to all supervisors for their information.

The Women and Leadership program has provided opportunities for participants to understand the structure of the University. It has also provided an environment to break down some of the barriers which exist among employees of the University, barriers of status as well as isolation. Academic and general staff women of many different levels and work areas have attended workshops and collegial groups together. Information has been pooled and outcomes made available to everyone within a safe and supportive environment. Although having a better understanding of their environment and feeling less isolated may not lessen the impact of the prevailing climate of change, economic stringency and increased workloads, women may at least feel that they can deal with the present and plan for the future.

While the benefits to the University include concrete outcomes such as the completion of projects of corporate significance which may otherwise not have been achieved, the less tangible outcomes include providing an environment which may help women staff to feel valued and to allow them to make valuable contributions rather than feeling insignificant, powerless and anonymous workers in a large organisation. The program has been successful across the University and the growth of the program in its second year would seem to indicate that not only are participants gaining development through their involvement in the program, but they are also able to participate without establishing tensions within their workplace. In fact, many women are commenting that they are returning to their workplace with positive strategies to improve their environment and relationships with co-workers. It was stated in the submission to the Cathie Commonwealth Staff Development Fund that 'the benefit of the program will be an increased pool of capable women who will be positioned to provide enhanced leadership when they progress to senior academic and management levels in the future' (University of South Australia, 1995, p. 4). It is believed that the benefits to the University are both wider and more subtle than stated in the submission. The empowerment of women and a change in the gendered environment of the University will not only benefit women but will also greatly benefit the University. If women feel valued and become part of the culture of the institution, if women enhance their decision-making and leadership qualities they have a better chance of moving into positions which influence the directions of the institution. For those women who do not progress to senior levels the program has provided them with skills and experience to enable them to perform better in their current position.

Evaluating Changes to Date

The participants in the program are representative of the women of the University community. The 1996 program involved 110 participants which was ten percent of the women staff of the University. This increased to 160 participants in 1997. The numbers of academic women and general staff women were approximately equal and all campuses, faculties and administrative units were represented. The participants were from levels A to D and HEO 3 to HEO 10.

With the program only in its second year of implementation, it is difficult to judge accurately the effect the program is having in relation to its goal of changing the gendered culture of the University of South Australia towards including and valuing women's contribution. However, it

has been observed that the program has institutional significance by being linked to the corporate plans and directions of the University. There is strong support for the program at all levels within the University and more women have joined the 1997 program. The University community is using the program to access women's talent, and individual women are showing more initiative and creating opportunities for themselves. A qualitative evaluation was undertaken at the end of the first year of the program. It was in the form of a questionnaire distributed to all participants. Analysis of the responses, attendance records and other communication with participants showed that the program was positively received in general, but that some modifications and development of the program in its second year would encourage women to participate more fully in the program. (Gustavson, 1997).

Care was taken in the development and implementation of the program to establish a positive environment both for participants and supervisors. Women joined the program by choice and barriers to their participation were anticipated and removed wherever possible. On an individual level there have been many successful outcomes and these far outnumber any negative situations. The program has shown that women took advantage of an opportunity which was offered to them in a positive environment and where information was freely available.

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THE POWER OF GOSSIP: STORYTELLING TO ENHANCE WORK PRACTICE

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Abstract

This paper documents outcomes of a workshop held at the Sixth, International Women in Leadership Conference, Fremantle, Western Australia, November, 1997. The workshop demonstrated storytelling strategies designed to generate critical-thinking about work and management. The features of the storytelling process were adapted from Canadian workshops developed by Labonte and Feather (1996). The case story at the heart of the workshop was taken from an international study (Hunt 1994) of the women's health movement, thereby providing a focus on work practices in feminist organisations.

Keywords: storytelling; work practices; feminist organisations.

Introduction

"(One doctor) went right off his face when I was told I wasn't allowed to counsel anybody any more ... that I could only say ... you have to be referred on. (He said) 'Where in the bloody hell am I going to refer anyone in this town? You are the only person here I'd send anyone to'... (The doctor) rang and spoke to the secretary ... 'I'm sending her up anyway. She is on her way'. And, I mean, this woman, you could hear her, out on the road anyway, getting out of her car. And I actually saw her for a considerable time that particular day, and I was dragged over the coals the next day for counselling somebody".

Who is the woman talking? What happened? When did the story happen? Where did the action take place? Who else was involved? What is their side of the story? Why is the story interesting? What does it illustrate about the way people work together? What can the story tell us about how to enhance work practice? These and other questions were discussed by members of a storytelling workshop at the Sixth International Women in Leadership Conference (WIL), Fremantle, Western Australia, November 1997. This paper documents the proceedings and findings of the workshop, which aimed to explore the purpose of storytelling; to examine the various applications of storytelling; and to explicate a strategy for using storytelling to enhance work practice.

What is Storytelling?

According to Labonte and Feather (1996), storytelling is a simple process that encourages both talking and listening. As they put it, 'we use stories as "triggers" to ask probing questions about what was done, why it was done, what it accomplished ... we use stories... to make credible claims about the knowledge they generate'. In brief, storytelling about work practices is a 'valuable technique for problem solving, critical reflection and skill development' (1996, p. 1).

The storytelling methodology of reflecting on experience is similar to feminist consciousness-raising processes that draw on personal stories to achieve understandings of women's position in the world. Such stories create data for analyses, which provide theoretical insights into practice. However, from a feminist perspective, the very process of analysing stories requires critical reflection because, as Stanley and Wise (1983, p. 5) noted, such analyses of women's stories may be seen as 'theorising in somebody else's language'. This they interpreted as meaning, 'I can see and conceptualise the truth about things but these poor falsely conscious morons can't'. Such an approach was described by Chanfrault-Duchet (1991, p. 90) as 'savage social therapy'. Yet she identified a difference between this 'social therapy' and the research process of interpreting stories in terms of social context. As Borland (1991, p. 64) noted, analysing back to the context should be possible by granting 'the speaking woman interpretive respect without relinquishing our responsibility to provide our own interpretation'. Each interpretation simply becomes one among many, including that of the storyteller. The important point is to make transparent the reasons for particular interpretations. The purpose of the interpretation of the case story in the WIL workshop was to enhance work practice.

Women and Storytelling

There are problems in using personal stories, particularly for women whose talk is often dismissed as gossip (Spender, 1985). Indeed, with reference to the workplace, the normative behaviours attached to professionalism actually portray gossip as unprofessional. As a consequence, an initial aim of the WIL workshop was to examine the term 'gossip' and to restore confidence in the power of telling personal stories. The purpose was to show how to analyse experiences in a manner designed to enhance work practice. Participants were asked to consider the power of gossip and restrictions on gossiping in the context of their own workplace. A general consensus emerged that silence can have negative consequences because it may protect poor work practices. Having established the power of personal stories, participants in the workshop moved on to explore storytelling strategies.

What Makes a Useful Story?

Choosing a useful story is an essential first step. Labonte and Feather (1996, p. 14), stressed the importance of tension in professional storytelling: 'Tension is not necessarily a bad thing. Some tension is needed to create and store energy in a system. But only when the tensions are released, for instance, in writing and dialoguing around the story, does its stored energy flow'. They concluded that useful stories:

- illustrate good or bad work practice;
- contain a problem;
- have beneficial lessons;
- reflect experience;
- are chosen for a purpose and prepared in advance;
- relate to pertinent themes or issues; and
- facilitate the key elements of storytelling: description, explanation, and reflection.

Normally, participants in a storytelling workshop would prepare their own stories. However, within the time limitations of a conference workshop, a story was provided. It was about a

disagreement over appropriate roles for lay and professional counsellors at a women's health centre. The story involved tension and was recounted in the words of the women involved. In particular, it provided an opportunity to reflect on work practices in a women-only organisation. Those interested in the story itself, may refer to readings that explore the counselling implications (Hunt 1994; Hunt 1998). However, its purpose in the WIL workshop was to provide an opportunity to learn by doing. Participants in the workshop were asked to apply specific storytelling strategies to the story provided.

The Story

The story took place in a women's health centre, located in a rural area of Australia. The centre was started in the late 1980s and arose from a particular vision of community health that included the provision of woman-space. As one of the foundation members explained (Hunt 1994, p.14): "It is a community-based centre for women, where women can come to ... just sit down and have a coffee with you, if that is what they want to do. I mean, that was what the whole centre was based around."

From its beginning the centre was designed to be a homely space for women, with lounge furnishings and the decorative use of plants, posters and pictures. From the outside it was indistinguishable from other houses in the street, except for the sign announcing its identity. The aim of its founders was to avoid the formal atmosphere associated with clinical settings.

According to staff of the centre, the issues on which women approached the centre included: depression; parent-teenager conflict; menopause; pre-menstrual tension; and hysterectomy. These issues carry with them the need for support, information and counselling. However, in sparsely populated rural Australia, counselling services are limited, or non-existent. In filling the gap in services, the women's health worker at the centre was careful to distinguish between her woman-to-woman support role and professional counselling. Her support role included (Hunt 1994, p.14):

"listening skills, being able to listen to somebody actively. Just listening to what they have to say and being able to put it back to them and to say to them, well, you know, this is what you are telling me. Perhaps you may like to look at it this way or perhaps you may like to do it that way. But ultimately it comes back to you. I can't tell you what to do ... whereas, on the other hand, a psychologist, they will go into all this ... therapy."

Active listening and personal support, which are ways to describe woman-to-woman support, were implicit in the lay counsellor's approach. To her, seeing women make their own decisions was a source of great satisfaction (Hunt 1994, p.142):

"They come back elated at decisions they had made ... This is a joy ... to have them come back and talk to you about what had actually happened in their lives; or you'd get a letter or a bouquet of flowers."

Despite the success of lay support, the need for professional counselling services was recognised by the management committee of the centre and a professional counsellor was duly appointed. On arrival, she expressed concern that unqualified women's health workers were involved in

what she perceived as counselling. Her concern was that they were (Hunt 1994, p.142) "not aware of their own prejudices and attempt to impose their own views on their clients and on the community".

The professional counsellor recognised a place for woman-to-woman support under professional guidance but felt that professional training provided the skilled support that women need and deserve (Hunt 1994 P.142):

"I think there is a place where women, as women, can help but I think, too, that women should also understand that even though we are all women-as-women, that some have skills that others haven't, and that we should be prepared to recognise that."

As a consequence of this difference in perceptions of counselling and support services, the women's health worker was instructed by the centre's management committee to stop 'counselling'. The story at this point can be taken up in her own words (Hunt, p.142):

"(One doctor) went right off his face when I was told I wasn't allowed to counsel anybody any more ... that I could only say ... you have to be referred on. (He said) 'Where in the bloody hell am I going to refer anyone in this town? You are the only person here I'd send anyone to'... It was to be a support centre, O.K.? So a support centre is actually talking to people as well. You don't have someone come to the door in a mess and say 'I can't talk to you. You've got to go down the road and see somebody else or go back to your G.P.' (The doctor) rang and spoke to the secretary and she said, 'Well, we can't see anybody'... Well, he said, 'I'm sending her up anyway. She is on her way'. And, I mean, this woman, you could hear her, out on the road anyway, getting out of her car. And I actually saw her for a considerable time that particular day, and I was dragged over the coals the next day for counselling somebody".

The tensions eventually forced the resignation of the women's health worker, one of the foundation members of the centre. The response from the townspeople was one of overwhelming disappointment at her departure. This, however, was interpreted by the professionally qualified counsellor as justification for the stand taken (Hunt 1994, p. 143):

"When she left there was almost a community sigh of sadness because she was 'mother' to so many people in a situation where she shouldn't have been. She was making them dependent on her where she should really have been helping them toward independence."

The Storytelling Strategy

After reading the story, workshop participants were introduced to the goals of storytelling which are to tap into the knowledge gained through reflection on practice experience; to help practitioners share work experiences; and to enhance work practices through new insights (Labonte and Feather 1996).

Subsequently, workshop participants were asked to form small discussion groups, known as 'reflection circles' (Labonte and Feather,1996). In the reflection circle people spoke one at a time, and there was no interruption or dialogue until everyone had spoken. Participants were not obliged to speak. Those who did, spoke within a time limit. The key learning point was that

storytelling is not a rambling dialogue, nor an excuse for self-indulgence. It is targeted discussion about a story, guided by four categories of open questions:

1. **Description** - what do you see happening in the story?
2. **Explanation** - why do you think it is happening?
3. **Synthesis** - so, what can we learn from this?
4. **Action** - now, what can we do about it?

The reflection circles had a facilitator and someone to record the ideas arising from the structured dialogue.

After consideration of the questions, recorders shared their notes with all members of the reflection circle. The group then created two to four 'Insight Cards' for each category of question. An 'Insight' is something that is important in work practice. A separate card is required for each insight so that they can be collated with those from other discussion groups to develop a practical written outcome of the story-telling workshop. To facilitate the subsequent collation of ideas from all the discussion groups, the insight cards were colour-coded to accord with each main question: description (white), explanation (green), synthesis (mauve), and action (yellow).

Workshop Outcomes

A representative of each reflection circle presented the group's insight cards to all members of the workshop. As they spoke, the cards were pinned to a board in accordance with their colour, thus providing a useful, thematic summary of the workshop discussions, described as follows.

The white insight cards described what the workshop participants saw happening in the story. The summaries included notions of: threat, power struggles, and poorly defined expectations; demarcation disputes; problems involved in the transition from non-professional to professional work; devaluation of the lay counsellor's role; questions about why doctors were referring patients to unqualified people; lack of resources for women in rural areas; and misunderstandings which had serious repercussions, because the value of the non-professional worker was lost to the community. It is clear that a number of outcomes can emerge from recounting one simple story. There is neither right nor wrong in the varied descriptions of what was happening. They are all relatively useful or unhelpful, depending on the purpose of the storytelling session.

The green insight cards indicated how the workshop participants explained what was happening. In their view the conflict in the case story could be explained in the following terms. There was: a lack of professionalism; limited consultation; no common purpose or due process; and, a lack of understanding of small town situations. Workshop participants identified ambiguity in professional and non-professional counselling roles; and felt that the story could also be explained by feelings of threat, jealousy and insecurity. It was noted that the management of the centre had an influential role in dictating the outcome of the conflict and that more time should have been allowed for new roles to be accepted. Generally, the participants concluded that while there may have been elements of arrogance in not recognising each other's skills, aspects of the case story could be explained through factors arising outside the women's health centre. For example, accountability to funding authorities may require the employment of qualified, professional staff.

Having identified key elements of the story and suggested explanations for what happened, workshop participants moved to the mauve insight cards which required them to answer the synthesis question, 'So, what can we learn from this?'. One insight card argued that the lay counsellor should not have taken a job for which she was unqualified. Generally, though, there was considerable consensus about the need for better communication and acknowledgment of different types of counselling. The need for agreed policies and procedures was noted, particularly in regard to role definition. Finally, there was reference to the importance of a team approach.

The yellow insight cards on suggested action (What can be done about the problem?) suggested the need for improved communication and the development of clear role expectations. The participants in the workshop suggested strategies to do this, for example: complete a full analysis of the context before instituting change; hold regular structured discussions with all stakeholders; involve clients at the centre in decision-making; develop a clear ethos for the centre; work with the local doctors; evaluate the process; and make recommendations for the management of change. One action insight card suggested that the lay counsellor be re-employed and trained.

Conclusion

In summary, the comments of the workshop participants demonstrated the process and outcomes of structured storytelling designed to enhance work practice. Their conclusions showed the variety of responses arising from one simple case story, and illustrated how it is possible to think reflectively about a story involving frustration, anger and pain and to turn it into analyses and recommendations for future action. For the purposes of the workshop, the minutiae of the particular case story, while interesting, are less important than the exposition of the storytelling process, which has a variety of applications. For example, storytelling can be used to encourage reflective work practice in staff meetings, where a number of stories might be used, or in program planning and evaluation.

In conclusion, it is important to note that storytelling in workplaces requires sensitivity. By definition, the stories are about a problem or a point of tension. There are risks involved, particularly for people who find it difficult to receive feedback. A certain level of trust is required, but this can also present problems if it involves too much trust and care, so that the hard questions are not asked. Storytelling is not about the feel-good factor, though the simple process of being listened to is, in itself, helpful to workplace relations. The aim is to 'synthesise lessons and to develop practice generalisations' (Labonte and Feather 1996), so that the power of telling personal stories, is used in a positive manner to enhance work practice.

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KEEPING YOUR WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP PROGRAM AFLOAT: MOVING TOWARDS A MORE SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FOR WOMEN

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Abstract

Management and leadership development programs which target female staff have been a feature of many Australian universities in recent years. These programs have diverse objectives, rationales, methodologies and target groups. However, all make valuable contributions to their institutions, and to the higher education sector generally, by redressing the gender balance in all the ranks of the university and improving the organisational climate for women.

Most Women in Leadership programs have relied solely on grant monies and other 'soft' forms of funding for their operation. This often means that the impetus and outcomes achieved through an initiative in one year have little opportunity to become 'embedded' in the organisation as funding is discontinued in a subsequent year. The valuable organisational learning these programs can offer then becomes a casualty of short-term planning and funding cycles.

The authors describe two approaches to leadership development for women, the first representing the majority of practice within universities and industry. The second describes the importance of the challenging assignment as the central feature of the program, with the application of the second approach being illustrated through two programs implemented at the Queensland University of Technology. The paper then outlines and argues for a third approach which furthers the objectives of leadership development programs for women through strategies which can be driven from the organisations' business units rather than from staff development or equity units.

Keywords: career development, leadership development, performance management

Introduction

It can be observed that there has been a sea change in public and corporate mood towards targeted initiatives for women in the last few years. This is especially true in the Australian university sector, where in 1997, the major Commonwealth funding body for staff development in universities (CUTSD) did not fund one proposal for initiatives for the professional development of women, compared with approximately 10 funded programs from the previous year.

With discretionary funds for Women in Leadership programs, both at the Commonwealth and institutional level, becoming increasingly scarce, it is time to consider moving from a short-term program-driven model of leadership development to one which can be implemented within the 'mainstream' of performance management and development planning practice, enhanced by targeted funding where this can be negotiated.

The paper describes two current approaches to the leadership development of women, the second using examples from Queensland University of Technology and the Australian Technology Network Universities. The paper then posits an approach to leadership development practice for women which is currently being considered at QUT. The third approach moves programs from the organisational 'periphery' to become part of the 'core' of organisational development and human resource development practice. The paper argues that interventions informed by this third approach would enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of programs for the leadership development of women.

The Changing Nature of Women's Careers

It is necessary at the outset to set down some terms about our particular interpretation of 'career development' and our assumed agency role for women. In terms of arguing for a concentration of resources for a career development intervention, objectives are framed in terms of assisting women to progress through a hierarchy into more senior positions.

However, it is useful to reflect that this is only one of many possible models of career development. We can already observe, either through our own experience or that of our family and friends, that the concept of 'career' as a meaningful, planned progression of age-related stages through a series of jobs, where success is measured through vertical progression, is somewhat anachronistic. It is likely that we will experience a fragmented set of relationships with various employers, with the whole held together far more by what Edgar Schein (1996) labels the 'internal career', that is our own personal and subjective sense of where we are going, rather than an externally imposed structure.

The onus for providing momentum and direction for a career has been shifting in recent times from the organisation to the individual. It is quite fashionable now to speak of the 'death of the golden age of corporate paternalism' and that 'well-worn career paths have been ploughed under by forces such as reengineering, implementation of self-directed teams and a general move away from hierarchies (Colby, 1995).

Universities have come to terms recently with new realities: loss of financial certainty, rapid pace of technological change and heightened competition. Universities are in the process of examining the fundamental nature of academic employment. Human Resource Development staff and other professionals who have a role in furthering the position and contribution of women in universities need to ensure the effectiveness and currency of our approaches. We must constantly review and challenge our modes of intervention so that they remain meaningful and effective in the new world of work.

Three Approaches to the Leadership Development of Women

Three approaches to leadership development for women are presented. Approach One describes the majority of practice in women's development in universities and industry. Approach Two is characterised by the placement of the challenging business-related project at the centre of the learning design. The application of Approach Two is demonstrated through discussion of two programs at Queensland University of Technology.

Each of Approaches One and Two represents good practice and a valuable contribution to individual professional learning. However, the paper presents and argues for an alternative third approach which can be driven from within the business units of the organisation, rather than from centralised staff units, providing a measure of sustainability and continuity into the initiative. Approach Three also incorporates 'best practice' principles of leadership development including a focus on 'in-the-job' challenge and 'just-in-time' learning support.

Approach One: Current Practice

In making a claim for a 'best practice' approach it is appropriate to review current practice in leadership development for women, as demonstrated in higher education, industry and the public sector programs. In general terms, practice can be grouped into four major categories:

Content Sessions These can be divided in two areas which may be classified as 'Women in Management Training' or 'Management Training for Women' (Cullen, 1987). That is, the programs can encompass topics on functional areas of management required to advance to the next organisational level, or they may address areas which are particular to women's experience in organisations, such as balancing work and family, dealing with an overtly male management culture, identifying and overcoming barriers to progression.

Networking Programs have been established to enhance women's access to information, both technical and organisational.

Mentoring This is one of the most commonly adopted approaches. In most cases the traditional mentoring approach is implemented. That is, a more senior and experienced staff member provides career support, expert advice and organisational insight to a more junior staff member. This can be contrasted with peer mentoring, which can fulfil the same psycho-social and career-support needs, but uses a group of women at the same career stage as sources of information and career guidance and support.

Project Work In several university programs, participants undertake a placement or project within the university. This is often a process of matching opportunities in the organisation with the interests of the participant.

In many cases a development program combines a number of these elements. In terms of the dominant theoretical frameworks informing women in management research as outlined by Fagenson (1990) this approach can be argued to be emanating from the gender-centred perspective. That is, the intervention is at the individual level and seeks to provide the skills and support that women perceive to be lacking, rather than engaging directly with structures and organisational systems within which women seek to grow their skills and progress their careers.

Participant evaluations of these programs point to the benefits of increased social and professional support and learning gained through participation in the program activities. Results of rigorous evaluative studies with measures including movement of women into senior

positions, as well as transfer of learning to the work role from participation in programs, is yet to appear in the literature.

In nearly all cases these initiatives are funded through non-continuing sources as discrete training programs, related only tangentially to an over-arching system of performance planning. This often means that the impetus and outcomes achieved through an initiative in one year have little opportunity to become 'embedded' in the organisation when funding is discontinued in a subsequent year. These programs then become a casualty in a climate of financial stringency or general questioning of what appears to be an organisational 'luxury'. Many organisations have a history of sporadic activity in women's programs for this reason.

Approach Two: Incorporating in-the-job Challenge

Developmental job assignments are increasingly being viewed as critical in the preparation for senior management positions (McCall, Lombardo and Morrison, 1988; McCauley *et al.*, 1994). One particular line of enquiry in women in management research has been the difference in developmental opportunities offered to men and women throughout their careers. As Van Velsor and Hughes (1990) suggest, "organisations in the past may have been too cautious in the treatment of women. Insufficient challenge can ruin the career of otherwise talented people who are judged too narrow at an advanced stage of their careers" (p.33).

Also, while research points to progress made by the last generation of women in 'climbing the ladder', women are still missing out on the 'key assignments' which provide the most critical learning. A 1994 study by Ohlott, Ruderman and McCauley showed that,

men and women who do not appear to be different in terms of objective level in organizations do differ in terms of the criticality, visibility and breadth of their responsibilities and the degree to which they interact externally. Women may not be getting key assignments involving international responsibilities, negotiation roles, managing multiple functions and key business units. It is possible that managers are giving women only stereotypical challenges (p.62).

Importantly, as Gold and Pringle (1988) found, organisations were more often moving women to staff positions, such as human resource management, and out of critical line management functions. Staff positions have been found to be lacking in the critical challenges necessary for progression to more senior position, relative to line management positions (Eichinger and Lombardo, 1990). A recent Catalyst study, reported in Barr (1996) found that 82% of male CEO's felt that "lack of general management/line experience" prevents women from advancing to corporate leadership. The study reported one male respondent as saying "It's not that women haven't been in the pipeline long enough, it's what they have done while they are in the pipeline."

There are implications here for appropriate models of intervention for women. It is obviously vital that women who aspire to higher levels of management be afforded the type of job assignments and challenging experiences that are seen as stepping-stones to future upper-level jobs, and that these opportunities are not more available to men than women. There is a need here for collaboration between the women themselves, line managers and development professionals, in determining the aspirations and learning needs, providing the opportunity and facilitating the

learning and appropriate support. Programs designed and driven from HR (or equity) units alone will not get the to heart of the issue.

However, when women have negotiated a significant job challenge, either as part of their current role or through a move to a new position, the traditional learning tools come into play. That is, there remains a vital role for support in terms of networking, skill development through traditional content sessions, as well as mentoring. This is critical for women, who as Ohlott, Rudermann and McCauley (1994) found, face greater challenges deriving from a lack of personal support. "To a much greater degree than men, women continue to feel left out of important networks ... (and) have trouble finding supportive people to talk to" (p.62).

The second approach then, within a program context, puts the participant's business challenge at the core of the development experience, with learning support designed to inform the particular needs of this challenge. This approach was used in a recent internal QUT initiative, and also in the Australian Technology Network Women's Executive Development Program involving QUT. These programs are described below as the practical application of the second approach outlined above.

QUT - Quality Women in Leadership (QWIL) Program and ATN Executive Development for Women

Programs implemented at QUT illuminate the argument about the importance of the challenging assignment as a career development tool. These programs were conducted as part of the broader QUT Women in Leadership Program in 1996 and 1997. While both remain examples of good practice, there is much about the methodologies of each that is currently being reviewed in light of changing circumstances and with the benefit of reflection and evaluation. One component of each program, the challenging assignment, is used to argue for this tool to become the 'centrepiece' of leadership development for women.

These two programs targeted academic and general staff women at Academic Level C, D and E and HEW Level 10 and above. The QWIL program was an internal leadership development program; the ATN Executive Development for Women program (ATN WEXDEV) was designed by a management committee of the five universities of the Australian Technology Network to provide development opportunities for senior women within these institutions. Sixteen women participated in QWIL '96 with thirteen of the women undertaking a leadership project as Stage Two of the program. Two QUT women have undertaken a four-week interstate placement, one in industry and one in a Commonwealth Department, coordinated by staff of the ATN program.

In each case, the women submitted a proposal clearly outlining the nature of the project they intended to undertake, and, importantly, the benefits that would accrue for themselves and the institution as an outcome of the project. Participants in the QWIL program had the option of identifying an opportunity that would meet their development needs and designing a project around these needs. The two women undertaking the placement opportunities responded to advertised opportunities promoted to eligible women within the five universities.

As has been suggested in the literature, several women in the QWIL group had been in one functional area at QUT or its predecessors for many years and felt that they were being 'labelled' or judged as being too narrow at an advanced stage of their careers (Van Velsor and Hughes, 1990). For these women, it was important to move into another organisational area, or into an organisation external to the university to undertake their placement.

Many QWIL women were 'mid-stream' in a career sense. They valued their current roles, and sought to gain a developmental edge by adding a challenge to their existing responsibilities.

The two women who undertook placements as part of the ATN program are both senior lecturers and both possess the competency and the motivation to progress in the organisation. The placements they undertook provided them with the opportunity to observe the management style and operations of another organisation, while undertaking a project with direct relevance both to the host organisation and to their own areas of professional interest.

Two of the participants from the QWIL program have made significant career moves in the months following their completion of the program. While it is speculative to attribute a causal link between recent engagement with professional development and the career progression, both women have made special positive mention of the nature of the projects and the learning and visibility the program provided. When interviewed about the benefit and outcomes of the program, one of these women described the project work as being "crucial to her personal and professional development", and that it has "both accelerated and lengthened the learning pathway." While having to allow time for the system to open similar opportunities for other women in the programs, other participants have already nominated the learning they have gained from the project component, the benefit to their units and to their professional growth.

A systematic evaluation of this program has yet to be undertaken, and would best be carried out after some time had elapsed in order for any outcomes to be quantified. However, the participants have clearly indicated that the project element of the total program experience was a particularly effective learning tool.

Approach Three: Towards Sustainability and Effectiveness for Women in Leadership Programs

Two general questions now seem to occupy the attention of program managers (at QUT and in wider professional development circles). The first is how to sustain such programs in our more financially straightened organisational environments. The second, related question is how to 'mainstream' our programs. That is, how do we embed the leadership development of women into core organisational development practice? The third approach presented represents QUT's attempt to address these issues, and is an approach which will inform organisational development initiatives generally in 1998 and beyond.

The second approach argued for the challenging assignment to be central to the design of a development program, and illustrated the effectiveness of this program element through description of programs implemented at QUT. The third approach proposes that this element

remain 'core' but that intervention moves away from the discrete development program to become part of the organisational performance management and planning process. That is, that leadership development for women can be implemented from the organisational 'mainstream' (business units) rather than from the 'periphery'. This recognises that organisational learning from programs designed and driven from central staff units, and funded sporadically, have limited potential for becoming integral to policy and practice at the organisational or unit level.

The key elements of the third approach are:

1. Central interventions encouraging line managers to assess the level of job challenge afforded to women in their current roles, to appreciate the gendered nature of traditional career structures, and to provide career encouragement and support to become effective leadership coaches. This process would be undertaken as part of the regular performance planning and review cycle
2. The formulation and negotiation of professional and career development goals between the participant and her immediate supervisor
3. The design of a program to further learning goals, centred on the challenging business related project, and supported by a range of learning opportunities funded through business unit professional development budgets, supplemented by central program funds for women's development where these are available
4. Opportunities for reflection and documenting of learning outcomes through the regular performance planning and review meetings.

While this is very much a 'devolved' approach, there remains a critical role for the development professionals and other central organisational units with an interest in the position of women in the organisation. There is the need to inform and monitor policy and practice in relation to performance management and to maintain a network at the organisational level of support and information for women. There is still the opportunity to enhance the learning support provided to women through targeted funding where this can be found.

There is also the need to engage line managers (male and female) in furthering the professional development of women in their units. It is necessary to ensure that managers can appreciate the differentiated learning needs of males and females, and how they can play a key role at an immediate level in ensuring that the necessary opportunities and support are provided for women. Most immediately this will be achieved through inclusion of a section on gender and career development at standard briefing sessions which accompany the organisational performance planning and review process for all line managers. Subsequently, dedicated sessions would need to be offered in this area.

In summary, the third approach recognises that the fundamental 'driver' of career advancement lies within the business units themselves and the level of appropriate challenge afforded in the roles of the women. The third approach also recognises that for our interventions to be significant, it is necessary to move away from the 'gender-centred' perspective (that programs should address the skill development of the individual participant) toward approaches which seek

to engage with organisational systems as well as the supervisors and managers who play a significant role in the professional learning and progression of women.

The following presents a summary of the three approaches presented:

Table 1. Three Approaches to Career Development for Women

	Approach One	Approach Two	Approach Three
Perspective	Gender-centred*	Gender-Organisation*	Gender-Organisation-System (G-O-S)*
Learning design	Content sessions Networking Mentoring Project work (brokered by program coordinator)	'One-off' challenging assignment, negotiated with the line manager, supported by program of content sessions, networking and mentoring	Individual program designed around a specific business challenge, supported by a range of organisational learning opportunities, and reviewed through performance management process.
Funding base	Non-continuing program funding	Program funding within mainstream HR/Equity operations	Core operating funds, possibly supplemented by targeted funding for women where possible.
Level of intervention	Individual	Line management with individuals	Organisational strategy/ policy and implementation
Partners to career development	HR/Equity with participant	Participant with HR/Equity	Participant/Manager/HRD
Driver of learning design	HR/Equity	Participant with HR/Equity	Participant/Manager/HRD

*Fagenson, 1990

Conclusion

A more effective and sustainable approach towards leadership development for women will recognise the changing nature of work and careers and incorporate current management development thought.

The advocated approach places at its centre the 'in situ' business challenge which provides the necessary 'stretch and leverage' (Hamel and Prahalad, 1994) for both meaningful managerial learning and heightened organisational visibility. For this model to become embedded in the

organisation, intervention needs to target line supervisors as well as the women themselves and must become part of an effective overall performance planning and development system.

Where additional resources can be obtained, they can be directed at providing a superior level of expert support to women undertaking a particularly challenging role or assignment. This support can be of the nature that is currently offered in women's programs; that is, mentoring, skill development sessions, networking and social support. However, the information, support and learning provided can then be more readily transferred and applied within a specific challenging context. The whole initiative would be supported through the infrastructure provided by performance planning systems, in line with mainstream human resource management practice.

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SETTING THE VISION - SOCIALISING THE TECHNOLOGY

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Abstract

The use of technological facility as the key measure of competency is generating a technological elite. Many women are rejecting this vision or are being rejected by the elite. Parallel experiences with science can be used to challenge this divide.

In the 1970s, when science was seen as the key to the future, there was concern over the low numbers of girls in science. Initially the problem was located in the female students. Later a more symmetrical treatment placed science in its cultural context and acknowledged the gendered nature of science. Likewise in the late 1980s the concern over the lack of public understanding of science generated a similar elitist response, followed by a corrective shift.

The time is ripe to learn from our experiences with science and its public understanding and reconstruct technology. This means rather than working to get more women into technology, we should ask how we can use women's knowledge of society to develop both more appropriate uses of existing technology and socially cohesive new technologies.

Keywords: science, technology, gender, public understanding

Introduction

Science and technology are inextricably woven into the fabric of our lives. This paper will highlight women's invisibility in large technological projects by considering aspects of technological power and control on show at a recent computer exhibition and an agricultural show. It will then ask, how, can we as women influence such projects?

In attempting to throw light on such a question, the paper will draw on lessons learned in the area of women's access to the power of science in particular the physical sciences. Over the years educational institutions have acted as the principle gatekeepers. They have erected a series of barriers to women wishing to study science. It will acknowledge the breakthrough as the spotlight moved from women's inadequacies in physics to physics' own inherent gendered nature. In this way science has been placed firmly in its social and cultural contexts.

The paper will then look at ways in which this shift of focus from the receiver to the science has emerged in the public understanding of science movement. Finally it will return to technology and celebrate two examples of vision involving a socialised technology. The first of these involves the vision of young people, the second relates to women's adoption of solar energy technology.

Technology from computers to agriculture: not a comfortable fit

Just before I wrote this paper, I visited a computer exhibition. It was a display of almost understated power with smartly dressed executives, mostly male, ready to impress with the newest, fastest software or hardware. I decided that this was the time to assuage my own curiosity and ask how data was stored in a Zip drive and why this was supposed to be such a safe

medium for data storage. I was invisible; men around me had instant priority. I eventually asked my question and found to my surprise that the man I asked could not answer it.

More recently the culture of power was reproduced for me in a subtly different way when I visited the Dowerin Agricultural Equipment show. This time the power was overt. The machines were huge, wonders of electronic control made possible by computer power. I climbed up into one of the cabs of the large tractors, and was transported into a different world. Sitting in the air-conditioned cab way above the ground, with all round vision and surrounded by controls, I was monarch of all I surveyed. Such physical separation and change of scale subtly altered perception and could too easily obliterate any concept of soil as a living ecosystem and render irrelevant the beauty of the minute detail within life. These insulating and distancing effects of the technology (Westrum, 1991) was a terrifying reminder of the potential of technology to alter our view of the world and our relationship with the environment.

I relate these two incidents to highlight the sense of dis-ease which displays of power and technical excellence can generate. I am sure that others can relate many similar experiences. Many such projects have technical rather than social goals and discount the level of social engineering that they automatically generate. For

'All projects - regardless of their stated purpose, their location, or their design - do accomplish some degree of "social engineering". All projects maintain or change, enhance or decrease, introduce or remove, restrict or distribute, direct or redirect, or otherwise affect patterns of human life.' (Erickson, 1994, p. 155)

By privileging the technical and ignoring the social domain, technologists set themselves apart (Green, 1994). This was the position that scientists once occupied. A study of women's entry into that domain can be used to throw light on the issue.

Access to the power of science

A return to the beginnings of science is instructive. What were the origins of the science component in these large technological projects? How have women negotiated their position in this culture? Sir Robert Boyle, of Boyle's Law fame, is often considered to be one of the fathers of modern science and the architect of the scientific paper (Shapin and Schapper, 1989). Boyle was working in the seventeenth century just after the end of the civil war in England when experimental science was beginning to emerge and separate from alchemy. Boyle was determining the rules for establishing the nature of scientific evidence. He had developed a vacuum pump and hence could show the difference between the properties of a vacuum and those of air. The way that he established the validity of his data, was to assemble a crowd of witnesses and demonstrate his findings directly to them. For those not able to be present he devised a way of writing that reproduced the event. His account was detailed, verbose and unemotional, the equipment and experiments were described, but the people were excluded. Non repeatability therefore could be seen as an impediment of machines, not a dispute between people - important in mercurial political times. Boyle's witnesses, with few exceptions, were male members of the aristocracy. Women hardly appear in this account.

It is interesting to note that the philosopher Margaret Cavendish working at the same time of Boyle and one of his rare female witnesses saw this new science in a different light. She saw it as impractical - 'The inspection of a Bee, through a Microscope, will bring ... no more honey.'

(Schieber, 1987, p. 9) She also saw the senses as unreliable and the new technologies of the microscope and telescope as even more unreliable.

In her delightful book *Pythagoras' trousers*, Margaret Wertheim (Wertheim, 1996) analyses this situation in terms of a male priesthood associated with the scientific body 'The Royal Society' (founded in 1662). Members of this society sought to understand nature and saw science as providing them with the 'power to conquer and subdue nature'. Wertheim says 'Women have had to fight to interpret the "book" of Nature, and, on the other hand, for the right to interpret the books of Scripture. On both fronts it has been a long struggle' (Wertheim, 1996, p. 235)

This struggle was still continuing when, in 1932, Joan Freeman wished to take physics for her leaving certificate (Freeman, 1991). As she writes 'the school, in keeping with virtually all the private girls' schools in Sydney, offered no further chemistry, and had scarcely even heard of physics' (Freeman, 1991, p. 31). She eventually obtained physics tuition in the evening classes held at Sydney Technical College, on condition that her mother took her to classes and fetched her directly after the two hour session had ended. However she was refused admission for chemistry and told to 'Go back to your domestic science that subject is more suitable for a girl'. Joan gained straight 'A's for all her Leaving Certificate Examinations and was awarded two University of Sydney Matriculation Scholarships.

As the physical barriers gradually came down and women began to have access to school classes in physics and chemistry, they generally obtained lower grades than their male counterparts. In the 1970s most staff room discussions surrounding students' poor performances were informed by a strong belief that girls had neither the spatial ability (Treagust, 1980) nor the associated problem solving skills to excel in physics. The physical barriers of the 1930s had been replaced by intellectual ones. In most cases the staff concerned would support their beliefs with historical data indicating lower mean scores for females than males on the same questions.

In the 1980's the issue of the lack of women in science and engineering became politicised. Researchers and practitioners largely stopped looking for intellectual deficiencies in female students which would make change impossible, instead they concentrated on experiential deficits and devised ways in which female students could be changed to suit the science. In addition text books were analysed and found to be mostly written by men about men doing physics in all male environments. The message was embedded in both text and the illustrations. In response to these data, the agenda shifted again, new texts emerged, new ways of working were discussed and gender inclusive science was born (Hilderbrand, 1989). The new texts needed to include women, so female role models were sought and some of the difficulties of working as a female in science were named, examined, and analysed (Brush, 1985; Steinke, 1997). Links were also made to the areas of science and technology studies. (Roth and McGinn 1997). In the new climate, science could no longer be divorced from its social context. Parallel work was being carried out in USA and Europe. (See for example Butler Kahle and Lakes, 1983; Staberg, 1994; Delamont, 1994; Volman, Van Eck and TenDam 1995).

Over the years the barriers at the gate of the physical sciences have shifted from physical to intellectual, then psychological and social. Finally the focus has moved from the students to the science (Kelly, 1987). In this way physics has been found to be an integral part of its parent

culture and the Royal Society a powerful mechanism for protecting the interests of its elite (Rose, 1994). Identifying this culture allows its assumptions and values to be questioned and the use of language challenged. This has been liberating and illuminating and has opened the way to new possibilities. The separation between the science, the scientist and the parent society imposed by Boyle has been rejected, thereby socialising the science. The difficult task is to keep such insights alive and to move forward. A parallel development has taken place in the area of the public understanding of science.

The Wider Context: Parallel Shifts in the Public Understanding of Science

Since the time of Boyle, scientists have been communicating their ideas to the general public. Boyle's initial lecture demonstrations involved a small select audience, however the Royal Society continued the tradition and enlarged the audience. Early this century science lectures drew large crowds. Scientists, wishing to regenerate this level of approbation, have shown concern about the level of scientific knowledge in the community. A recent wave of interest was triggered in the UK by the publication in 1982 of a report 'Science Education 11 - 18 in England and Wales' (Collins and Bodmer, 1986). Which linked attitudes to science education with attitudes to science in the broader community. It was followed by the formation of a Royal Society working group commissioned to examine ways in which the public understanding of science might be enhanced. This was still essentially the same elite group setting the agenda. The interest generated by their report (Royal Society, 1985) led to the publication in 1992 of the new international journal '*Public Understanding of Science*'.

The scientists surveyed by the Royal Society working group were unanimous that the public's understanding of both the principles and process of science were inadequate. The report stressed the need for the scientists to actively educate the public stating that 'it is clearly a part of each scientist's professional responsibility to promote the public understanding of science' (Royal Society, 1985). Unfortunately at this stage most of them were working from a deficit model. The general public needed more science education which the scientists needed to provide. It was a one way street and mirrored the state of the girls in science debate in the 1970s described earlier. It once again, we see a lack of an examination of the nature of science and a ignoring of the non-technical knowledge once again, we see a lack of the general public.

Later a more reflexive treatment began to be adopted. This was informed by the results from research in the area of science and technology studies and was made necessary by a series of events in which science failed to live up to its expectations for example, the Chernobyl disaster (Wynne, 1992; Wynne, 1993; Wynne, 1996). When the radioactive cloud from Chernobyl drifted across England, the areas of Cumbria and North Wales received particularly high levels of rainfall containing the fission products. In response to public alarm, it was announced that the impacts would be short lived. This prediction was made on the basis of previous work in which the radioactive caesium rapidly became chemically bound to the soil and was unavailable for uptake by grass and the subsequent consumption by sheep. These predictions were dramatically wrong and the problem remains. The scientists omitted a key variable, namely the soil type. Both Cumbria and North Wales have acidic peaty soils not the clay soils assumed by the scientists. In acidic soil the caesium remains mobile, and eleven years later the problem still persists. Wynne has studied both the initial incorrect predictions (Wynne, 1992) and the farmer's perceptions of the disaster (Wynne, 1996). The concerns and beliefs of the different groups did not match. Such analyses of controversial incidents (Irwin and Wynne, 1996; Petts, 1997)

highlight the need to move away from the deficit model towards a more reflexive treatment with the science as much an object for scrutiny as the general public.

Socialising the Technology: Setting the Vision

Although I would argue that science is inseparable from technology, science is usually seen as more objective and more isolated from society than technology. The previous sections have illustrated the changing patterns of analyses of issues relating to science. In each case a more mature analysis moves away from a model which concentrates on identifying deficiencies and erecting barriers towards one which recognises the impossibility of separating science and the society in which it is operating. We can apply these same insights to technology.

The rhetoric of progress associated with technology parallels the rhetoric of objectivity in science. Both exclude all but the expert and do not debate the societal impacts. As we have seen, socialising the science respects the positions of those outside the elite. It allows women into science education and the general public's knowledge to be considered in the public understanding of science. Socialising the technology, through its close connection with science, could provide similar benefits. It could empower all citizens to make decisions about the development and application of technology. As women, we would gain permission to acknowledge the complexity of our emotional responses, to ask relevant questions and envision a different future.

With the freedom gained by socialising science, I will return to my initial stories about technology. Why did I have such a deep sense of discomfort at both the computer exhibition and the agricultural show? The emotions were mixed excitement and awe coexisted with boredom and anger. It was impossible to ignore the stables from which such amazing computers were bred (Wajcman, 1991). Military technology oozed out of smart boxes and computer games and wove its thread through the Internet.

Was a deep belief in a deficit model underpinning both shows? If so, it is of little surprise that as a member of a non-dominant group I felt oppressed and excluded, whereas as a scientist I could recognise the sense the achievement. Viewed from outside it looked like an addiction to power and speed, whereas viewed from inside it was the obvious next step, its direction unquestioned. In both cases the debate that was clearly missing concerned two questions 'Is this the appropriate problem?' and 'Is this the appropriate direction?'

Parallel visions are emerging from young people and third world women. I will quote two examples. The views of young people on renewable energy can be gleaned from a study carried out by the Australian Science and Technology Council (1966). This study investigated young Australians' (mostly aged from 15 to 24) views of the future and the role of science and technology. There was a stark contrast between young people's preferred peaceful, sustainable future and their expected future in an inegalitarian society living a fighting existence in a devastated environment. In this expected future, expenditure on renewable energy was a low priority and scarcity was dealt with through inequality. In their preferred future, resources were shared and efforts were focussed on environmental care and global peace. In their preferred

future they had socialised the technology and integrated its development with their social purpose. In their expected future technology remained in the hands of an elite.

The second example moves through vision to action. In 1995 a group of women involved in gender and energy work in the developing countries founded an international Network for Women and Sustainable Energy. Its newsletter, *Energia* reflects the centrality of energy supplies to the lives of women by discussing issues and reporting on energy projects. One such project report concerns women in Vietnam.

In 1994 in Vietnam an association of Vietnam Women's Union (VWU) and the Solar Electric Light Fund launched a staged household solar photovoltaic (PV) project to provide low voltage (12 Volt, 225 Watts) solar home systems to rural communities (Everts and Schulte, 1997). The VWU is an amazing institution, having 11 million members out of a total population of 80 million. The first two stages of the project were successfully completed in February this year with a total of 240 solar home systems (SHS) installed. The general aim of the project is to extend this to the 70% of Vietnam's population currently without electricity. The finance has been organised so that the households pay a down payment of 10% and spread the rest of the cost over a 4 year period. As the authors say

"The VWU Solar Energy project is a remarkable project in many ways. In our view, it is exceptional that *women* are trained in PV technology, and are successfully promoting, selling, installing, maintaining and using photovoltaic SHS." (Everts and Schulte 1997 p. 12)

In some villages they have also installed solar streetlights in the markets.

Conclusion

The examples in the previous section move away from technology as progress towards a faster more efficient artifact and instead enrol technology for a social purpose. Thus by socialising the technology they move towards a concept of technology that provides extended care for the environment and for human communities. The driving principle of control has been replaced with one of care. The parallels with science are clear. The challenge, for us, is to ask appropriate questions and to maintain sufficient vision to actively socialise the technology not be subsumed by it.

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CREATING A CRITICAL MASS: COLLEGIAL GROUPS - THE WHOLE RECIPE OR SIMPLY AN INGREDIENT?

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Abstract

The Women in Leadership Project was introduced at Edith Cowan University in 1992. Since its inception, over 150 women have participated in collegial programmes. Evaluations of the collegial process have shown that changes occur at the individual and the organisational level. In addition to collegial programmes, a number of other complementary activities are offered. These include the Public Lecture Series, the annual Conference and seminars and workshops. There are a number of questions that require consideration: namely, are activities such as these effective mechanisms for organisational change? Does participation in these activities result in change for the individual? Do these activities encourage women to consider collegial programmes as part of a leadership development process?

In 1996 a survey was administered as a first step to answering these questions. The survey, distributed to all female staff employed at Edith Cowan University, sought to determine the level of Project awareness within the organisation and participation rates in Project activities other than the collegial programmes. This paper presents the preliminary findings of the survey and some insights into the key factors that lead to participation or non-participation in Women in Leadership activities. That the Project appears to act as a safety net within the organisation regardless of individual staff participation is also indicated. Project participation does not appear to be a necessary prerequisite for the creation of a critical mass but the presence of the Project itself in the organisation is.

Keywords: women in leadership, participation, universities.

Introduction

Much has been written over the last ten years about the under-representation of women in the workforce and the problems that they encounter upon entering an organisation (see for example Davidson and Cooper, 1992; Marshall, 1984; Vinnicombe and Colwill, 1995). Female academic women are not as prominent in research (Deane, Johnson, Jones, and Lengkeek, 1996) and are less likely to hold a tenured position. Those in tenured positions tend to be at lower levels than their male counterparts and are often less successful in promotional round (Castleman, Allen, Bastalich, and Wright, 1995).

Problems confronting women's participation in organisations are not simply confined to those mentioned above. Additional obstacles include poor organisational communication processes; a lack of information on internal decision-making processes and structures; limited access to key informants, a lack of organisational knowledge and general feelings of isolation, both from the organisation itself and from those within it (Blackwell, 1996; Noe, 1988).

In 1995, the Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills released its long awaited report on the need for management and leadership, if Australia was to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century (Industry Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills, 1995). An important recommendation of the Report was that women be encouraged to participate in managerial and leadership roles because of the benefit this would bring to their organisations and

the nation as a whole. The Report emphasised the importance of women's participation in organisational processes and recommended that women be targeted by industry and government in an attempt to develop the talents of Australia's diverse population.

The lack of a critical mass of women has been an argument used to justify women's absence in positions of authority and decision making. In this context, a critical mass means a sufficient number of women in decision making positions to make a difference to the organisational culture.

The question of how organisations might harness the talents of women given that the existing structures are often hostile and exclusive, needs to be addressed. The Women in Leadership Project has found new ways to include women in organisational processes and has been an important factor in the ongoing organisational change that has occurred at Edith Cowan University.

Women in Leadership Project

The Women in Leadership Project (WIL) has been in operation at Edith Cowan University since 1992. Its prime objectives are to increase the participation of women in the organisation's internal decision-making processes and to enhance leadership skills through a system of interactive workshops and peer support. Unlike many traditional approaches to staff development, which often focus on the personal development of individuals or isolated skills training, the Women in Leadership Project aims to link the role of the individual with the future strategic direction of the organisation.

The Women in Leadership Project operates within a four dimensional conceptual framework of leadership: *Dimensions of Leadership* (Pyner, 1994). To capture adequately the notion of continual development and to emphasise the importance of varying leadership behaviours, the components of this framework (competent self, creator of environments, strategist and public voice) are described in terms of capacities rather than personal traits, 'making the perceived potential to acquire (or to accept that one already has) such capacities less threatening to staff who may be enculturated to deny their natural capability to lead' (Pyner, 1994:5). The framework recognises the importance of the self and its connection to the organisation. It is also cognisant of the fact that leadership capacities can be developed and utilised for the benefit of the individual and the organisation, regardless of the individual's position within it.

The conceptual framework is built upon a recognition that leadership is about:

- Behaviour that makes a difference to the operation of the organisation in ways which support the interests of the organisation, staff and students;
 - One's personal self in the workplace;
 - Linking the role of the individual to the organisation.
- (Pyner, 1994)

Project Activities

Four activities are offered as part of the Women in Leadership Project: collegial programmes, Public Lecture Series, an annual Conference, and a series of ad-hoc seminars and workshops.

The collegial programmes comprise the core of the Women in Leadership Project and are the major mechanism through which change occurs. They seek to make the organisation more accessible to each participant by facilitating networking, providing support and identifying avenues for knowledge acquisition.

The programmes are structured as a 2-day residential followed by six one-day meetings held over a 3-4 month period. Group size is usually limited to 20 participants. Some collegial programmes are general and focus on organisational issues and the role of women in decision-making processes. Other groups have focused on research and one programme has been conducted for senior women in the University utilising an action research framework within the collegial process.

Whilst the structure of each collegial group is set around framework of leadership and its four capacities, specific content issues are generated by programme participants. The aim of each collegial programme is to develop strategic and meaningful approaches to problem solving.

The Public Lecture Series is one of the Project's most high profile activities. It features prominent Australian and international women, acclaimed for their leadership contribution in fields such as education, science, law, technology, arts, politics, sport and academia. The series provides an opportunity for staff and the public to interact with women who have national and international profiles and who have demonstrated leadership in their chosen discipline.

The Conference is held annually and attracts internationally renowned speakers as well as a wide audience from across the nation. It provides a means of personal interaction with eminent researchers and leaders in Australia and overseas and the opportunity for interactive workshops and papers that focus on leadership, and organisational change and development.

Other seminars/workshops focusing on issues such as technology and research are conducted on an ad-hoc basis. These have proved useful in providing women with the opportunity to become exposed to Women in Leadership activities without having to make a formal commitment to the collegial programme.

RESEARCH PROJECT

The collegial programmes and the Project as a whole have been subject to evaluation by both external and internal evaluators. The evaluations have been reported in detail in a number of reports and publications, for example Pyner (1994), Pike (1995), Lord and Pike (1997) and Watkins, Everett, English, and Woodgate (1996).

Changes that have been reported at the individual level include:

- increased knowledge of the University and its decision-making structures;
- increased levels of confidence;
- increased levels of autonomy and efficiency;
- increased job satisfaction;
- a greater understanding of leadership issues and the challenges facing the University;

We were aware however that despite these positive outcomes, many women had not participated in a collegial programme. Some had been involved in other WIL activities such as the conference or the Public Lecture series. In part, the participation in collegial programmes can be explained by the criteria for acceptance into the programme which designates specific levels for

staff. In addition, collegial programmes involve a substantial time commitment and require strong organisational support.

We were also aware that involvement in one of the Project activities often resulted in continued support and participation in other Project activities. There appeared, however, to be women who were interested in and supportive of the Project but who either did not participate or rarely participated in Project activities. We were interested in exploring this further to determine why women chose not to participate in various activities, in particular, collegial programmes. We were also interested in whether the presence of the Women in Leadership Project was sufficient for the women to perceive a benefit without being directly involved in a collegial programme.

Accordingly in September, 1996, a survey was distributed to all female staff at the University who had not participated in collegial programmes. The decision to exclude collegial programme participants was based on the fact that previous evaluations had focused almost exclusively on this group. Nine hundred and ninety two surveys were distributed with 356 responses received by the closing date. This represents a response rate of 33%. The survey consisted of 19 questions grouped under three subsections: Background, Project Participation, and Career Aspirations. Questions were largely closed (ie. multiple choice) but an opportunity was provided for respondents to make comments where necessary.

Results

(i) Responses of WIL participants

94% of all respondents had heard of the Women in Leadership Project. The 6% who had not heard of the Project were either new to the University or were employed in positions peripheral to mainstream University activities.

27% percent of respondents had participated in some aspect of the Women in Leadership Project. (Table 1), The Public Lecture Series and the Conference attracted the highest internal participation rates, particularly amongst general staff. Academic staff showed most interest in research-oriented activities, particularly the research seminars. The Project has attracted almost the same percentage of academic staff as general staff with 47% and 51% participation respectively. The majority of academic participants were employed at Lecturer B level, which reflects the University's academic staff profile. A high proportion of general staff participants were employed at HEW levels 4 and 5 where high concentrations of female staff are found.

Table 1. Participation in Women in Leadership Activities by ECU female staff, as a percentage of questionnaire respondents.

Project Activity	% Participation
Public Lecture Series	60%
Conference	41%
Research seminars	19%
Other seminars	17%
Technology workshops	3%

The factors that motivated women to participate in Project activities are summarised in Table 2. An overall analysis revealed that the significance of personal development to University women with 36% of the respondents citing increases in self-esteem and confidence. This was closely followed by a desire to gain knowledge about leadership issues, a desire to gain access to a network, increased job satisfaction, to update skills and to take a more active role in organisational department or section. Updating skills to be more competitive for promotion was the least important factor for participation. Other reasons cited included benefiting from public lecture speakers' experience and knowledge, increased knowledge of University operations and gaining a voice.

A separate analysis of both academic and general staff was undertaken to determine the similarities or differences the factors identified. Networking appeared to be significant for academic staff, with 70% participating primarily to gain access to a network. Personal development was the most important factor for general staff. While access to promotion was not a major reason for participation, academic staff were more likely to participate to increase their chances of promotion.

Table 2. Motivational Factors cited by respondents as Influencing their Participation in the WIL Programme.

Factor	Percent % of respondents
Personal development	36
Gain knowledge about leadership issues	32
Gain access to a network	30
Increased job satisfaction	17
Update skills/more active role in Department	11
Update skills/promotion	9

Respondents were asked to indicate their interest in gaining promotion, tenure or secondment. These were seen as representative of career development opportunities. The majority of women were interested in career progression, with 70% expressing a desire to move from their current positions. High levels of satisfaction with the Project were identified, with 73% of participants willing to participate in other activities in the future.

(ii) Responses of non WIL participants

Of the 71% of respondents who had not participated in any Project activities, time to do so was cited as the most inhibiting factor, with 54% unable to participate due to time constraints. 18% of staff indicated an interest in doing so, 16% had no interest in the Project, 10% said they were not encouraged by their supervisors and 6% had not heard of the Project.

The issue of time emerged as a particularly significant one for general staff with 70% unable to attend due to time constraints. Almost half of these women (46%) would participate if time was not of essence. General staff were also less likely to be encouraged by their supervisors to participate in the Project. Eighty percent had received no encouragement to participate in Project activities. Over half of these women indicated that they would participate in the Project if given the opportunity. Nearly half of those women who had not yet participated, indicated that they were likely to do so in the future.

DISCUSSION

The Women in Leadership Project has made considerable inroads in its attempts to deal with academic patriarchy and improve the position of women within the University. Through peer support and a system of interactive workshops, the Project has enabled women to claim their place within the organisation and play a role in its strategic development by shaping its structure and culture. It continues to maintain a high profile within the University. Its impact is such that almost all respondents (95%) who had not participated in the Project's major activity for staff were aware of the Project and its associated programmes.

Results from the survey have shown that the Project has influenced women in a number of ways but particularly in relation to career progression, the enhancement of academic and research profiles, and the development of effective networks. Staff who have been involved in aspects of the Project are keen to participate in future programmes, providing a strong indicator of the Project's broad appeal.

One of the most significant impacts identified from the study was the effect of the Project on women's career progression within the organisation. The trend between participation and promotion/tenure is, we believe, an indicator of the Project's success. This will need to be tested more rigorously in future research regarding the Project's impact on individual career progression. The finding was particularly interesting for us, given that promotion was not the primary motivator influencing women's participation in the Project. Networking and personal development prompted most women to participate but some appear to have been rewarded with career promotion or tenure. This supports anecdotal feedback that suggests an increase in confidence demonstrated by how women present their work and argue their case for recognition.

The Public Lecture Series and the Conference attracted the highest internal participation rate. The lectures are held outside working hours, making them accessible to staff who are unable to attend other programmes. Some staff receive financial support to attend the Conference. The public nature of these activities is also attractive to some staff. Women's academic and research profiles in the University can be enhanced via participation in both the Conference and Public Lecture Series. These activities can also provide the encouragement and incentive to participate in collegial programmes and research seminars as women seek to pursue additional leadership development opportunities.

Loneliness and isolation can be common problems for many women in organisations, particularly those in leadership roles (Tanton, 1994). Marginality has been cited as a key issue for women who are climbing the organisational ladder or entering professions traditionally dominated by men (see for example Marshall, 1984; Rosner, 1995; Smith and Hutchinson, 1995). Women tend

to be excluded from informal networks and this which reduces their ability to participate fully in an organisation's decision-making processes.. Furthermore, women's exclusion from the informal network is often a result of additional group processes. Women who are excluded from informal networks are less likely to be known and possess the organisational 'in-house' knowledge. This has the resultant effect of denying women the co-operation that is necessary for decision-making (Burke and McKeen, 1994).

Survey results showed that women perceived a 'collegial' benefit from participating in other aspects of the Women in Leadership Project. These networks can form the basis for decision-making processes and can provide opportunities for staff to raise and address work issues. In addition, they can be used by women as an information source and as a source of personal and professional support. The importance of networking to academic women in particular was confirmed by this study; a finding supported by other research undertaken in the area of networking relationships (Burke and McKeen, 1994; Kram and Isabella, 1985). Through networking University women are able to exchange and obtain information usually restricted to formal networks such as the 'old boy network' (Burke and McKeen, 1994:5). The visibility of women within the organisation can heighten confidence in applying for promotion and accepting new challenges can seem less threatening when one has the support of a network. Increasing the visibility of women within organisations has been cited by Tanton (Tanton, 1994) as an effective means of counteracting isolation. In short, the networks developed as a result of participation in the Project can be a source of ongoing support for women in the organisation and can be influential in the development of their leadership potential.

The effects of the Women in Leadership Project on those who have participated has been documented above and in other evaluations. The Project's influence, however, is more widespread and its impact extends beyond the group that has been directly involved. For a large number of survey respondents, failure to participate in collegial programmes was not a result of lack of interest. Rather, time constraints, fear of approaching supervisors and inadequate encouragement were identified as the most inhibiting factors. Some Project components, particularly the collegial programmes, require a high level of personal commitment and organisational support, thereby making it one of the most difficult activities to attend. Teaching commitments, unsupportive supervisory staff, and under-resourced organisational units also pose difficulties for some staff who are interested in participating. The large number of non-participants who indicated their intention to become an active participant in the Project, indicates that the Project is viewed as worthwhile and perhaps for some as a major career development option.

Conclusion

The group surveyed had not participated in collegial programmes though a number of respondents had attended one or more of the other Project activities. The results indicate that organisational factors, rather than lack of interest or inappropriateness of the programmes are the major reasons for non-attendance. Despite the Project's uncertain future due to ever present budget constraints, the majority of respondents who had not participated to date indicated that they intended to do so in the future.

Thus the Project, through the provision of a broad range of activities, is generally viewed positively by women in the University. Its presence in the organisation provides the opportunity

for issues relating to women's career development to be placed more firmly on the organisation's agenda. The Project activities provide women with the knowledge and networks to ensure that such issues remain there. Thus, whilst we recognise that collegial programmes can have the most impact on individual women and are effective in creating networks, they are just one of the ingredients needed to create a critical mass.

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WOMEN LEADERS IN NEW ZEALAND : A CASE STUDY IN POLITICAL COLLABORATION

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Abstract

New Zealand's radical political experiment, the 1996 change to a proportional representation system, has provided a unique opportunity for the development of female political leaders. The highest number ever, 35 out of 120 (29%), of women were elected in the first Mixed Member Proportional election, achieving a critical mass of women in Parliament. Prior to this date the country had a first-past-the-post political system and the few women who succeeded in national politics were typically cast in an adversarial role, pitted against other female politicians on issues critical to women. For the first time in contemporary national politics, female Members of Parliament joined together across party lines to lobby on the Coalition Government's proposal to introduce compulsory superannuation. Women MPs identified compulsory superannuation and the proposed referendum as equity issues central to women's social and economic well-being. This study reports on interviews with prominent female politicians examining the emerging cooperative political style. The structured interviews explore the prevailing attitudes towards the new cross party group, the political processes involved, the opportunities presented and threats posed, and the implications for the development of women as political leaders. We conclude by asking whether this nascent political cooperation amongst parliamentary women is an isolated occurrence or the shape of things to come.

Keywords: gender, leadership, parliamentary culture, proportional representation

Introduction

New Zealand's radical political experiment, the 1996 change to a proportional representation system, provides a unique opportunity for the development of female political leadership. Under the traditional two-party system which previously dominated New Zealand politics, the influence of female politicians was limited. A new electoral system provided the promise for women in power to provide active leadership on issues critical to women for several reasons. First, previous comparative analysis has suggested that the type of electoral system can explain the discrepancy between countries in women's legislative representation (McLeay, 1993). A Canadian study, which surveyed 23 democratic states including New Zealand, found that the major predictor of a high number of women in Parliament was the presence of a proportional representation electoral system (Rule, 1987).

Tony Blair's Labour Government in Great Britain may be the contemporary exception to the rule that the type of electoral system improves women's representation, but the exceptional circumstances surrounding the dramatic gains in female representation need to be noted. A total of 101 women were elected out of 418 Labour MPs, more than double the number in the previous Parliament, and comprising the largest group of women to sit in the Commons. In part this was a response to the British Labour Party's programme to double the number of women by the year 2000. The policy required the regions to draw up women-only short lists in half their seats where

a sitting Labour MP would be retiring and in half the winnable, marginal seats. The use of Emily's List, the group which granted sums of money to women seeking parliamentary office to help defray childcare costs and travel expenses during the election campaign was another factor. Emily is an acronym for Early Money is Like Yeast, and the scheme has also been used by the Australian Labor Party.

One reason in New Zealand why the Royal Commission on the Electoral System recommended the Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system as opposed to the traditional first-past-the post electoral system in 1986, was that it would increase the number of female members of Parliament. This was borne out a decade later. The first proportional representation election in New Zealand in 1996 saw the percentage of women in Parliament rise from 21.2% to 29.2%, 35 out of 120 Members of Parliament (Wilson, 1996).

A second, and related reason, is that proportional representation altered the dynamics of supply through political party nomination for legislative representation. Traditionally in New Zealand women struggled to secure party nomination in single-member district or constituency seats under first-past-the-post and were more likely to win nomination in vulnerable rather than safe seats (McLeay, 1993). The disproportionate nature of party representation impacted on the extent of women's parliamentary representation. Under MMP, however, a proportion of seats in Parliament called list seats are allocated to political parties in proportion to the votes gained by the parties. As the Royal Commission (1986) stated "the use of lists allows the possibility of enhanced representation for minority and other special interests" (p.11). Catt (1997) notes that a comparison of the full slate of candidates put up by three of the main parties in 1996 with that for 1993 (pre MMP) shows that all three parties selected more candidates who were women, or Maori. Parties selected more women for their lists than they did for electorates. In 1996 plurality and greater diversity in representation of women was achieved to some extent with the election of the first Chinese female MP, with a larger number of non-professional women coming into Parliament, with the elevation of the youngest-ever female politician to a ministerial post, and one new Maori woman MP replacing the unemployment benefit for a parliamentary salary. A number of the new women in the House also represent minor parties.

The third reason why the change from first-past-the-post politics represented an opportunity for female political leadership concerns the culture of politics. It is commonly accepted that the vote against the previously existing first-past-the-post system by over a million New Zealanders was as much a protest against the prevailing political culture as it was in favour of something new. Hayward (1996) describes a growing sense of political powerlessness and alienation in the New Zealand electorate during the 1980s and early 1990s. These feelings were accompanied by increasing levels of public distrust of political processes and institutions. New Zealand's move to MMP was seen as part of a wider shift towards a more consultative style of politics, seen as superior to the old adversarial model. Previously the few women who succeeded in national politics were hostages to the tyranny of party discipline and were typically pitted against one another on issues critical to women unless the issues allowed for a conscience vote. The eventual outcome of the first MMP election saw a minor party, New Zealand First, hold the balance of power and usher in a new era of coalition-style politics, more suited to a female style of political leadership which emphasizes cooperation rather than competition.

As both politicians and the public alike can testify, getting into Parliament is only half of the equation. What impact increased female representation has on the political environment, whether women Members of Parliament can feminise political decision making and influence the policy agenda, and the degree and type of political leadership they can provide other women are critical issues. As Levine and Roberts (1993) suggest, "for many women, much of the time, there has been an 'agenda gap' distinguishing their political needs, preferences and aspirations from those of men" (p.151). This paper explores whether the promise of a different electoral system, proportional representation, is expressed in a new form of political collaboration by women in Parliament. It uses a case-study approach to canvas a broad spectrum of female politicians on the formation of a cross party group. The group linked senior and junior female politicians in opposition to an important policy plank of the Coalition Government, compulsory superannuation. This policy was widely perceived to be harsh on women who on average earned less, often left the waged workforce to care for children or dependents, had fewer assets when they retired and lived longer. The cross party group favoured the retention of the existing superannuation scheme which was based on individual entitlement and did not penalise women for unpaid work. While previously women parliamentarians had crossed party lines on conscience votes or morality issues such as abortion, the significance of the fight by female politicians on the proposed compulsory superannuation scheme was that the issue was of economic as well as social importance. While there had been for many years a women's caucus in Parliament it had been devoted largely to issues of process, such as the inconvenient hours of parliamentary sittings for women with family responsibilities and the quality of food served in parliamentary buildings. The cross party group opposed to compulsory superannuation was not confined to process issues but intended to actively ignite wider female opposition to influence the political agenda.

The Study

The study reports on structured interviews with female politicians including the then Minister of Women's Affairs, Christine Fletcher, and the Leader of the Labour Opposition, Helen Clark. The women were selected as interviewees on two criteria: their active involvement in opposition to the proposed superannuation scheme and to ensure an adequate representation in the sample of women from the three political parties involved in the cross party group. Seven women, representing 20% of the total number of women in Parliament, participated in the study. Two each from opposition parties, the Alliance and Labour, and three women from National, the major party in the Coalition Government, were interviewed and taped by consent. The interviewees represented a broad spectrum of political views and experience and included both list and constituency members of parliament. They comprised both veterans of 27 years experience in the House to first time female politicians. Women MPs from two parties, New Zealand First and the minor party ACT, were not involved in the cross party group and were not interviewed. Both of these parties supported the compulsory superannuation proposal.

In depth interviews were conducted with each of the female politicians using a semi-structured interview schedule. The interviews were conducted over a three week period several months prior to the referendum on superannuation in September 1997. All of the interviews were taped, the tapes were transcribed and major themes identified and collated. These themes were the influence of proportional representation (MMP) on the development of the women's cross party group on superannuation; whether the mood, culture and atmosphere of Parliament had changed for women as a consequence of MMP, and the perceptions of the women parliamentarians regarding the impact of the cross party group on superannuation.

The Influence of Proportional Representation

Six of the seven interviewees felt the MMP environment was influential in the formation of the women's group against superannuation. The reasons advanced related to the addition of more women in the House and the coalition style of government as opposed to adversarial party groupings. Asked whether the women's group would have been formed under the old first-past-the-post system the then Minister of Women's Affairs, Christine Fletcher said, "no, I think it would have been impossible....it has been a huge jump forward". She described the new environment as "quite radically different."

Labour's Helen Clark talked of a "window of opportunity". She suggested that MMP allowed for degrees of support or opposition which meant coalition partners did not necessarily have to agree on all issues and individual MPs were now freer to express opinions on specific issues. Alliance list MP, Laila Harre, said "MMP meant that you had a major Government party who could express differences of opinion on matters of major public importance. You have created the conditions for a truly cross party approach."

The question posed by the influence of a new electoral system is whether it provides an environment that is more conducive to the expression of women's values. These include among others cooperation rather than competition, inclusionary rather than exclusionary politics, interdependence rather than independence and participation and consensus in decision making (Cross and Madson, 1997; Grant, 1988; Maier, 1996; Marshall, 1994). The spirit of the new emerging style was expressed by Helen Clark who favours separating out policy areas where there might be consensus. She said, "if it is going to be good for women to have us talking cross-party then let us focus on that objective and let's say 'there are all these things we don't agree on and we think you have behaved in a terrible way, but let's not get into that'... let's look at what we can do in common".

The Culture of Parliament

A familiar theme in organisational literature suggests that women at senior levels might influence the culture or atmosphere of their organisations by reducing competition and aggressiveness (Burke and McKeen, 1996; Rosener, 1990). Alternatively, a stream of scholarship refers to the notion of acculturation whereby women assimilate culturally and psychologically into the dominant group (Ely, 1990) and act like men (Gutek, 1985). A pervasive feature of parliamentary life for women has been an oppressive masculinity which is expressed in sexist denigration during parliamentary debates, the assertion of a 'boy's club' mentality, and the other trappings of a male-dominated institution. Former politician, Marilyn Waring, described incidents of shoulder jolting and physical confrontations between male parliamentary colleagues (McGregor, 1996) and former Finance Minister, Ruth Richardson, complained of the hostility towards women with "institutions, arrangements and expectations against them" (Brown, 1992). The current Minister of Transport, Jenny Shipley (who previously held ministerial posts in Health and Women's Affairs), states women refrain from calling each other names in the House unlike their male counterparts (Venter, 1990) and Alliance deputy leader Sandra Lee has talked of her loneliness and isolation as a female minority party representative in Parliament (Hyde, 1994). The then Minister of Women's Affairs, Christine Fletcher, drew flak and support from female parliamentarians with recent comments that "New Zealand's culture of government is becoming dangerously macho" (Dominion, 1997; p.2). This provoked National MP and assistant Speaker of

the House Marie Hasler to criticise her colleague's "long-standing transfixion with and great dread of male behaviour" (Dominion, 1997; p.2). Ms Hasler said she had found that some women MPs interjected just as loudly, and often as rudely as men. Her comments were attacked by New Zealand First's spokesperson for Women's Affairs, Reverend Ann Batten, who said all politicians, male and female, should actively challenge those MPs who participated in a backlash against women. "Christine Fletcher speaks from the heart and she is also brave enough to exhibit vulnerability. The Minister rightly questions male culture, male power and the politics of man." (Media Release from Reverend Ann Batten, September, 1997).

The female politicians were asked whether the new electoral system and a greater number of women made a difference to the culture of Parliament. The seven interviewees expressed a variety of views against a background of change in the House. A new 'warrior' style exhibited by several of the male Maori Members of Parliament, some of whom are Cabinet Ministers, has provoked public and Parliamentary debate. A late-night physical confrontation between New Zealand First leader and Deputy Prime Minister, Winston Peters, and National MP, John Banks, in a Parliamentary corridor resulted in an acrimonious Privileges Committee hearing. Labour leader Helen Clark said:

"funnily enough, along with having more women we also have a higher level of testosterone. We have had these difficulties with people who want to thump people in corridors, and who use foul language...there has been a temporary setback in that respect. The women don't like it. Who wants to be in workplace where people hit each other. It's truly revolting."

Alliance Party list MP Liz Gordon agrees with the suggestion of a worsening climate. Parliament "is a nasty, hierarchical male-dominated institution with ritualised practices and as with many such institutions, the emphasis is on socialising you into its ways rather than allowing you to be effective in your ways."

Two other women were more positive including Alliance Party list MP Laila Harre who linked the atmosphere of Parliament to the changed power relationships and said, "there is nothing like the level of tension there was previously and I do put that down to people realising that they cannot alienate at a personal level people they are probably going to end up in Cabinet with after the next election." The former Minister of Women's Affairs, Christine Fletcher, sees a new mood connected to the increased diversity of representation:

"I often refer to the fact that I find Parliament fearsome. It took me a long time to really understand that and not to be hurt by it. There were occasions, however, when you could sense the blood on the floor, when you knew Parliament was in a vicious day. Maybe I am just institutionalised and have become immune to the pain, I just don't feel it anymore. You may hear the banter and parliamentary question time remains unchanged. But there is a warmth among parliamentarians. The Members Only dining room where we had these long tables where National and Labour Party sat apart, now with six parties, people sit in the middle. As much as I would like to say it is gender-related I think that it is driven by the involvement of other parties and diversity of people. I think Parliament is more representative."

A complex array of factors, including the increased representation of women and their diversity, appear to be impacting on the culture of Parliament under proportional representation. Gender may be one influence but in the long run the power dynamics of coalition politics many prove to

be a more powerful determinant of parliamentary culture. Ironically this is underlined by the recent resignation of Christine Fletcher from her Ministerial posts. While there were a number of factors that contributed to her decision, no doubt including the oppressive male-dominated institutional culture of caucus she has railed against, it was the "meddling" in her portfolios in order to satisfy the Government's coalition partner's expectations that proved to be the final straw (Welch, 1997). Clearly further research comparing the parliamentary culture in countries with proportional representation to those without, would provide valuable insights. It can be anticipated that the results of any such future scholarship, though, are likely to be influenced by the number of women in parliamentary politics, and the notion of achieving a critical mass. The Task Force of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarian's Group commented in 1996 that there were "proportionately fewer women in the world's Parliament than there were 10 years ago"(p.30). The Task Force report notes that "complacency is the enemy....to have begun to redress the imbalance but then to allow it to slip away is unforgiveable"(p.30).

The Impact of the Cross Party Women's Group

All seven female politicians interviewed, even those who were generally less enthusiastic about the cross party women's group on superannuation, claimed it had been influential in helping to set the political agenda on retirement savings policy, and in providing leadership for other women's groups. In particular, the Ministry of Women's Affairs which had previously been criticised for its passivity on policy issues was encouraged by the then Minister, Christine Fletcher to be more politically active on the super issue. The formation and membership of the cross party group also increased the profile of those female parliamentarians involved and increased their publicity opportunities.

National MP Katherine O'Regan said the group had been "very influential" and its early formation had helped "crystalize the mood" and influence the agenda-setting about the superannuation issue. Fellow National MP, Joy McLauchlan, said:

"one would have to say it has been effective. I would like to think that the way it was effective was in ensuring that the scheme has come out as good as it has for women and Winston Peters (the scheme's architect) regularly comments on the fact that the scheme has picked up on the issues of concern to women."

She said that if the women's group had not been formed the superannuation scheme would not have been modified to accommodate women's concerns. Labour MP Di Yates points to the production of a special leaflet, entitled *Issues for Women: What you need to know on the compulsory superannuation proposal* which was part of a special \$10 million Government information campaign. She said, "I don't think on any other issue there has been a special leaflet produced by a government agency in this way for women. This is a separate leaflet on policy."

The women's group also sparked personal correspondence from the Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer, Winston Peters. His letter to them read in part, "of central importance to the design feature of the scheme will be an equitable provision of retirement assistance to those groups, such as women, who on average experience lower life time earnings and interrupted work patterns." The letter also urged the female MPs to wait and refrain from premature criticism of the scheme and was greeted somewhat ironically by Labour MP Di Yates. She said that:

"Winston Peters in the whole 4-5 years I have been here has never so much as acknowledged my presence. Immediately we formed this group and sent out a press release we all got a letter from Winston Peters - the first communication that I have ever had with him, and the letter basically said 'trust me I know what I'm doing'. I have dined out on that for weeks."

The female politicians point to the appearance of unanimity amongst women on the superannuation issue, the politicising of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the organisation of meetings and seminars, and the organised distribution of materials and resources as positive outcomes whereby political women have actively provided leadership. Alliance MP, Laila Harre, said:

"the virtue of the whole opposition to superannuation is that it has been seen to be coming from all over the place, and in relation to women it has been seen as women in Parliament are bigger than their silly little political agendas and they are getting together, so they must be right, because if it is so important that they can cooperate then it must be really important."

The then Minister of Women's Affairs, Christine Fletcher, indicates she had two motivations in facilitating a more active role for the Ministry of Women's Affairs which she acknowledges had "developed a reputation, rather sadly, of not being to the forefront of issues." She wanted to ensure the Ministry was positioned as a core agency able to influence the design of the superannuation proposal so that in event of its introduction the discriminatory features were modified. The Ministry was also used to take a lead in the provision of information and resources to other women MPs and non-government organisations like the powerful National Council of Women. "I have certainly tried to position the Ministry of Women's Affairs which is a bit scary for them" Christine Fletcher said. "The voluntary women's groups are probably looking to us to be more active...to be the ones leading the debate."

Several of the female MPs said the group's opposition to superannuation had enhanced their political and media profiles. Labour MP, Di Yates, said, "I have had more media coverage on the issue than any other, personally. Front page in the The Christchurch Press which is unusual for a North Island MP." Interest in women's opposition to superannuation was even the subject of questions to the Minister of Women's Affairs by the magazine Fashion Quarterly which rarely covers political material.

"The whole interview was about why it was that younger women (their readership) are only just starting to take an interest (in politics) because of compulsory superannuation. One of the problems that I detect, it is not just a New Zealand problem, it is an international problem, is that women under the age of 40 are not strong in terms of political activism. For whatever reason they have felt distanced from a lot of the issues that women of my generation felt were most important."

The former Minister credits the women's super group with revitalising membership of some women's groups. "They have genuinely been excited by the wave of activism and involvement and new members coming on board their organisations as a result of the leadership that I think that the women of Parliament have displayed by their involvement." She cites anecdotal evidence of interest by younger women in becoming involved in the superannuation debate.

Conclusions

A critical question raised by the formation and impact of the cross party women's group is whether it ushers in a new era of female political leadership. It is clear that increased diversity and plurality in representation under a proportional voting system will continue to be a feature of the New Zealand political scene and it is reasonable to assume that more women will be elected as a result of the party list process. The political activism of parliamentary women on the superannuation issue, the new style of cooperation amongst them and the increased profile of female politicians may also encourage other women to consider seeking political nomination.

The views of the female politicians on the impact of their cross party group on superannuation were remarkably positive. They were optimistic about the effects on the membership of women's groups, about the increased political and media profile, and about the ability to network on particular issues while still allowing for divergent political philosophies. However, perhaps the most significant feature of the women's group was its influence on helping to set the political agenda about superannuation. The coordinated and early opposition from women saw the design of the proposal altered to try and accommodate women's concerns and prompted personal correspondence to the female politicians from the Deputy Prime Minister and Treasurer, Winston Peters. The Coalition Government was forced to develop special public relations initiatives aimed at women, funded from the controversial \$10 million information campaign, in response to political and public lobbying by the female politicians.

Although not directly quantifiable a measure of the impact of parliamentary women coming together across party lines to express their opposition to the retirement savings scheme is seen in the eventual referendum result. With the highest turnout ever for a referendum in New Zealand more than 1.5 million voters (70.4%) overwhelmingly rejected the coalition government's proposed scheme. The postal ballot saw 92% of New Zealanders who voted say a very emphatic "no" to compulsory superannuation.

The culture of politics in New Zealand is clearly undergoing change stimulated by proportional representation. The evidence from our interviews suggests that a transition from the politics of confrontation to the politics of compromise has yet to occur. It is ironic that the very diversity and plurality which proponents of proportional representation have applauded has allowed in to Parliament a group of male politicians exhibiting a particular macho style. But what is evident is that MMP provides an environment for the expression of opinion on some issues not subject to either the agreement binding the parties to the Coalition Government or party discipline, which the women involved in the cross party group on superannuation have understood and exploited. The level of cooperation amongst many of the women in Parliament, particularly on an economic policy issue, has boosted the confidence of the female politicians themselves about their ability to influence the political agenda. Whether the "window of opportunity" talked of and acted on in the case of superannuation, translates into a recurring pattern of collaboration remains to be seen. The new and complex dynamics of power in MMP-style coalitions may prove to be a more powerful determinant of political culture than gender alone.

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A Commentary on the Women in Leadership Project at Edith Cowan University

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Abstract

Business schools have taught that leadership is about having certain generic skills that are the same for everybody despite gender differences. This paper asserts there are stereotypical expectations and perceptions of how people behave in positions of leadership based upon their gender, and these have thwarted women attaining leadership in the past. The focus is an anecdotally based review. It explores the way women have overcome some of those barriers at Edith Cowan University through the *Women in Leadership* project to achieve positions of authority and power in ways that are not typically male and are not adequately emphasised in the management curriculum of business schools.

Keywords: gender, leadership, barriers, stereotypes

Introduction

The issue of gender differences in leadership is extensively covered in contemporary literature. This paper will not attempt to encompass a comprehensive summary of the literature but rather discuss *expectations* of gender differences in leadership and the impact that those expectations have on leadership styles at Edith Cowan University. The paper will also discuss the relevance of gender differences in leadership style in its role in the implementation of emerging new management styles expected to lead the way into the next century, particularly in the university setting.

The profile of a leader in the 1970s was a male, operating in a highly hierarchical structure, from a position of accepted authority (Karpin, 1995). The leadership model was masculine, the leaders were male but increasingly, the led were female. There have been significant changes in the nature of the workforce with greater numbers of women entering and staying in the workforce. The trend towards globalisation of businesses with the needs of individual workers becoming more diverse demand that notions of leadership also change. All of these changes have been reflected in the university sector.

In Australia, 43% of the workforce is women (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 1995), yet the percentage of women at middle to senior levels of management is far below this figure. It is difficult to know exactly how many women there are in management positions in Australia, but ABS (1994) statistics claim 22% of women hold management positions, most at the lower end of the scale.

Robbins and Mukerji (1993) define leaders as "those who are able to influence others and who possess managerial authority" (p.364). This definition does not acknowledge socialisation, legitimacy nor sexual politics. The textbooks do not mention that not only are women socialised differently to men, but they also face structures which have been predominantly developed by males for males (Smith and Smits, 1994; Roddick, 1991). These structures include reward systems for long hours instead of results; inflexible work schedules; unavailable or expensive childcare facilities (Smith and Smits, 1994). There still exists the perception of "masculine

characteristics as those which an effective manager should adopt and conversely feminine behaviour as ineffective for managing" (Rigg and Sparrow, 1994, p.14). Historically, the perceived differences between males and females have been used to keep women out of management. Female characteristics such as consensual work style, sensitivity and flexibility have been viewed as weak (Smith and Hutchinson, 1995). Many believed that women who had achieved leadership roles had merely imitated typically male characteristics such as toughness and aggressiveness to compete in a masculine province (Stanford, Oates and Flores, 1995, p.9). Certainly there are female leaders who are portrayed as male leaders in frocks, the quintessential example being Margaret Thatcher and more recently Amanda Vanstone. The concept of a leader has continued to be synonymous with dominator stereotypes of masculinity (Eisler, 1995, p.37).

There is however, the issue of an evolving workplace with greater emphasis on the changing demographics of the workforce, globalisation and a new paradigm of management for the next century. It has now become fashionable to say that the differences in leadership styles between men and women are real and beneficial, and that women will complement men in the management ranks and bring a healthy balance to business (Colgan and Ledwith 1996). The association between the style of management as practised by successful women and the style of management envisaged as being essential in the year 2000 and beyond is made by many contemporary writers (Karpin, 1995; Marshall, 1994; Morrison, 1992). Segal (1993) claims it is clear that "women are more likely to embrace the transformational style" (p.130). Scandinavian nations following a "partnership model" rather than a "dominator model" (Eisler, 1995), have led the way to a more gender - balanced society. There, stereotypically feminine values have been integrated into social, economic and ecological policies. Leaders practice more participatory work styles in keeping with evolving management practices for the 21st century.

Women and Contradictory Expectations

Women in the executive ranks or even middle management in most large corporations, confront two sets of demanding, sometimes contradictory expectations that reflect the dual roles they play as women in business and in society as a whole (Colgan and Ledwith, 1996; Still, 1993; Chater and Gaster, 1995). However, as long as women's management and leadership goals are the goals of women alone and not the goals of the workforce as a whole there is implied gender conflict and an implied lack of a common objective.

Professor Amanda Sinclair claims that when meeting some men and women she senses they feel vaguely cheated because she does not look the way a professor should. She is not big, nor is she tall and she is definitely not male (Sinclair, 1995). For this reason she has been committed to illuminating the diversity of ways in which women express who they are, as women, in leadership roles. Shrank (1994, p.78) claims that an organisation runs the risk of "losing its place in the line" when its "managers fail to create the environment in which a diverse team can achieve trust and mutual respect". Women such as Professor Amanda Sinclair are role models and important allies for women aspiring to, and working in positions of authority. They can provide a great source of information and encouragement for younger women coming up through the ranks.

The Development of the Women in Leadership Project

Established in 1991, the *Women in Leadership Project* at Edith Cowan University has sought to contribute to long-term cultural change by engaging with, shaping and responding to changes in the structure and culture of the university. Previously the only leadership models at Edith Cowan University were male models of leadership behaviour. They were reinforced by strong networks and widespread internalisation of a male dominated culture. In 1993, of the 20 professorial positions, 19 were occupied by men. The vast majority of women were in the lower or lowest academic positions. Similarly, women predominated in the lowest non-academic staff positions. The culture of the organisation was heavily influenced by its history as a teacher's college with strict hierarchies, the intricate teacher networks and the over-riding headmaster authority figures. Being 'political', having networks and being overtly visible were not strong feminine characteristics, nor were they encouraged in the female employees.

What is the Women in Leadership Project?

Pyner's evaluation (1993) of the *Women in Leadership Project* described it as a staff development program; an EEO program; a corporate strategic plan; a women's support group and a grass roots 'movement' all rolled into one. However, it goes beyond all of these through the development of a conceptual framework that does not rely on superficial, 'text book' concepts of planning, management and leadership. The programs within the project have been developed to meet the demands of the conceptual framework.

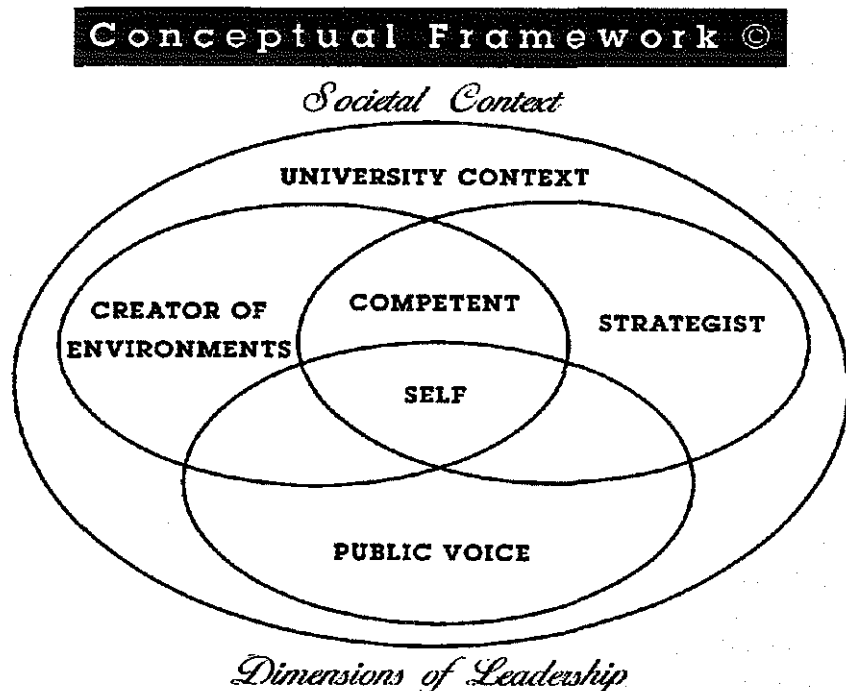


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of The Women in Leadership Project at Edith Cowan University.

The Project focuses on women recognising their own skills, contributions and potentials at all levels of the university and using these to grow and progress within the university. Women have never been socialised to say "I am good at" and many observers of this transition in women find it threatening. The conceptual framework underpins this new paradigm of leadership. "It offers insights into a socially constructed reality which 'undoes' the constraints of enculturation" (Pyner, 193 p.6). It provides entitlement for women to contribute as well as demand recognition and reward for their contribution.

The *Women in Leadership Project* has facilitated women to claim legitimacy and has enabled women to play a significant role in shaping the emerging structure and culture of Edith Cowan University. One of the attractive features of the *Women in Leadership* model for many women in the university is that it doesn't contradict femininity, and in fact gives permission not to behave in a "masculine" manner. It provides strategies different to the "male leaders in frocks" traits in a number of ways. The model encourages participants to acknowledge and assert their presence within the university. It also encourages participants to recognise blockages in the organisation that prevent them from progressing and teaches women to overcome obstacles that previously would have silenced them. The "coming out" of women in the organisation has not always been a comfortable experience for those who already occupied positions of authority and status. It has been presumed that women gathering together behind closed doors must be plotting against them, usually men, and therefore the organisation. The *Women in Leadership* programs were perceived by some as a threatening, secretive female cohort – "a witches' coven". It did not occur to the critics that the issues being discussed were organisational issues that affect everyone in the university but often impact upon women differently to men.

In fact the *Women in Leadership* programs give authenticity and legitimacy to women's activities in the university as well as providing networking opportunities and support. Knowledge about the way the university functions in both formal and informal ways is shared which is critical because that knowledge also empowers. It is also important to share with others the knowledge of consequences, and strategies to deal with them. Women who engage in collegial groups often find it difficult to go back into the workplace and talk about the issues discussed because they have "indulged" in this separate women's program which is not inclusive of all employees in the university. Consequently, the *Women in Leadership* programs benefit women in the organisation but can also be a catalyst for conflict in the organisation. It is therefore crucial that the peer support and camaraderie developed in collegial groups and other *Women in Leadership* activities be maintained after the collegial programs have run their course.

The manner in which these strategies are imparted is important. Assertiveness rather than aggression is promoted, as is learning to feel safe about asking questions and continuing to ask questions and ignoring female socialisation that has inculcated the notion that nice girls don't ask questions and they certainly don't answer back. What is there to lose? Being good girls has not got women far; they have been marginalised and silenced, just as when they ask questions and are assertive. However several women asking questions and demanding that their presence be acknowledged is less easy to silence and there is a greater likelihood of change.

Another goal of the *Women in Leadership Project* is to cultivate a critical mass of women in decision making positions and to legitimise women's voice. This task is made inordinately easier with a female vice chancellor because she differs from the norm due to her gender, but she has legitimate power and authority. It will also become progressively easier as more women adopt *Women in Leadership* strategies and attain positions of authority and status. Women who make a

fuss are hopefully less likely to be singled out as dangerous, "bad girls who do not fit into the cultural and community formations of how women should behave and thus all the easier to dismiss or distance oneself from" (XX, 1997, p56). Critical mass is therefore important for cultural change. It allows women the opportunity to evolve their own management styles.

Women in Leadership Programs: Developing a Sense of Leadership

The programs provide vehicles by which participants can develop skills that facilitate formal recognition for promotion and tenure purposes. Collegial groups are a dynamic coming together of diverse women from throughout the university whose purpose is to develop a sense of leadership, the achievement of one or more formal skills as well as personal goals. Pyner (1993, p.11) outlined the objectives of Women in Leadership collegial groups:

- For individual women to identify and develop those technical and personal skills and knowledge required in academic leadership roles.
- For each participating collegial group to identify organisational change strategies that will more effectively include women in the decision making process.
- To build a strong and enduring network which will be a continuing source of support for participants and which will assist them to develop to their full potential as academic leaders.

The collegial program is about women working for change, doing things differently and extending women beyond their perceived horizons in a supportive environment. One of the exciting challenges of the *Women in Leadership Project* at Edith Cowan University is that participants impose their own limits while also learning to expand them, with the assistance of a facilitator who extends the boundaries. By developing their own skills, participants learn of new possibilities for themselves and their roles within the University.

One of the basic tenets of the *Women in Leadership Project* is developing a public voice, learning to assert one's capacity and expertise and being prepared to own that public voice. The annual *Women in Leadership* Conference provides women with the opportunity to develop and present papers and workshops around their research and areas of interest. This is a necessary way of establishing credibility but often goes against traditional socialisation practices of females. Traditionally, women are not encouraged to promote themselves or demand that their work be recognised (Chater and Gaster, 1995; Still, 1993). Becoming visible 'however' can come at a cost and women wanting recognition and to assert their position are a potential threat to those who have had the limelight and they become a target, particularly while there is no critical mass. *Women in Leadership* provides a 'safe zone' where women can confidently discuss, debate and propose ideas without the threat of ridicule and possible marginalisation. This can be an empowering experience which can motivate women to undertake other academic and leadership challenges.

A goal of the *Women in Leadership Project* has been to confront some embedded University practices which have excluded or marginalised women in decision making forums. An important strategy has been to encourage Deans to replace staff without penalty while they attend *Women in Leadership* collegial programs. The *Women in Leadership Project* has also conducted interview workshops where participants are shown how to write an impressive CV, have the opportunity to hear from others what makes a good interview and tips on the do's and don'ts of the interview process. The outcomes of such strategies can be measured by the success rate of

women in promotion and tenure rounds who have participated in the various programs and workshops.

Unique to Edith Cowan University is the affirmative action quota in all promotion and tenure rounds. In order to increase the number of women in senior positions and break the male domination of men in senior positions, the University agreed that in each promotion and tenure round there would be a more equitable mix of men and women. This means for example, that if there are three positions available, at least one must go to a woman. If the interview committee does not deem any woman to be suitable at that particular round then the position stays open until there is a woman qualified. There have been a number of formal accusations that this practice is discriminatory, but the university has been found to be acting lawfully each time. This has been a very powerful tool for women at Edith Cowan University.

The research activity index at Edith Cowan University in the last three years has increased four fold and women are significant contributors to it. *Women in Leadership* has published a register of those women in the university who are achieving in their specific field, based upon their research activity index returns. This both publicises their achievements but also provides a reference for other women to access if they need assistance, advice or technical expertise.

Being shown that some past practices have been discriminatory, questioning why some actions should be continued, or having it suggested that women are equally capable of senior positions, has been uncomfortable for many in senior and middle management positions in the University. Outcomes from collegial groups have clearly demonstrated blockages for women advancing in the organisation and the *Women in Leadership Project* has been able to influence key committees in the dismantling of barriers for women. This has been achieved by improved consultation opportunities for women in university policy development and the requirement for equitable gender representation on all university committees. A recent example of the efficacy of such policies was the opportunity for senior women to interview candidates for the Vice Chancellor's appointment and submit a report to the appointment committee. The *Women in Leadership* management team have also made submissions to the Strategic Planning Committee, detailing how the university can maximise female employees' contribution to the university in the future.

Conclusion

Some men have described the *Women in Leadership Project* as a takeover, discriminatory, clubby, even audacious because it has challenged the status quo of the institution. Although the university's early history was as a teacher's training college with firmly embedded patriarchal hierarchies, it has moved forward, striving to make a place for itself as a progressive, pro-active institution in a number of areas. Certainly gender determines the right to participate in the *Women in Leadership Project* but it is not an exclusive club. The issues addressed are those experienced by and for all women in the University regardless of their formal status. All women become stakeholders in the issues which does not mean they lose ownership. Quite the contrary, women are encouraged to own the problem and deal with it, equipped with strategies that will facilitate learning and advancement. The goal is for the outcome to be beneficial both for women in the university and Edith Cowan University itself.

The Women in Leadership model provides ways for women to adopt positions of authority that are different to prevailing models of leadership, while also providing on-going support and legitimacy, because it is not always easy for participants to change lifelong socialisation processes nor tolerate suspicion. Participating in the Project is exciting because it is making a difference in and to the organisation by enabling women to contribute to its development in ways which take their reality into account. It is an organic process, continually responding to the strategic needs of women and the university.

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THE PROCESS OF BECOMING A TECHNOLOGISED SELF: ARTISTS' VISIONS OF MENOPAUSE ON A CD-ROM

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Abstract

How can we create texts that are innovative, dynamic, vital and riveting, texts that are attended to, that will make a difference? How can technology be used to achieve the vision? In exploring the lived experience of menopause by women artists, this paper demonstrates my response to these questions. Through the use of visual imagery it illustrates how my experience as an artist and feminist researcher has shaped and informed an innovative and experimental arts based approach in creating a text that will not only make a difference but will also reach a wide and diverse audience. It demonstrates how modern technology in the form of a CD-ROM can provide the spaces for the collective 'voices' of women to re-cover and re-vision a fresh perception of our embodied existence.

Keywords: menopause, art, visual imagery, technology.

Introduction

During the course of our lives we receive or we buy books that are recommended to us by friends and colleagues. We glance through them, looking for a connection to our own lives, for solutions to problems, or for answers to questions about our work or to simply satisfy our curiosity. If you are like me, you might make marks, comments and underline certain paragraphs or words because they 'speak' to you. We file these quotes and sentences away in our memory bank, thinking that perhaps one day we might incorporate the writer's particular turn of phrase or theory or literary style into our work. Then the book is returned to the shelf and there it sits forgotten, silently storing those inspirational words and ideas. Until one day with deadlines looming we find ourselves sitting at our desk waiting for the words to flow. We feel that our bodies are suffering from information overload, and that as a consequence our clarity of vision is blurred and creative thoughts are hard to capture. We feel that the muse has deserted us, and then our gaze happens to fall on the book or paper that offers the direction we are seeking. We glance through the pages and, just by chance, find the words that propel us to begin writing. One such book, given to me two years ago, just as I was being initiated into the processes of becoming a female member of the cyber-community, was Dale Spender's *Nattering on the Net*. (Spender, 1995). In her introduction Spender states:

The last few decades have seen an explosion in women's knowledge, as women's studies have appeared on every campus and women's issues have become part of the public agenda. But if the present generation of women cannot hand on this knowledge that they have created, then the entire tradition is at risk – and it could be lost. This is the pattern of the past; it should not be the prediction for the next century (Spender, 1995 p. xxiv).

Spender brings to our attention that women occupy only 6% of cyberspace, and this imbalance in numbers is how marginalisation and oppression are too easily maintained or reconstructed. She

urges more women to become involved in this public place because this where new communities are being formed; this is where new values, new meaning and alternate forms of understanding are being developed. Spender then holds out the metaphorical carrot to entice the reader to explore the new communication technologies. My interest and imagination were stimulated by her claim, that 'where women have made the technology accommodate their needs, their success knows no limitations' (p. xxiv). The invitation to become involved was one I couldn't ignore. For the past three years I have been confronting my fears of technology and slowly I am developing my electronic skills so that I too might creatively contribute to the cyber space community and transform information into new knowledge and wisdom. I recognised that if art could mediate the spaces between subjective and public discourses, then electronic imagery could also be used in a similar manner. Used creatively, it has the power to offer not only new meaning and understanding about women, their bodies and self-representation, it can also be a valuable tool for healing. Imagery that contains innovative, experimental and reflexive narratives has the potential to re-vision and re-story women's lives. Stories, whether visual, textual or oral, mirror back to us aspects of our own daily experience, and when those stories resonate and connect with our own memories we don't feel so alone. A storyteller of many years standing, Clarissa Pinkola Estes, said: Stories are medicine, 'they have such power; they do not require that we do, be, act anything – we need only listen (and I would add look and see). The remedies for repair or reclamation of any lost psychic drive are contained within stories'. (Breathnach, 1996 n.pag)

When I wrote the abstract and title for this presentation I was reflecting on two different forms of technology: technologies of the self and electronic technology. I was considering how one might creatively merge the two so that they could elaborate on the questions of what, and who, we are. I had been reading Elspeth Probyn's *Sexing the Self*, and in particular the chapter on *Technologising the self*. (Probyn, 1993). Probyn urges theorists to re-examine comments by French philosopher Michel Foucault on how the gendered self might form a critical position when investigating the events and experiences that have led us to constitute ourselves. She presents several ideas and possibilities for re-working and expanding on Foucault's theories that primarily were about domination, power and control. Her concerns are focussed on integrating a woman's experiential knowing self with one's theoretical and academic self. From this fusion or blending of selves, women could enunciate new modalities for change in their current social formation, as well as in their own individual lives. In elaborating how women might combine the personal and the political as a mode of re-interpreting women's lives, Probyn suggests that women need to 'think about the self in terms of what it is (a point of articulation) - and where it may allow them to go (a way of speaking and communicating a gendered actuality) (p. 116).' Her questions explore how we as woman might re-think Foucault's technologies of the self so as to 'open up the possibility of a creative life', and incorporate it into our theories and back into our daily lives (p. 117). Central to Probyn's thesis on how new perspectives might communicate different forms of understanding, was Foucault's comment on how individuals might recognise themselves as 'subjects' of sexuality:

We have to understand that with our desires, through our desire, go new forms of relationships, new forms of love, new forms of creation. Sex is not a fatality; it's a possibility for creative life. (Probyn, 1993 p.117)

For me, the processes of becoming a technologised self are both experiential and political. On the one hand, they are an intellectual attempt to expand on Foucault's theories of the self when elaborating on the critical position of the present. This is in relation to my ontological selves and

the selves of others for whom I speak. And on the other hand they represent my creative self which is grounded in my personal lived experience. Whilst negotiating the somewhat tenuous journey from visual artist to academic researcher and now 'techno' artist in my desire to create on CD-ROM a doctoral thesis with a difference, my sensory body has experienced a duality of emotion and feeling. In stretching into the complex and intricate world of computer technology I have been baffled, challenged, confused, enraged and at times reduced to tears, as well as entranced, absorbed, energised and excited at the power of this medium to create possibilities that will expand our human potential.

At the conclusion of my research, it is anticipated that the individual women's visual and textual narratives which form the centrepiece of my thesis will become part of the cyber-space reference system via a website on the Internet. Their stories will add to the body of knowledge that extends beyond the traditional discourses which have defined women's reproductive bodies. And by using the medium of a CD-ROM for presenting my research I can re-produce at relatively low cost a form of representation which will provide interested individuals who are not connected to the internet a means of accessing the ways in which artists express and transform themselves and others.

The Study

The study, entitled *Making the Invisible Visible* investigates how 11 women artists articulate the lived experience of menopause. It is a conversational mapping of embodied space and time as they re-imagine memories that have informed their changing sense of sexuality, femininity and self during the transitional stages of this biological process. I explore through visual and textual narrative how women experience the absence of blood and how this disruption to their cyclical and fertile bodies impacts on the ways in which they then use their bodies to express their creativity and sense of embodied female self.

I am keenly interested in exploring notions of the self - this difficult-to-define sum of who we are, and how we negotiate our way of being and becoming in the world. The idea that women artists have been trapped within the confines of masculine ideological constructions has been a common thread throughout the writing of both literary and art theorists (Benstock, 1988; Betterton, 1987; de Lauretis, 1984; de Zegher, 1994; Deepwell, 1995; Duncan, 1988; Gablik, 1991; Gilbert and Gubar, 1988). Alicia Ostriker (1985; 1986) writing in *Stealing the Language* claims, that women artists and poets, when defining a personal identity, have primarily interpreted their external reality through the medium of the body, and that their work is explicitly female, in the sense that they choose to explore experiences that are central to their sex and to the activities of their everyday lives. At the core of their work is a continuous quest for self-definition. Ostriker goes on to say that throughout most of our history, the women artist who felt she did not fit into the acceptable narrative of a female life has had to state her self-definition in code.

Both art and literary theorists who employ psychoanalytic insights into their ideas claim that autobiographical visual and textual representation of women's lived experiences can be read more for their absences than their content (Cixous, 1976; Deepwell, 1995; Gubar, 1982; Heilbrun, 1989; Pollock, 1996a, 1996b; Rich, 1980). These authors suggest that women's writing and visual imagery are filled with silences that can only be read and 'got at' sideways and

in the margins (Humm, 1986 p.67). Benstock (1988) suggests, that the retrospective glance that initiates the artistic autobiographical act has by social conditioning been enmeshed in the repressive effects of language, and in doing so renders the speaking subject primordially divided. Thus women are split between the realms of the unconscious and conscious reality and as a result we are not fully known to ourselves.

The ideas of these theorists intrigued me. Could autobiographical forms of self-representation of women's experiences of menopause offer new insights and alternate accounts of women's understandings of their gendered bodies? Was there a submerged female language trapped within the artistic imagination that could be released and liberated from the constraining and repressive effects of patriarchal discourse? Was it possible, as Liz Grosz conjectured, that I might find new forms of representational practice created from a woman centred position that was outside our cultural terms of bodily reference? (Grosz, 1994a, 1994b). Would the different genres illustrate that the individual had slipped beyond the borders of the conscious world into 'fissures of discontinuity to re-interpret her own unique re-configuration of self?' (Benstock, 1988 p.20) Or would I find, as Janet Wolff suggested, that woman artists were unable to 'circumvent the dominant regime of representation' in their quest to make a space for women's voices and women's experiences (Wolff, 1990 p.70). Wolff argues that women have for so long been marginalised by the dominant culture that it is impossible for them to develop alternative forms of language other than from their basis in that culture.

The Women in the Study

The women who generously provided their time and energy for this study were contacted primarily through artist's registers within Australia. Two women self-referred when they heard through friends that a study on women's visual representation of menopause was being initiated. Choosing the 11 participants was done on a process of elimination to fit my selection criteria. That is, that they define themselves as going through the transitional stages of menopause, that their work had changed as a consequence, that they agreed to have their work documented, and that they were willing to take part in a participatory experiential process over several years. The women in the study range in age from 42 – 61 with the average age being 51. They are white, predominantly middle-class, and are relatively highly educated. Of the 11 women who began the study 7 have achieved mature-age university arts degrees within the last twelve years. All but two of the participants have had some form of instruction or tuition in the visual arts. With the exception of two women they were heterosexual. Their interest and involvement in the arts ranges from professional practicing artists, to artists who engage in creative expression part time, or as a leisure activity.

The women were aware that they were taking part in a participatory process that would contribute to other women naming and giving voice to their real experience. The study became a collective experience. By sharing their stories they were conscious that their involvement would expand the knowledge about women and women's bodies. As a result of this personal interaction, not only did they describe and reflect upon their flesh and muted parts of their anatomy through visual imagery, they also offered poetry, shared their personal journals, creatively re-invented short stories and wrote long letters in their attempts to speak into existence a fresh perception of their female sense of the body.

Methodology

In the reflective processes of writing and rewriting the material gathered during the study, and in its subsequent presentation on the CD-ROM, it is not my intention to critically analyse or offer causal explanations of women's menopausal experiences, but rather it is to present their visual and textual stories as expressive representations of possible ways for generating different understandings and meanings that will in turn influence existing perspectives, paradigms and ideologies.

The primary frame of reference for this study is van Manen's (1990) semiotic employment of the methods of phenomenology and hermeneutics (refer endnote). It is informed by feminist theory. Instead of following a prescriptive traditional format for presenting the research material, I have used van Manen's 'broadened version' of phenomenology as a point of departure. Using this approach I have interwoven various forms of scholarship and philosophic thought. With my background as an artist I was creatively challenged by van Manen's suggestion that a researcher may need to invent or discover a methodological approach that will enable an energetic response and appropriate investigation of the phenomenon in question. I wanted to create a methodology that maintained a certain harmony and resonance with my own ontological experiences, and with feminists' understandings of the research process, as well as one that would reflect my own writing decisions and processes.

Menopause and Self-Representation

I have traced the women's menopausal experiences over a period of three years. During the course of our many conversations together we have examined and explored the new narratives, myths and stories that they created around their individual and collective experiences of menopause. Through their different forms of unmediated self-representation they have connected the personal self – the 'I' and 'she' of the autobiographical self – to the social self, and they have worked through the processes of experience and meaning-making to arrive at a re-defined sense of their own multiple subjectivities. The women have not only engaged in asking questions about who am I, but also who am I thought to be by culture? They have spoken openly and honestly about what they believe to be the 'truth' of their lives, the kind of 'truth' that comes from living inside an experience. This is in contrast to culturally prescribed descriptions about the body and how it is shaped. And they speak from a point of reference within themselves that they have come to know as a new and emerging sense of embodied feminine self.

As I come toward the completion of interpreting the texts I have found a number of common threads running through many of the stories. There is the recognition by the majority of women of a sense of physic splitting between being both subject and object; a split subjectivity that at times creates conflict between their internal and external landscapes. Other recurring themes, are that of not being listened to, of not being taken seriously, of being silenced, and of the inability to speak out about their bodies during menopause, of not having a language of self-description within which to describe an appropriate sense of embodiment, and of their changes in consciousness as their body awareness prompts expression of longing and desire. The most significant feature of the research has been the bringing of life to stories that were stored in memory. These re-imagined embodied memories from the past significantly influenced the way they experienced their bodies during menopause.

And so, I find that I am not only deciphering 'inscriptions in the feminine' and re-conceptions of the body's flesh and blood, I am also reflecting on the historical silencing of women's voices and the imperative for providing time and space for the naming of their experiences, and more importantly, a space for being heard. (Pollock, 1996b p.67) Menopause is not something that one does separately like childbirth, nor is it an experience that is prescriptive and known. Within the transition of menopause are other life transitions that can impact on the way a woman experiences menopause. Each different experience is interwoven and intimately connected to her body. Menopause is a process that can take ten years – a considerable time in anyone's life – and it is a time when women can experience a sense of dislocation, confusion and even grief over previously held beliefs about the self, aging and femininity, and of their sexual and creative identity. A friend remarked recently:

Letting go of mother and sex object and moving to crone can take a lot of doing. Women have been relentlessly herded into motherhood for thousands of years and they are very good at it. It is hard to give up an identity for which you are regarded in order to move to one which is currently less valued, for the wise old woman is nearly invisible in our culture.

And now with the women's permission, I would like to share with you examples of some of the images and poetry included on the CD-ROM that were presented at the Women in Leadership Conference.

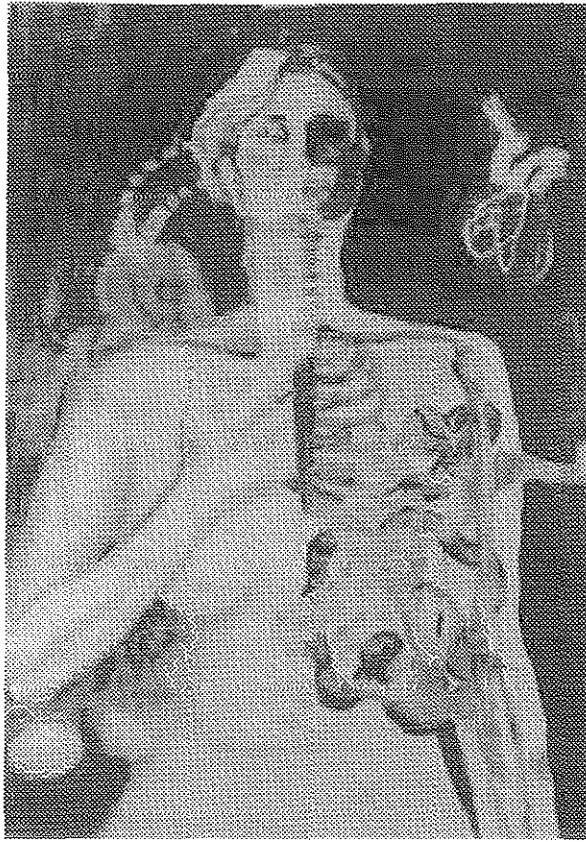


FIG. 1

Recognition - (This poem was created from participant's letter)

Memories.

Just a mother

or a wife.

Nothing else.

Belonging to others

Thinking only of others

Cgito ergo sum: I think therefore I am

Mother

Wife

Therefore I give

Serve, console, nurture, support,

beyond tiredness

beyond capacity.

Motherhood was

baggy clothes

floppy, shapeless, drab,

hiding my feminine self within.

Typical girl product of the 50s

Who was I as woman?

No answer

Sexuality?
self raising flour
vegemite sandwiches
pea and ham soup
a vacuum cleaner
a Hills Hoist,
a good husband
a barbeque out the back
happiness
fidelity.

But whose, and to what?

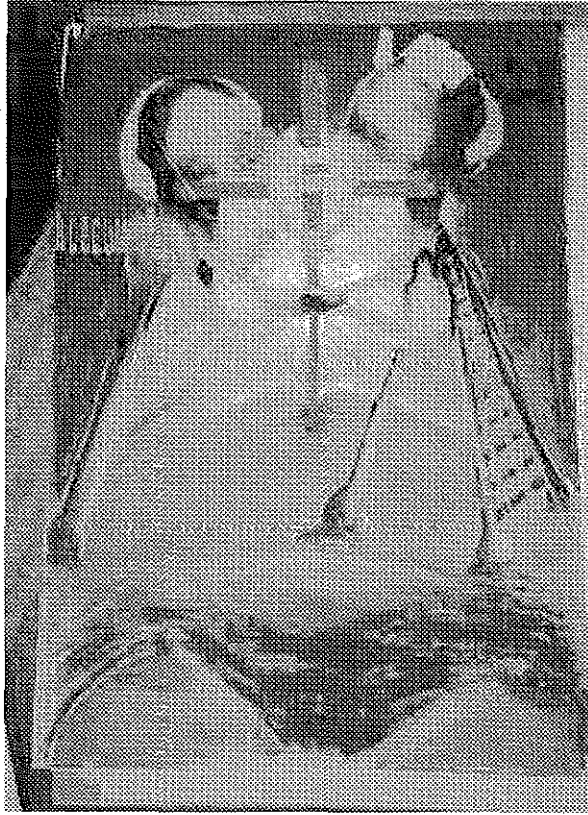


FIG. 2

The Longing for Eros in the Everyday – (This poem was rewritten from participant's personal journal notes)

On my bike I ride with the wind
looking at a sky so high
pure and clear
filled with bright white clouds,
sharply defined against blue
so pure and infinite
and I see nine frigate birds soaring above me
heading north on the wind.
I see them with my heart
I feel them through misting eyes.
Why is it
that my truth
causes suffering in others?
In me?
As I think that,
the birds falter in turbulent air,
my heart races,
breath pulled in sharply,
they flap and skew in the air

before regaining effortless flight
on wings outstretched,
strong and steady.

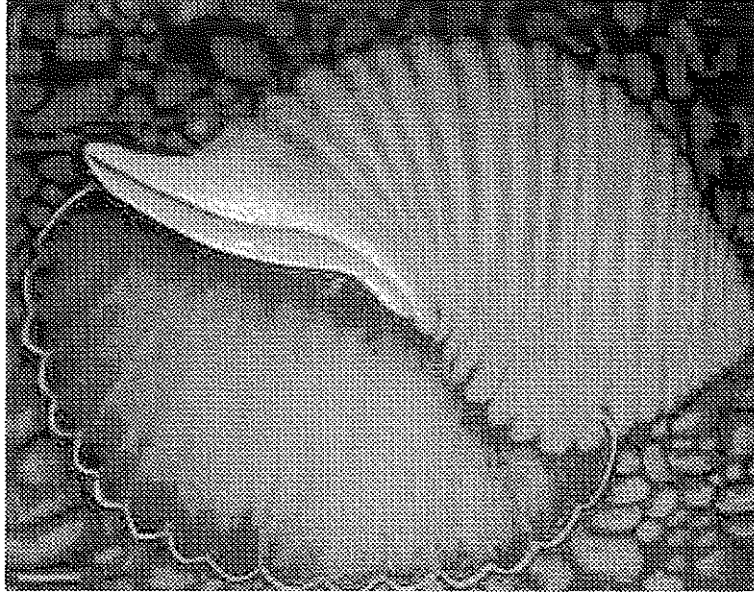


FIG. 3

Vessel for his Comfort – (This poem was created from words in the transcript and my imagined response to the telling of her story)

Look at the canvas
Look at the paint
Look at me

I am an invitation
The moist ripe flesh of my labia will soon disappear and change
The tissues will dry out
In time they will cease to embrace
The mystery of my inner mouth
Lying softly between my legs
No longer do these lips witness my seasonal drips
my leaks
my gushing blood coursing between the furrows.
Time is so short
I have not yet had my fill
We were always ending and beginning
This rhythmical body and I
I liked that feeling of dull pelvic ache
Seeing my body appearing on my underwear
It told me I was alive
We will never again dance between babies
between fucking, between friends

I see in my mind the vault of my vagina
and sense the space that was my uterus.
Its life has ceased
I am taking leaping bounds towards the grave

My lips quiver as they search in vain
For my old familiar smells
I am empty now
My eggs long gone

but
My body and I
We still desire
Slip now into this space of longing
let me feel once more my body expand
and fill with the rush of lust
You drowning and me touching you
Reaching out
and then, after
Finding ease together
ah.....
now I remember
Men don't want to linger
And the old familiar line
Men will say that they love you to get sex
and women will give sex to be told they are loved
takes me by the throat
and chokes the dying remnants of desire
is this how life ends?

Did I tell you I stroked a dog the other day?
It was lovely having something warm and soft to touch.
He just kept on letting me do it.
He loved it.
and so did I.
I suppose that is why I became a nurse.
You are given permission to touch

The following poem expresses the participant's inability to articulate her sense of grief, confusion and anger after undergoing a hysterectomy and oophorectomy. Her words are in italics. The other words are my imagination.

Interlacing the Elemental Fabric

the knitter
a modern day hysteric
sits alone
mute
cut off from her roots
her silence
practiced to an art from early childhood

is captured in the threads
that lay upon her lap
each thread, each strand
is a memory from the body
tears of recognition
prompt the knitter into action
her strong firm hands
grasp the needles
and with a skill passed down
through generations
ties a knot
casts the stitches
checks the tension
and begins
the long and painful struggle
to write
in coded secrets
the stories of her life
knit, knit, knit, knit change colour
plain knitting
no pattern
no sounds
except the clicking of the needles
knit, knit, knit, knit change colour
a different coloured ink
a space appears
she dreams a question
what is above?
what is below?
knit, knit, knit, knit change colour
eyes on knitting
she waits for the words to appear

Endnote

At a recent workshop with van Manen he explained that hermeneutics and phenomenological research is involved in all the disciplines of the humanities and social sciences. With postmodern concerns centering on the primacy of language, and the ways in which discourse codifies our cultural understanding, phenomenology has expanded to make space for an epistemology of language and text. In van Manen's opinion, various postmodern language oriented scholars and theorists have added significantly to a broader and wider understanding of the relationship between language with its systems of signs and signifiers and lived experience. Within the contemporary discourses of phenomenology van Manen includes the work of Derrida (1978) and Lyotard with their deconstructive analysis of texts. Gadamer (1977) and Rorty with hermeneutics. He names Ricoeur (1981) with his interest in the relationship between text, epistemology and human action. He describes Foucault (1976; 1977; 1978; 1982; 1984a; 1984b) as an historical phenomenologist. Under gender phenomenology he includes the work of Ruddick (1989), Gilligan (1982) and de Beauvoir (1988.). Within the analytical phenomenological framework he includes the work of Barthes (1982) and Lacan as well as the psychoanalytical perspectives of Kristeva (1984; 1987) and Irigaray (1986).

Acknowledgements

The photographs have been re-produced with the permission of the artists.

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NEGOTIATING POWER AT THE FRONTLINE OF THE WOMEN'S HEALTH ARENA: A STUDY OF WOMEN'S HEALTH CENTRE COORDINATORS

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to describe how women managers working in small, government-funded health services experience their work in relation to power issues. The information presented here is derived from data gathered from a larger, exploratory study on women's health centre coordinators in their roles as managers of women's health services. This paper suggests that part of their success can be attributed to the way they are able to identify and negotiate issues of power at every level of their work. Excerpts from women's narratives are used to illustrate themes relating to their experience as women managers, and to explicate some of the strategies used by them to negotiate power at the frontline of the women's health arena.

Keywords: women managers, qualitative research, women's stories, management strategies

Background

Women's health centres have been established since the mid 1970s in Australia, and since that time they have continued to represent a unique and quality approach to the provision of health services to women (Smith, 1978; Broom, 1991; Stevens, 1995). These specialist health centres for women were part of a host of feminist women's services which sprang up as a result of the broader reforms of the women's health movement of the past few decades. They represented the first of their kind, and offered an holistic, social model of health care as an alternative to patriarchal, mainstream medical services.

Like other feminist services, women's health centres are run by and for women, and are community-based. They operate on an explicitly feminist philosophy about social change and serve a triple purpose of responding to women's unmet needs through social action, community education and by helping individual women to increase their personal power and control over their lives (Broom, 1991; Dwyer, 1992; Stevens, 1995).

Where women's health centres originally began as small, independent collectives funded by government grants, the increase in corporatism and the dominance of economic rationalist doctrine by the state has challenged the continued autonomy and cooperative structure of women's health centres. Economically driven government policies of 'integration', 'mainstreaming' and 'amalgamation', have meant that women's health centres are being incorporated into larger, mainstream health service providers, such as community hospitals (Dwyer, 1992). Consequently, women's health centres are being faced with the challenge of adapting to a larger, hierarchical management structure while still maintaining their feminist ideologies.

Significance of the Study

It is well documented that "women's health centres are generally under-resourced and marginalised from mainstream health care" (Hunt, 1994, p.227). Increased competition for funding, a history punctuated by battles for mere survival, an already marginalised position in society, shoestring budgets and changes in government funding structures must all impact on the experience of women managers in women's health care settings. The fact that these women's experiences have not been documented is an indication of the invisibility of these individuals in the system. The embattled history of women's health centres in Australia is proof that their voices have not been heard.

Although there has been much written on the women's health movement, much less has been documented about women's health centres. Those studies that have focussed on the latter have discussed the political, economic, social, and cultural aspects to the exclusion of the individual. With the exception of one study (Weeks, 1994) which looked at the experience of women managers of generalist services as well as women's services (but not specifically women's health services), no research to date has considered what it is - or has been - like for the women who run these centres. The current study has been instigated to address the gap in the literature by exploring and describing the individual and shared meanings of 'being a women's health centre coordinator' held by this cohort of women.

In the light of all of the above, the main research question was posed: "What is it like for these women, on an everyday level, in their role as managers of women's health services?" This paper seeks to address this question with particular focus on the experience of these managers of grassroots health services in their everyday negotiations around issues of power. It is also anticipated that through the conducting of such research and the publication of this paper these women's voices can be made more audible, as well as contributing to the body of literature on women managers and women in positions of leadership.

Research Process

A purposive sample of four women's health centre coordinators participated in the study. All coordinators had been employed in their jobs for a minimum of 12 months, with three of the four coordinators having been in their current positions for three years or more. Two women had previous management experience, the others had come directly from women's health centre or project worker positions. Between them they have experience in women's refuge work, education, community development, disability services, group work, librarianship, counselling and project management. All are or have been involved on management or advisory committees locally, statewide or at the national level.

The purpose of the study upon which this paper is based was to explore and describe the lived experiences of women's health centre coordinators. As such, a qualitative and naturalistic approach, based on an interpretivist paradigm and phenomenological method (Colaizzi, 1978) was chosen as it is well suited to achieving an holistic understanding of the everyday experience of these women.

Data collection was primarily achieved via the use of audio-taped, in-depth interviews, supplemented by the use of verbal, open-ended prompts, and entries from the researcher's journal. Data collection, phenomenological analysis and validation of the data were conducted concurrently. In order to maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms have been used in the following presentation of the findings in order to identify participants' verbatim contributions.

The Findings

Each research respondent described their everyday experience as women's health centre coordinators as one of involving them in a complex web of political, management and power issues. They all seem to have to be able to "*think on their feet*". They constantly are required to quickly assess situations with funding bodies, government officials, senior management staff and the wider system. They need to be alert to current political trends and community resources. They all described a sense of feeling under threat, having to deal with diminishing resources and a political context that undermines the value of their work and principles regarding women's health services.

Feminist principles are at the core of these women's belief systems, and clearly underpin the women's health movement and the network of women's health centres. All coordinators expressed the importance of these principles to their approach to their work in women's health. These principles are based on a sound understanding of women's experience, women's points of view, the position of women in society, gender analysis, feminist theory and women-based, democratic organisational practices.

All coordinators spoke about the passion they feel about their work, about working with women, for women. For them, it is more than just a job, it's a way of life that extends into every part of their existence. It's a way of thinking about women, women's health, and the world. They all spoke about their work as being a privilege, a job where "*you can get to act out your passion within your work*" and where their belief systems are supported in their immediate working environment.

The Transition to 'Manager' - a Shift in Power

The previously flat structure of women's health centres has been replaced with a more openly hierarchal one, which, together with recent amalgamations with other generic health services, now places coordinators in a different power relationship to workers and senior management. In effect, they are now in middle management positions.

The women who participated in the study talked about their personal transition to the role of a manager. This transition is seen by them as a significant change. For Clare and Karen, this was because they came from non-managerial backgrounds. For Sue and Mary, it was more related to a change of attitude about the position, that is, a re-definition of their role from 'coordinating' a team to 'managing' a centre.

"We weren't coordinating a team any more. We were managing in a system, and that's been a big head-shift to me, that I do manage a centre now. I don't coordinate it...So that's been a big change...Quite a fundamental one. Because it has meant a separation from the notion of collectivity." (Mary)

One of the difficulties associated with this transition was having not only to manage 'up' as well as 'down', but also being under scrutiny from all sides: upper management; staff; funding bodies; and the community. Sue, Mary and Karen talked about this issue in relation to the economic rationalisation of health servicing, requiring them to handle the expanding upper management requests as well as continue to respond to community needs.

"It wasn't just the service that was looking at what we were doing. We had a whole bureaucracy and a whole government and we had a sector (looking at us)." (Karen)

Identifying the Power Issues

All participants mentioned at some length the central notion of power. They all seemed to be very aware of the importance of power in their positions, their power, power of others and the system. Each of them was careful to clarify their use of the term "power", particularly in relation to their everyday application of it. For example, Clare talked about "taking her power" and being "very careful about how I use my power". All talked about the need to name the power and to analyse and understand existing power relationships, particularly with reference to their funding bodies, and in relation to their own roles.

Some needed to state their dislike of the word "power", but seemed reconciled to its inevitable presence in their jobs. Mary spoke of the need to balance reality with her natural idealism, musing about how much better the world would be if feminist principles of "empowerment" rather than "power over" were the primary mode of operation in the wider system. Other coordinators also made similar comments, reflecting on ideal feminist practice of non-abusive use of power and their struggle to understand and negotiate the real "power plays" that are obvious in their everyday working lives.

"There's always been in this place quite a lot of attention paid to an analysis, I suppose, which is structural, which starts from the world and society and power relationships. I mean it's quite explicit in the way we work. I mean, it's been quite explicit in the way we talk about everything that happens, both to women out there and to us in here..." (Karen)

"I don't think I realised, at first, by the position, by the nature of the job, that you are in a different position in terms of power, and even though we are very much a flat structure and try to eliminate that power, it is there..." (Clare)

Most women expressed feelings of oppression by their funding bodies, especially since the change in government funding structures. The increasing trend toward the privatisation of health services, including the amalgamations of women's health services with generic services were named as causal factors. The result of this has been a strong perception amongst coordinators that women's health centres are being even further marginalised by the government, resulting in a loss of autonomy and consequently, a serious undermining of the feminist principles and practice upon which their centres are based.

"I think one of the fears even of amalgamating with the generic services is (about the) loss of our feminist face and always having to answer to somebody else..." (Clare)

All managers expressed a fear that the government agenda will ultimately result in a total dismantlement of specialist, women's health services. Consequently, they have felt under constant and increasing pressure to fight to maintain existing services. Two women mentioned that one of the "tools" that the government used was "to distance us from our team and our management committee." One coordinator saw it clearly as a deliberate act of power over them, of oppression, or of a 'divide and conquer' manoeuvre:

"...if you took it as a version of oppression, the (funding body's) come around to have a good go at oppressing a group (Women's health Centres). One of the responses of the oppressed group is to see that they haven't got a response back to the regime, and so they go inward and do each other over." (Mary)

All participants shared some of this feeling. The temptation to turn inward and criticise each other as a response to the pressures that the lack of understanding or political support from the wider system has created, appears to have been strong at one point. However, this temptation was only mentioned in the past tense, with comments about needing to create a "unified front", feeling bonded by "shared feminist principles", and wanting to make the time to meet and support each other in their roles as coordinators, taking precedence.

For example, Mary spoke about the need to "use their power" by remaining cohesive and to present as a unified team, to provide "a grand and more powerful sense of, it's not just me and the workers and Service you are dealing with.". Others spoke of needing to "learn from these experiences" and about recognising "opportunities" to maintain whatever power base they have. Karen shared some of her anger about the feeling of oppression, of feeling undermined, but most of all, "the devaluing of the work we do."

Sue clearly articulated the power issues in terms of the further marginalisation of women's health through progressive funding cuts. The result for her has been to be more involved with policy and broader women's issues, in order to:

"...maintain a profile for women, not just for women's health, because the profile for women has just been cut and cut and cut and marginalised; and so some of the things we do now are not just with women's health but are with other women's organisations to just ensure that there is a profile there." (Sue)

The Need to be Politically Aware

All participants described at least part of their everyday working life as requiring them to be politically aware. Being 'tuned in' to the political climate is a vital part of their job. Sue described their tasks as coordinators of women's health centres to be more and more focussed on ways to maintain "a face and a consideration for women's health", requiring them to embark on what she termed as "a political marketing exercise."

Other coordinators mentioned the need for each of them to be "a political creature", and that they are unable to luxuriate in idealism or, as Karen put it, to be "naive about the world".

They shared, too, a common experience in feeling that their work is largely misunderstood by most politicians and bureaucrats. Their view of the few who do have knowledge and insight into the value of preserving specialist health services for women was that they are mostly women, who are "*in the minority in their positions anyway*", and who are therefore not major stakeholders of political power.

Government issues and agendas were frequently mentioned as having a direct impact on their jobs. This awareness was not stated in terms of policy, but with regard to needing to have an understanding of broader political tools, concepts and positioning of power. Most participants demonstrated an advanced level of insight into the context of their work in the current political climate, and the ways in which changes in government policy had undermined their power to fight to maintain their centre's existence.

"One of the tools of change from the government was to put each of us (Women's Health Centres) in a radically different context so that what we shared was our unique experiences that (then) wasn't necessarily transferable or applicable to any other one Centre." (Clare)

Specific Strategies for Negotiating with the Wider System

Closely linked to their awareness of political agendas and power issues, all coordinators spoke of having had to develop a strategic approach to their everyday working negotiations. For example, it appears that they have had to get 'street smart' by carrying out power broking "*deals*" with line managers and funding departments; building "*illusions*" of having a more solid, powerful and cohesive core of support than they might actual 'feel'; monitoring shifting power bases; and developing ways to "*strategise things*" in order to help their centres to survive. As Mary described it, "*we built up a whole host of tactics*" in order to successfully negotiate for what they needed.

These tactics included intensive lobbying of people on committees, and of rallying support from others in a way that was tangible to management and funding bodies.

All participants mentioned that they have needed to adapt or review their styles of management as they have "*evolved*" in their roles. Their different styles and strategies are closely linked to their use of power, the importance of setting up clear management structures, and the development of and reliance on good policies and written guidelines. For example, Clare spoke of the importance of having a "*strong policy framework*" which has been "*developed by staff and management committee*" in order to guide the decision making process for herself as well as for others. This, she said, safeguards against inconsistent or erratic decisions, and allows staff to be aware of how final decisions are derived.

Developing informal (as well as formal) networks and connections with other organisations and public offices are also important ways of getting results, and of setting up negotiations and strategising. Since the recent amalgamations however, this seems to have become more difficult, as one coordinator described:

"(I) had very strong connections in the bureaucracy. Like, I always knew who to ring. I always knew who to tap. You knew your way of getting round the system. Now it is different, and so you have to play it much harder in the, you know, the bigger environment." (Sue)

All participants expressed a strong commitment to maintaining their ethics and sense of integrity in their work. They also spoke of needing to balance their idealism with a strong practical approach.

“I found a wonderful, wonderful phrase from a friend, which is ‘ethical pragmatism’. How do you become pragmatic and still maintain an ethical framework?” (Mary)

“And I see that as one of the biggest challenges, now, how to be pragmatic, and how to maintain those principles and look at different ways of using them.” (Karen)

All coordinators shared the notion that a high degree of organisational ability is essential to their success. They all spoke of having evolved a range of strategies and “*systems*” to help them keep on top of their enormous workloads. They all seemed to be very confident of their efficiency, whilst recognising that sometimes even the best organisational systems break down. Most commonly cited “*systems*” were diaries, lists, lists of lists, whiteboards, coloured stickers and post-it notes, self-sent phone message reminders, and “*a really great administrative assistant*”.

“So my diary and myself became bosom buddies, and yellow stickers for the next lot of check lists and you know - it is a skill base I have. I am very organised. I have a very good system. I can see now why systems are so important.” (Mary)

They also mentioned a common belief that the recognition and the setting up of good management structures is vitally important to them. This seems to be particularly true for them in times of turmoil or uncertainty, that clear management structures, strategic plans and stated principles for their service are what they have to fall back on.

“In order to survive those really difficult political times, having the structure, the management structure that we set up, and having those clearly explicated principles, have been the really important things for me.” (Sue)

Summary of Findings

Findings presented in this paper reveal a number of strategies used by these women managers in their everyday negotiations with staff, funding bodies, politicians, bureaucrats, and the wider system. To summarise, these strategies include:

- identifying and understanding the power issues
- being politically aware and well-informed
- setting up clear management structures
- having clearly explicated baseline principles
- developing and maintaining highly efficient organisational systems
- having a strong commitment to maintaining personal and professional ethics and integrity
- balancing idealism with pragmatics
- developing good formal and informal professional networks
- creating strong policy frameworks and written guidelines
- being prepared to engage in intensive, strategic lobbying for support

Finally, it is important to acknowledge the generosity and enthusiasm with which these women participated in the research upon which this paper is based. It is hoped that by sharing their personal stories and strategies, other women's experiences may be confirmed, supported or, at the very least, highlighted for further discussion.

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Women of Diversity And How They Got To The Top In Western Australian Universities

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Abstract

In the last five years, seventeen out of thirty seven Australian universities have introduced women's leadership, management or general career development programmes. The extent to which these programmes address or respond to the needs of women of diversity is not well understood or documented. This research documents how women of diversity have achieved their goals in Australian universities.

In 1994, the University of Western Australia implemented a Women in Leadership Programme, an Affirmative Action initiative of the Equity Office, for senior general and academic staff. The Programme was developed to:

'enable women at UWA to develop leadership skills and knowledge in order to increase their participation in positions of leadership and in the University's decision making processes

An emphasis on ensuring the participation of women of diversity in the planning group, as mentors, as trainers, participants and role models is now being given consideration. Issues such as leadership concepts and diversity matters are also being given some prominence. A women of diversity support network has been established to explore the experiences of women from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds in the university.

This paper summarises the outcomes of interviews with senior general and academic women of diversity in Western Australian universities. Many of the women are or have been participants in leadership programmes and despite barriers and racial stereotyping; some women have broken through the 'glass ceiling'. The experiences identified in this research may be useful in assisting other women of diversity to achieve their goals in higher education.

Keywords: culture, women, leadership, race

Introduction

An initial literature search on 'women of diversity in leadership in higher education' indicates that much of the available information has been undertaken in America and England. There seems to be very little written about the experiences on women of diversity employed in Australian universities by women of diversity themselves.

The two researchers of this study are women of diversity from an Indian background and an African/Anglo background. For the purposes of this research 'women of diversity' refers to women who are culturally and linguistically different from the dominant Anglo-Celtic white majority. As researchers we acknowledge that indigenous women are often the most disadvantaged women in higher education in terms of level, tenure and systemic discrimination. Whilst there are some common experiences between indigenous women and minority migrant women, we as researchers do not feel culturally competent to interpret indigenous women's concerns or issues and hence they have been excluded from this study.

In the first part of this paper we explore strategies which one Western Australian university has developed to assist in changing the culture for women of diversity by making it more inclusive. The second part of the paper includes qualitative data from a number of interviews, which attempt to identify the barriers for women of diversity in leadership at Western Australian universities. The interviews also explore the experiences of these women in predominantly mono-cultural environments in addition to determining whether they face a double disadvantage because of their differences of gender and race.

Background to the Study

Women of diversity in leadership at universities are a recent phenomenon and there are still relatively few of these women in senior positions. A study by Wilson (1989) indicates that the reason for this is their double oppression in a predominantly patriarchal white society as a result of their gender and sex.

The idea for this research emerged from a major Affirmative Action initiative implemented at the University of Western Australia (UWA), - The Leadership Development for Women (LDW) Programme which has operated successfully since 1994. The aim of the LDW Programme is to enable women at UWA to develop leadership skills and knowledge in order to increase their participation in positions of leadership and in the university's decision-making processes. The LDW Programme involves over 100 academic (Level B and above) and general (HEE level 6 and above) women staff. The themes of the LDW Programme have centered on action learning projects, a personal mentoring system and information sessions including a 'women at the top' luncheon series.

Several issues of concern to women of diversity emerged within this programme during its implementation from 1994 - 1997. During the second year of the LDW Programme's development a number of participants felt that the leadership issues relevant to culturally and linguistically diverse women were not included. These women also felt that the prevailing leadership paradigm emerging within the Programme was ethno-centric and predominantly Anglo-Celtic. The women questioned whether the LDW Programme was inclusive and beneficial to them as women of diversity. Through the support of one of the key members of the LDW planning group (herself a women of diversity) a number of initiatives have been developed to ensure a more inclusive process.

Over the past three years the LDW Programme has been marked by a number of defining events and activities that go some way to reflect the concerns and perspectives of these women. These initiatives include the integration of diversity issues in aspects of the LDW Programme, in the selection of participants, mentors, consultants, trainers, content and development of study materials. A 'Woman of Diversity' support group was also established to provide support to women on the campus. The group holds informal meetings and an email network were established to facilitate discussion and debate of relevant issues. Many of the members of the network may have difficulty participating in mainstream university women's groups on campus.

In 1996, the LDW Programme (under the University's Distinguished Visitor Fund) invited Renee Redwood, the former Executive Director of the USA Glass Ceiling Commission to run seminars and workshops for senior staff, heads of departments and the community. The Glass Ceiling

Commission reports barriers impeding progress of women and minorities to the US President. Renee Redwood put the issue of managing diversity firmly on the agenda at UWA through her work with various groups and in particular women's groups and the senior executive management group.

A recent evaluation of the LDW Programme showed that 40% of the participants have applied for promotion and 52% of these have been successful. The evaluation also asked the women to list any aspects of leadership that they have become aware of that have not been discussed by the LDW Programme. The following were identified:

- issues pertaining to leadership and cross-cultural matters;
- assumption by facilitators that there is an even playing field for all women which is definitely not so for women of other cultures and ethnicity.

More recently the women of diversity network presented a lunch time forum about the issues of race and gender at UWA to the other women on the LDW Programme. This was the first time these issues had been placed in an LDW public forum. At the forum, senior women from the diversity network discussed the issues, barriers, pressures and complexities of working in a multi-cultural world. It is also interesting to note that there was reluctance on the part of more junior academic and general staff from the diversity network to publicly participate in the forum. These women met separately with the coordinator of the network to share their own experiences. Their comments included the following:

“there is more unity with men of diversity than Anglo-Celtic women on the campus”

“the women from the dominant cultural group just do not hear our voices”

“there is no self reflection on the part of women from the dominant cultural group, they often

refer to us in the deficit model; for example if we do not participate in mainstream women's network meetings it is considered our fault, rather than reflecting on the reasons why women of diversity choose not to participate”

“recently arrived migrants can find it very difficult to address selection criteria for employment at the University”

The above comments suggested that there is a form of 'cloning' in recruitment at the University. Watson (1996) refers to the 'cloning effect' whereby existing managers select other managers on the basis of how closely they approximate themselves. This results in a predominantly white Anglo-Saxon workplace.

While planning the research for this study, a survey of equal employment opportunity (EEO) managers in Australian universities asked the following questions:

- (i) Are there any women of diversity networks operating in your University?
- (ii) In your University's Annual Affirmative Action report do you provide a statistical analysis of the position of women from cultural and linguistically diverse backgrounds?

The responses to these questions were obtained from eighteen Australian universities and indicated that universities do not have women of diversity networks or did not know about their existence. Only one university (UWA) is currently operating an informal network. The University of Technology, Sydney (UTS) was the only institution collecting statistics on all academic staff from racial, ethnic and ethno-religious minorities. Some universities such as the

University of Western Australia, Charles Stuart University and the University of New England indicated that statistics would be collected as part of the 1998 Affirmative Action review process. Although many of the respondents indicated they were interested in the issues raised in the questions, they have not been prominent concerns for many universities.

The implementation of the Affirmative Action Act (Equal Opportunity for Women) in 1986, has led to the requirement that universities provide a demographic profile and analysis of academic and general staff women. Accurate data on women could indicate where progress is or is not being made in breaking the 'glass ceiling barriers'. The survey responses to the above questions indicated that universities do not presently collect data on the basis of race and gender. As a result, affirmative action policies and programmes have not focussed on the specific issues of women of diversity. Likewise, much of the literature on women in higher education has focussed on women in general and not specifically on the needs of women of diversity.

Australian universities are increasingly being asked to develop an international focus and to recognise the globally competitive nature of higher education. The challenge is to provide a culturally responsive work and study environment and to reflect the societal shifts of Australia and the region by becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse in the student and staff populations. Achieving diversity in higher education is essential, as it will play an important part in shaping our future to create a truly diverse environment that aims for excellence in education.

The Research Approach

In Australian universities there can be little doubt that women of diversity have similar experiences to other women, and specific experiences that derive from the culture and practice of the higher education sector. This research investigates the task of filling the gap in research, ensuring that the voices of women of diversity are heard and documented.

The aims of this research were to:

1. Identify how women of diversity got to the top in Australian universities in Western Australia;
2. Identify the visible and invisible cultural and systemic barriers encountered by women of diversity; and
3. Explore issues of race, gender and cultural differences for women of diversity.

Case studies of women of diversity from four of the five universities in Western Australia formed the basis for this study. In total, eight academic and general staff women were selected for the study, including one lecturer, two senior lecturers, two associate professors, two professors and a HEE level 9 general staff member. Seven of the eight women were born overseas. Except for two women who obtained their doctorates from the US and UK, all the other women had obtained their postgraduate degrees in Australia. The women in academic positions started their academic careers as Associate lecturers and slowly moved upwards to their current positions. All the women had worked at different universities.

This research was conducted by interviewing the participants. Each interview took approximately one hour. A list of open-ended questions was used to explore the following issues. The educational background of the participants was explored. The role of mentors, role models and networks that played were determined. The barriers and stresses in leadership including personal and professional stress experienced as women of diversity formed a part of this research. Issues of racial stereotyping; empowering aspects of being a woman of diversity

and strategies used in integration and making it to the top in the universities were also explored in this study.

Results

i. Role Models, Mentors and Networks

Role models, mentors and networks are important in the development of leaders. However, compared to the dominant cultural groups, women of diversity are often less likely to have role models and mentors who they can identify with and obtain support and guidance (hooks, 1990).

The women interviewed in this study indicated that family members often served as role models and mentors during their childhood and early adult life. During their postgraduate studies and especially during the initial transition and integration into Australian society, postgraduate supervisors and professors were identified as common role models and mentors. Most women indicated that later in their careers, prior to their involvement in any leadership development programmes they were without a mentor.

Those women who did have mentors, cross-cultural communication difficulties were identified as a cause of concern in the mentoring relationship. The desirable qualities and attributes of mentors identified by these women included: fair and consistent treatment of people, recognition of the difficulties women of diversity experience, being objective and calm during a crisis, and resolving conflicts in a dignified manner.

It was interesting to note that in general most women of diversity did not belong to formal and informal networks on campus. The lack of participation in networks and community groups was attributed to time constraints (although possibly not the underlying reason). More importantly, the feeling of not fitting into a group and not being treated fairly were identified as reasons for not

being a fully active member of networks. The advantages of belonging to networks were identified as:

- improved professional and personal networks;
- sharing of information and opinions;
- increasing knowledge of people and institutional cultures.

ii. Barriers and Stresses in Leadership

Research indicates that the barriers to equal employment opportunity for women can occur at three different phases of the employment process: recruitment; job entry; and (Pettigrew and Martin, 1987). The existence of performance pressure was identified as one of the main causes of stress in the professional lives of these women. Some women indicated that certain individuals in their work area had doubts about their capabilities and even questioned whether a woman of diversity was capable of being a leader. These women found that they needed to work doubly hard, not make mistakes and prove themselves much more than women from the dominant cultural groups. As a result, these women spent greater time and energy on research, thought and consultation prior to the making of decisions about even trivial matters. The women also felt that they placed high expectations on themselves to perform well and to do better than others just to be considered an equal. The women expressed a sense of alienation from the organisational culture, which was white, conservative and patriarchal.

This is consistent with the findings of Alcorso (1991) who reported the diffuse but powerful role of organisational culture in promoting insiders and excluding those perceived as outsiders: an issue which has emerged in several studies of discrimination in the workplace.

In the present investigation, language and cultural differences were identified as impeding leadership in women of diversity. For example: during the interviews conducted in this study the following were identified:

language and accented English impedes communication as does other people's perceptions of the women's language skills; and cultural conflict, which occurred in socialising, especially in drinking alcohol in social situations and in socialising which, takes place at bars and pubs.

One woman related her experience of how even body language revealed discrimination. She said that even before she spoke some people would 'place hands on the ears in a motion of straining to hear or an expression in the eyes that indicated I am sure you have an accent and I will not understand you, but I have to try hard'.

In a report by the Australian Council of Trade Unions (Matheson, 1994) it was noted that; employers place more importance on a migrant's accent than their qualifications". This form of subtle discrimination often goes ignored and seldom is it dealt with. As Hawthorne (1994) reported, the issues of 'accented' English were stated as the most frequent problem by non-English speaking background people. Likewise, Pettigrew and Martin (1987), while studying the experiences of black American Administrators, have reported on the existence of subtle and indirect forms of discrimination that are sometimes not recognised by their perpetrators.

iii. Personal and Professional Stress

The important issues identified by the women in our study as contributing to personal and professional stress included: not considered to be articulate; lack of assertiveness; cultural and personal values and respect for others; not contradicting elders; and avoidance of confrontation. Additional personal and professional stresses identified in this study were:

- responsibility to protect your culture by setting good examples;
- behaving at all times and not letting down your culture or people;
- being away from home country and family;
- not being able to speak one's first language, share jokes, memories or experiences related to one's culture;
- leadership as a new experience for women in Australian universities;
- the challenge and stress of managing others who may not accept you as a leader;
- the lack of interest by members of the dominant culture in understanding different ethnic cultures;
- recognition of intellectual abilities but not an appreciation of the whole person;
- not being taken seriously because of difference in dress and colour; and
- isolation and tokenism.

iv. Racial Stereotyping

The notion of racial stereotyping exists in our society and was experienced by all women interviewed. While working with black Americans, Pettigrew and Martin (1987) observed that in interracial work environments people of colour have to cope with 'triple jeopardy' that is, coping

with negative racial stereotypes; being the only person of colour in the work group; and being regarded as a token women. These issues also apply to women of diversity in the Australian university context. All the women interviewed experienced racial stereotyping in the form of categorising individuals on the basis of race and sex. In particular:

- Asian women were required to conform to the stereotyping of being soft and unable to take tough
- decisions, being passive, mild, conforming and difficult to deal with;
- when the women challenged the stereotypical image assigned to them by others they were often
- labelled as 'stirrers', 'challengers', 'aggressive', 'pushy' and 'authoritarian';
- perceptions that people of colour speak with accented English and are unintelligible, where present
- and,
- some women experienced negative racial comments and jokes.

When asked how they dealt with racial stereotyping, some of the women said they would either challenge it or ignore it.

These experiences are consistent with the findings of other research in Australia into discrimination in the workplace. In service and management areas, the Australian Public Service Commission found that "systemic discrimination is a fact in the APS. Experienced, well qualified NESB (non-English speaking background) staff do not have the opportunities to develop their potential to compete equally" (Public Service Commission, 1990).

The New South Wales Equal Opportunity in Public Employment (1990) is a useful benchmark for later research. The EEO survey of the NSW higher education sector found discrimination in the form of racial harassment and indirect discrimination against both academic and general staff. Respondents cited discrimination in institutional practices such as non-recognition of overseas qualifications and English proficiency as significant barriers.

v. Integration and Strategies for Making it to the Top

Transition and integration into any society can be a difficult process. This was confirmed by a number of the women in the study. Postgraduate supervisors and overseas student friends were identified as assisting in the integration process. The presence and visibility of other women of diversity in the university was identified as important in assisting the integration process. (The more established women were happy to pass on tips and strategies for integration into the university). Those women who were married identified their partners who were Anglo-Celtic Australians as assisting them in understanding the culture of this society and its institutions.

The women had valuable strategies and suggestions to pass on to other women of diversity working in the higher education sector. Some of the suggestions are listed below:

- join support groups and institutional networks for women of diversity;
- have a positive philosophy of life;

- take risks in breaking the stereotypical images of your culture;
- work around obstacles you encounter;
- acknowledge the difference of race and sex as an empowerment rather than dis-empowerment;
- express your opinion even if it involves stepping out of your stereotypical image;
- get to know local ethnic community groups;
- recognise and validate cross cultural experiences as an asset for universities and decision-making processes;
- endeavour to get along with people and be interested in their culture;
- expect to be treated differently; and
- be proud of your culture and values.

vi. Empowering Aspects of Being a Woman of Diversity

The women of diversity were asked to share the empowering aspects of being a woman of diversity. The responses to this request were mixed and may have been influenced by the women's sense of personal progress and/or satisfaction. The following are extracts of the comments from the women interviewed:

"In the past I hid my diversity but now I am more assured and self confident about who I am. I am no longer apologetic or embarrassed about who I am. Now I feel positive that I am paving the way for migrant women".

"My culture is a slight buffer, people who assume difference restrict my space but give it to me as well. Anyone who leaves his or her country is never totally bound by the tradition of the home country or country you come to - you can claim freedom. It's the insider-outsider dilemma".

"Having been born and brought up in a different culture allows me to choose the best values and cultures from two distinctively different cultures - the home and host"

" Because of my experience of sexism, racism and my knowledge of diversity, I believe I make unique contributions to the university 's decision making processes. I am proud to represent the views of women of diversity at the university."

" As a woman of cultural diversity, I relate well to international students. I find that I can empathise with them and they open up to me very easily."

"Being born into a culture where I was taught to manage power and handle authority has assisted me in my leadership role."

Conclusions

The information presented in this research explores aspects of how some women of diversity are making their way to the top in Western Australian universities. The barriers encountered by the visible, invisible, cultural and systemic barriers in the workplace women have emerged clearly. While exploring the issues of race, culture and gender differences experienced by the women interviewed, an examination of the data indicates that race may be a greater barrier than gender. The importance of a sense of belonging to the university was paramount to all women and this appears to have been achieved gradually. Strategies for cultural change and informal and formal networks addressing issues for women of diversity are important in overcoming visible and

invisible barriers. The removal of career impediments, racial stereotyping and discrimination are imperative in achieving parity for women of diversity.

Women of diversity in universities have a difficult journey fraught with many barriers and challenges, yet despite this they are achieving outstanding success. The opportunity for women of diversity to share their experiences can be an empowering tool in leadership for all women.

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1948 LONDON OLYMPICS: FASTEST WOMAN IN THE WORLD IS AN EXPERT COOK

DUAL ROLES : CREATING SPACE FOR WOMEN AS LEADERS IN SPORT

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Abstract

The title of this paper is taken from media representation¹ of events in the life of Dutch athlete Francina 'Fanny' Blankers-Koen. Even today, it encapsulates many of the issues facing women as they strive for full inclusion in the Australian sporting environment.

For most of its history, the world of sport in Australia has been a male construct. To a large extent, it remains so today. There has been change - even considerable change - but this is very much work in progress. Sport reflects many of our cultural mores; as such, to change the culture of sport is to be a part of the larger social revolution being conducted by women (and men) on behalf of women. However, what if environments unresponsive to women continue to survive, even dominant; environments that do not create spaces of social conscience? What roles can women play in altering such environments?

Which in the context of this conference, raises another question - how do you create a history of women leaders in a sector noticeable for their absence? This is an issues paper. It identifies some of the factors behind the statistics on women's participation as leaders in sport. It raises more questions than it attempts to answer: but in delineating the issues we may find solutions that are truly inclusive of women's leadership aspirations.

Key words: leadership, image, media, women in sport.

Introduction

I was appointed Executive Director of the Women's Sport Foundation of Western Australia in September 1996. This is my first experience of working in the sport industry. However, through personal and familial experiences, I have gleaned some insights into women working in the media/ the law/ in medicine/ engineering/ academia/ in science/ in the construction industry/ politics and architecture. As well as women combining family, study, career and private business.

What has intrigued me about the world of sport is on the one hand its presence as a defined arena reflecting traditional social mores - conservative, overwhelmingly male and saturated in history - and on the other hand, it is a place of enormous change, of entrepreneurs, fast food sports, adaptation of the most advanced technologies and science, a place of debate, research and the (at times) uneasy mixture of private enterprise and government.

Sport is also another community space into which, over the last 100 to 150 years, women in the Western world have been determined to find access. First as participants and now more actively as decision makers and leaders.

Sport combines the best and worst of our social attitudes - from the universal virtues enshrined in the notion of 'fair play' or sportsmanship, to the abuse of performance enhancing drugs; from the drive for inclusive participation to harassment of just about every form. Apart from the health benefits to be gained from participation in sport, it is a medium long used for leadership training: for the development and honing of skills recognised as essential for success - self-confidence, ambition, goal setting, discipline, teamwork and empowerment of the individual.

In the era defined by the Modern Olympics, it has taken a century of women's activity both on and off the sports arena to formulate an international agenda for change. And the work is not finished. As this paper will show, we are still raising more questions than are being answered. To understand some of the reasons for this, it is necessary to look at how society represents women, in particular, women in sport. It is thus essential to consider issues of language and image; which I shall firstly do so by looking at the lives of several internationally acclaimed female athletes and society's response to their successes.

Society's Representations of Women in Sport

The title for this paper is taken from media representation of events in the life of Francina 'Fanny' Blankers-Koen. Blankers-Koen was a Dutch runner who at 18 competed in the 1936 Berlin Olympics and then aged 30, married with two children, sought to compete in the 1948 London Olympics. She was declared too old and neglectful of her son and daughter. Despite the pressure to retire, Fanny did not and won four gold medals (three individual and one anchoring the Dutch relay) (Leder *et al.*, 1996, p. 43). Fanny's husband, and also her coach, supported his wife with the public statement:

My wife is a real housewife ... She cooks, cleans and takes care of our children. She sews and knits their clothes. (quoted in Leder *et al.*, 1996, p. 43)

To give the discussion an Australian slant, consider the career of another great female track and field athlete, Western Australia's Shirley de la Hunty (nee Strickland). De la Hunty, who competed against Blankers-Koen in 1948, also faced this apparent conflict of roles. For de la Hunty, however, the conflict between sexual stereotype and individual ability and desire had begun before her international success on the running track when she was refused admission to The University of Western Australia's School of Engineering. She was refused admission because there were no female toilets in the building. There were no female toilets because women were refused entry to the school so there was no need to provide such amenities. As an alternative, de la Hunty completed an honours degree in nuclear physics (Leder *et al.* 1996, p. 45).

Looking back at the careers of Blankers-Koen and de la Hunty with a view to assessing women's presence in sport today, the question arises, have we, in the intervening years, made (more) space for ourselves? As a corollary to this question, if we have made (more) space, is this space comfortable; that is, is it an environment conducive to women's continuing presence and full contribution to the best of each individual's abilities? Have we reconciled our abilities and desires to participate in the ways we want to, with the pressure of society to conform to long-held stereotypical roles? In this regard, de la Hunty understood the tension between her 'roles' as woman/wife and athlete

As an athlete, I believe I was popular as long as I was demure, appreciative, decorative, obedient, and winning. (Leder *et al.* 1996, p. 45).

Like Blankers-Koen, de la Hunty's physical prowess was seen to challenge her femininity or her status as a 'real woman'. As with Blankers-Koen (through the comments of her husband, Jan), given the mores of the time, de la Hunty acquiesced in resolving this conflict for society. So that in 1988 de la Hunty commented

I well remember wearing exotic hairstyles and Chanel No. 5 during my competitive days to reassure myself, as well as everyone else, that I was female. (Leder *et al.* 1996, p. 45)

In other words, de la Hunty had to 'internalise' society's tension with her dual roles as woman and successful Australian athlete to create an image of herself which would make both herself and others feel comfortable.

To understand the context within which women in sport operate in Australia, it is necessary to acknowledge that traditionally Australian sport is fundamentally a male construct. As such, sport is based on traditional hegemonic masculine virtues so that

In the later nineteenth century, sport became a crucial cultural activity that demonstrated difference between men and women. The aim of sport was to show masculine power and domination over an opponent and competitive spirit, qualities that 'scientists' of the day thought women did not or should not possess. (Kirk *et al.* 1996, p. 171).

In this inheritance, lies many of the issues facing women today as they enter sport as participants and possible decision-makers and/ or leaders.

Placing the "London Daily Graphic" headline in the context described by the above quotes, it can be seen that in the achievements of both Blankers-Koen and de la Hunty, there was danger that such success in a medium considered fundamentally male would negate the value of the medium for men. The women's success challenged the value of the medium, sport, to define and award such masculine virtues as strength, power, success, ambition, competition and winning. The implication being that, as successful participants, Blankers-Koen and de la Hunty could only be 'other than woman'. So in the language and imagery of the time Blankers-Koen and de la Hunty were 'made safe' to society by associating their achievements with 'womanly' matters. They therefore remained 'real women'.

Neither the media nor the athletes thought to challenge these suppositions. Such deconstruction of image and text is a tool honed through the experiences of the 'feminist' seventies. In fact, by their various actions all parties reinforced the assigned roles. As a consequence, there was no 'rupture', barely even a conscious wrinkle in society's essential fabric. Blankers-Koen and de la Hunty remained first and foremost women whose success in the predominantly masculine medium of sport could be celebrated through retention and visible confirmation of their womanly virtues.

Another extraordinary Australian athlete, Olympic swimmer Dawn Fraser, refused to conform to the 1960's sporting establishment's standards of 'feminine behaviour'. Despite her unequalled achievementsⁱⁱ, Fraser did not present the same comfortable images of woman/athlete to the power-brokers. She also directly challenged some dearly held beliefs. For instance, Fraser mainly trained with men and in this regard, revealed her attitude with the comment, "I hated the easy assumption that girls had to be slower than boys" (Leder *et al.*, 1996, p. 51).

In her view of Australia's female athletes, Fraser observed that

I think the ability of Australian women to endure explains a lot of our Olympic success. Women in this country have always been a lot more gutsy than men. (Leder *et al.*, 1996, p. 52)

If one considers Fraser's assertion about the strength of Australian women combined with their undeniable success in the Olympic arena over most of this century, the important question is, given this ability and determination, why aren't women leading the development of sport in this country today?

Creating a History of Women Leaders in Sport

Part of the answer lies in the fact that although there have been female advocates for women's sport for over 150 years, there is not a history of women's leadership in sport; certainly not in Australia: it is a history we are now actively trying to create.

However, the Australian women who have participated in the Olympics, often against resistance and even active hindrance, have shown that women do not have to be constrained by the inhibiting physical space historically allocated to them. Like the women who fought for the right to tertiary education, the right to vote, the right to enter parliament, to run their own affairs and in the eyes of the law to be an individual rather than part of their husband's estate, women in sport have broken free from long held constraints on how we can use our bodies - and the roles that we can undertake.

While women have won the right to participate in sport in this country, there is not the same level of acceptance of women as leaders, as the power-brokers. Nor have we fully taken control of our sense of physical self, of our bodies and how this is publicly portrayed for social approval.

Limited acceptance of women in leadership roles is not unique to sport. However, just as in medicine, law, government, the financial and business worlds, for instance, there are women in the highest positions, there are women as Presidents of various national and state sporting associations. But the numbers are limited so that in 1991 it could still be said that

Men continue to hold virtually all the key positions within the international and national sport federations throughout the world and on the International and National Olympic Committees as well.
(Depauw *et al.* 1991, p. 33)

In defence of the International Olympic Committee, efforts are being made to overturn a century of active resistance to women's presence in leadership roles. In the IOC's opening statement of "Women and Sport - New Horizons", released in 1995 it was noted that

the IOC is aware that the principle of equality between men and women needs to be reached within the Olympic movement...
(Davenport, 1996, p. 30)

So if we accept that attempts are being made at the highest levels of sport and government (via legislation and policy) to encourage the equal participation of women and men, why is the response so limited?

A partial answer, or at least a key insight, may be gained from examining the issues of language and image; to how society represents women in sport. For it is crucial to understand the close connection between the media's representation of sport and sport persons and the continuing effort to secure equal opportunity for all Australians. The images that are projected reflect the values that society gives, or is perceived to have given, either consciously or sub-consciously, to those persons and their occupations. It thus becomes crucial to critically assess such images and the language of their description; to tease out any underlying messages of racism or sexism. In view of this relationship, the impact of the media's representation of sport persons cannot be trivialised and is important to understanding the positioning of women in the sporting arena.

The recently released Phillip's Report (*Illusory Image*) on Media Coverage of Women's sport in Australia confirms that there is still a clear dichotomy in the way our society represents men and women. That is, there is the continuing prevalence of gender-based stereotypes and roles. As both the lack of media coverage of women's sport as well as the narratives employed to depict women demonstrate, society apparently is still experiencing significant discomfort in breaking free of 'archaic' images and stereotypes. For instance, the print media more commonly portrays a female athlete in a static or staged pose whereas male athletes are more likely to be shown in action poses or with a wife (or dog) in postures of admiration.

With this in mind, a key part of the Phillip's Report is not so much the statistics demonstrating the continuing paucity of media coverage of women's sport, rather it is the section on the qualitative coverage of women's sport. The language and imagery used to portray women in sport is reflective of that found throughout our society: based on stereotypes and acting as a restraint on women's roles.

As Jill Astbury points out in her book, *Crazy For You, The Making of Women's Madness*, "language has been a powerful tool to discount women's opinions. Women, not men, are often said to nag, moan, whinge or bitch." (1997) Astbury also argues that the language of "inadequacy and failure is [still]... attached to the female body. And acceptance of the normality of women's bodies, let alone their minds, unaided by medical assistance", still seems a distant goal (Astbury, 1997). For example, although pregnancy is a normal state, the best one can hope for is, in medical parlance, "a low-risk" pregnancy.

Considering the crucial, and interconnecting, issues of image, language and projection of women's physical awareness, one can argue that until we take control of our own physicality, that is our sense of self, women will continue to struggle to fully realise their potential on many fronts, including leadership. Instead, we will always be contained and constrained by stereotypes.

Understanding the connection between the control of one's body (sense of self) and the attainment of power or higher levels of self-confidence is not new. This is one of the oldest forms of restraint on women's lives. It is a form of control that actively inhibits the development of women as leaders - be it leaders in the physical or intellectual arenas. It is intrinsically tied to women as child-bearers; using the possession of a womb to deny women's abilities and desire to be strong and assertive. As Dr Elizabeth Blackwell, the first woman on the British medical register, observed in 1858: "A woman who controls her body controls her destiny" (quoted in Kirk *et al.* 1996, p. 225).

Compare this attitude to the dominant view of the time expressed by a Dr Howard Kelly in 1913

Good women ... possess no language and no terminology, either for their feelings or their anatomy.

(quoted in Kirk *et al.* 1996, p. 225)

To effect change in the lives and roles of women over the last 100 to 150 years has involved challenging the powerful combination of medicine and science, which deemed females

to be physically and mentally weaker because of the constant drain of their reproductive systems and ... warned that academic pursuits would cause their breasts to shrink and their ovaries to atrophy. (Astbury, 1997, p. 21)

As well as being too fragile to educate, women were also deemed too physically weak to participate in any real way in organised sports. In fact it needs to be recognised that this attitude still lurks in certain minds and is used to influence decisions - or "restrictions based on medical evidence" - as for example, in 1988 when the

Queensland Life Saving Association banned women from the beach flag events, involving a sprint and dive after a flag placed in the sand. This was done on advice of their medical committee who argued 'females contesting flags risk damage to breast tissue and the development of painful lumps which could be a source of worry'.

(Kirk *et al.* 1996, p. 229)

The fairly obvious observation that males also risk injury from protruding body parts seems to have escaped the committee's notice. In fact, it can be argued that males are at greater risk of "injuring reproductive organs in sport, but medical restrictions on participation have applied to women only" (Kirk *et al.* 1996, p. 229). The Queensland decision was overturned.

Against this pseudo-scientific justification of stereotypes over the last century there has been a slow but steady progression toward equality - in both the sporting and general community. However, considering the determination by men to exclude women from the sporting arena, or at least hinder their entrance, perhaps one should ask a little more critically, why?

Sport as Leadership Training

Well, sport is powerful. Men know it, after all they invented sport. As women have discovered this opportunity and wished to participate, they have also realised how sport empowers the individual. It's an arena that gives women permission to succeed. It boosts self-confidence, the willingness to take risks and to achieve; sport makes the individual feel strong and capable. In

summary, one can say that sport gives skills and levels of confidence that are equated with leadership. These are lessons that boys have learned, still learn, from their earliest years; along with lessons in teamwork, risk-taking, fair play (theoretically speaking!) and co-operation (Garloch, 1997, p. 17). They have been taught for many years through sport to set a goal, go for it and achieve it. And if you do not succeed, if you do not win - this time, sport empowers the individual to have another go, to fail and then turn this around, to learn from the experience and go back out.

As Donna Lapiano, Executive Director of the Women's Sports Foundation based in New York, points out, (quoted in Garloch, 1997, p. 17) many of these skills are also the basis for success in business; that business is nothing more than a reflection of male sports teams. As evidence to the power of women's admission into this arena, in a recent USA survey, 80 percent of the women identified as key leaders in Fortune 500 companies played sport as children and as young adults.

Research confirms the "strong link between physical activity and positive self-esteem, feelings of competence and self-confidence" (Yu 1993, p. 14). In fact,

...it is argued that the potential for sport to act as an agent of women's liberation, rather than their oppression, stems mainly from the opportunity that women's sporting activity affords them to experience their bodies as strong and powerful and free from male domination. If, as MacKinnon (1982, p. 537) argues, sexuality is the linchpin of gender inequality, then women's sporting practice can challenge gender inequality by challenging sexual stereotypes and patriarchal control of women's bodies. (Theberge quoted in Birrell and Cole, 1994, p. 191)

Understanding the power of sport in this context, it is crucial to teach our daughters, and remind ourselves, that a woman

is not confined to the role of princess; that the hero, who wakens Sleeping Beauty with a kiss, is that part of herself that awakens conventional girlhood to the possibility of life and action. (Carolyn G. Heilbrun, quoted in Yu, 1993, p. 14)

The role of princess is passive, it is not inclusive of what can be deemed active leadership attributes. Unfortunately, it is the princess-image, the voyeuristic potential of women which still underlies much media coverage of sporting women, portraying either princess or non-princess type of behaviour. So that, as Shirley de la Hunty indicated, in her public persona she adopted princess-like patterns whereas Dawn Fraser did not.

The 1996 Atlanta Olympics showed however that the language and images used to represent women in the media can be changed when required. At Atlanta, despite the commentators' initial platitudes, the achievements of our female athletes demonstrated courage, determination, athletic prowess, mental and physical toughness, and the desire to win; words more usually associated with male athletes. In the moment of acclaim, these women received universal approbation as victorious Australian athletes not successful female athletes. In other words the assumptions underlying the representation of sporting, or any successful woman, are not immutable. It should also be recognised that these are examples taken from 'big events'; occasions which are more likely to conform to the traditional male ethos of sport - struggle on the highest (and largest) scale; the ultimate prize; and general acclamation as victor.

While it is pleasing to see such visual endorsement of women's sporting achievements, it is even more important to ensure that change occurs in the everyday reporting of sport. For the daily reporting represents the current 'norms' in attitudes towards women in sport, as well as women's roles in the wider community.

It is difficult to challenge a history and culture of sport in Australia that is intrinsically linked to the identification and definition of masculine values. We need to create spaces which are conducive to women's participation in all aspects, but in the context of this paper, with especial reference to leadership. Suggested strategies to achieve this include leadership training; the introduction of mentor schemes, which should also include skilling women how to be mentors as much as how to seek one out; active development of role models; programs to increase women's self-confidence, especially at times of transition such as adolescence, change of career, returning after family etc; and actively encouraging women to support women. The latter strategy is frequently neglected but it is important to recognise that women also oppress women. This is the experience of many successful women and it can come from all levels.

Acknowledging that women do oppress and/or inhibit other women allows us to look at where we position ourselves - not as victims but honestly and scrupulously. For it is essential to realise that women also participate in maintaining stereotypes.

To balance the last comment, I also note that in implementing any or all of the above strategies, a crucial factor is to avoid implying that the focus of remedies is on some assumed deficiencies in women when compared to men, even if this comparison is implicit. With this assumption the underlying argument becomes when women correct or compensate for their deficiencies, they will receive the same rewards as men (Grunig, 1992, p. 52). Such a scenario almost always guarantees the 'failure' of the majority of women to achieve executive positions. Further, it neglects to challenge the culture that is fundamentally detrimental to women's leadership aspirations. In other words, it leaves male structures in place and women trying to be pseudo men.

Overall, in presenting leadership opportunities for women, the Australian sporting industry has been recalcitrant. As a social institution, sport has reflected societal attitudes toward women and even with women's participation, given less value to women's achievements and contributions. As examples from the media demonstrate, sport however resistant, is not immune to change.

In the last decade or so, organisations such as the Women's Sport Foundation of Western Australia, present in some form or another in each Australian state and territory, have been endeavouring to overcome sport's (at times entrenched) reluctance to include women at every level in the industry. These endeavours have ranged from fighting to get such organisations formed to recently introducing a Management and Leadership Project for Women in Sport.

This Management and Leadership Project is aimed at overcoming some of the barriers to women taking leadership roles in sport. After completing a national audit of available training, the career paths of women currently in sport leadership positions and the recommendations of these women to increase women's presence, the first phase of the project concluded:

In assessing why there are so few women in senior management and leadership positions in Australian sport, the results confirm other research which suggests the following barriers or reasons for the low numbers of women:

- the organisational culture of sporting organisations is distinctly male
 - there are preconceived notions about women's competence
 - pressures of family and unpaid work responsibilities
 - absence of gender equity practices and other affirmative action procedures
 - lack of female role models
 - lack of support networks and formal mentors
 - an understanding of equitable management of flexible work practices and
 - the ability to negotiate for these practices within workplace agreements.
- (Draft Report 2, Heather Reid, Womensport Australia)

One should also add to the above list, a frequent resistance to change.

There are no real surprises in the reasons for women's under-representation as leaders in sport. Unfortunately, nor are there any definitive answers as to how to achieve a "critical mass" of women leaders.

However, since the mid-nineteenth century, women have refused to be denied entry to experiences they rightly perceive as empowering. Even in the 1880's, through the impetus of the women's suffragette movement, women were 'invading' sport as yet another bastion of male privilege (Phillips quoted in Leder *et al.* 1996, p. 17). And when women were banned from certain sporting associations they formed their own. Similarly successful incursions have included medicine, law, education, politics, engineering, the media, sport, business - every area of society.

Increasingly in the late twentieth century women are focussing on the issue of leadership. To succeed in this endeavour and so reach a "critical mass", it is likely that a concerted effort that transcends the boundaries of each arena is required. Women in sport can learn from women in engineering who have learnt from women in medicine and so on.

The above disciplines have witnessed enormous changes in the last 100 to 150 years. Women in sport are seeking to achieve the same goals - preferably in a shorter time frame.

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How do you know when you've joined the critical mass? Collegial programmes: an initiation for leadership

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Abstract

Creating an environment, being strategic having public voice are hallmarks of Women in Leadership Project at Edith Cowan University. Pervious evaluations of the Women in Leadership Project have examined its impact at both the global and individual level. Global evaluations have focussed on the effect of the project on the organisation as a whole. At the individual level the emphasis has been on collegial group participation. Anecdotal evidence and observed behaviours suggest that changes have occurred at both levels. However, it has been difficult to document these changes using existing evaluation methodologies. It is our view that as a result of the limitations of the existing methodologies the previous evaluations have not given the complete picture of the significance and influence of the Project on the organisation. Therefore a different approach to evaluation that Women in Leadership provide greater insight into Project outcomes is required if projects such as Women in Leadership are to receive ongoing organisational support.

Using a range of evaluation techniques including case studies, semi- structured interviews and Rep grid, our aim was to identify significant changes in the behaviour of women who had previously participated in Women in Leadership collegial group programmes. Comparison with previous evaluations Women in Leadership be made in order to determine if this approach offers new insights for the change process as it impacts on individuals, and the organisation. The results are also expected to impact on the design and implementation of collegial programmes. This paper presents preliminary findings on the effectiveness of this new approach to evaluation of the Women in Leadership Collegial programmes. A greater understanding of the effectiveness of developing women leaders through the collegial process Women in Leadership held to ensure that we are working towards establishing a critical mass who are able to influence organisational outcomes and direction.

Keywords: women in leadership, program evaluation.

Background

The Women in Leadership Project has been in operation at Edith Cowan University since 1992. The conceptual framework of leadership that underpins Women in Leadership describes four leadership capacities: public voice, competence, strategist and creator of environments. The term 'capacities' is used rather than 'competencies' to signify a breadth and diversity of meaning in each of the areas. The Project consists of three main elements: an international conference, a Public Lecture series and collegial programmes. The international conference provides the opportunity for women to explore leadership from both theoretical and practical perspectives. It also provides the opportunity for many of the participants in collegial programmes to practise public voice, either through their own presentations or by acting as chair to other's sessions. The Public Lectures profile prominent women drawn from a variety of organisations and backgrounds. The isolation of Perth, the city where four of the University's five campuses are located, means that there are not the same opportunities to participate in networks or to listen to leading women located on the east coast of the country or overseas. The Public Lecture series has provided the opportunity for women to hear and perhaps more importantly, to discuss leadership with women leaders from all areas of life. The collegial groups operate over an extended period of time and enable participants to examine the capacities for leadership within the repertoire of their own skills and within the context of the organisation within which they

work. Participation in the programme positions women within networks and increases their visibility through an increased willingness to seek promotion to senior levels and to become more involved in their organisation's decision-making processes.

That women are under-represented in senior positions in organisations has been well documented (Smith, 1995). Much of the debate about reasons for this has focussed on the need for a 'critical mass' of women, that is, an increase in the number of women in senior positions so that visibility is increased and the spotlight on individual women reduced

This paper examines the impact of one of the Project's major activities; the collegial programme in terms of its potential to add to the critical mass of women in senior positions within the organisation.

The collegial groups are the major vehicle within the Project for staff development. The objectives of the collegial groups are:

1. for individual women to identify those technical and personal skills and knowledge required in leadership roles;
2. for each participating collegial group to identify organisational change strategies that will more effectively include women in the decision-making process; and
3. to build strong and enduring networks which will be a continuing source of support for participants and which will assist them to develop their full potential as leaders.

A significant feature of the collegial programmes is the emphasis placed on connecting the individual with the organisation. Many women's programmes appear to have focussed on 'fixing women' so that they would fit more easily into existing structures and cultures. The Women in Leadership Project in its conception and design recognised that organisational change was a key factor that would lead to women's success within the organisation (Pyner, 1994). By this we mean that issues identified by the individual or the group are placed in the context of the work environment to enable the exploration of organisational solutions or outcomes.

Programme Evaluations

The Project has, since its inception, been evaluated many times. In some instances the focus has been on the totality, in others on assessing changes in individual participants. The evaluations that focussed on individual outcomes used both qualitative and quantitative data gathering methods and have been used to measure changes in adjustment to components of 'work self' and 'personal self'. These evaluations have consistently shown an increase in the participant's perceived competence, self awareness, confidence and empowerment. There has also been an increase in networking and knowledge of the organisation. On the other hand, the participants have reported no perceived change in their own leadership capacities, little increase in their desire to undertake leadership roles, greater dissatisfaction with the existing organisation structures and no change in personal perceptions of the ways in which the organisation values women. We suggest that these outcomes highlight the difference between personal versus professional achievement and between personal perceptions versus organisational outcomes.

In an attempt to understand and reconcile such disparate outcomes in the evaluations, the previous evaluations were reviewed. This identified shortcomings relating to methodological and

measurement issues, including sampling and the nature of the scales used. This confirmed our view that the measurement instruments were not the most appropriate for determining the level of change being observed.

In addition to our disquiet regarding the measurement tools available, our involvement with many of the collegial group participants in forums other than the collegial programme, indicated a demonstrable mismatch between their expressed views relating to their lack of leadership skills and their actual ambitions and observed actions and outcomes. This led us to undertake a review of previous evaluations plus examine in greater detail the experiences and perceptions of some of the collegial group participants.

Current Study

The study therefore consisted of three sections:

1. a review/re-analysis of semi structured interviews focussing on data relating to 'leadership';
2. case studies conducted with four women who were past members of the early collegial groups; and
3. the application of the technique of repertory grids.

The re-analysis of the data focussing on leadership involved examination of the available semi structured interview material. We were particularly interested in the participants' views of both effective leadership and their own leadership capacities. This data had been gathered as part of the programme evaluation conducted for both the 1994 collegial group and the senior women's collegial group (see Pike, 1995 for a more detailed explanation of the 1994 programme evaluation.)

The case study subjects were selected because they had made some significant observed personal or professional shifts in their lives, and included academic and general staff; and current and previous employees. Four women, two academic and two general staff were selected for interviews of one to one-and-a-half hour's duration. The interviews were recorded and then transcribed and checked by the participants for accuracy. Two of the women were still employed at the University, while two had resigned since completing the collegial programme. Of the two who had resigned one was a member of academic staff and one was a member of general staff. Of the two women still at the University one was a member of academic staff and one was a member of general staff.

It was hoped that the use of Repertory Grids would enable us to establish how collegial group participants construct and define successful leadership (see Dr Valerie Stewart at <http://www.EnquireWithin.co.nz> for information on the theory and application of repertory grids).

Results

The interview data was re-examined to determine participants' responses with regard to leadership. The responses were classified under four headings that related to:

1. the key qualities of leadership;
- (ii) their own leadership abilities;

- (iii) the level of their personal ambition to become leaders; and
- (iv) the extent of opportunities that they had to become leaders within the organisation.

Seventy percent of post programme respondents readily identified key leadership qualities. Seventy percent could identify their own leadership abilities in terms of strengths and weaknesses; 60% wished to pursue their leadership abilities but 70% believed that this was not possible within the organisation. Interestingly, only 40% believed that they could be a good leader.

Evaluation of the senior women's collegial group had not focussed on the senior women's perception of effective leadership and their own leadership abilities. Therefore the review of the data was less helpful in identifying or quantifying these aspects. Nonetheless, the review identified that the women had exercised leadership skills through their actions which included: becoming involved in the selection process of a new vice chancellor; and influencing the development of a University wide performance management policy and a staff mentoring proposal. The women's responses indicated that their sense of action in terms of influencing the decision-making processes was strong but, similarly to the 1994 collegial group, there was limited recognition of themselves as leaders.

A thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews was undertaken. In addition, the data was examined for indications that the women were operating within the conceptual framework of leadership explained above. The women provided some clear indications that participation in the collegial groups had been good for them personally and professionally. Common gains included taking more control, changed consciousness, increased self confidence and an increased knowledge of organisational issues.

Qualitative analysis of their responses also identified some common themes with regard to leadership capacities. This analysis identified how the leadership capacities are being used, particularly those of being strategic and developing a public voice. As one participant stated, "...the thing about voice is an important one, and the only way to learn that is to be courageous. You can't sit around and talk about it, you have to do it." Another participant commented that "...what the University can learn (from Public Voice) is that women offer a

different perspective and that diversity of view leads to stronger decision making ... that they (management) ignore women at their peril."

Increased strategic networking also characterises these women. However, implicit in their answers is a reluctance to recognise their own leadership strengths and when confronted with direct questions about leadership, the women are reluctant to name themselves as leaders. The women had some clear and disparate definitions of leadership: "Leadership is about endless meetings, paperwork, being obsequious and acting politically" or "Leadership means being 'boss cocky'."

Unfortunately, at the time of preparing and presenting this paper, the results from the repertory grids were unavailable.

Discussion

Anyone who has ever experienced an organisation in our culture has experienced the mechanical model. In fact this model is so well integrated into our culture that we've assumed that it is the correct model for us. (Smith, 1995)

The results of the current study show a mismatch between the reality and the rhetoric of participants' leadership activities. Perhaps this is due in part to a questioning of women's place in this 'correct model' of organisations. This mechanistic model was not developed, nor has it evolved as a model that recognises women's leadership contribution. Increasingly, we are becoming convinced that the problems of mismatch are not confined to methodology but may also be attributed to an expectation that traditional theory would provide insight and understanding. In addition to an examination of traditional theories of leadership, we have also been attracted to the new theoretical paradigms offered by Wheatley, Gleick, Capra and others who offer interesting insights into the unique role that women's leadership could play in different organisational structures (Capra, 1997; Gleick, 1996; Wheatley, 1992).

Gleick explains that the shift in thinking in the world of physics (the development of quantum theory) at the beginning of this century has been mirrored by more recent changes in our view of the systems and processes shaping our world. The dominant paradigm saw the universe as a mechanical system with elementary building blocks, the human body as a machine, life as a competitive struggle, and sustained economic and technological growth. Gleick goes on to explain that a fundamental belief that 'a society in which the female is everywhere subsumed under the male is one that follows a basic law of nature' (Gleick, 1996: 6) is also part of this paradigm. With such a worldview, it is little wonder that women's fight for equality has been far from easy (see for example, Bandarage, 1997).

Gleick terms the new paradigm 'a holistic world view' (Gleick, 1996:6), in which the world is seen as an integrated whole rather than as a collection of parts. Wheatley (1992) encourages us to take a quantum view of the world, a world in which relationships are of critical importance. 'What is critical?' Wheatley tell us 'is the relationship created between the person and the setting. That relationship will always be different, will always evoke different potentialities,' (Wheatley, 1992:34). Thus we move away from the so-called predicability of organisational structures and processes to a view that the only thing that is predictable is unpredictability. What does this paradigm shift offer women?

Wheatley suggests that

there is value in working with the system any place it manifests itself because unseen connections will create effects at a distance, in places we because unseen connections will create effects at a distance, in places we never thought. This model of change of small starts, surprises, unseen connections, quantum leaps; matches our experience more closely than our favoured models of incremental change. (Wheatley, 1992: pp 42 43)

If as Wheatley suggests, we take a quantum view, then working with women in a collegial group has the potential to result in changes in places we least expect and often far removed from the group itself. Small changes can result in large system changes because of the interconnectedness

of the relationships. While the women have not seen themselves as major influencers in the organisation exercising significant leadership, they are in fact influential if one moves to an holistic worldview. Thus the 'normal' measures of success in a mechanistic model may be of little use as measures of success of collegial programmes. Success can be measured when women are acting locally. We have identified a number of areas where the collegial groups have influenced individual participants leading to observed and measured change. Wheatley points out that acting locally 'allows us to work with the movement and flow of simultaneous events within the small system. We are more likely to become synchronized with that system, and thus have impact,' (Wheatley, 1992 p 42).

The collegial groups are a small system, connected and inter-related to the organisation. They provide participants with a formal structured opportunity to share and reflect on the challenges of leadership, both their own and other's leadership. The process of reflection results in a realisation that many of the issues of concern to an individual are in fact shared by others. The effectiveness of this reflective approach can be partly explained by Argyris' theory of 'double loop learning.' Argyris explains double loop learning as being characterised by a willingness to confront one's own views and to seek feedback from others, and an understanding that openness to information and power sharing has the potential to lead to more effective problem solving. Mastering double loop learning has been described as learning to learn, in that the 'comfort zone' of people's belief systems,' (Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphy, 1993 p 32) is challenged in order to arrive at new understandings of leadership. The collegial process encourages the participants to constantly challenge both their own 'concept zone' and that of their organisation or the paradigm resulting in a deeper understanding of leadership.

Although double loop learning can help individuals to work through 'blind spots', it doesn't appear to have helped participants recognise their own leadership potential. Participants' responses when asked about leadership perhaps provide the clue as to why women who have participated in collegial programmes do not readily identify themselves as leaders. It is described variously as 'entailing being the boss cocky', 'an up-front leader of the pack type person', '...about endless meetings and paperwork' and 'of being obsequious and acting politically.' Leadership in a mechanistic organisation leaves little room for ambiguity or different approaches. It is clear that the case study participants **do** want to bring a different approach to leadership, one that is perhaps as yet unrecognised in organisations operating within a mechanistic framework and one whose impact and ability to bring about change is undervalued by the women.

Collegial groups empower individuals. Women describe how their participation in the collegial groups is an empowering experience. They describe increases in their levels of confidence and competence, thinking strategically and establishing a network; for example 'the programme gave me more confidence in myself,' 'through the programme I realised that I am just as good as everyone else.' The programme is responsible for '...strengthening women's natural ability to network and provide support for one another.' When women are describing empowerment, networking and the like, we believe that the type of power they are identifying is similar to Colwill's categories of power. Colwill has described three categories relating to perceptions of power in organisations. Personal power, that is believing that one is powerful; interpersonal power characterised by the ability to influence others; and organisational power which is the ability to mobilise organisational resources (Vinnicombe and Colwill, 1995).

In the collegial groups, the women have the opportunity to identify and appreciate the strength and adequacy of their own competencies. Discussion and reflection about job related issues that have been initially identified as personal issues are more correctly identified as organisational

issues shared and experienced by many of the women. This leads to the realisation that the individual is in control of their own environment and that the issues of concern are more likely to be structural, attitudinal and not idiosyncratic. This realisation results in increased feelings of personal power. Simultaneously, the network that is established by participation in the collegial group encourages the women to act more strategically to bring about change, not only at the macro level but also at the local level. This can result in changed perceptions that the individual has about their value and the value of their work to the organisation. This results in increased interpersonal power.

While the women acknowledge changes in personal and interpersonal power, they rarely claim organisational power. Colwill describes organisational power as the ability to mobilise resources and her research suggests that women may be more effective than men in this. Our study suggests that women define organisational power as positional, that is relating to formal roles and positions within the structure and therefore would not identify with Colwill's definition of organisational power.

Smith in his article titled 'Servant Leadership: A Pathway to the Emerging Territory' (in Spears, 1995 pp 198-213, provides some new models of leadership which he terms the emerging models. As he points out, the shift from the mechanistic model to the emerging models takes time, energy and commitment. The emerging models call people to 'collaborate with one another,...to assume authority and responsibility with others for how things go. ...to take risks and to assume ownership' (Smith, 1995). This is what we have observed in the collegial group participants.

Wheatley tells us that 'leadership is always dependent on the context but the context is established by the relationships we value. We cannot hope to influence any situation without respect for the complex network of people who contribute to our organisation' (Wheatley, 1992; pp 144-45). Within the Women in Leadership framework, Wheatley's context corresponds to the creation of environments. The relationships are those developed through collegial group participation and with the organisation, whilst the network is that which has been established as a result of involvement in the programme.

Thus the examination, through the collegial process, by women of leadership capacities can result in the creation of a critical mass both through the networks established and through increased willingness to seek promotion and involvement in organisational decision making.

Being part of the collegial process is an initiation for leadership. Participation in a collegial group results in observed and measurable change when operating within the mechanistic paradigm. The estimation of change within the holistic paradigm offers greater challenge and enormous potential by providing a framework within which women's leadership and influence can be more easily recognised, understood and valued, both by women and the organisation.

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THE GETTING OF POWER: WOMEN'S WAYS. SNAPSHOTS OF WOMEN IN TERTIARY EDUCATION ENACTING THEIR EMPOWERMENT

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Abstract

This paper presents a creative discourse about what is possible for women wanting to build alliances across difference, to tell their stories, and in the telling, to enact their own (and support others') empowerment. An example of the range of creative discourses women engage in are presented, whereby women's voices in tertiary education can be heard (by each other) across multiple sites of power, identity and experience.

The learning gained strengthens existing alliances and provides bridges to other women. In this way, women gain an appreciation of their leadership and visioning abilities and build the legitimacy of power structures not formally sanctioned by hierarchical organisations. At the very least a concerted, creative resistance is provided to the more oppressive aspects of male power (Wearing, 1996). And possibly, women can substantially redefine power to effect more respectful, diverse and just forms of human organising and interacting.

The task of redefining power has to be more than an academic exercise divorced from the complexities of lived experience in socio-political contexts. To this end creative discourses are any mediums women choose to speak of their visions, power and experiences which (in the telling) challenge stereotypical, dualistic and other rigidifying ways of thinking and acting.

Keywords: creative discourses, alliances, redefinitions, difference, support

Introduction

The paper is a creative, in-process document that has changed as a result of preparing it and presenting it at the 1997 Women In Leadership Conference. Rather than hold to our original intent of presenting a range of creative discourses¹ of women in tertiary education enacting their empowerment, we decided to focus on one creative discourse (the Conference presentation) as an example of what is possible. In order to illustrate aspects of the discourse, the paper is interspersed with a series of snapshots of one of the authors working with social work students using the technique of sculpturing². Sculpturing (Spolin, 1963) is a process which allows for expression (rather than explanation) as a way of reflecting and processing experience (Reason and Hawkins, 1988, p. 79). The sculptor creates a human sculpture around a word or an issue and asks the participants to hold their postures. They then break out of the sculpture and talk about how it felt for them to be in those positions. Participants are encouraged to share and explore as many diverse experiences and perceptions as possible. While the sculpturing technique is a readily available and accessible way to work creatively with women, its value and implications are not explored in this paper.

A group of 30 women attended the Conference workshop, which was ideally situated at the end of the three-day Conference. Small groups of women discussed power and their experiences of dis/empowerment and fed their ideas back to the larger group. As part of this process, many of the women used sculpturing and found it to be a flexible and inspiring technique for literally

creating scenarios, which could be variously interpreted and reworked. Effectively we engaged in a dialogue about power and women, so continuing the creative discourse processes upon which the paper is based.

Our Positioning: "I Am Woman!"

Some women's ways of understanding, obtaining and using power offer hope for more egalitarian and democratic organisational structures and educational practices even while we, too, grapple with our male-like expressions of power.



Use of positioning and physical power to control and silence.

As female academics on a regional university campus we offer this paper from a fluid yet recognisable ideological positioning. That is, we acknowledge the influence of our gender, middleclassness, Euroethnicity, able-bodiedness, privilege born of education, employment, financial resources and familial and collegial relationships. These influences and privileges provide both the motivation and wherewithal to undertake this creative project and strongly shape how we go about it.

The authors share an affinity with post-critical (Lather, 1991; 1992) and radical ecological (Marchant, 1992) perspectives wherein we value the politics of difference alongside community building and a linking of structural and personal analyses and processes for change to effect more just, respectful, ecologically sustainable and peaceful ways in our work and lives generally.

Multiple Sites and Types of Power: "It's Everywhere, but Not for All"

While women in academia may sometimes forget or fail to access women's ways of power, this paper is testimony to the deep knowing that what counts as power has multiple sites and takes multiple forms. Further, thanks largely to critical and feminist writings and activism (Ramazanoglu, 1993), it is well known that what counts as power is political and likely to be contested - including among women.



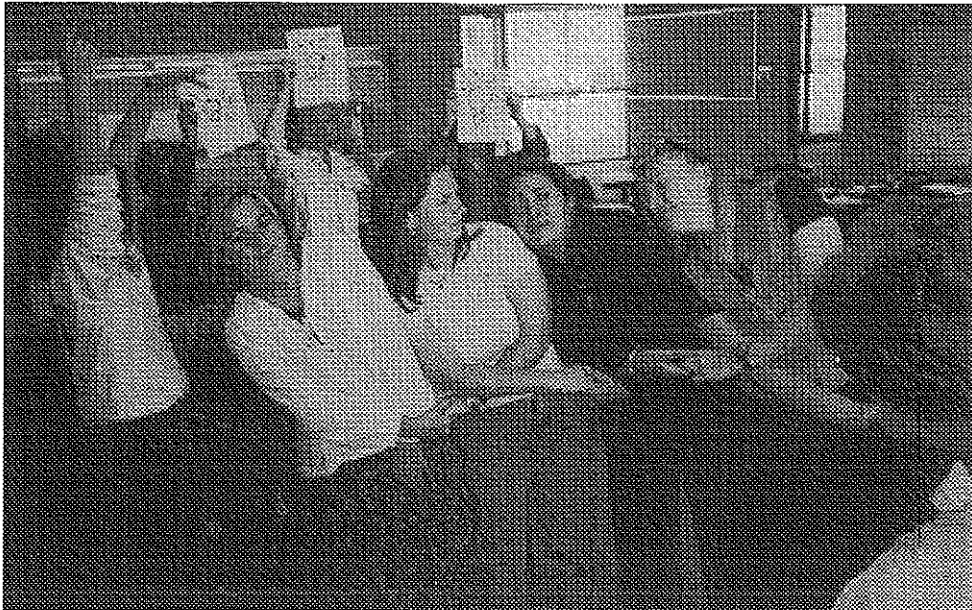
A stereotypical use of male-like power between women

We suggest that the strength of women's ways of power is in our ability to move across the different sites of power which are often entwined with the multiple identities women juggle. These identities include mother, friend, neighbour, student as well as lecturer, administrator, community worker, political activist, sister and lover. These correspond with shifting sites of power spanning the home, the lecture theatre, the staff room, the committee room and the streets.

This movement in our sense of where power is located and how it is expressed, is supported by conceptualisations of what constitutes power that encompass but go beyond male conceptions of power. Thus, power is not simply a commodity that exists in finite, fixed forms and available only through formal organisational structures. Rather, it is a relational process that is able to be continually negotiated and transmuted in any given historical context, albeit substantially influenced by cultural and structural factors such as race, gender, region, ethnicity, able-bodiedness, etc.



The female leader both influences and is shaped by those in her life.



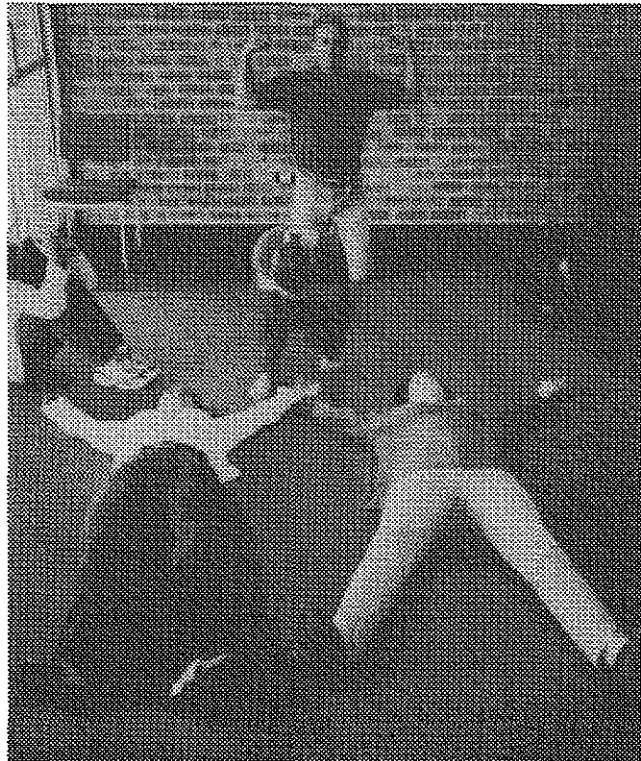
The interconnectedness of power relations and the attendant struggles to express ideas and visions.

Power then, as we see it, is very much about the ability to interact with others so as to influence what is spoken, valued and enacted. Relationships sourced in many sites and involving different expressions of power are the key medium of women's leadership strategies.

Upheavals in the Male-Knowledge-Power Hegemony

The strong and immensely complex relationship between knowledge and power (Habermas, 1971) and male positioning (Wearing, 1996) finds a home in universities. Historically, universities have been the socially sanctioned formal institutions where the material and interactive conditions of male dominance over women, children, animals and nature (Orr, 1994) are continually recreated.

This has happened in a number of ways - we focus on two here - the dominance of both rationalist/scientific knowledge and hierarchical, competitive power structures. In the past few decades the knowledge generation and transmission function of universities has been increasingly under critique from radical educators (Freire, 1972; 1973; 1978; 1990), academic feminists (Luke and Gore, 1992; Fine, 1994, Culley and Portuges, 1985) and qualitative educational researchers (Lather, 1991; 1992; Ellsworth, 1989). Implicated in the ferment of post-modernist inquiry (Habermas, 1987; Cherryholmes, 1988), universities as the bastions of white male, universalist, rationalist/scientific knowledge are being exposed as covert political institutions which serve the maintenance of the status quo which generally benefits men (Pettman, 1992; Weiler, 1989).

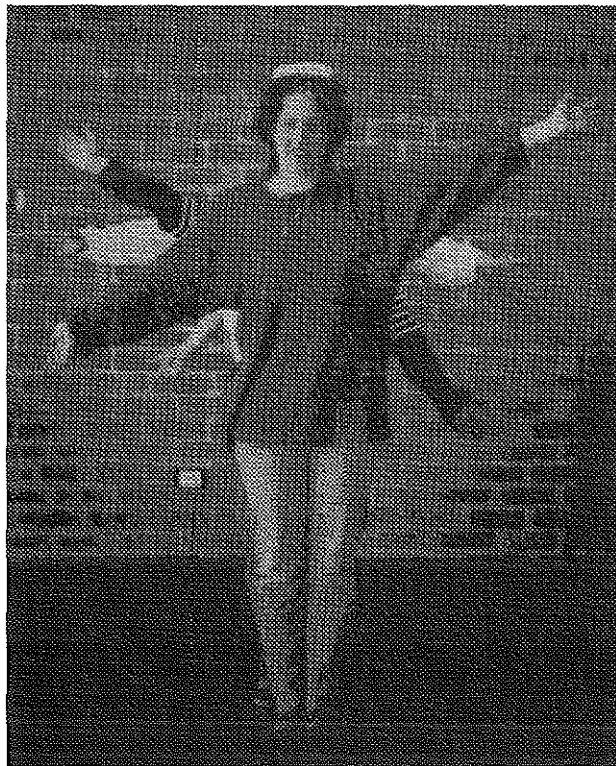


Women's positioning. Male power. What knowledge? What purpose?

Of interest in this paper are the challenges mounted to what counts as knowledge, how it is generated and the purposes it is used for. Feminist writers and others (Belenky et al., 1986; Peile and McCouat, 1997) have called for the recognition of bodily, emotional, intuitive ways of knowing alongside the cognitive/rationalist form that underpins the positivist and post-positivist paradigms (Guba, 1990). The devaluing of a broader range of ways of knowing has real and often negative consequences for women in academia.

Further, the organisational structure and management processes of universities contribute to an educational context which can be experienced as hostile to women. Often, irrespective of the gender of the occupant of the position, hierarchical and economic rationalist forms of management predominate (Pettman, 1992; Halsey, 1992). These lines of authority can smother and fragment other forms of organising and interacting because one-dimensional male power is privileged often at the expense of the multi-dimensional power of "others".

Paradoxically, the dominance of male power can heighten the need to resist and challenge its oppressive effects. That is, by its very nature, the exercise of male power which tends to control, exclude and minimise difference, invites women to be "like the boys" or find alternative sources of empowerment for themselves.



Superwoman!

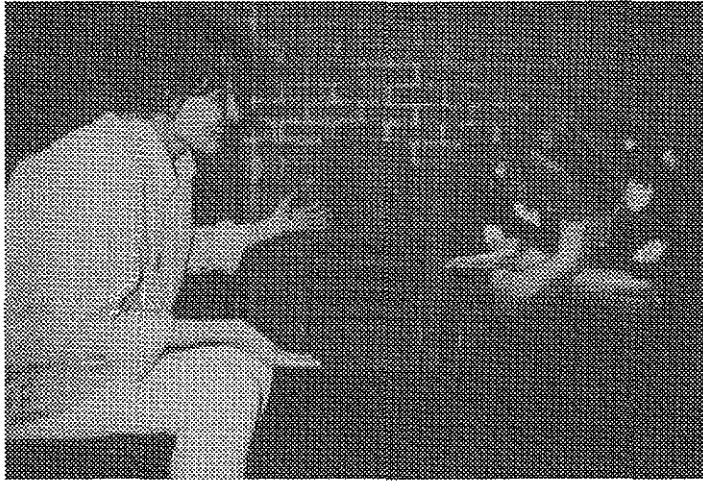


A movement towards expression of complexity of own power.

All Kinds of Women, All Kinds of Leaders: “Pick the Leader, if You Can!”

The organising themes for the snapshots are women’s accounts of the ways they get and use power expressed here through the medium of sculptures. One way of thinking about these processes of empowerment is to regard women as leaders of many kinds who build alliances with other leaders wherever they find themselves and for purposes they determine as appropriate. It may well be that women cannot survive with integrity in “a man’s world” unless we develop our leadership potential on many fronts.

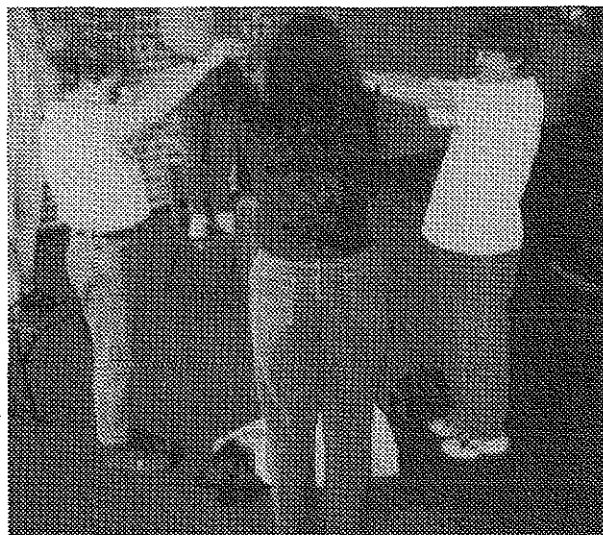
To this end we regard leaders as those women who are consciously engaged in their own empowerment where their visioning extends to support others' empowerment and is based on principles of participative democracy, social justice and respect for difference. The implication is that women leaders may not be formally recognised by "the hierarchy" and may not hold formal, traditional vestiges of (male) power.



Offering. Needing. The complexities of receiving.

The Local Educational Context: "A Holiday Camp in the Bush"

We have provided snapshots of the richness, complexity and paradoxes of women's lives in an educational context at a particular point in history, time and space. Edith Cowan University, Bunbury has been at the centre of a political struggle over ownership in recent times. This struggle accentuates the deeper issues of resourcing of regional services, rural decline and crisis, centre-periphery struggles for identity and control, and the broader industrial and educational



Resisting. Withdrawing. Supporting. Resting.

This struggle accentuates the deeper issues of resourcing of regional services, rural decline and crisis, centre-periphery struggles for identity and control, and the broader industrial and educational changes occurring in a climate of economic rationalism and downsizing of public utilities. For all its seeming like it is not really a university, the campus has strategic value in the rush for university survival stakes.

The impact on the ground is profound and finds expression in the power dynamics of women's relationships in a variety of ways.

Just two examples of this expression that we actively adopt on a day-to-day basis are:

1. A ceaseless critical awareness of threats to our own power so that not one ounce of power is conceded unnecessarily (where to do so would detract from democratic practices for others and ourselves).
2. A ceaseless critical reading of the socio-political context we work in, so that opportunities for productive alliances and reformations of existing networks are capitalised upon wherever possible. This strategising means that highly flexible, often invisible, bases for challenges to the dominating uses of power can occur with minimal risk to individual persons and with maximum advantage in holding tensions at points of difference.

The stereotyping of Bunbury Campus as a "holiday camp in the bush" falters through this ongoing politicising and struggle for what counts as education and legitimate organisational structures and processes that sustain the relationships at the heart of university life. The Conference based discourses reminded us that others, too, are working creatively and productively at the interface of knowledge and power.

In Closing

Women in academia are redefining what counts as power, how it is used and for whose benefit. While not wishing to claim a universally agreed-on 'one way' of women's power, this creative discourse points to the richness in diversity and difference which, if embraced as multiple sites of power, can loosen the strangle hold of male power in universities. Further, the day by day enacting of women's individual and informal collectives of empowerment enables a critical mass of leaders to become established.

Notes

1. We use the term "creative discourse" to refer to any medium of communication and interaction that allows the creation of choices, ideas, energy, vision and possibly, empowerment.
2. The paper presents the argument for the need for a range of creative discourses between women in tertiary education and elsewhere and shows how the sculptures created by students (in a social work class) can be re-interpreted and re-used to explore conceptions of power and choices we have around its use. The re-interpretations provided alongside the photos are the work of the authors and do not portray students' interpretations and interests that may have been operating at the time the sculptures were created. We gratefully

acknowledge the students for their creativity and willingness to share these photos. The sculpturing was used as a teaching process to enable students to integrate their learning from two academic units. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive and its value in enabling students to empower themselves regarding their learning and professional development parallels broader empowerment processes we wish to support between women as leaders in their various fields of endeavour. The students agreed for their photographed sculptures to be made available at the Conference workshop (and in this paper) and this in turn shaped what happened in the workshop.

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Generation Nowhere: Young Women in the Australian Public Service (APS)

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Abstract

This paper describes the current state of affairs for women employed within administrative and management classifications in the Australian Public Service (APS). Workforce statistics and personal employment experiences suggested that much could be gained by a gender focussed analysis of the working conditions for young women, and the possible existence of the 'backlash' phenomenon.

As part of the implementation of recent 'managerial' reforms, and the identification of new skill requirements, there has been an increased demand for skilled staff at higher levels within the APS. While there has been an increase in the number of women within the APS generally, women remain under-represented at these middle and senior management levels. This trend has been accompanied by an overall reduction in employees aged under 25, although women between 20 and 30 years of age are well represented at the ASO 6 and SO C levels. Of concern, though, is the continual under-representation of older women at middle and senior levels. Conclusions are drawn about the need for further empirical investigation, including in-depth qualitative research that focuses on the effects of employment conditions, the effectiveness of policy and programs intended to redress gender imbalances, and which examines further the notion of a 'backlash' against women in the APS.

Keywords: managerialism, backlash, public sector, feminist research

Introduction and Methodology

I know some people feel that working for a female SES manager is harder, because women at that level have to prove themselves more, so they are harder on you. Maybe they've had to be really pushy to get there (Female Focus Group Member in Smeaton 1995, p 107).

This paper reviews the structural and organisational conditions that women in the public sector work within, and proposes questions for future research. It examines the distribution of women across classification levels in the Australian Public Service (APS), and explores the possible nature and manifestation of the 'backlash' phenomena, within the context of managerialist reform.

This review is designed to help refine tentative doctoral research questions, and to test a number of ideas and assumptions generated by potential co-researchers. Much of the impetus for this exploration came from my own experience as a researcher and middle manager in the APS, and from conversations with friends and colleagues who bemoaned the limited opportunities for women, especially for those who have reached middle management levels. It was these experiences that led me to develop an approach to doctoral research that combines traditional methods of enquiry within a framework focussing on the work stories of a number of women

(who in terms of generating fieldwork questions and data can be seen as co-researchers a characteristic of much feminist research (Haggis, 1990; Fonow and Cook, 1991).

The Concept of 'Backlash'

'Backlash' is a recurring feature in feminist and anti-feminist writing, one which needs to be analysed within its specific historical and national context (Walby, 1997). In this paper, the nature and manifestations of a backlash are investigated through examining the opportunities for women within middle and senior management positions, in the context of the structural and administrative reforms that have shaped the APS.

This broader focus is on identifying the conditions within the public sector that may lead to barriers for women's advancement in light of recent reforms and potential APS policy changes. At the micro-level, an analysis of the representation of women within various occupational stratifications is conducted. This data is examined from a feminist perspective which suggests that gender and bureaucracy intersect to create a gendered organisation (see amongst others: Ferguson, 1984; Witz and Savage, 1992; Calas and Smircich, 1989 and 1991; Eisenstein, 1996). Furthermore, public sector organisations may be particularly prone to this configuration with a focus which is both patriarchal and masculine. (Smeaton, 1995)

Australia's Reform Agenda and Managerialism in the Public Sector

Particular reforms and organisational restructuring in Australia's public sector need to be understood in the broader international context. The globalisation of capitalism has seen most Western countries respond with deregulation of financial markets and a reduction of resources in the public sector (Edwards and Margarey, 1995). Indeed the overall size of the public sector in relation to the general population has been shrinking in a number of OECD countries, including Australia (PSMPC, 1996).

At the broadest level Australia's public sector has suffered a period of enormous transition since the mega-departments were formed in 1987. The APS, while not representative of the broader public sector (the APS accounts for approximately 40% of Commonwealth public sector employees) (PSMPC, 1997a), is an interesting case study because of its recent emphasis on reform, creating a leaner public sector that has been evident under both Labor and Coalition governments.

Much APS administrative reform has been viewed as a type of private sector 'managerialism', with some accounts describing of the State's agenda as a rational process, or a sanctioning of the relevancy of private sector models (DIR, 1989a and 1989b; McCallum, 1984; Codd, 1991; Rimmer and Verevis, 1990). Conversely, some authors describe or evaluate the reforms in terms of both the benefits and potential problems such change can cause (Hamilton, 1990; MAB-MIAC 1992), or analyse the reforms in more radical structural (and gender focused) terms (Yeatman, 1990; Burton, 1987, 1993; Pringle, 1988). This 'modernisation' of the public sector has been described alternately as a revival of 'economic liberalism' (Yeatman, 1990, P.33); 'economistic culture' (Yeatman, 1990, p.2); 'economic rationalism' (Sinclair, 1989, p.11); and as having 'managerialist orientation' (Yeatman, 1990, p.11). Accompanying this rationalism has been the

trend towards decentralisation and devolution of authority from the centre to the periphery, and the reduction of the overall size of APS agencies. As Alford argues,

“These developments - decentralisation and fragmentation - resonate with societal trends in organisation design, such as de-bureaucratisation, accessibility, devolution and the belief that small is beautiful” (Alford, 1993, p.2).

In terms of employment structures, reforms were accompanied by changes to classification groupings in the APS in 1987 including the introduction of the eight level Administrative Service Officer (ASO) group which integrated the work performed in over one hundred separate classifications, in the office based area of the service. The new structure was designed to provide staff with opportunities to acquire new skills and do more interesting work, in addition to improving career opportunities and job satisfaction. The majority of staff previously having jobs with a narrow range of tasks in the office based area were women (DIR, 1989a, p 77), so these reforms were in part aimed at improving opportunities for women.

The 1990s Context: APS Change and Gender

In the ten years between 1986-87 and 1995-96 the Australian Public Service

(APS) underwent a series of management reforms to increase the accountability, efficiency and effectiveness of the service. One consequence of these reforms was an overall decline in the number of staff (PSMPC, 1997a).

It is in this context of managerialism, efficiency, economic rationalism and threatened career prospects that young women entering the APS find themselves. In the ten years from 1986-87 and 1995-96 the numbers of permanent and temporary staff in the APS has reduced by approximately 8.5 %, with staff numbers at 143,136 at 30 June 1996 (PSMPC, 1997a, P.12). During the 1996-1997 period 4,936 permanent staff were appointed and 15, 044 staff separated, with the actual decrease in total APS staff being 6.7% over the past twelve months, and the total number now 133, 602. (PSMPC, 1997a).

It is worthy to note that many of the reforms discussed above were thought to be of direct benefit for both women and members of other 'disadvantaged' ('targeted') groups, were perceived as congruent with the philosophy and aims of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) programs throughout agencies, and were supported by external stakeholders, including public sector unions. Whether or not these, and current initiatives, have in fact benefited women is worthy of further investigation by both researchers and policy makers.

Current legislative change in the APS means that modifications to EEO programs will take place in the APS in 1998 (PSMPC, 1997b). The Public Service Bill 1997 is currently before Parliament and planning is proceeding on the basis that the new Public Service Act will be in place in January 1998. Under the new Act, the current requirements for developing and managing agency EEO programs will be replaced by a requirement for Agency heads to put in place a *Workplace Diversity Program*. (PSMPC, 1997b). While details of these changes are unclear, when

examining potential policy and program changes the PSMPC should consider both the outcomes of recent reforms, and changes in staffing profiles.

Gender Distribution

The overall representation of women holding permanent positions in the APS has increased from 41.6% to 47.6% over the ten years from 1987 to 1996. Representation of women is concentrated in the ASO Stream, with 79.8 % of all women in the ASO stream (PSMPC, 1997a). The point at which women become a minority is ASO 6, where women make up just over 40% of employees (refer to Table 1).

At June 1997 women comprised only 30% of the Senior Officer classifications and under 20% of the Senior Executive Service (SES) (PSMPC, 1997a). In the 1980s and 90s there has been slow but steady increase in the numbers of women within middle and senior management levels. In 1987 women accounted for just 16.3 % of Senior Officers and 7.2 % of Senior Executives (PSMPC, 1996, P.14).

Table 1: APS Permanent Staff - selected classifications by gender, June 1997

Classification	Males	Females	Total	% Female
ASO 1	2983	4561	7544	60.5
ASO 2	3275	6528	9803	66.6
ASO 3	7654	15054	22708	66.3
ASO 4	5668	8505	14173	60
ASO 5	5443	5715	11158	51.2
ASO 6	6717	4729	11446	41.3
SO C	5245	2620	7865	33.3
SO B/A	3316	1066	4382	24.3
SES	1260	309	1569	19.7

(Source: Table 7, PSMPC, 1997a, p. 37)

Age Distribution

Examining data on APS employees under the age of 25 years sees a substantial decline in the number of young public servants. In the twelve months to 1996-97 the number of young people (under 25 years) employed in the APS dropped by 1,798 or 22.7%, where there were only 6099 staff aged less than 25 years (PSMPC 1997a, p.15), representing only 4.56% of permanent staff at June 1997. This is in contrast to 1988 where people under 25 years represented 14.6% of permanent staff (PSMPC, 1997, 39). At June 1996, within the under 25 years age group 60% are women, which is not surprising given the dominance of women at lower levels.

Implications of the Data

These statistics need to be analysed in light of the continuing opportunities for women as current and future leaders in the APS. Within the APS, the decline of appointments at the lowest levels (appointments at the ASO 1 level declined from 9,831 in 1986-87 to

1,439 in 1995-96 [PSMPC, 1996, P.16]) needs to be understood in the context of changing skill requirements:

Staffing profiles have changed with changing skills requirements. These included increased demand for skills such as policy analysis and contract management, and a decreasing demand for routine clerical work because of the increasing availability of technology (PSMPC, 1996, 13)

It is with this focus in mind that the ramifications of women's under-representation at higher levels becomes more apparent. The decreased demand for clerical and administrative skills is reflected in the reduction of lower level appointments in the APS over the last ten years (PSMPC, 1996). Correspondingly, while growth has occurred at the Senior Officer levels, it is at these levels that women continue to be considerably under-represented. It is precisely at the level where women become the minority (ASO 6) where the changing skills will be predominantly found. It is at the middle and senior management levels that most policy analysis and development occurs, and control of the decision making process about client and consultant needs and resultant contract management occurs primarily at the Senior Officer levels (or at the very least the senior ASO levels).

The experiences of women at the different levels of the APS need to be explored in order to understand the implications of recent managerial reforms, and in particular the significance of the shift in skill requirements. Of particular interest is the decreasing representation of women as they move into middle and senior management positions (permanent staff). While women overall are under-represented at the classifications of ASO 6 and above, younger women are better represented at these levels than their older colleagues (PSMPC, 1997a). In particular, women 34 years and under are well represented at the ASO 6 and Senior Officer levels. While the overall representation of women at the ASO 6 level is 41.3%, women 34 years and under represent 55.9% of all ASO 6 permanent employees. It is only after 35 years of age that women become under-represented (47% at age 35-39). This trend continues as women age, with women 50 years and over representing only 26% of ASO 6 permanent employees. Similarly, at the SO C level, while the overall representation of women is 33.3%, women 29 years and under represent 50.9% of permanent SO C employees. At 40 years of age this drops to 31%, and 24.6% at 45 years

(PSMPC, 1997a, 52-53). This data shows that as women age their numbers shrink from ASO 6 to SES levels.

The potential implications of this data need investigation. There are a number of possible interpretations here, which need to be discovered through further analysis that examines staffing trends, employment policies and conditions, and the experience of women within managerial positions. Further research could examine both the conditions that limit opportunities for women, and the individual choices women have made about pursuing promotion. In particular, a focus on the existence or shift of a 'glass ceiling' (Still, 1993) for women as they age and move up the ASO/SO classification structures needs investigation. In addition, research and policy development needs to explore possible remedies to improve the opportunities for women who seek promotion.

Further research could also focus on:

- Identifying the barriers for promotion and participation for women, especially young
- Women at the lower and middle administrative classifications;
- Understanding what opportunities are available for women to manage and lead within
- The APS, especially at a strategic level;
- Exploring the experiences of those women who remain fixed within positions at
- Middle management levels, with limited opportunities for promotion; and
- Examining women's participation or exclusion from central decision making
- Processes.

This research should be utilised to explore the implications of the statistical data gathered by the PSMPC's research team, and to inform the policy and program decisions that are made by those setting directions for EEO policy and development programs aimed at improving opportunities for women. In relation to the introduction of *Workplace Diversity Programs*, the PSMPC should consider changes in staffing statistics, skill requirements, and in particular, the unique experiences and needs of women and those from other disadvantaged groups. This will help establish whether or not there is in fact evidence of a 'backlash' against these groups, in particular, women.

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THE ROLE AND CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN IN SMALL BUSINESS IN THE CHANGING AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY

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Buoyed by the prediction that women in small business will outnumber their male counterparts in the sector by the year 2000 (Employment Skills Formation Council 1994b, Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996), there is apparent enthusiasm among researchers and policy makers as to the potential economic contribution of small businesses owned by women. However much of the confidence and rhetoric surrounding women in small business rests on largely untested assumptions. The findings of our research suggest that if current government interest is to benefit women in the sector a broader framework is required to measure, and thus encourage "success", "contribution" and "growth". In particular, such a framework must move beyond the conventional measurements in order to identify, support and benefit from the largely invisible contributions that women in small business make to our community and rapidly changing economy.

Keywords: women, small business, measurement.

Introduction

Since its election to office in March 1996 the Howard government has suggested that policies designed to promote growth in the small business sector provide women with particular benefits and opportunities. In March 1997 the Prime Minister stated that "Small business is the engine room of the Australian economy... [and] ... a source of economic opportunity for women" (Small Business Deregulation Task Force 1997, piii). Similarly, Senator Jocelyn Newman, then Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Status of Women stated that "Small business ownership provides substantial benefits for women" and that "Women who own and operate small businesses will benefit from the Government action to create an environment where small business can make the greatest possible contribution to economic growth and job creation" (Newman 1996, p 6).

The government's optimism regarding the participation of women in the small business sector stems from the steady increase in the rate of ownership of businesses by women since the early 1980s. Today, Australian women constitute almost a third of people working in their own business and are expected to outnumber their male counterparts by the year 2000 (ABS, 1996; Employment Skills Formation Council, 1994a; Australian Economic Indicators, 1996).

This paper discusses the conceptual and methodological problems which must be confronted before the true extent and nature of women's involvement and contribution in the small business sector is to be accurately measured and effectively harnessed. A review of literature and other data sources, including reports from various government and agency sources and a survey of government and non-government services which support women in small business have been utilised to develop a profile of the types of small businesses owned by women and trends in the

sector (particularly: data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1992; 1995a; 1995; 1996 and data published by the Industry Commission and the Department of Industry, Science and Tourism [DIST] from their 1997 Business Longitudinal Survey). The researchers have interviewed and consulted with (57) individuals from relevant government departments and agencies, educational and research institutions, business associations and networks, small business lobby groups, and industry representatives around Australia. In addition, 10 focus group discussions were attended by 60 women who owned small businesses in Western Australia. The participants were drawn from a range of industries and included sole operators, women in business with a partner, and women who employed between one and 18 people.

A Profile of Women in Small Business

Although women own and operate almost a third of small businesses in Australia the majority are in business with a partner (often a family member) and few are the leading decision-makers in those businesses. It has been estimated that of the 62 per cent of Australian small businesses in Australia which have a sole decision-maker, only 10 per cent are women (Industry Commission and DIST, 1997). Counted among this group are self-employed women who operate from home.

Women are more likely to be involved in very small businesses which require nominal start-up capital, typically less than \$10,000 and a sizeable proportion with less than \$5,000 (Still and Guerin, 1990). Three quarters of women in small business employ less than 5 people (micro-businesses) and almost 60 per cent of this group are non-employing proprietors. (ABS, 1995a). Just over 56 per cent of women in small business work in a full-time capacity of between 35 and 50 hours a week. Women owners tend to predominate in the education, health and community, personal and business service industries and are well represented in retail trade, cultural and recreational services (ABS, 1996).

Despite more than a decade of Australian research a significant proportion of women in the small business remain invisible to researchers, policy makers and service deliverers. To date, profiles of women in small business have largely been limited to women from Anglo middle-class backgrounds. There is insufficient research material on the characteristics, experiences and activities of women who operate at the margins of the sector, women operating home-based businesses, consultants (the new contract workers), young women, indigenous women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, and small business women in rural and regional Australia.

Research suggests that businesses owned by women have higher survival rates than those owned by men (Employment and Skills Formation Council, 1994a; Still and Chia, 1995). Although their turnover may not be high, businesses owned by women tend to make a profit earlier than new businesses established by men and growth is often "organic", that is, financed from profits rather than external sources (Saxon and Allan-Kamil, 1996). Consequently, businesses owned by women tend to be small, stable and less orientated towards growth (Still and Guerin, 1990; Still and Chia, 1995). The 1996 Yeloo Pages Special Report on Women in Small Business confirmed that only 17 per cent of women in its survey were planning high growth for their businesses. Instead, the overwhelming majority of women were playing a leading role in businesses which had no plans for growth.

In their review of research of women in small business for the Commonwealth department of Industry, Science and Tourism, researchers from Flinders University of South Australia (1996) extrapolated that the women who represent a third of small businesses in Australia were responsible for approximately 10-15 per cent of the country's private sector gross domestic product (GDP), about two-thirds of net growth, and approximately 20 per cent of net job creation. As no hard data exists to test this estimate it should be borne in mind that women tend to be segmented into particular industries, such as service and retail, where the potential for expansion and employment growth tend to be limited. In the light of the fact that women predominantly own micro-businesses and favour organic growth, it is arguable that the current potential for increasing the economic contribution of businesses owned by women to employment growth and GDP (the conventional measurements of economic growth) is modest.

Given that the public policy framework is informed by national account statistics which measure growth in terms of a narrow definition of GDP, it is not surprising that researchers and policy makers have been increasingly concerned with identifying and removing barriers which are said to prevent women from expanding their businesses. Barriers which have been identified in the research include: low levels of entrepreneurial drive and confidence in abilities (especially financial management skills), inadequate access to finance, low levels of use of training and government assistance programs, low levels of participation in business networks, limited use of business mentors, a reluctance to delegate responsibility and control, time poverty (Flinders University of South Australia, 1996; Still, 1994), and exclusion from what has been called the 'culture of advantage' (Still and Timms, 1997). Although opinion is divided among government agencies, organisations and researchers as to whether such barriers are gender-specific or are common burdens of small business, in recent years governments have begun to provide gender-specific services designed to remove such barriers.

However, a policy framework which merely focuses on removing barriers to growth will only have limited success because conventional models of business growth do not necessarily reflect the broad spectrum of business endeavour undertaken by women. In reality small businesses take a number of forms and pursue a number of trajectories which do not conform to this model either by choice or necessity. Until researchers and policy makers develop new methods of identifying and conceptualising the diverse activities of women in small business, the full nature and extent of their economic contribution will remain invisible and untapped.

Business Women Operating Outside the Box

Including the diverse experiences and activities of women in the small business policy framework in a meaningful way requires the development of a new paradigm which offers new ways of working towards, thinking about and harnessing small business endeavour (Thomas and Ely, 1996). If the trend towards an increase in self-employment and small business continues, it is apparent that small business will come to mean many different things to many different people, each of whom will be drawn to the sector for different reasons. Present models of 'rational' business behaviour, 'risk taking' and 'entrepreneurial drive' are framed around particular masculine experiences and do not easily represent or shed sufficient light on alternate patterns of business activity, particularly the economic benefits of organic business growth which is more common among businesses owned by women. Similarly, consideration needs to be directed

towards the attributes of small, stable businesses in periods of economic uncertainty and high unemployment.

Researchers have observed that the time poverty associated with their multiple roles and responsibilities is a significant barrier which constrains women from growing their business (Flinders University of South Australia, 1997). Without discounting the influence of such constraints it is important to acknowledge that it is this double burden which attracts many women to small business in the first place because it offers them the flexibility and autonomy they cannot find in paid employment. Our focus group discussions confirm that a significant proportion of women are concerned with finding ways to integrate, not separate, their family and business responsibilities. The motivations for doing so varied, although being able to work from home was important for women with children.

I just felt like I was beating my head against the wall. I paid such high childcare fees to keep [my children] in a decent environment [and] by the time I got home [from the office] I was exhausted...I felt that everybody else around me was having more time with my kids and knew them better than I did.

A policy response which seeks only to remove the 'barrier' of the work/family matrix, while ignoring the advantages of that matrix (for businesses and the people that operate them) will neglect the men and women who not only want their businesses to thrive, but also want to find ways of integrating their work and personal lives successfully.

Recent research from the United States suggests that women in small business measure success according to broad criteria. In addition to achieving flexibility and balance, success can mean stability of employment; work satisfaction and the opportunity to make a contribution to the broader community (Buttner and Moore, 1997). That is, their 'bottom line' includes more than accumulation of capital and assets through business growth. Similarly, Saxon and Allan-Kamil (1996) found that Australian women are concerned with operating an ethical business which offers an opportunity to add value to their local communities while providing a comfortable standard of living, a sentiment which was also articulated by the women in our focus group discussions.

I was determined to prove that you could have total integrity because you can't have just a little bit of integrity - it's like being a little bit pregnant! [I want to prove] you could make money and you could do well, and you could hold your head up high. When you said something you didn't have to cheat, you didn't have to have hidden commissions...That's incredibly important to me.

From the beginning, a big part of my business has been looking after people who are less fortunate than I am. I just feel it's time I paid a little back.

I started on the basis that I wanted to deal with people ethically and morally. I didn't want to sell people a service that someone told them they needed but they didn't really need or want.

Similarly, there are indications that the way that some women prefer to do business provides the type of flexibility which is increasingly necessary in the rapidly changing economy. For example, our focus group discussions confirm recent observations in international research that women in small business often favour business relationships which are based on collegial rather than traditional hierarchical models of expansion or diversification (Scott and Rosa, 1996; Holmquist and Sudin, 1996). These novel forms of strategic alliances have recently emerged as an effective expansion strategy adopted by other segments of the small business sector both in Australia and overseas (Dawson, 1997; Gibson, Weaver and Dickson, 1996; Volery, 1996; Bureau of Industry Economics, 1993). As traditional ways of doing business become less effective in the changing economy, women can bring different values and strategies to the business community which are as yet unrecognised.

Present day statistics and collection methods do not measure indirect economic contributions (Waring, 1988, 1990). Future quantitative research thus needs to be adapted to be more responsive to the diverse and often 'invisible' nature of the contributions of businesses owned by women. Ground-level qualitative research must be undertaken in order to develop new models which can capture the significance of the diverse types of businesses owned by women, their preferred business operating modes, and their motivations for entering small business. It is only with such models that researchers and policy makers will be able to understand and harness both the 'visible' and 'invisible' contributions of women who are operating their businesses outside the conventional box which currently describes small business endeavour and success.

Women and Small Business: Untested Assumptions

The deficiencies of existing research which inform policy concerning women in development have been described. It is also appropriate to scrutinise the assumptions which underlie the assumptions which underpin the current policy rationale concerned with increasing the participation and contribution of women in the small business sector.

It is pertinent to explore whether it is possible, feasible or desirable to transform the business aspirations and activities of women in small business. Before this question can be answered a fuller understanding of the value of invisible contributions, including the attributes of slow organic growth over rapid growth is needed. Are women in small business best placed to become the employers for what is a growing pool of unemployed, or is this policy in conflict with the reasons why women are attracted to the small business sector? The prevalent view expressed in focus group discussions was that the women wanted to keep their business small.

The whole reason for me being in business, and it says this categorically in my business plan, is not to have a business that employs sixty people...its just not what I am interested in.

I have a specific vision of keeping my business small...I can control that creativity and flexibility...[If the business gets] any bigger I [would] start to become restricted and I don't want that.

While many women regard small business as a means of managing the demands associated with their multiple roles, research has not adequately identified how this motivating factor may change

over a women's life-cycle. Similarly, there is insufficient insight into the relationship between an owner's need or desire for flexibility and firm size. As such research has not yet pin-pointed potential periods or phases of business transition and growth. If policy is to be directed at facilitating the growth of businesses owned by women it is essential that research investigates the dynamics of the changing relationship between the business cycle and the changing interests and needs associated with the life cycle of women owners. The assumption that removing a particular 'barrier' will prompt or enable women to grow their business ignores the potential matrix between the business and personal life cycle. The challenge is to understand the subtle nuances of business and life-cycle configurations in relation to growth in order to provide appropriate policy and encouragement in a 'just in time' manner.

It is important that neither policy makers or researchers separate the reasons which propel the increased participation of women in the sector from the optimistic forecast that by the year 2000 women will own/operate half the number of small businesses in Australia. Women's increased participation in the small business sector has been especially prominent in self-employment (Employment and Skills Formation Council, 1994b) Most of this growth, however, can be partly attributed to shrinking employment opportunities in the corporate and public sectors resulting from restructuring, downsizing and women's frustration with the 'glass ceiling' within organisations. For professional women who participated in our focus groups, the barriers in the workplace were a common motivation for becoming "their own boss."

Professionally I was sick and tired of hitting the glass ceiling. A lot of promises were made, I was working a lot harder than my male colleagues. I was earning a good income, but was struggling all the time to get the recognition...I wanted to be my own boss, have a real go at it myself, to see what I could achieve.

Arguably, the growth in the small business sector is in part the result of a transfer of lost opportunities from other industries. In a recent report the Australian Business Foundation Limited (a independent economic and industry think-tank) argued that "the popular belief in small firms as the main engines of growth in the new environment may be misplaced" (1997,p 25). So too, the notion that small business growth has inherent economic benefits for women owners may be misguided.

At present research does not provide an analysis which tests the assumption that equal participation in the small business sector is a vehicle for women to avoid employment segmentation and economic marginalisation. How many women in self-employment or small business live below or close to the poverty-line? How many women are unable to accumulate adequate financial security for their retirement? How prevalent is the problem of 'sexually transmitted debt?' Until these types of questions are explored, the assumption that women's increased participation in the sector is beneficial for women will remain untested.

Conclusion

If governments at both the federal and state level are serious about the advancement of small business, and the role of women in this new 'economic growth area', then much work needs to be done at both a conceptual and measurement level. There is a need for the collection of more relevant, comprehensive and valid data to provide researchers and policy makers with an empirical foundations of a more accurate framework. To date, most empirical data analysis has been distanced from the stories and sentiments articulated by those that have closer working contact with women in small business. In addition, further qualitative research methods which uncover the voices, experiences and attitudes of women in the sector should be incorporated into and inform future research models and policy frameworks.

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ⁱ Title is from a headline in the *London Daily Graphic*, 1948

ⁱⁱ Fraser set 27 individual and 12 team records, becoming the first and only swimmer, male or female, to win the same event in three consecutive Olympic Games. She won more medals (four gold and three silver) than any other Australian in sport. (Leder *et al*, 1996, p52).

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