

1999

## **International review of women and leadership: Special issue 1999**

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*International  
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*of Women and Leadership  
in  
collaboration with  
Centre for Research  
for  
Women*

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

*special editors  
Jane Long  
Sherry Saggars*



# *International Review of Women and Leadership*

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## EDITORIAL ADDRESS:

Journal Editor,

*International Review of Women and Leadership*,

Edith Cowan University,

Pearson Street,

Churchlands,

Perth, Western Australia 6018,

Australia

Telephone: 61 9 273 8781

Facsimile: 61 9 273 8754

Email: irwl@cowan.edu.au

World Wide Web Address:

<http://www.cowan.edu.au/dvc/irwl/welcome.htm>

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Special Issue 1999

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# Special Editors Introduction

The centenary of women's suffrage in Western Australia in 1899 has presented many moments to reflect upon and evaluate women's experiences, to recognise and respond to the diversity of women's lives and concerns. This special issue of the *International Review of Women and Leadership* is one contribution to a year's activities marking that centenary.

Millicent Poole's preface discusses the genesis of these papers in a successful series of seminars in 1998 hosted by the Centre for Research for Women which attested, each fortnight, to the energy, intellectual rigour and vibrancy of participants. Poole contextualises the seminar series by pointing out the gap which existed between the symbolically important granting of non-indigenous women's suffrage in Western Australia and federally (in 1902, and the broader participation of women in formal politics. While personally and socially circumscribed in their contributions to public life, figures such as Edith Cowan demonstrated women's commitments to issues relevant to women and to society at large. Most of the contributors to this special issue are engaging, in some way, with the perennial questions, - what has been achieved, and what still needs to be done to create the sort of society which values all of its citizens?

On the eve of the centenary, some of Western Australia's best known as well as lesser known politicians and activists, writers and academics, addressed issues of current concern in the community; they looked back across the rich and difficult histories which led to the centenary; they surveyed current challenges to active citizenry; and they looked forward, envisioning possible futures and the alternate paths which may be pursued. Contributors to that series elicited lively discussion and debate, relating their views at times with humour, and at others with pathos, but always with a sense of the strong commitment they shared to women's voices being heard.

The seminars as a whole then, functioned as a loose, ongoing series of 'conversations' between presenters and others, and, although not all participants are represented here, these contributions convey the diversity of interests, emphases, and voices which marked the series. This special issue is divided into three sections which reflect the preoccupations with readings of the past, contemporary society and the future among the participants. In Part 1, 'Remembering Women', each writer engages with pasts which bring us closer to the successes, sadness, determination and humanity of women in previous decades and centuries. Veronica Brady's interpretation of the relationship between Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Judith Wright is at once both a reflection on one close intellectual and personal friendship, and an exploration of the broader terms through which 'difference' may be negotiated in a society whose history and present has been characterised by intolerance and racism. Terri-ann White's deft weaving of family stories, of secrets and their revelation, presents a compelling and at times tragic account of the connections between women whose histories jostle and collide to touch the present. Both contributions may raise broader questions for the reader too, about the traditional, easy 'separation' between past and present which underlies most conventional history, but which may not serve to accommodate women's own stories, or the alternative modes in which they may be recalled.

In Part 2, 'Politics and Participation', Judy Skene's interview with Patricia Giles, former Australian Labor Party senator and a committed activist in feminist and human rights issues, reveals the breadth of one woman's energy and achievement, as well as shedding light on the fascinating (and sometimes difficult), connections between personal and public

life for individual women in Australia through the twentieth century. Readers will sense the echoes between the lives of Pat Giles and that of Edith Cowan, both for the obstacles they faced and the entwining of gender in the bigger political picture.

Felicity Haynes' paper addresses issues of citizenship and participation from a different angle, examining the position of androgynous persons in Australian public life and exposing the ways in which exclusionary definitions and practices around sexuality and gender operate. This paper provides an infrequently heard voice in the contentious debate about what constitutes the categories 'woman' and 'man'. Exclusionary and discriminatory practices in voting and participation is not only evident within the arena of parliamentary politics and the sphere of formal citizenship rights.

Less theoretically contentious is Fiona Haslam McKenzie's argument that practices within the peak industry organisations of agriculture in Australia continue to restrict women's effective participation in significant ways, while calls for their greater involvement are being heard. Again in this paper are somewhat depressing echoes about the 'proper' place of women in the public domain, and the ways in which enduring ideologies of women affect women and men. Together, the papers by Haynes and Haslam McKenzie reinforce the sense that while celebrating the achievements of women in the past one hundred years, there can be no unequivocal sense of women having 'arrived'. Domains of exclusion and inequality continue, and they must be both acknowledged and dismantled.

Cynicism about the new millenium and contemporary political debates in Australia surrounding the Republic are sometimes read as proof of a further fracturing of civil society. However, these periods in history can provide an opportunity for reflections upon the past and, perhaps more importantly, for re-envisioning the future. Contributors to Part 3, 'Contemporary Issues and Visions' of this issue illustrate that many women are doing just that. Donella Casperz examines the implications for women of Export Processing Zones in Australia. Moving behind what Casperz calls a 'muted' debate, she argues that a gendered analysis reveals the problematic nature of EPZs in the context of Australia's still-segregated employment structures. If we are to address the issues facing women in the future more effectively, however, upon what (and whose) terms should we proceed? Lekkie Hopkins provides a passionate attack of the economic rationalist framework of contemporary Australian life, and argues for the development of alternative paradigms for feminists to intervene in shaping the future in political, economic and social life.

Australia's almost unchallenged pursuit of neo-liberal goals is the context for both Casperz' and Hopkin's papers, and both are concerned about the impact of these changes on women's lives. A similar concern to reconceptualise existing boundaries of thought and discussion, this time at the level of community life and relationships, underlies Marilyn Palmer's contribution in this section. How can 'community', and positive ideas of reconciliation, healing and support within it be fostered without erasing difference and diversity? Contradictions of everyday life should be celebrated, not obliterated, argues Palmer.

Together the papers here illustrate the ongoing participation of women across personal, community and political worlds, the connections between them as well as the differences, and the continuing, sometimes urgent need to question both the past and present. It is this constant interrogation which provokes and promotes the exploration of imagined communities for 1999 and beyond. It has not been, and may not be, as one contributor noted, 'plain sailing' but the contributions, like the seminar series itself, demonstrate that the symbolic equality that suffrage achieved was simply the beginning.



We thank all contributors for responding so promptly to our requests for their papers, Annie Goldflam from the Centre for Research for Women for her persistent vision for this publication, and Fiona Haslam McKenzie for suggesting this special issue of the *International Review of Women and Leadership* and providing much practical assistance throughout.

Jane Long, The University of Western Australia.  
Sherry Siggers, Edith Cowan University.

Special Editors.

## Preface

This year, 1999 marks the centenary of non-indigenous women's suffrage in Western Australia. To celebrate the occasion, the Western Australian Government, through the Minister for Women's Interests Mrs Rhonda Parker, appointed the Centenary of Women's Suffrage Committee to oversee the recognition of women's contributions and achievements.

The Centre for Research for Women, a collaborative arrangement between the State's four public universities, secured a grant from the Committee to organise a seminar series, "**Women's suffrage: Into the second century**", and a publication based on the series. The focus of the seminars was the contemporary contributions of, and issues facing, women. These covered domains such as indigenous women's experiences, family histories, women in politics, human rights and sexuality, the arts, rural issues and domestic violence. The seminars provided an important opportunity to reflect upon the gains and losses women have made in this country and abroad over the past century. As Australian women we are in a unique position for such reflection.

For a brief period during the early part of this century, Australia enjoyed an international reputation for pioneering women's political rights. In 1902 when women were granted the vote federally, Australia was the only country in the world where women could both stand and vote for the national parliament. Although the British suffragettes, such as the Pankhursts, are better known than most early Australian feminists, women in the United Kingdom could not vote until 1918. In spite of such a propitious start, however, it was not until 1921 that the first woman was elected to an Australian parliament. Edith Dircksey Cowan won the seat of West Perth in the Legislative Assembly of the Western Australian parliament. It would be another 22 years before Dorothy Tangney (elected to the Senate), and Enid Lyons (elected to the House of Representatives), became the first Australian women to enter the federal arena.

Although some historians have pondered over the gap between the winning of suffrage and the participation of women in the formal political process in this country, many may not be so surprised. There are prolific clues, such as the reporting of Edith Cowan's political campaign and subsequent historic election. After being accused of being a disgrace to women and heartlessly neglecting her husband and children (her youngest child then being 30!) during the campaign, she was used by *The Age* (15 March 1921), in an otherwise supportive editorial, as a cautionary example to other women.

*Were political office to become the ambition of the fair sex, and were standing for Parliament to become the latest craze of fashion, there would be many dreary and neglected homes throughout the country sacrificed on the altar of political ambition.*

Most women have heard many variations on that theme! Letters to the editor in our daily newspapers and some academic contributions still contain assertions that youth unemployment, allegedly rising crime rates, concerns over masculine identity, among many other ills, can be traced to feminism generally, and the increasing participation of women outside the home, in particular. Imagine, then, the pressure on those pioneer women in this State as they fought for what seem now to be fairly modest goals.

Also enlightening is the political context to the granting of the vote to Western Australian women in 1899. At the time, there was a professional campaign organised by the Women's Christian Temperance Union (which hoped that votes for women would translate into



liquor reform), with the collection of signatures for a mile long petition and much public debate in support of suffrage. In spite of these positive incentives for political reform, there is very strong evidence that women's suffrage was achieved because of a cynical manoeuvre by the conservative Premier, Sir John Forrest, who wanted to counteract the progressive political demands of the outlying mining communities in the State. As women were mostly located in the conservative settled areas, it was believed their votes would save the government, and assist in the forthcoming referendum to oppose federation. Although this strategy backfired in the short term (the conservatives were defeated), it is true that "party loyalty rather than sex loyalty dictated the political behaviour of women" in the future (Sawer & Simms, 1984:13).

This brief glimpse of women's political history in this State is instructive, and not simply because of the sometimes depressing reminders of the obstacles women have faced, and continue to face, in their attempts to contribute to the public good. The celebration of women's suffrage also allows us to acknowledge with pride those women who pursued the vote in the belief that the participation of women in political life would enrich the nation as a whole.

Edith Cowan provides an outstanding example with her contributions to the interests of women, children and families both inside and outside of Parliament. She fought both for the right of women to participate vigorously in all aspects of public life, and also for those women who chose not to. Her maiden speech touched on issues great and small, ranging from the contribution women could make to the development of sensible public policies in the areas of child and maternity endowment, to the injustice of charging mothers a shilling to place a pram on a train, at a time when few women had access to private transport. It was these very domestic issues which stirred many of the Western Australian suffragettes.

I'm proud to be Vice Chancellor of a university which has acknowledged Edith Cowan's achievement in such a public way – and pleased that our university's commitment to service, professionalism and enterprise closely match the values so passionately championed by her.

The seminar series provided a valuable opportunity to showcase the contributions of contemporary Western Australian women. The speakers – some prominent, others not as well known – were all engaged in the exploration of women's lives and the intersections of those lives with broader social institutions and issues. At this period of Australian history, when social commentators and individual citizens alike are expressing alarm at the apparent divisions between rich and poor, young and old, black and white, and the city and the bush, women must contribute to the public debates which will help define our contemporary national ideals and policy priorities. This compilation of articles is the outcome of some of the seminar presentations and is published as a Special Issue of the *International Review of Women and Leadership*. I commend it to you.

Millicent Poole,  
Editor-in-Chief

**Reference:**

Sawer, M & Simms, M. (1984) *A woman's place. Women and politics in Australia*. Sydney: George Allen & Unwin.





## **PART 1    REMEMBERING WOMEN**

## Judith Wright and Oodgeroo Noonuccal: Two Women in Search of Understanding

Veronica Brady

Honorary Research Fellow, Department of English at the University of Western Australia.

*If we are sisters, it's in this –  
our grief for a lost country,  
the place we dreamed in long ago,  
poisoned now and crumbling.*

(Judith Wright, "Two Dreamtimes").

This series of seminars is concerned with the question of suffrage, women's participation in the political, social and intellectual life of the community, and with the way forward. These two women, I suggest, are important not just because they are well known and have already made their contribution but because they point a – perhaps the – way forward. In my view our definition and practice of politics needs reworking, and the friendship between them helps us here. But first to say what I hope to do, which is briefly to talk about them and what their friendship represents and then at greater length to reflect on their and its significance.

As Wright understood, it was an unlikely friendship:

*I am born of the conquerors,  
You of the persecuted.*

They were separated by class, culture and history:

*You were one of the dark children  
I wasn't allowed to play with –  
Riverbank campers, the wrong colour*

(*Two Dreamtimes*, Wright, 1994, p. 316).

When they first met she was a well-known and highly esteemed poet and literary figure and Oodgeroo – or Kath as she was then called – an Aboriginal woman, already a political activist, trying to get her first book of poems published. True, she had not been stolen from her family but she had grown up on the fringes of society and had left school early and worked as a domestic servant, initially for 2/6 a week – the wage for whites ranged from 15/- to £1: the highest she was ever paid was 13/6 (Cochrane, 1994, p.7). She was also "kept in her place". When her employer found her reading a book on first aid she was told she was wasting her time because the language would be "too much for her". When she persisted, saying that she would go to Red Cross classes instead, the reply was, "I am a member of the Red Cross... and it will be embarrassing to me if my friends knew that you, my servant, are a member," (Cochrane, 1994, p.10). But Wright was born into a prosperous pastoral family, descended from English gentry on one side and Scots Highlanders exiled

for their support of Bonnie Prince Charles, had been to University and travelled, a poet whose work had helped to define our national identity.

Yet they became great friends, Wright found her the “person I speak to most easily – I refer things to her in my mind”. As long as Oodgeroo was live she consulted her on Aboriginal issues and gave a great deal of time and money to the work of setting up an Aboriginal Cultural Centre, “Moongalba”, on Stradbroke Island, her country. For her part, Oodgeroo so trusted Wright that at one stage she hoped to publish a book between them on Aboriginal issues. When she could take time off she would stay with Wright in her house at Mt Tambourine and they would sit up talking till all hours over a bottle of Scotch; Wright called them their “bottlefests”, (Brady, 1998, p.304). Oodgeroo would share her knowledge not just of traditional Aboriginal people but of the fringe-dwellers, the rootless, “truly at the bottom of life in an alien world”, (Wright, 1991, p.4), and Wright her skills, her contacts and her money.

Clearly this is a model of reconciliation and coexistence. If negotiation is the key to amicable agreement and thus of civil society, (which I take to be the goal of political thought and practice), then this understanding which comes from mutual respect is surely the key to negotiation. But how is it possible and what is its result in actual political terms?

The two women first met professionally. Asked her professional opinion of the manuscript of Oodgeroo’s first collection of poems, Wright immediately recognised their power, the “fire and urgency” of the language but also the challenge these poems offered to her personally, the blazing “new voice in the fields of Aboriginal subjection”, (Cochrane, 1994, p. 166). They overturned “all preconceptions of what Aborigines were, and all principles of what they should be”, (Cochrane, 1994, p. 168). But why did Wright appreciate this? As the Hanson phenomenon tells us, many if not most, people respond to challenges of this kind with fear and anger, resenting the threat to their notions of self and the world. What made Wright different?

Partly, I think it was a matter of inheritance. She had been born into a family with money and position, was educated herself and thus could afford tolerance. But there was more to it, a certain wound she shared with her Aboriginal sister. She was a woman and in a family like hers, girl children were less important than boys: it was the men who inherited the land and the “real power”. She had realised this very early and determined to get out and make her own way; Sybille Melvin in *My Brilliant Career* was her heroine. So she responded at once to the defiance of Oodgeroo’s poems. They “refused to be patronised”, she wrote. “They demanded rather than pleased; they spoke not only of oppression, injustice and hardship but of pride and the right to pride, and the sorrow and loss of Aboriginal life”, (Cochrane, 1994, pp.171-2). As an Aboriginal woman she was marginalised, but that marginality became her base:

*We want hope, not racialism,  
Brotherhood, not ostracism,  
Black advance, not white ascendance:  
Make us equals, not dependants.*

(Cochrane, 1994, p. 64.)

As a woman growing up in a patriarchal culture in her own way and to a lesser degree, Wright had felt marginalised and has asserted power, and like Oodgeroo, language had been her weapon. If women have been the victims of language, silenced or written into a position of inferiority, they both used it to assert themselves.

But what Oodgeroo wrote about made a further impact. As a child Wright had spent most of her time with the land. Her mother was an invalid, confined indoors whereas outdoors was where the real work and power of the land lay. As a girl she was excluded from the work, so she went off alone exploring the land, not seeking to dominate it but to live with it, in itself an attitude closer to Aboriginal culture than to Western culture. There she had grown uneasily aware of some loss, some lack within herself, that she was living in a land which was somehow haunted, and this sense found expression in poems like "Bora Ring", "Half-Caste Girl" and "Nigger's Leap, New England" first published in the 1940's. "Nigger's Leap" is quite specific: the wound inflicted by the massacre which is the subject of the poem was inflicted not just on the Aboriginal people who were its victims but on ourselves as well:

*O all men are one man at last. We should have known  
the night that tided up the cliffs and hid them  
had the same question on its tongue for us  
and there they lie that were ourselves with strange.*

(Wright, 1994, p. 15).

This, I must stress, is not guilt, which is best defined as feeling responsible, (Ricoeur, 1968, p.101), but its opposite, a sense of being responsible to the other – the basis, Levinas argues, of ethical existence and thus of an ethical society. (See Hand, 1993). Wright had recognised this in her history of her family, *The Generations of Men*, first published in 1959, in a passage in which her grandfather is pondering the fate of the Aboriginal people he had dispossessed. "Obscurely he found himself resenting" their fate.

*They refused the conditions his people had imposed;  
they preferred their own stubbornness. It was unfair,  
unfair, that such a choice should be made...'Kill us,  
for we can never accept you,' the blacks said; 'kill us,  
or forget your own ambitions'.*

(Wright, 1959, p. 162).

This was something colonial patriarchal society could not do. But the wound remained; "until the white men could recognize and forgive that deep and festering consciousness of guilt in themselves, they would not forgive the blacks for setting it here", (Wright, 1959, p.163). But from childhood Wright had interrogated that society, and the more she came to know of Aboriginal people the more she sensed in them also a "deep turning away" from it, a profound rejection of "the rat race, the grab, the exalting of money and possessions", (Brady, 1998, p.305). This sympathy meant that she could listen and hear Oodgeroo

*Sitting all night at my kitchen table  
with a cry and a song in your voice,  
your eyes full of the dying children,  
the blank-eyed taken women.  
The sullen looks of the men who sold them  
for rum to forget the selling*

and feel closer to her than to

*the hard rational white faces  
with eyes that forget the past.*

(*Two Dreamtimes*, Wright, 1994, pp. 315-6.)



Her appreciation of Oodgeroo's poetry and their subsequent friendship, then, was based on this "turning away" from patriarchal society. Their interrogation of history and their commonality was as women, the sense of loss Wright also expresses in "Two Dreamtimes":

*If we are sisters, it's in this –  
our grief for a lost country,  
the place we dreamed in long ago,  
poisoned now and crumbling*

(*Two Dreamtimes*, Wright, 1994, pp. 316).

- a place, of course, which is essentially a state of mind. "The culture we have imported into this country wilts and changes under the pressure of reality", (Cochrane, 1994, p. 183), Wright believed, because the values on which it is essentially based are destructive. But Aboriginal people by and large still lived by the values which seemed to her important, a sense of community, respect for people and the rest of the living world of which we are part, generosity, openness and non-possessiveness. She also shared Oodgeroo's view that

*one could judge a society by the way it treats its racial minorities. Where a minority was forced to live in squalor, I have seen a squalid society. Where a minority was riddled with disease, I have seen a sick society. Where a minority was without hope, saw a nation without hope.*

(Cochrane, 1994, p. 113).

There is a social philosophy here but it also implies the kind of reversal Walter Benjamin had in mind when he wrote that the history which matters in the long run is that of the losers, not the winners since it is the former reminds us that the good society is still to be achieved.

The good society, "the lost country", has to do with quality of life not with mere material productivity. "What really matters", Wright insisted, "is relationship, obvious and oblique, body to earth, and heart to mind and the integrity of things created or imagined", (Brady, 1998, p. 394). To many, especially those with power, this seems at best impossibly romantic, at worst dangerous; the "real world" does not work like that. But this brings us to the significance of Wright's position, and to make my point I want to move further into the "romantic" or "poetic" continuum, to look briefly at a poem which lies at the heart of the Wright-Oodgeroo friendship, a poem first published in 1952 and thus long before they met, "Canefields".

*An Aboriginal girl is standing on a bridge in the middle of the canefields,  
folding her sorrow into her breast  
looking down into the dark water of a lagoon.  
Her face is a dark and downward mirror  
Where her eyes look, and are lost.  
The land has been conscripted into the conquerors' purposes,  
...marshalled under  
the heavy regiment of green cane.  
But the water where the paperbarks  
Unroll their blank and tattered parchment  
seems to be  
Waiting for some unknown inscription  
which love might make in ink-dark water.*

When they first met Oodgeroo told Wright that the poem was about her, that Wright, her "Shadow Sister", must have seen her there. What she was waiting for was the mystery hidden in the great lily, setting

*...her perfect dusk-blue petals  
in her inherited order of prayer  
around that blazing throne, her centre.*

(*Two Dreamtimes*, Wright, 1994, pp. 137).

Poetic, yes, but where is the politics? It seems to me that it lies in the sense of reality it implies, the sense that the ultimate order of things is not the present world order: rather, our task is some further harmony and liberation, some unity. Nor is this "unrealistic" not if you consider the fact increasingly evident today that the fate of human beings is bound up with that of the rest of the natural world, with the life of our small and vulnerable planet suspended in infinite space. It can, I think, be argued that it is literally time that we must love one another or destroy ourselves. The evidence is all around us.

Both Oodgeroo and Wright agreed on this. Both engaged in "practical" politics to try to move our society in that direction. But I wonder whether in the long run their most significant contribution lies in the fact that they were both poets? The great means of enslavement today is language, the language of abstraction, disembodiment: "down-sizing", for example, is a neutral-sounding word which describes human disaster. But poetry, at least the poetry these two women wrote, always insists on the personal and the bodily, and the sensibility needed to respond to it therefore essentially dissents from a world into which people are turned into abstractions. What if more and more people began to share this sensibility?

There is not time to develop this thought further, except to say that the Hanson phenomenon surely points to widespread disillusion with politics as it is played today and the need for new initiative. That does not mean, of course, that we should adopt her simplistic and divisive solutions. On the contrary the "poetic" sensibility is profoundly aware of ambiguity and of the need to be practical. But what we need, however, is political solutions more aware of this ambiguity and of the human and environmental realities – of the cost, if you like – of policies in terms of bodies and the earth. The original meaning of the word "economics", after all, came from the Greek for "care of a household". The real chains which bind us and which need to be broken are surely what Blake called "mind-forg'd manacles".

In 1983 the Melbourne *Herald* invited Wright to contribute to a series, "What I would say to the Prime Minister". This is what she wrote:

*Stop believing what billionaires tell you.  
Give the young a say and some hope.  
Change education which is today biased towards the status quo.  
Set up a strong Press Council.  
Stop forest clearance.  
Fund the search for forms of alternative energy.  
Encourage research into the limits of population in this country.  
Stop uranium mining.  
Cease to live by a philosophy which make economics the supreme value.  
Pay our debts to Aboriginal people.  
Resign.*

(Brady, 1998, p. 464).

No doubt it was utopian to expect any Prime Minister to listen and the piece was not published. But it surely lays out a political program more practical in the real sense than anything governments have done or are doing. Politicians, I suggest, are trapped in the power games of patriarchal society. In their different ways both Wright and Oodgeroo reflect the situation and the significance of woman as the "stranger". As Kristeva argues, this positioning can give the insight and strength to question "the latest preconception, the one we thought we could be comforted by, the one of which we could be proud" and to subvert authority, above all "the authority of monologic science" which our society honours (Toril Moi, 1991, p. 150). As Kristeva also points out, "to work on language" as both do, "to labour in the *materiality* of that which society regards as a means of contact and understanding" (Toril Moi, 1991, p. 150) is also to declare oneself a stranger. But I submit that it is the strangers who will, if anyone does, transform our politics.

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## Theodore and Brina: An Exploration of the Myths and Secrets of Family Life. 1851-1998.

Terri-ann White

Department of English, University of Western Australia.

### Abstract

My paper will trace the development and theoretical conundrums of my current writing project. I am writing a novel, a work of fiction, that incorporates historical detail, family history, and popular mythology of the Western Australian community. Through the details of family and social history, I aim to tell another version of settlement of Perth from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. This story belongs to my family, starting with great-grandparents who travelled from London to Australia in the 1850s: one as a convict, one a free settler. Both were Jewish, and the convict was Polish.

The writing is textured with forgotten voices, it is self-reflexive, and will tackle the paradoxes involved in telling stories from within the family I belong to, one that resists telling its own stories because of shame and the lack of an authoritative, or socially given, voice. From family history to social history, my interest is in the material that sits on the margins: the unspoken and generally unwritten histories of people on the edges of this society. Histories obscured by silences. I am interested in the material which is not recorded or spoken, which nonetheless 'speaks' of a shame that shapes the ever-developing identity of a family and a community.

The work is informed by feminist ideas about voice and the hierarchy which licenses select people in our society to speak. Relying on the varied materials that sit between history writing and personal memories, it will follow the evidence, both written and oral, recognising how malleable memory can be. One of my purposes is to explore ideas about memory, from the individual act of memory to its transmutation into collective memory, and especially to the complexions that collective memory acquires through social symbolism, ritual, and tradition. To recover, recuperate, and explore what is involved in forgetting and remembering; and do this through a layering of stories, of voices, of form.

I would like to begin with a couple of points about writing and reading, about my own practice of both. The sort of creative writing I am interested in has a hybrid shape: with boundaries *between* genres breaking down, and the spaces *between* the critical and creative challenged. These writings confuse categories and collapse the forms and conventions of history, autobiography, memoir and fiction, and are fiercely interested in the subjective, in the timbre of the subjective voice. Some recent works are ones you may have read, and that I have recently been teaching with students at Honours level and in Creative Writing classes. They work through their employment of memory: as filter, as map. Drusilla Modjeska's *Poppy* (1990), Annette Kuhn's *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination* (1995), Carolyn Steedman's *Landscape for a Good Woman* (1986), Rita Huggins' and Jackie Huggins' *Auntie Rita* (1994), Susan Varga's *Heddy and Me* (1994), Eva Hoffman's *Lost in Translation: Life in a New Language* (1991), and a book that serves almost as a precursor to all of these, from 1977, Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Childhood among Ghosts* (1977). Explorations of the relation memory have to personal identity; the way that it is constituted: both selective and fragmentary, personal and public. I am interested in what such strategies can contribute to feminism, and how these projects of mixing up forms relate to the particular disciplines they emerge from. So these texts are my models, exemplary and experimental works.



Carolyn Steedman writes in her book, *Landscape for a Good Woman*, which contains biography and autobiography and social theory and history, that it is:

*about interpretations, about the places where we rework what has happened to give current events meaning. It is about the stories we make for ourselves, and the social specificity of our understanding of those stories. The childhood dreams recounted in this book, the fantasies, the particular and remembered events of a South London fifties childhood do not, by themselves, constitute its point. We all return to memories and dreams like this, again and again; the story we tell of our own life is reshaped around them. But the point doesn't lie there, back in the past, back in a lost time at which they happened; the only point lies in interpretation. (p. 5)*

I am writing a novel, a work of fiction, that incorporates historical detail, family history, and popular mythology of the Western Australian community. Through the details of social history and my own family history, I aim to tell another version of some of the history of Perth from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. I cannot cover all of the facets of this project here, so will take as my cue, appropriately, the title of this seminar series: *Women's Suffrage: Into The Second Century*, and focus on the women in this family of mine.

The form of my paper moves between offering an outline of the project and reading from the text-in-progress. I have been working on this book for three years: researching, writing and rewriting, and recently writing in a different medium: as part of an online residency, I have been continuing with the writing off the page, beyond the confines of the A4 white page, I have been constructing a web site: using images, colour, different design ideas and, importantly, finding a rhythm of linking text on from one field to another. The archives open up on the Web, the sense of a concertina-like opening out. The anarchy of a line of stories that doesn't conform to a plan or an order. The reader can get lost, and that's ok with me. I feel as though I've learnt a lot about narrative from this new medium: not entirely sure if I can name those lessons yet, except the connectedness, the way that one idea can lead into another, inform it, enhance it, make it different. I'm sure it will change my writing. And I'm not disposing of the traditional medium of publishing: that can sit alongside this new model. They can co-exist productively. And I promise to potential readers that the book won't promote the confusion that some people feel about the lack of direction on the Web.

One of the significant threads in this project is the idea of what has been carried along the line of women for five generations. My grandmother's grandmother Brina Israel arrived on the *Travancore*, a free settler to the Swan River Colony in 1853 when she was nineteen. She arrived with her sixteen-year-old sister Esther, and it appears that they might have been escaping the shame of Esther's pregnancy, and it also appears that a baby may have been born on the high seas. Of course, there were other social factors affecting such an extreme escape.

I have specific areas within the social history record of Western Australia that interest me and have relevance to the project. These areas include:

- White settlement of Western Australia, and the way that the society was formulated and regulated;
- the decision that was made in 1849 to request the British Government send the colony convict labour after 20 years of working on the idea of a free colony. What

that meant to the 'fabric' of the society, the increasing imbalance of the numbers of males and females, and the idea that a 'better' type of convict might be requested and received, (which just led to a fabrication of records in England);

- the settlement of Jewish people and the development of a Jewish community in Western Australia. Ideas about the dis-connection between free settlers and convicts and the imperatives involved in prayer and adherence to ritual. How that enforced marriage worked;
- the role and lives of white and Aboriginal women in the colony, either involved or excluded, but either way affected. At a number of crucial periods, there were twice as many white men as women in the colony;
- and out of the context of the men of my family, the Krakouer family, forming sexual and familial relations with Aboriginal women, I am researching the extent to which Aboriginal-white relations were viewed: whether as transgressive, or acknowledged at all.

*The stories my family told about themselves and how they came to be here, in this place. Well, they didn't: they told no stories beyond those of kitchen cupboards, lost fortunes, bus timetables, the sanctity of silence in families. Shame drove this: a common enough story.*

*I have become a collector of shards. Shards of memory, things passed down: told to me at the end of this long line of tellings. I want to catch these shards, these half-lit, often, paste jewels. I don't know how authentic they are, does it even matter? For me it doesn't matter. I am making anew, building something from the remains. Wanting to honour the fleeting; the fragment, fractured histories and stories. Not passed down, but dredged up.*

I am working on recalling stories not ever known to me, *not* passed down. But about this place I know so well, and am so connected to. For all of my growing up, the past was out of my reach: it was clear to me, early on, that there were big taboos. It wasn't until I was an adult that they were named, through my research: Jew, convict, madness, criminality, illegitimacies, and a pejorative word used deliberately, miscegenation.

*Theodore Krakouer, my grandmother's grandfather, arrived in Perth, the Swan River Colony, in 1851, twenty-two years after the British invaded. He arrived as a convict on the Mermaid. He was literate, a Jew, born in Poland, and, in his convict papers it is declared that his state of mind was hopeful.*

*I am attempting to return to my roots. I may have to invent most of it.*

*Theodore and Brina.*

*Theodore Krakouer.*

*The pronunciations: Krack-hour. Crack-over. Krak-ooer. Cracker.*

*And Brina Israel.*

*They arrived within two years of each other. Their first baby Abraham was born in the same year of her arrival and, I suppose, their first meeting. He is the first Jewish baby born in the colony; that at least is the claim. Eight more children were born, the last being my great-grandfather David in 1869.*

### **mythopoetica**

This is a story of female fertility.

Ideas of new beginnings, of a new world, implicit in the movement from England to here. The appalling results. The legacy of not passing on stories. I'm telling other people's stories because nobody else will. Or ever has.

What it is that I have to do: break open secrets from the family, benign secrets now, they can do no one any harm. Talk about death and loss and sufferings.

The voice in his belly told Theodore Krakouer to destroy the world. With words, too, I am destroying, smashing up, the world of the family. I don't mean to do anyone any harm.

Will I be forgiven for my transgression?

### **storing memories**

It wasn't a catastrophe. The two girls, sisters, held onto their memories of family at home, and they replicated the best parts in a new and disordered place.

Because records are kept in this way, I have only the name of the father of Abraham and Brina and Hannah and Esther Israel, in that order, without their mother's name.

Samson Israel. Furniture Broker.

Residence: 7 Constitution Row, Gray's Inn Road.

Or elsewhere named as Gray's Inn Lane. I have found it on the map of London, seen it noted as a current address of the Open University.

In these records, I am given, in its flourishing script, the Hebrew names of all of the children. Born between 1831 and 1836. Mother nowhere named.

### **families**

*Keeping secrets about pregnancy runs in my family: the sham of shame. Shame about breaking the rules. That babies are to be born into families, and marriage is what defines a family. What happens when this sacred understanding is broken? I can tell some horror stories from my family, mistakes and risks taken, the way the women were made to pay.*

*Starting in 1853 with Esther, and because she was there, Brina was implicated. They changed their lives because of a pregnancy. All of Brina's children were illegitimate, even though she signed herself Mrs. Brina Krakouer. She never married her married man.*

*Ena, my grandmother, who gave birth in 1929 to a daughter she named Merle, lived with her for nine months and was then forced to give her up for adoption. Audrey, her adoptive parent's choice of name, found her mother a short time after Ena died, after looking for her all of her life. Isn't that what they all say?*

*Ena's next two daughters were married shotgun style: she forced them to marry boyfriends who may not have been suited as life partners because both girls fell pregnant, fell into disrepute. I was the result of one of those mistakes. It always reads as if these girls were the only ones in the 1950s who had sex before marriage, the way the family tells it. Each family.*

*What eclipses all of these losses is a story that continues to shock me to my core, one that comes at the end of the 1970s, when you might imagine more leeway for mistakes, more compassion and support. My cousin Julie, aged eighteen, close in age to Ena when she first gave birth to an illegitimate child, became pregnant in the small country town she lived in. She felt the shame of this keenly: I know this because of her actions. She told no one; perhaps she even kept it from herself, went without medical supervision, a proper concern for nutrition, and continued to wear her tight black jeans. She killed herself, but it was a subtle suicide.*

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From family history to social history, my interest is in the material sitting on the margins: the unspoken and generally unwritten histories of people who inhabited marginal spaces within this society. Histories obscured by silences. I am interested in the material which is not recorded or spoken, which nonetheless 'speaks' of a shame that shapes the ever-developing identity of a family and a community.

My approach is informed by feminist ideas about voice and the hierarchy which licenses select people in our society to speak. I am following the evidence, both written and oral, recognising how malleable memory can be: how it is selected and edited to fit particular purposes. I intend to reflect on family and social histories by being explicitly reflexive about my methodology, by documenting the process of research, the discoveries along the way, and my responses to the material I uncover.

Powerful preoccupations include ideas about family, and how some patterns of behaviour and consequence in families can be so prevalent that they could be viewed in some ways as an inheritance. Questions about what a family is, what it carries, how it is defined, an opportunity to imagine those theories about the family that I have engaged with through feminist and socialist discourses as they are put into action across five generations. The family as the absolute centrepiece of our society. The patterns that occur with, for instance, female reproduction, and the particular stories that have not been handed down to subsequent generations who have been harmed, as I see it, by this lack of knowledge. Women's punishment for their sexual misdemeanours, for stepping over the bounds of sexual and then reproductive decency. Investigate legitimations, legitimacies. Illegitimate. Punishings.

What those silences do. How identity is formed, what is passed down. If most of the heritage of a family, its mistakes and distinctiveness is not given to the next generations, then how does that retard them? I am attempting to collect the losses, to make links, family patterns, that have been evident in this family since their arrival in Australia.

This is a quote from Annette Kuhn's book about memory and family and secrets *Family Secrets: Acts of Memory and Imagination*:



*Telling stories about the past, our past, is a key moment in the making of our selves. To the extent that memory provides their raw material, such narratives of identity are shaped as much by what is left out of the account - whether forgotten or repressed - as by what is actually told. Secrets haunt our memory-stories, giving them pattern and shape. Family secrets are the other side of the family's public face, of the stories family tell themselves, and the world, about themselves. Characters and happenings that do not slot neatly into the flow of the family narrative are ruthlessly edited out. (p. 2)*

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*Tell me a story --*

*Should it be real or not? What sort of story do you want? A fairy tale?*

*I'm teasing it out, bit by bit.*

*I met a man in Busselton in 1997 with a story about how his father was in Victoria, Australia, when Ned Kelly was hanged. He wasn't that old, the man in Busselton, in his early sixties, but his father had married late and had children even later. So suddenly, a century and more compacts into a manageable size and you can understand about lives in the nineteenth century when they had been previously about as 'real' as dinosaurs.*

*That moment for me was when I found letters handwritten by Brina Israel in the State Archives. These were letters that were well controlled and built an argument, many of them with a subtle tone. They were about care and social justice, about arguing for her place in the society that was keeping her out. I read them in an entirely contemporary way; I identified with that voice, felt that they could have been written by me.*

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CSR Vol744/181

August 21 1874

To the Honorable Colonial Secretary

Sir

I can scarcely express my feelings when unfortunately I have to mention the circumstances connected with my Husband now in the Lunatic Asylum. I have been applied to pay for the keep of my Husband a sum now which unfortunately to say is not in my power to pay How willing I should have been to do so had I not been left with a large helpless family & the only dependence I have is in my eldest son a lad of twenty years of age who has to work very hard to support us (Most people say great credit is due to him) Too much put on him must be the cause of him wishing to leave the colony. He my son is willing or am I if we can get some assistance from Government to send my Husband home to his native country to his relatives in Berlin for the present it is as much as we can do to keep out of the poor House - should business prosper I should only be too happy to offer the support of my Husband - at present I must beg the release of any payment demanded of me & my son. I therefore hope & pray Sir you will be good enough to intercede on my behalf & I will be ever grateful. I am now living in Perth & if you will

allow me the honour of an interview with you I will explain more fully to you how I am situated & will give you ample proofs if required.  
Your very humble & obedient servant

B Krakouer

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I am intending to generate multiple voices and modes, without being corny and trying to replicate an oldy-worldy nostalgia trip. One mode is that of the mid-nineteenth century shipboard diary kept by working class British emigrants. Another is the intensely personal, even confessional voice of the contemporary narrator, the keeper of the material, the one who is organising and interpreting. Me.

### Brina's Shipboard Diary

How am I to do this? Can I pull off a fictional account of a sea journey that lasted one hundred and six days and included these two young women, my ancestors?

I want to get under the skin and into the lives of Brina and Esther. The only way possible is through words.

I have some historical records about the *Travancore* but, again, the generalisations don't seem to fit. These girls are not named or described in these records. Instead, the dominant group holds the focus, the Irish and English girls escaping poverty and a dead end and setting off to make good in a new place. To build up their chances of doing well in the life stakes.

The very nature of a colony a million miles from anywhere else gives rise to it becoming a refuge, a hiding place for people escaping something somewhere else. For generations, Perth girls have been told by their parents (and probably sensible aunts), to beware of men from the East or even further afield. To avoid confidence men, of strangers to this hometown. They must be escaping a dark splotch in a grimy past to want to come this far, to a place they don't belong. You can take this idea right back to the first white settlers here: certainly the convicts didn't have much of a choice, but many of them, once given their ticket-of-leave, didn't allow wives and children back in England to follow them out here, despite the assistance provided by the authorities in the interests of family values.

But I'm still in avoidance mode. I have to write these women into my narrative. How? I haven't developed the skills of a historian, and there seems not to be enough evidence anyway: that I already know. So, I'll write it as a granddaughter, I'll project a voice, invent a voice through my imagination and this scant evidence I have found. There are, miraculously, remaining shipboard diaries and accounts by working class people of that journey from England to Australia in the middle of the nineteenth century, so there is a genre to refer to, a model for me.

*Going By The Travancore*

*From Plymouth on the*

*30th September 1852*

*Brina and Esther Israel*

*May God Preserve*

*Them and  
Keep Us From Evil*

But 22 years later in 1874, from the official records:

The Hon FP Barlee Esq.

Sir

I would not trouble you only I am duty bound according to my own conscience & the advice of my friends to contradict such a base falsehood that has been told to you & I think I ought to know the author of such an untruth. What I write to you the inhabitants of Fremantle can prove. I only wish the person that gave you the information would take my ample means & support my Husband & my self & children. I would be truly grateful & so would my Husband's creditors for there is a good many of them in this place. When my Husband was first put into the Asylum the bailiff immediately afterwards came in to the house. My Husband owes a great deal of money which can be provided. I am paying them all a little at the time on purpose to keep my few belongings together to enable my son & myself to try & get a living for ourselves without becoming a burden upon government. The public know the unnecessary trouble my poor Husband was often put to. No wonder that he ends his days in a Lunatic Asylum. I am afraid that my son will be driven there too unless I have the means to send him out of the Colony & then perhaps Government will be kind enough to keep my children & me for already one of Krakouer's creditors not satisfied to wait has sent a summons to the Lunatic asylum. Poor fellow they wont let him rest there. I would feel obliged if you would grant me an interview as I wish to speak to you. Please name the time that will suit your convenience. Yours obediently.

B Krakouer

## Nancy

The next story involves a powerful dose of self-loathing.

Nancy Krakouer, my great aunt, David's daughter, who died in 1985. A failed political activist. She fell in love with a man and she followed his calling. Her infamy is so topical in the highly charged Australia of the late 1990s, which is wearing its racist simplicities boldly, and getting away with asserting them again in public. Graeme Campbell, a failed Western Australia politician, formed a new political party and named it the *Australia First Reform Party*. A homage, perhaps, to the party that Nancy's membership of, allowed her name to be printed four times in the *New York Times* in 1942. *The Australia First Movement* - Western Australian branch. With only four members: a merry little band of rabid fascists. Perhaps Nancy was simply lovestruck, smitten, and didn't think through the consequences. She wouldn't have known about the logic of the Nazi Party at the time: that her two Jewish grandparents would have made her a *mischling*, first degree and therefore non-exempt from the Final Solution. It was lucky that diaspora had meant Nancy's daddy was born in Fremantle and not Cracow or Berlin.

Nancy was interned. In my childhood when I was told stories of Nancy as a wild woman, the coda involved the punishment for being wild. Nancy had been deported out of

Australia for her bad deeds. I never asked where, as an Australian citizen, she could be deported *to*, because I liked the mystery too much. Later, it is always later, I read of her dislike of Jews, her desire to see Roman Catholic priests put on roadwork and the church hierarchy shot. The *New York Times*, covering the treason trial, records that the group had drawn up a list of persons to be assassinated. "Nancy Rachel Krakouer, a post office employee and the only woman among the defendants, was said to have suggested that the victims be tortured before being shot".

In the proclamation of an '*Australia First Government*', which included a welcome for the Japanese and relief at liberation from the Jewish domination of Australia, Nancy was to be appointed minister of all women's organisations. She was acquitted in their 1942 trial on the charge of conspiring to assist the Japanese forces, but ordered interned under national security regulations.

I wonder about whether these people were as serious as they have been made to appear. The Fifth Columnists. It was certainly an unfashionable position to hold in 1942; to celebrate the actions of the Japanese as true patriots.

Did Graeme Campbell understand when he echoed their name in 1996 that they intensely hated the British and admired the Japanese?

We sit around for hours together, night after night, plotting the overthrow of our government. Some of us even know, crudely, how it works and how we might sabotage it. We are incensed, horrified, desperate at the rapid slide back. This government has no redeeming qualities. Racist. Lacking in humanity. Corrupt. If we were to be infiltrated by intelligence forces, would we, too, be charged with something? Treason. Something under the Security Act?

## Julie

*The girl is quiet, always has been. Self-absorbed and thoughtful. Resourceful, but she will never dazzle: hers is a slow burn, a satisfaction-in-the-getting-there. Look at the photographs of her as a young teenager; don't forget that she was dead before she had finished her teens. She looks halfway between a boy and a girl, very pretty but with an absence of the girlish flourishes that we were flaunting in abundance, her sisters and cousins.*

*The girl was probably a wonderful and generous lover, full of affection and patience. She took her lover's identity with her, secreted it away; in death she protected him. Told no one. I hope he deserved it; hope he was a lover and not a man who forced himself into her.*

*There were all of those months, nearly nine months, of having a foetus growing inside her. A time when some women grow comfortable with their bodies for the first time, read it as a remarkable living extension of themselves, less abstract than ever before. The pain is, for once, productive.*

*This act of violence. Her denial. Submerged, and she didn't fight back, she didn't ask anyone for help. I hope she didn't. It is easier to imagine the disaster as being of her making. If she asked for help and was rejected I don't know what to think.*

*The girl, before she turned nineteen, died. Close in age to Ena, her grandmother, when she first gave birth to an illegitimate child. This girl became pregnant in the small country town she lived in. She felt the shame of this keenly: I know this, not because she had the chance to tell me, but because of her actions. She told no one, perhaps she even kept it from herself, went without medical supervision, a proper concern for nutrition, and continued to wear her tight black jeans. She killed herself, a subtle suicide: the foetus died at an advanced stage and her body was poisoned with septicaemia. It was too late, and she died in the flurry of emergency. Not for her the ignominy of a botched abortion attempt, or the struggle of single motherhood. She held her secret within her body, enclosed it, as tight and fearfully as you can imagine. Died with her shameful evidence inside her body. That protection from hard truths: who was she afraid of? Following the line of transgressors in the family, women who had sex and became pregnant outside of marriage.*

*At the funeral, did my grandmother Ena think about her own, similar experience in 1929? Did she think about her secret? Because it was still her own secret then and she had held it close and told no one, certainly none of her children. It was revealed much later. When Julie died, Ena's own illegitimate baby was turning fifty. I plunder my memory of that day, that terrible funeral, for evidence of how my grandmother behaved, for any slippages: of recognition, a return to her own hardships.*

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## **PART 2    POLITICS and PARTICIPATION**

## **One Thing Led To Another: A Life of Activism in Support of Women's Rights. An Interview with Pat Giles**

**Judy Skene**

University of Western Australia.

### **Abstract**

Patricia (Pat) Giles, a former senator and long-term feminist activist, was one of the contributors to the citizenship seminar series that formed the basis of this volume. Pat's interest in women's health issues and her experience in international politics led to her appointment as Chair of the World Health Organisation's Commission on Women's Health, after her retirement from the Senate. Pat is currently the World President of the International Alliance of Women. She took time from her busy schedule of travel and committee work to speak to Judy Skene about her continuing commitment to women's rights.

**Pat, you have had a very long involvement with the women's movement. I was wondering if you could think back and tell me how you first became involved?**

It is thirty years now. I was amongst the first to join Women's Liberation and to get Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL)<sup>1</sup> going in Perth in the early seventies.

**Were there incidents that triggered that involvement?**

Certainly. Yes, I had personal experience. Firstly, and I think this was probably the most influential, was that I was asked by the Mother's Union in Bassendean to talk to them about education. I was very active in the State Schools' Parents Organisation. There had been changes in the state school system and I thought that that was what they wanted me to tell them, but when I got there, I discovered that they wanted to know what I was doing. Now, I had decided, in my very early forties, to do the exam that would allow me provisional enrolment at the University of Western Australia. I passed that and then went on to do a full time Arts degree. These women I was addressing were women who would have left school at the age of fourteen, the majority of them, perhaps worked for a while in a factory or a shop, and their children were now grown up. They were looking at another twenty-five or thirty years of active life and wondering just what there was for them, questioning their lives in a way that hadn't apparently happened before, although I'm sure many women were doing it in private. But these women were doing it in semi-public so this was enormously important for them. That was about the time when we were seeing Germaine Greer and other women on television, and many aspects of my own life were helping me to identify with what they were saying, so the opportunity to join Women's Liberation and to get WEL going appealed greatly to me. I didn't really have a lot of spare time, I was still running a very busy household. The organisational side of things appealed to me. I had already been chairing school committees for twelve or thirteen years and it seemed like a very logical progression for me. Also, at the end of 1971, I joined the Labor Party and had become extremely interested in the trade union movement, so my degree was principally in politics and industrial relations.

**When did you make the commitment to stand yourself? You were elected to the Senate in 1981, but what made you decide to have a go at that?**

It was at the end of the seventies, by which time I had had the opportunity to make a position for myself in both the Labor Party and the trade union movement. I was divorced in 1975. By then my children were all well into their teens, so I was able to spend a fair amount of time and energy on committee meetings. 1975 brought enormous changes for me. Some of the leaders, in both the trade union movement and in the Australian Labor Party<sup>2</sup> (ALP), were sensitive to the need to identify women who could be promoted. At that time in my life, a number of extremely progressive males here in Western Australia were very, very important to my career.

**They were supportive?**

Oh yes, very supportive. One of them was the secretary of the union for which I started working in 1974. His name was Owen Salmond, a fine feminist. Another was Bob McMullan, who was secretary of the Labor Party during those years and is now a Member of the House of Representatives. Another was Peter Cook, who was secretary of the Trades and Labour Council. They were perhaps a new generation of males who were nowhere near so challenged by women as some of the older and more traditional men.

**And why did you choose the Senate?**

In the mid-70s, the South Australian government was looking for someone to head up their Equal Opportunity Commission. I had a message from Adelaide, which is where I grew up, asking me to apply. I recall sitting down with Bob McMullan, in the pub of all places as that was where all the business was done, and asking him his opinion. He asked me then, "what do you see for yourself in the future?" It wasn't until then that I had taken a serious look. I had stood for parliament twice, and for local government by then, and I said to him, "if I were looking for a parliamentary career, I think it would probably be in the Senate". By then I had realised that a Lower House seat takes an enormous amount of time and energy looking after an electorate. A Senate position leaves one with more scope to specialise if one wants to. That was my opinion at that stage. I stood for the seat of Curtin, without success, in 1977. In 1979, when the Labor Party was pre-selecting for the Senate, I was happy to go third on the ticket which was a pretty hopeless position. Just before the pre-selection closed, one of the sitting senators, John Weeldon, decided to retire, which left the second position, an eminently winnable position, open. Suddenly it was a Melbourne Cup<sup>3</sup> field, and all the reasons in the world were offered as to why I shouldn't get it. These included, "there were too many women in the Senate", (there might have been four or five), "that women's issues were not federal issues", (I'm glad nobody ever told Gough Whitlam<sup>4</sup> that), and that "we were pre-selecting too many damn academics". My Bachelor degree put me in that category. At my pre-selection, I talked about my apprenticeship in nursing, probably one of the harshest you could do in the 1940s. In the event, I rocked in, as far as the pre-selection went, with Bob McMullan's very strong support and that of my union colleagues. By then I had been working in the union for five years and I was well known, and trusted I think. That was no accident because I set out to make sure that would happen. As I said, my kids were older, so I could stay after meetings and make one beer last for several hours, not just to establish my credibility but also to get to know them as people and give them a chance to get to know me. The men could get used to the idea that there was a woman, and probably a whole lot of other women like me, ready, willing and able to contribute to the union movement.

**Pat, your comment about the Senate being a forum where, rather than having to relate to your constituents, you were free to pursue other issues, is interesting. Do you think that is one of the reasons why there are more women in the Senate, because that aspect appeals to women?**

Actually when I got into the Senate, my office was in the northern suburbs. It was a very rapidly developing area at that stage, with very little in the way of community services, so we did have a lot of electorate activity. I had splendid staff, women who were excellent organisers and very good at getting groups together, identifying their needs, working with local government, working with Federal and State governments which were Labor governments. We had a collection of very fortunate circumstances and we did a lot of work in the electorate.

**So your perception maybe wasn't quite what you discovered the reality to be?**

No. On the other hand, much of the Senate work is not sitting in the chamber, it's committee work. One is chairing committees, there are reports which demand an enormous amount of work taking evidence, checking evidence, reading submissions, working with parliamentary staff, and so on. There is a degree to which one can choose which committees one is on. In the beginning when you go into the Senate, you are put on one regardless of your interests. I had the opportunity to chair the caucus Status of Women Committee. We had to work very hard, there is no doubt about that, but there was a lot of satisfying work to be done. The question about more women being in the Senate is solely because of the fact the Senate is elected by proportional representation.

It is more likely that women are pre-selected for positions on Senate tickets than they are for winnable Lower House seats. In the Labor Party it has changed a little over the last few years with affirmative action. Here in Western Australia under Bob McMullan, we actually had affirmative action in elections for the executive committee of the Labor Party from the end of the seventies. And brilliant man that he is, he recommended a change in rules to increase the vice-presidents from two to three, so there were less men feeling threatened. That was accepted, I won't say easily, but within a relatively short time. For many of the blokes, of course, it was the first foot in the door for women.

**Do you think, in terms of the masculine culture in parliament, both State and Federal, there needs to be a critical mass of women to make any difference?**

I think there needs to be a critical mass before a woman in a really senior position like a deputy leader or a leader is accepted without the sort of hypercritical approach. A woman leader is expected to be a combination of Mother Theresa and Madeline Albright.

**Carmen Lawrence<sup>5</sup> has made comments to the effect that it is just an impossible expectation.**

It is an impossible expectation. I don't know how many people have asked me, "are we going to see a woman prime minister"? And I have been saying, "maybe in a generation; it will be a miracle if it happens within a decade". Still, there have been little miracles going on all the time. In 1975, 2.5 per cent of all parliamentarians were women. By 1985, that was 12.5 percent. That was an enormous increase, a five-fold increase in a decade. Now it's getting close to 30 per cent. It's not even throughout Australia, it's patchy, and it won't continue to go up constantly. There will be dips and plateaus but the increase is inevitable. And there are younger women coming in to parliament. There was an article in one of the ALP (Australian Labor Party) publications very recently about the seven women under the

age of thirty three who were recently elected to the Federal Parliament. Once again, they are under very intense scrutiny, one foot wrong and off they go.

**Can you see an improvement in the situation for women representatives in the time since you were first elected?**

Oh yes, it's no longer an oh-ah state of affairs. It is much more accepted. All the polls that I have seen over the past few years show that there has been a much higher acceptance of women for their nurturing qualities, their capacity to listen and their real interest in social affairs. They are seen as hard-working and on the whole, as credible and intelligent. That translates into votes. I think one of the reasons that Carmen was so persecuted was because she was seen as such an asset for the Labor Party, and bringing her down was a blatantly political exercise.

**What sort of advice would you perhaps give to one of the young women under the age of 35 who is just entering parliament?**

I think the first thing, obviously, is to settle in. Listen carefully, go to absolutely everything you possibly can but try not to get exhausted in the process. Make sure you have got really good staff who can give you personal as well as practical and technical support. Get to know your electorate really well.

**On a personal level?**

Look after yourself. Keep healthy. Get as much sleep as you can. For those with young children, it can be hell, just extremely difficult juggling their time. Cheryl Davenport, a state MP, is a sole supporting mother, with a boy of ten or eleven; just too young to leave on his own. She was employing three people for the days when she had to stay in parliament. Someone to get him to school, someone to get him his evening meal and someone who could stay with him in the evening. Immensely difficult.

**Pat, were there really significant moments in your time in the Senate, or significant achievements?**

There were very important occasions, for example, when we finally got the Sex Discrimination Act<sup>4</sup> through the Senate, after long, long debate. There was no doubt that it was going to be passed but there was such intense opposition. We had 26 hours of debate on the second reading and I was by then, one of the deputy chairmen of committees and that last night I will never forget. Fred Chaney, who was the leader of the Opposition at that time, was dead-set against the legislation. We wanted to get it through that night, it was getting close to Christmas and everybody wanted to go home. So we cancelled the dinner break, which enraged the Opposition, so they called quorums every ten or fifteen minutes. I was there, watching the sand go through the hourglass and watching my dear colleagues straggle back into the room, having heart attacks one after the other because if there had been no quorum, we would have had to adjourn the debate and gone home. It would have hung around for another three months. There was great rejoicing when it passed.

Another memorable incident happened in the House of Representatives when the Land Rights Bill was completed, at three o'clock one morning. I was sitting there to watch that along with a group of Aboriginal friends. I suppose there were other very significant things that happened like convincing the Labor Caucus that child care was a serious issue. That was a long process. On one occasion when I was speaking to the Caucus, I was prepared to



go on for as long as it took, but someone said to me, "listen, it's all right, you've got the numbers".

Convincing not only the Caucus, but the community generally, that violence against women was a public issue, was immensely significant. We actually got figures to show public opinion and then spent three years working very hard on the measures to change public opinion. We were then able to demonstrate a shift in public opinion. Moments like that stand out.

There were duties that I was asked to do on behalf of the government which were very significant, like leading the Australian delegation to the Nairobi conference<sup>7</sup>. Once, I was thoroughly abused and vilified for presenting a report in the Privileges Committee as if I'd done it all on my own. That happened on the very last night in the old Parliament House<sup>8</sup>. The Senate gallery was jam-packed with people from Canberra who had all come in for this great occasion. The Leader of the Senate was tearing into me because he did not like this particular report, which did not wound me personally at all, but I wished he was not doing it.

**Once you did retire from the Senate, was it the experiences you had had, like leading the delegation, that provided the sort of opportunities for activities that you have undertaken since then?**

Very much so. One thing leads to another. I went with the Australian delegation to the 1975 United Nations International Women's Year Conference. I was at the Tribune, the non-governmental meeting there, which gave me that experience of international activity. By then I was also, in Western Australia, chairing the Committee on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation, which was based on the International Labour Organisation Convention on Employment and Occupation, so I was gradually gathering a consciousness on international instruments and the United Nations. I was very strongly encouraged by Irene Greenwood<sup>9</sup> who would have to be one of the most amazing mentor of all times. So that was developing my consciousness of the potential value of the United Nations. When WEL affiliated with the International Alliance of Women (IAW) in 1982, I went to a Congress in Helsinki and was immediately elected to the board. During the 1980s, there were other activities associated with peace and disarmament. In 1985, Mai Brit Theorin, who was the Swedish Ambassador for Disarmament, set up World Women Parliamentarians for Peace, which started out as quite a small group but grew very rapidly, and for a while I was President of that organisation and we had a conference in Canberra in 1988. There was another international group called Women for a Meaningful Summit, which widened the pool of activities around questions of peace and disarmament.

There was the Nairobi Conference, - and it's not just the Conference, there are Preparatory Meetings. I went to Japan for the Regional Conference in 1984 and then in 1985 to New York for the final Preparatory Conference. I was asked to lead Australian delegations on behalf of the Australian government, which was a level of trust that I appreciated. There were Commonwealth meetings on the Status of Women in 1985, 1987 and 1990; and there was a Commonwealth Meeting for Ministers for Health in 1992 which Brian Howe asked me to represent him at. In 1992 I represented the Australian government for three months at the United Nations General Assembly. That was very close to the end of my parliamentary career and was an extraordinary experience. The last thing I did for the Australian government and this is possibly one of the most significant, was to represent Brian Howe, who was then our Deputy Prime Minister, at a meeting of Ministers in Geneva, which was a preparatory meeting for the Social Development Summit. This was in mid-1993 and the Social Development Summit was 1995. Apparently there were people

watching me there. Suddenly, after I left the Senate, there was this letter from the World Health Organisation (WHO) asking me, firstly, to join a newly established Commission on Women's Health and subsequently, to chair it. I had maintained my association with the IAW and in 1996 when they needed a new president for three years, preferably for six, I seemed to be the person they wanted. A very important thing as far as my parliamentary career was concerned too, was the fact that I could be away from home for quite significant periods of time without anyone feeling neglected. To a degree, I had the financial capacity, certainly the will and I still get a great deal of enjoyment out of committee work. It's a growing process, and this is the most important thing I think; that one keeps on learning and to a degree, a very small degree, has some influence on the way in which things are going to develop; not as an individual but as one of a group of like-minded individuals. So it was for me within government, and now it is within non-government organisations and inter-government organisations.

**Thinking of the issue of Indigenous women and their participation in politics in Australia, have you any particular comments in that regard?**

It's time someone did some writing on this. When this surge of feminism began in the early 70s we were very conscious of the need to include all women. Among the Aboriginal women leaders within urban experience at that time, there were few who could identify with the feminism we were talking about. They felt very threatened and the last thing they wanted to do, and this is still in evidence, was to see any wedges driven between Aboriginal women and men. It is totally understandable. And the issue of violence too is open to misunderstanding. There were some extremely strong feminists amongst the Aboriginal women here in Western Australia. We, the women's movement, always worked very well with Joan Winch. The other very prominent woman in Western Australia in the early 70s was Gloria Brennan, who subsequently died in her middle years and who had a lot to do with getting the Aboriginal Legal Services going here. So there was a close bond with those women but they were few and far between at that stage. The best that any of us could imagine really was to work within the various organisations and bureaucracies to try and improve conditions generally rather than focusing on a feminist approach. It was a great joy to all of us when the Aboriginal Medical Service was developed. I can remember being at the opening of the first Aboriginal child-care centre here in Perth. I also had the privilege of being able to fly to communities in the Central Desert or the Kimberley, and took every opportunity I could to talk with Aboriginal women. We've seen refuges established in remote areas. I am now finding that the women I met in those years have gone through the education system and have degrees in administration, health, - a whole range of nursing services and education. Their ambitions for themselves and their children are no different from anybody else in this wealthy society of ours, and as they should be. I went to collect an Aboriginal woman, who was to speak to my own Labor Party branch some months ago. In the car she confided to me that she is a vice-president of a Branch of the Labor Party and she has every intention of becoming a Senator when she finishes her PhD.

That was music to my ears. So, the relationship has been patchy and uneven on the face of it but underneath gradually improving. Recently I've been convenor of Women's Health Care House. I was around when it started up 25 years ago and we tried over the years to involve Aboriginal women in our activities with very little in the way of durable results. But over the last few years they are coming to us. We are offering training, we are not trying to subvert anything that they are trying to do but they are looking for the skills that we are able to provide and that is as it should be. So the relationship is good and developing. Those are my personal responses to that question but as I said, it needs some solid research.

**Another subject that may be quite close to you, as the mother of four daughters, is the question of generational differences sometimes observed in feminism. There have been some quite public debates over the past few years on this issue.**

There is something I'd like to make quite clear about my attitude to feminism. I strongly believe that there is no one feminism with a large 'F'. Feminism, as far as I am concerned, is a state of mind. I describe myself as feminist socialist activist. For a long time I had a very strong feeling that one can't really be a socialist and not a feminist and that for feminists, the only way to go is to the left. This sounds a bit glib, I know. I appreciate the fact that there are not a lot of women from the right of politics who identify themselves as feminists. There are women who identify with the left who reject the notion of feminism. It's the dictionary definition of feminism that I like: that it appeals to equality.

**Having said that, I'm still wondering whether there is a different focus among younger women who might identify themselves as feminists? Maybe not. You might disagree.**

Well, look at my four daughters. I describe them as feminists, I'm sure they describe themselves as feminists. Only one of them is overtly political and is active within a political party and I guess her position would be closest to mine. They have gone their different ways. I know it's been said that young women take a lot for granted and I think that's not surprising. For those of us who became committed feminists 10, 20, 30 years ago, the trigger was often a single instant or a single issue. Something that really comes close to home and you think, "should I have to put up with it"? It is probably going to be the same with these young women. I think it is quite unrealistic to expect young women to become politically or socially active.

**Pat, 1999 is the centenary of suffrage for White women in Western Australia. What do you think the centenary should mean to women? Should it make us focus in some particular way?**

Yes that's interesting. The centenary suffrage committee has been collecting all sorts of information and there has been one of those exercises: what does the suffrage mean to you? Actually having the vote is taken so much for granted but a fairly high proportion of women of all ages appreciate the other things that have followed from suffrage. That whole raft of inequities, if they haven't been totally dealt with, at least they are on the way. I have to speak at the 10th anniversary of the refuge that has been named after me in the northern suburbs and I was thinking about what I should say. Perhaps one way to start would be how in 1987 we set up a National Committee, the first national approach to the issue of domestic violence. This was really giving it public viability. It was making an announcement that this is something that your Federal Government is concerned about, it is a public issue.

**So that is a focus for the future, that we should devote more energy to preventing domestic violence?**

Certainly. I don't think we've found out how to do it yet. I've been saying for years, we could have a refuge on every street corner but it wouldn't stop the violence, and the ready resort to violence is something that I believe we don't understand. There is a lot more work being done at the statistical level, at the sociological level and at the policy development level and when all these work together, we may very well have an answer. But it's got to have a lot more men actually involved in it. There are men with sensitivity and men who are actually working in the field now and providing interesting insights.

I recall another example. I had organised myself a study tour of eastern Asia and I spent a week in Pakistan, in 1989. Our Ambassador was so pleased to see someone who wasn't concentrating on defence and trade. He and his wife made it possible for me to go to places where he couldn't go as a man and my education burgeoned during that week. Amongst other people that I met were some lawyers from Lahore, women lawyers. After we came back, I had a message through the embassy in Islamabad, from these women lawyers, asking me for advice about how to set up a refuge. Well, nowhere was it written. We had been using the prior knowledge as it had accumulated. Coincidentally, we had just set up the refuge in my electorate. My senior staffer, Ann Deamus, who is now the director of Health Care House, and the director of the refuge, Lorraine Brown, sat down at the word processor and put together this modest document from our own experience. Now, of course, we had the benefit of an enormous amount of government support, financial support and not only that, of individual benefits that are unheard of in Pakistan. We based it on our philosophy of self-determination and decided that if we were doing the correct thing in our refuges, where we had women of every race and nationality, it could be appropriate. A message came back immediately: "that's exactly what we wanted, have you got a training package?" No, we didn't have a training package but we needed one and so we produced that as well. That first document has gone all over the world. I go to places I've never been before and they say, "oh yes..."

**Domestic violence is obviously a problem not just in Australia but throughout the world. With your experience on international committees, and they have often been health committees, Pat, is there one big issue that you would like to see women focus their attention on?**

One big issue?

**One that stands out amongst the many.**

The global commission decided early on in its existence, and with the help of technical people in WHO, to concentrate on six issues. Nutrition was one of them. There is a lot of information out there about vitamins, iron, iodine, folates and so on. There is reproductive health, once again an enormous amount of work done on that. People know what the problem is, they have the figures, even if they are sometimes a bit dodgy, because there are a lot of countries that don't keep disaggregated data. There is women's occupational health and that's just hitting the global scene. There is the health of older women, which is logically tied up with nutrition, early life experiences and all the rest of it. There is the question of violence against women. The sixth one includes mental health, substance abuse and that sort of thing. I think if you are looking for figures for the most women affected by any of these issues, and most severely affected, then violence has to be right up there at the top. It's not just the overt violence. I am a bit perturbed to discover that in the last round of reorganisation, WHO has put violence against women in the injury prevention section. I think that is a problem because it is a lot more than injury. The violence goes very closely with the whole concept of son preference, which affects countless millions of women and little girls. Many who do not survive until menopause. They have babies while they are very young themselves; many will die in childbirth. This issue still isn't getting anything like the attention it should. Female genital mutilation is now well and truly on the agenda. That will take a long time but there are good news stories, since it has become a well-recognised issue and African women have said, "this is our problem and we will deal with it". They have had help and support from their leaders.

**Pat, if you could go back, would you do anything differently?**

Oh, I've been asked that question in different ways. People used to say to me, "do you regret the fact that your parliamentary career didn't start until you were 50"? And I had to think hard and my response has always been, "if I start regretting, I then have to regret who I am, because what I did before that has made me who I am". So yes, the response is still the same. By the time I got there, there were at least some women to talk to. We weren't freaks, by then, and once you are a senator or member, there is a level of respect. Differently? Probably not. My children and my grandchildren are very valuable to me and they are very good friends, and immensely supportive. That doesn't mean we don't have our disagreements now and then but I think I've learned to 'shut up' when it's obviously a generational difference.

**You've become adept at compromise?**

Well, you are not much of a politician if you don't!

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL), formed in Melbourne in 1972 to promote women's interests in all aspects of political life in Australia, soon had branches throughout Australia, including Perth (1973). WEL is a formal organisation with a constitution, various committees, official spokeswomen and a national coordinator. Women's Liberation groups in the early 1970s tended to be more informal and radical, but there was often close collaboration between Women's Liberation and WEL. See Marian Sawyer and Marian Simms, *A Women's Place: Women and Politics in Australia*, Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1984, pp.175-8.

<sup>2</sup>The Australian Labor Party (ALP) is one of Australia's two main political parties.

<sup>3</sup>The Melbourne Cup is Australia's most famous horse race, held annually in early November.

<sup>4</sup>Gough Whitlam was Australia's Prime Minister from 1972 to 1975.

<sup>5</sup>Carmen Lawrence became premier of Western Australia in 1989 and was the first woman Premier in Australia. After her party's defeat in the 1993 election, Lawrence entered federal parliament in 1994 and was immediately offered a ministry. She became the target of a Royal Commission in Western Australia in 1995, when her prior knowledge of a petition, tabled in the Legislative Council in 1992, was questioned. The petition made allegations about Perth lawyer, Penny Easton, and the then opposition leader, Richard Court. Easton committed suicide a few days after the petition was tabled. In 1999, Lawrence was cleared of a charge of perjury. See Joan Eveline and Michael Booth. (1999). *Images of Women in Western Australia: The Suffragist, Edith Cowan and Carmen Lawrence. Women and Citizenship Suffrage Centenary: Studies in Western Australian History*, 19, .29-47.

<sup>6</sup>The Sex Discrimination Act was passed in 1984, when the ALP was in government.

<sup>7</sup>The World Conference to review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 15-26 July 1985.

<sup>8</sup>The new Parliament House in Canberra was opened in May 1988.

<sup>9</sup>Irene Greenwood was a prominent West Australian feminist and Labor Party supporter. In 1983, the State Government recognised her contribution to the community by naming the flagship of the State ships after her. Dianne Davidson, *Women on the Warpath: Feminists of the First Wave*, Nedlands, University of Western.

## Androgynes as Non-Citizens

Felicity Haynes

Graduate School of Education, University of Western Australia.

### Abstract

If we take suffrage to mean not only voting rights, but recognition as a citizen, then many women and ethnic groups still struggle to gain that recognition. There is a group remaining today however who are even less visible as persons with legal and moral rights, namely those who cross or straddle the boundary line between male and female. With sophisticated surgery making sex-change more accessible, naturalist definitions of male and female generate legal and social paradoxes. To be born a male and change one's identity into a female, or vice versa, is to transgress an unwritten law of personal identity, and deny oneself legal status in one's chosen gender. For example, in a country in which same-sex marriage is illegal, two women can be legally married if one is a male-to-female transsexual. While a birth certificate might be changed to fit a person's current gender, in most countries there is only a choice of male or female. The person then who is born hermaphrodite, unlike the transsexual, has no choice about his/her gender identity. Well-meaning doctors often perform genital surgery to make them appear more "human". Such practices contravene Article 2 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights which proclaims "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status". How can we best confer upon the androgyne the rights of the citizen?

*The presuppositions that we make about sexed bodies, about them being one or the other, about the meanings that are said to inhere in them or to follow from being sexed in such a way, are suddenly and significantly upset by those examples that fail to comply with the categories that naturalize and stabilize that field of bodies for us within the terms of cultural conventions.*

(Judith Butler, 1990 p. 110)

Our cultural conventions evolve from common practices to code law in mysterious and gradual fashion, changes being made at the margins which do not touch the axiomatic assumptions at the core. This paper is written in the Foucauldian spirit of a critical ontology aimed at revealing how our current forms of life, and in this case our legal notions of citizenship and biological assumptions about sex, are neither inevitable or self-evident. It presents cases which problematise several assumptions of human rights and as such is intended to disturb and "give new impetus to the undefined work of freedom" (Foucault, 1984, p. 351), in a manner similar to the way suffragettes fought to redefine women as social citizens almost one hundred years ago. The people who present their narratives here are involved in a dialogue which is the open-ended "agonistic" dialogue of forces that Foucault presented in *Discipline and Punish*; they are not merely subordinated subjectivities trapped in an impersonal structural totality, subjected to a unitary all-embracing organising principle of power, but they contest a complex network of latent assumptions about justice and the social self, the citizen.

1998 was the fiftieth anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the articulation of a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations. The first two articles state ....

*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.*

*Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.*

Given that these general statements can actually override civil law in controversial situations, one could and should immediately ask from what perspective these aspects of race, colour, sex, language, religions, political opinion, property and so on are singled out as being irrelevant to human rights. Because they clearly are not irrelevant. In Article 26 for instance, 'Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance', gender *does* become singled out for special attention in regard to motherhood. As Butler (1990, p. 93) notes, we single out for attention what we most fear to ignore. Because culturally marginal forms of sexuality are culturally unintelligible, they are rendered invisible. Butler, like Foucault, offers a critical view of any theory that lays claim to a sexual identity before or after the law. Law, that most powerful of social institutions, confers an essentialist quality to the notions of female or male that it would have people recognise. So deeply is the law endowed with an essential (and largely biological) female/male distinction that there is no explicit definition of human in terms of gender, or any functional definition of male or female<sup>1</sup>. For just as our language is saturated with only male or female pronouns, so is our law equally saturated with an assumption that persons are essentially either male or female, masculine or feminine.

With her interest in performativities, those social practices which inform language and law, Butler (1997) examines the potency of speech, though her impetus comes indirectly through the social effects of hate speech. As social selves, citizens voluntarily commit themselves to social institutions in their speech acts. "I promise to love, honour and obey until death do us part" is one of the most common examples of a performative speech act. In saying it, you put it into effect, and the utterance implies a shared understanding of its social meanings. Butler (1997, p. 36) makes an interesting analysis of "power" as a movement which seeks to arrest movement itself. In making the marriage vow, one tacitly commits oneself to abstaining from certain practices. The act of marriage is defined in English law as the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others. In the 1990's, most of these legal requirements are no longer essential to the legality of a marriage. Arranged marriages have meant that some are not entered into voluntarily, adultery does not guarantee the end of a marriage and changes to divorce laws have liberated many couples from a lifelong legal commitment to each other. All that remains embedded in the law is the requirement that the partners are respectively a man and a woman (Whittle, 1996).

As Whittle (1997) reminds us, "laws consist exclusively of those rules enacted by formal organised social power, rules that are backed by definite sanctions, the imposition and interpretation of which are normally entrusted to special officials" (quoted in personal communication from Whittle to the author). Human rights are less specific and less formalised than legal rights, though they influence them. Human rights exist in a broader social spectrum with its own set of sanctions, often imposed and interpreted by special officials in social institutions, such as education, health, welfare. They are meant to reflect core social values, the common law as perceived by sanctioned members of society. Kleinig (1982), discussing children's rights, argues very reasonably that rights come into focus when



there is felt to be a discrepancy between code law and common law, between law as it is officially enacted and law as it is practised socially. In the interplay between code and common law, between human and legal rights, the citizen is constructed. There is nothing natural about the rights of a citizen: they arise within Foucauldian contingencies of power, when social practices create new awarenesses about basic social concepts, (such as birth, marriage, copulation and death), which create paradox and contradiction within existing legal codes.

The legal requirement for marriage to be only between a man and a woman was one of the major sticking points for the progress in Australia of its own Bill of Rights. The Commission for Human Rights in Canberra could not agree whether homosexuals and lesbians met this requirement. They are placed in a bind, a discontinuity between *epistemes*, a paradox arising from a contradiction between Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which makes it undesirable to discriminate against homosexuals and lesbians on the basis of sex, and article 16 suggesting that marriage can only be between men and women. Single sex marriages are still illegal in Australia.

One of the basic assumptions underpinning our daily social practices and institutions is the assumption that one is essentially either a male or a female. Freud said "when you meet a human being, the first distinction you make is 'male' or 'female'. And you are accustomed to making the distinction with unhesitating certainty". How? Why? So deeply embedded in us is this assumption that we do not often ask the question, "what constitutes this gender assumption?" For doctors, it is largely the size of the penis or clitoris. When external genitalia are ambiguous, doctors refer to chromosomal differences. A woman is 46XX, a male 46XY. This presumes that we are biologically male or female. But there are many people for whom there is a conflict between their biological sex and their psychological gender. These people have been called transsexual. The Council of Europe states that "transsexualism is a syndrome characterised by a dual personality, one physical, the other psychological, together with such a profound conviction of belonging to the other sex that the transsexual person is prompted to ask for the corresponding bodily 'correction' to be made". These people are willing to go through a process of gender change, socially, hormonally, physically and legally. But the law, which prefers an essentialist definition of male and female, has trouble recognising fluidity of gender, that someone may *become* female or male. There is a tacit dogma which claims that you are as you were at birth, and what is recorded on your birth certificate.

As many have argued, (Harding ,1987; Haraway, 1989; Bornstein, 1994; Whittle, 1997; for example), our changing social sexual and gender practices require us to modify our shared conventions in both language and law in respect to the male/female dichotomy. One of these transsexuals, (Whittle 1995, pp. 17-22) contends:

*What I am concerned to emphasise is that the phenomenon of transsexuality, even though it is not of great significance in statistical terms, constitutes a reality today which has been discussed in various bodies, not only scientific but also legal, in particular from the point of view of fundamental personal rights. Consequently, the law is faced with that reality - and is destined to come up against it to an increasing degree. This is inevitable. In society as it is today, in which customs and morals are changing rapidly, citizens are guaranteed ever wider and deeper protection of their freedoms, and social and legal studies are increasingly taking on present-day and, for that very reason, real - values, on the principle that it is effective to do so. It would be unjustifiable to reject out of hand the problem of transsexuality - which certainly can still be assessed quite independently in moral terms - or simply to condemn it and consider it contrary*

*to the law. ... The principle of the alleged immutability of civil status has been overtaken by events... The fact that one cannot change one's sex for bureaucratic and administrative purposes no longer corresponds to the true situation, if only on account of the scientific advances made in the field of gender reassignment.*

There is increasing recognition of the special legal needs of transsexuals. Some countries have given a legal response to transsexuality by adopting special legislation; for instance in Sweden, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy and the Netherlands. In Brazil there is no special legislation for transsexual persons. The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 assures equal treatment for all people, independently of sex, race, religion and age, and condemns all forms of discrimination (Art. 3, IV Constituição Federal) and guarantees a right to privacy and to a self-image. Whether this constitutional approach could be used to assure legal rights to transsexuals after sex reassignment is not certain. In NSW and South Australia, where appeal can be made, in the absence of an Australian Bill of Rights, to the International Declaration of Rights, there is special legislation enabling change of birth certificate following reassignment surgery. The laws concerned authorise transsexuals to correct their birth certificates so as to include a reference to their new sexual identity, with the result that they have the right to marry, adopt children and enjoy pension rights according with their new sexual identity. However there are no such laws in Western Australia which is the only Australian State not to outlaw discrimination on the basis of sexual identity.

Whittle (1997, pp. 432-3) reminds us that there may be no need to draw special attention to the rights of transsexuals. They are recognised as citizens under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Transsexuality has been tackled by the Commission and the European Court of Human Rights from the twofold angle of violation of the right to respect for private life (Article 8 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom (EHRC)) and of the right to contract valid marriages (EHRC, Article 12). In 1979, the European Commission on Human Rights decided unanimously that the refusal by the Belgian State to adopt measures to enable the registers of civil status to reflect lawful sex-changes constituted a violation of the right to respect for private life enshrined in Article 8(1) of the Convention. At present 'transsexual' surgery is regarded as legal, even in those countries that still do not allow a corresponding change of civil status through change of birth certificate. In most national legal systems it is permissible to change civil status, either by virtue of specific laws or because of judicial involvement on a case-by-case basis.

In ongoing legal arguments as to whether transsexuals have had to have had surgery before they can be recognised legally as being of the other gender, or whether it is possible simply to live as the other sex, the boundaries between sex and gender become extremely blurred. In many countries and states, "it is very unclear whether there can be legal protection for persons who have changed sex or are living through the period of change when, specifically and solely on that account, they are discriminated against or, in any event, treated unfavourably in the field of employment, possibly even, as in this case, by being dismissed" (Whittle, 1997, p. 438). There have been cases of sudden dismissal when transgendered persons 'come out' by dressing in what is perceived as inappropriate dress, because sexual preferences are both physically embodied and culturally shaped. Sex is still perceived as an 'either-or' matter.

Occasionally this 'naturalistic' dichotomising can be useful. Same-sex marriages have not been legally permissible in Britain since the common law ruling in *Hyde v Hyde* [1866]. Whittle (1996) discusses "Britain's first lesbian marriage", when on June 28th 1995 twice-divorced Tracie-Anne Scott married her girlfriend Tina-Louise Dixon. This wedding was legal only because Tracie-Anne, a 38 year old former merchant seaman, is a post-operative

male to female transsexual. Registered at birth as a boy, Tracie-Anne began living as a woman seven years ago and, having undergone hormone therapy, underwent gender-reassignment surgery in 1993. Her legal sex status is however still that of male and it is that which enabled two 'apparent' women to contract a legal marriage in Britain. For some years now transsexuals who identify as gay men or lesbian women have been taking advantage of the law's archaic approach to their sex status to marry their partners and take advantage of pension rights, immigration rules etc. This all seems very paradoxical within a legal system which does not allow heterosexual transsexuals to marry their 'other-sex' partners despite the fact that, as a general rule, it might be said that same-sex marriages are not legal. There was no doubt in the Registrar's mind that he was marrying two females when he declared Scott and Dixon, not to be 'man and wife', but to be "legally married".

The apparent paradox of a legal same-sex marriage is dissolved by recognising the equivocation on the concept of female-ness. Legally, the sex is determined by physiological determination as recorded on the birth certificate, usually external genitalia. In practice, the sex is determined by the perceived gender identity, usually reflected in social dress and practices. Once we accept that one can change from male to female or vice versa physiologically, what happens to our social understanding of gender identity? Birth certificates, completed by a doctor who has examined 'the evidence', confer upon a person the status of either male or female, and the birth certificate cannot be altered as easily as a person's physiological characteristics. Transsexual people face discrimination in most countries, particularly in the UK, where their lived-identity contradicts their birth certificate. This limits their rights in most civic aspects of life, including marriage, employment, privacy, adoption. A society called *Press for Change* is working to right that injustice. The birth certificate is the visible icon of the assumption of binary genderhood. And it is that certificate that confers upon persons their rights. To get a birth certificate, one has to be male or female.

Whittle, a trained lawyer, was born a female, and has lived for many years as a male, with a female partner and adopted child. When he was recently invited to be guest editor of a special transgender issue of the *Journal of Gender Studies* (November 1998), he asked how he had come to be invited to edit a journal which had only ever had women editors before. Whittle (1998, pp. 270-1) comments:

*Trans has problematised all the categories and all the words of sex, gender and sexualities. No amount of trying is ever going to clearly pin them down again, they have become linguistic signposts which we now know are often pointing down the wrong road. The audible gasp when I asked "am I the first man to edit the journal?", was what I expected, because the acknowledgment of the questions has to arise before we can even start to formulate the answers. I have no idea whether I have been asked to edit because (and here I give as many choices as I can think of):*

*I am a woman really (choose whichever you prefer)*

- but deluded in thinking I am a man, therefore as a woman I can edit the journal;*
- and offer an acceptable performance of masculinity by a woman, because I acknowledge it as performance, by being out about my trans status;*
- and my oppression as a woman lies in my childhood experiences as a girl and my experience as a woman who lives as a transsexual man;*
- and it is just that my body morphology simply is no longer 100% female or I am a man really;*
- but the acceptable face of manhood because of my childhood experiences wherein others thought I was female and therefore oppressed me as such;*

*· but my position as male is undoubtedly contested;  
 · but my feminist credentials are pretty good;  
 ..... Whatever made me, I am, and I can no longer say who the "I", is, except  
 through a descriptive process in which the words man/woman, male/female,  
 straight/gay become absorbed into Queer.*

Whittle raises the issue of the right of a transsexual to be married to the partner of their choice, but the matter of sexual preference is relevant too, especially in those places where homosexual relationships are neither legal nor tolerated. The absorption into Queer is mirrored in Kate Bornstein's story. Kate defines herself as gender outlaw, having had surgical reassignment as a female and hormone treatment which allow her to perform publicly as a very attractive female. As a male, she was in a long-term unmarried partnership with a female. Does the gender change, which suddenly transforms her into a female equally, transform her into a lesbian? Many transgendered people stay within a marriage relation with their partner, and are legally allowed to do so, especially if they do not change their birth certificate. But the right to change their birth certificate is denied to most transgendered people. Kate has changed her Californian birth certificate from male to female because she sees no need for a legal marriage document. There is a further twist to this however. Her partner now wishes to change her gender and become a male, in which case, having changed her gender from female to male, she would now be able to marry the female Kate legally.

The definition of one's legal sex identity by one's birth certificate has a bearing on one's recognition as a citizen. In order to change one's birth certificate, one has to have one. To get a birth certificate, one has to be assigned a male or female gender by the delivering doctor. I can give a true case history of an Australian person born with female chromosomes 46XX but with a complete set of female sexual organs and male sexual organs. The doctor, relying as most do on the appearance of external genitalia, refused her a birth certificate. This denied her any status as a person. Raised as a male, her vagina sewn up at the age of seven when she was given massive testosterone treatment, she served in the Navy very successfully for several years. Having to undergo a thorough medical for promotion, her secret was discovered and she was immediately discharged. One wonders whether the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could have been invoked at this point. But this was the 'seventies and it was not. She became subject to psychotic bouts, diagnosed as gender dysphoric and reassigned to be the female she chose to be. The surgery was not skilfully carried out. She has been on an invalid pension for some time, living with a very supportive female partner and has just been awarded compensation for medical malpractice. One would like to say that this is a story with a happy ending, that she can now settle into society visibly and behave in whatever gender stereotype she likes, especially now in a society which is generally more supportive of gay relationships. Yet she lives as a female, a 6'3" fairly sociopathic one. As a legal female, she cannot marry her female partner, though she could have, if she had retained a male birth certificate. Does it make sense to require her to have a birth certificate that registers her as male or female? Any accurate birth certificate would have rendered her male and female, but that dual status is unacceptable to most social institutions, including electoral registers, which plead computer incompatibility as their requirement to be labelled either male or female.

Transsexuals have begun to make themselves heard publicly through such networks as *Press for Change*. A question less usually raised in connection with suffrage than the paradoxes of those who choose to change their sex, to cross the boundaries is the civic rights regarding voting, employment, marriage or otherwise, of androgynous persons, those who are born of both genders, the hermaphrodite or intersex person. This is the true androgyne, and there are many of them, more than transgendered persons, though the categories are

not exclusive. They do not fit the legal presumption that a person is biologically male or female. The medical figures for those with ambiguous sex at birth range from 1 in 500 to 1 in 10,000, a figure that will remain elusive as long as there is a requirement for birth certificates to register each person as male or female. The standard figure for those with 47xxy chromosomes is usually tentatively estimated as 1 in 3,000, which is as many as those with Downs syndrome. Most people are unaware of this because the doctor has registered them as male or female. It becomes overt when unexpected breasts develop in a 'male', or there are problems of male fertility, or osteoporosis unexpectedly makes hormonal imbalance evident.

In majority opinion, the law provides, by definition, the standards of correctness. One is naturally either male or female. Any chromosomal variation is therefore unnatural, abnormal, deviant and must be brought by drugs and/or surgery as close as possible to an 46XY or an 46XX norm. Where the physical realities contradict this, the law enforces its truth through hormonal or surgical treatment. Foucault has demonstrated that what appears to be simply a medical matter is also a political one and one which many groups of androgynous persons, particularly ISNA, (see Dreger, 1999) are pressing to have changed. If one were to allow that lesbians and gays are sometimes not simply male or female with aberrant sexual preferences, but sit somewhere on a complex continuum of maleness to femaleness then their queerness might dissolve (See Haynes 1999). Androgynous persons are already socially dehumanised by virtue of not having a pronoun by which they may be recognised as persons and some (norrie mAywellbe) opt for the gender-neutral pronoun – 'it'. If we were to allow the possibility of androgyny, that some people had characteristics of maleness and femaleness combined, then the construction of marriage as a long-term commitment between two caring people takes on a different shape.

Kai Chris Somers provides further evidence of the difficulty of being both male and female and a citizen. Chris came out on a *Sixty Minutes* programme in 1995. At the age of fifteen in boys' private school, s/he began to develop breasts. His/her father, a doctor, gave him/her a double mastectomy to help him/her fit more easily into her/his male community. S/he did not know of his/her chromosomal condition, 47XXY, until the age of 27 when s/he became a medical curiosity, classified as having Klinefelters' Syndrome and given massive doses of testosterone to prevent osteoporosis. He/she grew a beard, and now visibly presents as a male. But he/she does not feel a male, despite the compulsory gender assignment. At the age of fifty, he/she discovered through an ultrasound that he/she had a uterus, ovaries and an incomplete vagina. Chris is now largely responsible for establishing an International Foundation for Androgynous Studies, to study and support those who inhabit the spaces between male and female; transsexuals, gays, lesbians and other forms of hermaphroditism.

It is not illegal to be hermaphrodite or androgynous. But there are ongoing civic sanctions and pressures to conform. There is medical necessity to be defined as either a man or a woman, and there is institutional pressure, particularly in the requirement to fill in forms for all sorts of applications and declare oneself to be male or female. Why should one have to declare whether one is male or female before one can enter a university or apply for social services? These are social pressures which unfairly cloak difference, and are therefore a matter for consideration of human rights. But are these legal issues? Yes, to the extent they affect one's right to have a driver's licence, to buy an airline ticket and above all, to vote. When Chris applied to be placed on Western Australian electoral rolls s/he ticked both Male and Female, writing underneath, "This is not a mistake. I am both male and female". The electoral office returned it saying that in order to vote legally, he/she had to be either male or female. Chris has declared him/herself female, waiting for the reaction at

the next election when she/she presents with his/her beard. The truth remains that he/she is legally unable to vote as an androgyne.

Is the categorisation of people from the moment of birth as either male or female a form of sexual segregation as pernicious as racial apartheid? In her book, *The Apartheid of Sex*, Martine Rothblatt cites current academic opinion and research to argue that the answer is yes; and that the time is right for a new sexual revolution. She makes a case for the adoption of a new sexual model that accommodates every possible shade of gender identity. She reveals that traditional male and female roles are dictated neither by genetics, genitals, nor reproductive biology, but rather by social attitudes that originated in early patriarchal cultures and have been institutionalized in modern law. In the name of the countless people of unique gender who continue to suffer on the procrustean bed of sexual duality, Rothblatt (1995), Dreger (1999) and O'Keefe (1999) call for a new acceptance of human sexuality in all its prismatic variety.

The voices of these individuals, and those of political groups such as ISNA, *Press For Change* and IFAS, has resulted in the adoption of an International Bill of Gender Rights. This International Bill of Gender Rights (IBGR),<sup>2</sup> was first drafted in 1993 and modified and ratified each year after that until the draft was adopted on June 17, 1995 in Houston, Texas, U.S.A. The IBGR strives to express human and civil rights from a gender perspective. All ten sections of the IBGR are universal rights which can be claimed and exercised by every human being, regardless of gender identity, chromosomal sex, genitalia, assigned birth sex, or initial gender role, namely, to define gender identity, to free expression of gender identity, to secure and retain employment and to receive just compensation, to gendered space and participation in gendered activity, to control and change one's own body, to competent medical and professional care, to freedom from psychiatric diagnosis or treatment, to sexual expression, to form committed, loving relationships and enter into marital contracts, and finally, to conceive, bear, or adopt children; to nurture and have custody of children and to exercise parental capacity.

The IBGR is a theoretical construction that has no force of law. However, individuals are free to adopt the truths and principles expressed in the IBGR, and to lead their lives accordingly. In this fashion, the truths expressed in the IBGR will liberate and empower humankind in ways and to an extent beyond the reach of legislators, judges, officials and diplomats.

In this paper I have been speaking of civic rights rather than legal ones. As noted earlier, rights are neither natural nor arbitrary. They are called into existence when commonly accepted moral truths come into conflict with legal conventions, at the interface between common practices and code law. When the truths expressed in the IBGR are embraced and given expression by humankind, the acts of legislatures and pronouncements of courts and other governing structures will necessarily follow. To change the common law, or the ethical voice that drives jurisprudence, people need to be informed of ethical inconsistencies that arise from following the law to the letter.

To want to have the binary assumption of gender changed in keeping with the Bill of Gender Rights, you need to know what happens when a transsexual or hermaphrodite is placed in a male prison. You need to know what happens when a well-meaning doctor assigns a legal gender to a newborn baby on the basis of genital size or chromosome configuration. You need to know what happens when a worker is dismissed because he comes to work in a dress. The International Foundation for Androgynous Studies<sup>3</sup>, has

been established to increase public knowledge and understanding of these persons and invites expressions of interest and support.

Having outlined some personal histories of androgynes, that is, peoples who do not fit easily into the category of male or female, I now urge you to read the concluding statement of the United Nations' statement from a different perspective:

*The peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person and in the equal rights of men and women and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom.*

Perhaps it could be rewritten without loss as "The peoples of the United Nations have in the Charter reaffirmed their faith in fundamental human rights, in the equal dignity and worth of the human person and have determined to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom." What differences would that remove, and more importantly, what difference would it make?

The questions of embedded power that are raised by androgynous persons are very similar to those underpinning the exclusion of women from suffrage prior to this century or those not recognising the rights of indigenous Australians to be recognised as citizens. It would be wonderful if we could feel that the International Bill of Gender Rights was redundant. Suffrage isn't just about voting. It is also about recognition as a citizen, which implies recognition by society as a person with equal rights of all kinds. Gender should not make a difference to those rights.

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<sup>1</sup> Butler's Legal Dictionary 1979 "Female: The sex which conceives and gives birth to young. Also a member of such sex". (The term is generic but may have the specific meaning of woman if so indicated by the context)". "Feminine: of or belonging to females", (p. 556). "Male: of the masculine sex", (p. 862).

<sup>2</sup> Bound proceedings from the 1993 and 1995 annual ICTLEP conferences may be ordered for \$65 each by contacting Phyllis Randolph Frye, Executive Director, ICTLEP, 5707 Firenza Street, Houston, TX 77035 - 5515 U.S.A. Telephone: (713) 723 - 8368. FAX: (713) 723- 1800. E-Mail: PRFrye@aol.com.

<sup>3</sup> PO Box 1066, Nedlands, Western Australia 6909, Ph/Fax 618 9386 7730

## **Boys Clubs: Discriminatory Voting Practices in Agricultural Industry Organisations.**

**Fiona Haslam McKenzie**

Edith Cowan University, Western Australia

### **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this research was to investigate the voting practices of peak agricultural industry organisations, and ascertain whether there are rules or practices that discourage or hinder participation by all sectors of the constituent membership. Agricultural women have been exhorted by politicians, other women, community and industry leaders to get more involved in their industries at a formal level in order that their views, work and contribution be recognised and valued. A Centenary of Women's Suffrage grant facilitated the examination of the membership rules and articles of association of peak agricultural industry organisations in Western Australia to ascertain whether women have an equal opportunity to formally participate as do men. Most industry organisations in fact indirectly restrict women's participation by their voting and membership rules and practices. This paper will explain how this occurs.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Within a small circle of academe across Australia this decade, much work has been devoted to women's various roles in the agricultural sector, their economic and social contributions to their families, communities and business enterprises as well as their industries. (See Teather & Franklin, 1994; Teather, 1996; Liepins, 1996; Liepins, 1995; Alston, 1995c; Hogan, 1994; Alston, 1994). Most academics in the area of rural social research have been determined that agricultural women's contribution be recognised and valued. It has also been made clear by the Federal Minister for Primary Industry and Energy among others that the sector must make an effort to encourage more women and young industry participants to contribute to formal decision making forums, in order that their perspective and skills be captured and profited from. The Minister and his department have spent a great deal of money and time documenting the necessity to be more inclusive of particular sectors of primary industry which are under-represented in key areas of agriculture. Furthermore, Dr Wendy Craik of the National Farmer's Federation has also made public her desire to see more farming women present when key agricultural policy decisions are being formulated and decided. The reason for this is that research repeatedly shows that women offer diversity; they tend to be reflective, collaborative and intuitive, (Sinclair, 1994; Saunders, 1996).

As a result of this, some agricultural women have become politically active but not necessarily in the peak industry organizations whose policies and activities are most likely to influence their business and profitability (Liepins, 1996). Why is this? This paper has come about as a result of a Centenary of Women's Suffrage grant, the purpose of which was to investigate the voting rules and rights in agricultural peak industry organisations in Western Australia to ascertain whether there are rules, practices or traditions that prevent women from formally participating.

### Some Background Information

Over the last ten years, significant change has occurred in regional areas of Australia, particularly in rural industries, in response to reform, deregulation and liberalised financial policies which have facilitated Australia's entry to the global economy and the adoption of sophisticated technologies. Globalisation of the Australian economy has accelerated the effect of market mechanisms causing continual change in technologies, products, markets and modes of distribution. These changes have led to major shifts in the way the business of farming is conducted which has been painful for many in agricultural rural Australia. Generally, women have responded to these changes in a matter of fact manner, but in the process, are demanding to have their significant contribution publicly recognised (Mitchell, 1994; Alston, 1995a). An important move to that end was the creation of the Rural Women's Unit at the Federal Department of Primary Industry and Energy (now the Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry). Among a number of strategies to recognise and value the contribution of women in the agricultural sector has been the commissioning of *The Missed Opportunities: Harnessing the Potential of Australian Women in Agriculture Report* (usually referred to as the *Missed Opportunities Report*) in 1997. This showed that agricultural women are not, as Margaret Alston describes, 'the other'. From their research, they found that 70 000 Australian women define themselves as farmers or farm managers and reported that rural women,

- make up a major client group for agencies and organisations which serve the agricultural sector;
- based upon conservative (and possibly inaccurate)<sup>1</sup> data, constitute 32% of agricultural workers;
- are at least 40% of all farm partners;
- are increasingly contributing to farm enterprises through their off-farm earnings, from 24% to 68% of farm cash income since 1984. This off-farm income is critical to the ongoing viability of some farm enterprises as well as meeting family needs;
- have skills and priorities which are identical and complementary to the skills brought to the sector by men.

There is no doubt then that women are active participants in the industry but they also contribute to the financial value of their industries. The *Missed Opportunities Report, Volume 2* (Elix & Lambert, 1998) estimated the current and potential contribution of women in agriculture. In 1995-6, the National Accounts reported that the market value of farm output was \$14.5 billion, but when the value of household work, volunteer and community work and off-farm wage income earned by people on farms was factored in by Elix et al. (p.2), the real farm income was just over \$28 billion. They calculated that women contribute 48 per cent of this real farm income. In strict economic terms, they estimated farm women's contribution to the market value of farm output amounts to \$4 billion annually. Furthermore, they claim that women contribute to the viability of farming enterprises through off-farm work to a total of about \$1.1 billion per year. Their economic contribution to the sector is considerable.

Studies of rural women and leadership (Alston, 1998; Fisher & Hutchison, 1998; Board, 1998), show that many rural women are not attracted to leadership roles which are 'out front'; they prefer a collaborative model of influencing change within an organisation or community or family business. Women generally perceive that men take jobs in public office, the role of spokesperson, or organiser in community affairs. There are few women who hold office, speak publicly, or take on upfront organisational roles. Research has shown (Alston, 1990; Alston, 1994; Haslam McKenzie, 1998a), it is typical of rural women that they are suspicious of 'feminism' as it is popularly constructed: the image of women striving against men, of women seeking a role out front *at the expense of men*. Rural women

have been in strong agreement that they have a role working with men in the sector, in partnership. Board (1998) who heads up the Rural Women's Unit within the Federal Department of Primary Industry and Energy, makes the point however, that it is important for rural women to recognise that sometimes *a distinct and different voice is needed*, and that this does not necessarily undermine the sense of solidarity which women feel with their male partners and with their communities. She adds that both women and men must agree to make changes in the structure and in the allocation of responsibilities within farm businesses and farm families. It has been one of the roles of organisations such as the Rural Women's Unit and the Australian Women in Agriculture organisation to communicate the need to women that their active participation in farming organisations is important because without them, true representation of the industry participants is not being achieved. Furthermore, their knowledge, expertise and different perspectives offer diversity and therefore vigour to the organisation.

The rural areas throughout Australia are still seen as men's territory and it is still men, generally, who hold most positions of power in rural areas (See Dempsey, 1992; Alston, 1995b; Sher & Sher, 1994; Franklin, Short, & Teather, 1994). In the course of this research project and another undertaken on behalf of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), (Haslam McKenzie, 1999), a division of the Federal Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, many male interviewees emphatically stated that their farming enterprise could not continue without the involvement of their female partners. Why then are women excluded from the formal decision making forums, which guide policy and the future of the agricultural industries? Women are under-represented in decision making at all levels of local, state and federal government. In 1994, the then Federal Minister for Primary Industry and Energy, Bob Collins formally acknowledged this and made an effort to attract women to the 507 board positions within his portfolio. By 1995, 49 of the 507 positions were occupied by women but of those 49 only nine went to women primary producers. Nationally, 6 per cent of women participate in government and industry boards and authorities. In West Australia, it is calculated that only 1.7 per cent of women participates in formal rural decision making roles.

Margaret Alston from the Centre for Rural Social Research at Charles Sturt University has researched the absence of women from the agri-political scene for some time. She has stated "their absence from the political arena has more to do with the nature of the organisations themselves, their structures and the reluctance of such organisations to accept and acknowledge women" (Alston, 1995c p.67). In 1997, Alston was awarded an Australian Research Council grant, the purpose of which was to better understand why women are not more equitably represented in agricultural leadership positions. This project is simpler. It intended to confine the research to the rules and articles of association of the formal organisations to investigate whether there are rules or practices that constrain women's active participation in agricultural peak industry organisations in Western Australia.

### **Membership of Agricultural Peak Industry Organisations in Western Australia**

Agricultural peak industry organisations usually have grass roots connections with growers, either through their own organisation or through affiliations. In order to gain some insight into the way agricultural peak industry organisations function at all levels, many of these organisations were contacted and asked a number of questions about how a producer becomes a voting member and a member of the organisation executive. The organisations were also asked to give some indication of the gender split of their membership. In total, sixty eight organisations were contacted.

Very early on in the project, a major hurdle was confronted. There did not appear to be a comprehensive data base listing all the agricultural grower organisations nor details how to contact them. Requests were made to the Western Australian Fruit Growers Association, Agriculture WA, the Ministry of Primary Industry, the Fishing Industry Association, Western Australian Farmers Federation and the Pastoralists and Graziers Association for a comprehensive list of associated industry organisations. With the exception of the Western Australian Fruit Growers Association, none of them had a formal list of all of their constituent organisation groups. The research team then had to use personal contacts and industry newspapers to get contact details of agricultural organisations.

An added difficulty was an unwillingness by a number of organisations to speak with the research team. Nine organisations were not willing to answer any questions; referring to the enquiries as 'trouble making', a 'waste of time', 'feminist sticky beaking', 'no one's business but the people involved in the industry', and 'not legitimate'. Two organisations instructed their employees not to share any information, while several others promised to send information but did not despite several requests. The presumption that the project was necessarily 'feminist' or 'women meddling' was interesting, given that the two research assistants working on this project were males.

The grower organisations range from relatively informal 'interest groups' to large, politically powerful lobby groups such as the Progressive Farmers Association (PGA), previously known as the Pastoralists and Graziers Association, and the Western Australian Farmers Federation (WAFF). The 'interest group' organisations, (24) were relatively casual, usually with a simple constitution outlining who could be a member, the objectives of the organisation, its powers, an outline of the office bearer and committee positions and their roles, the levies and the legal conventions of the constitution. Membership is usually small and for most of these organisations, is dependent upon paying a nominal subscription fee. Generally there were no conditions other than an interest in the produce represented by the organisation. This was often governed by industry contacts. When asked to explain this, an office bearer of one of these organisations said:

*People in our industry pretty much know everyone else. If we had a ring in, (someone not known to the membership) we'd know and I'm telling you now, if he had no good intent we would get rid of him, no trouble at all.*

*(Field notes, 1998).*

This seemed to be a general sentiment of most of these small organisations or interest groups. Voting rights tended to be equally casual based upon payment of subscriptions. Voting therefore was not restricted to ownership or partnership (marital or business). Their main purpose is to share and exchange knowledge and promote public awareness of their produce. Most of these organisations agreed that it is possible for a member to 'stack' the voting procedures, but most office bearers decided that their organisations were rarely that 'high powered' that any one would want to do that. 'J' from the Organic Growers Association of WA claimed that, "if you want to get into 'real politics' you join a big industry group".

Organisations representing a larger number of growers and therefore with more political clout usually had a more detailed and comprehensive set of rules and regulations. The rules governing voting rights tended to be dependent upon production or size of holdings. Nonetheless, voting rights were usually restricted to one vote per enterprise, regardless of how many partners or constituent members there might be in the enterprise. In some organisations however, an enterprise could have another voting representative if their production potential was big enough.

A number of grower co-operatives, for example, the Gascoyne River Co-operative Limited and the Broome Grower's Association were in the medium sized grower group. Membership is by purchase of \$2 shares, and each shareholder then has a vote, regardless of the number of shares held. Shares held in joint names or in a partnership constitute one vote only. Rarely, if ever, do husbands and wives have a vote each, although in several instances, the second generation of an extended family enterprise take out a separate shareholding in order that they can secure their own vote.

During discussions about voting rights, there was no concern shown that few women were the nominated voter, even though women are active participants in the day to day running of the operation, particularly in the horticultural sector. It was assumed that if a woman wanted a vote, she would get one; that she would make herself the nominated enterprise vote. Generally it was assumed however, the male partner would speak or vote for the enterprise, and if the female partner had a particular view about an issue, he would raise it on her behalf. The suggestion that women's views and knowledge might offer the industry diversity and variation in decision making met with limited enthusiasm.

Most of the medium sized organisations had both a male secretary and a male president, even though the gender split of their members was close to 60% men and 40% women. Significantly, when information was being sought for this study from either of the nominated office bearers who were usually male, (79% of office bearers were male); invariably either their wife or female secretary would give us the details. When asked about that, most of the women laughed it off. The typical reply was that of "R" who said,

*Of course we know what the rules and stuff are, we type the minutes, we field the phone calls and do all the running around (for the meetings). Boss/husband can't do it because he is out and about, in the sheds, or paddocks.*

(Field notes, 1998).

When asked why she doesn't stand for office, one wife coyly replied:

*My husband and I discuss everything, I know that his opinions are my opinions on all the business issues and he can attend the meetings, I can't.*

(Field notes, 1998).

When the office bearers were asked about the gender split and then why the office bearers don't reflect the number of women members, most questioned were surprised by the question. The standard reply was "I've never thought about it", or "women can be office bearers but they don't put themselves up". This did not seem to concern anyone.

The Grain Pool and Co-operative Bulk Handling are grain marketing bodies, both of which have grower representatives on their board. Neither organisation had ever had a woman director and neither interviewee (an organisation executive), could foresee 'a woman putting herself up' for election. Neither of these two important grain authorities were concerned that women were not active decision makers in their organisations, nor that their organisations were likely to attract women to participate at the highest levels. This is despite the Australian Wheat Board overtly celebrating the leadership role of several women on their board and the appointment of several other women to senior marketing positions of the commodity around the world. Furthermore, a female grain farmer did 'put herself up' for election to the Co-operative Bulk Handling board in 1998, running against the incumbent who was first elected to the board of directors in 1974. The incumbent won by a narrow margin.

Many of these smaller industry organisations are affiliated with either of the two largest peak industry organisations, the Western Australian Farmers Federation (WAFF) and the Progressive Growers Association (PGA). The WAFF is a large peak industry organisation and claims to represent 7 000 individual farmers on 5 200 farm enterprises, including wool producers, grain growers, meat producers, horticulturalists and dairy farmers. They also represent more than 1 000 affiliated members from a range of diverse agricultural industries such as poultry farmers and shearing contractors. The PGA also represents broadacre farming interests; wheat and wool growers, beef and sheep producers. Affiliated members are from the kangaroo shooting industry and the livestock transport industry. Both peak industry organisations claim to lobby on behalf of their members in order that their industries and livelihoods be safeguarded. The two groups are in direct competition for members and often, their policies contradict each other, undermining their lobbying power. The PGA essentially promotes free enterprise and trade. Their belief is that deregulated production and marketing through individual enterprises is the key to future sustainability of Australian agriculture. The WAFF on the other hand, are dedicated to statutory, or 'orderly' marketing of produce, which means that they prefer to market produce under a regulated system, designed to protect growers from fluctuating market prices and prevent larger producers from undercutting smaller producers in a free market environment.

### Access to Power

In the course of the research, farmers and various primary industry participants mentioned that the two largest peak agricultural organisations had a potential role in leading the change process. Both peak industry organisations are dedicated to lobbying government but, because they vigorously oppose each other, ministers, government departments and statutory authorities are often able to play one group against the other, and direct policy with some disregard for both organisations.

Voting entitlement is different in each of the peak organisations. The WAFF follows the traditional farm organisation pattern whereby an average sized farm enterprise has one vote, and the enterprise determines who will exercise the privilege. Grace (1997, p.47) noted in her research that while it may be true that the farm is in joint names and any person who is a partner may exercise the vote on behalf of the farm, it does seem that this tends to favour representation by the husband or senior male member of an extended farm partnership. Women are unlikely to nominate themselves as the enterprise representative voter. The PGA has recently moved away from this pattern in an endeavour to encourage all adult partners of the farm enterprise to contribute to the policies of the organisation, particularly targeting women and younger generation producers.

Voting entitlements at the PGA are dependent upon subscription. There are six membership options. Larger producers can buy a membership entitling them to 10 votes, while the smaller producer at the other end of the scale can pay the minimum but still be entitled to two votes. The medium – large farm enterprise may choose to pay for four, six or eight votes. This structure is specifically designed to facilitate multiple members of a farm enterprise partnership to have representation with voting rights. An 'associate' of the PGA is an organisation interested in agriculture but not directly involved in primary production. An example would be a farm adviser, stock and station agent or an interested academic. The structure of the organisation is relatively flat with every member being able to nominate himself or herself to any leadership position, regardless of their land holding or previous executive experience. This could be as a member of the executive committee (office bearers), Council (committee), District Committees or resources sub-committees. The



PGA is dedicated to limiting bureaucratic structure and boasts that every member has direct access to the president of the organisation on any issue.

The WAFF membership scale is simpler than that of the PGA; a large scale farm enterprise can buy three memberships and therefore three votes, an average farm enterprise may buy two votes and a small scale farm enterprise may purchase one membership and therefore one vote. Interestingly, an 'associate member' of the WAFF is defined in the membership application as someone "not part of a farm operation (i.e. off-farm family members / allied businesses)". The WAFF associate members are not entitled to vote but they will receive the Federation's newsletter. A 'retired farmer' is defined as someone 'retired from actively farming' and that membership may be taken out for the same cost as an 'associate' but with full voting rights and membership benefits.

The WAFF structure is considerably more complicated than that of the PGA. It has four levels, the highest being the General Executive which acts in a similar way to a Board of Directors. Employees of the organisation had difficulty explaining the structure and some were not sure who had rights at which level. Members agreed that understanding the path to power took time and association. It would appear however that the president wields considerable power; the structure is hierarchical and decision making flows vertically rather than horizontally. As of June 1998, of seventeen delegates who are on general council in the WAFF, four are women. The only other woman holding a leadership role in the WAFF is a dairy farmer and she is on the ten member executive of General Council. This woman also represents the WAFF on the National Farmers' Federation Economics Committee.

The PGA has a slightly better representation of women. Of the four executive committee positions at the PGA, one of the two Vice Presidents is a woman and two of the 18 ordinary members of Council are women. At the district level, the PGA acknowledges that women tend to be the secretaries of the District committees rather than the chairpersons. There are no current women chairpersons. There are also a number of commodity subcommittees to which anyone can nominate and there are currently four women chairpersons, two of whom hold executive positions. Furthermore, the administration manager at the PGA, (comparable to a chief executive officer) is also female. During the interviews with the PGA, it was made clear that the organisation is keen to encourage more women to actively participate in key leadership positions. The organisation was familiar with the *Missed Opportunities Report* and there had been discussion of some of the strategies recommended in that document to encourage women.

The WAFF on the other hand, tended to be defensive. The comment has been made that the WAFF has resisted any significant change in order to facilitate greater participation by females and younger farmers generally. The WAFF argues that many farm enterprises have the opportunity to nominate at least two members from a farm enterprise to at least the zone (local) level because most farming operations are more likely to be average - large. This argument overlooks the reality, which is that many farm enterprises in Western Australia have rationalised their spending as commodity markets have weakened and the cost-price squeeze has taken its toll. It would be tempting for those average - large farming enterprises under financial pressure to take out just a single membership. Furthermore, more average - large farm enterprises are likely to have an extended family operation, be it several members of the same generation or two or more generations. In that situation, it is less likely that a female farm partner will be nominated as a voting member.

While it can be argued that actively participating in peak agricultural organisations through membership and access to the decision making process does not necessarily equate with power, it does nonetheless build opportunities for women's public voice and a forum for

the acceptance of new ideas and perspectives. Foucault views power as a fluid process that is identified through examples of interactions rather than any clear, overall process. (See Sawicki, 1991). He claims one cannot look at the power of institutions as such, but that true power reveals itself in the micro power relations, person to person, that exist and make other power possible. For this to occur, women must be legitimate members of the forum in which to make relationships.

Research shows that flatter organisation structures tend to favour inclusiveness and suits women's capacities for co-operation and collaboration, while bureaucratic structures are less easy to change and favour the status quo (Smith & Hutchinson, 1995; Still, 1993; Cox, 1996). Furthermore, hardline economic reformers have advocated the concept of flattened structures. Their critiques suggest that a new management style is needed to achieve change and greater efficiencies where new skills and abilities are valued which incidentally coincide with female gender attributes.

### How Are Women Excluded?

The *Missed Opportunities Report* (Elix & Lambert, 1998), Alston (1998), Grace (1997) and Haslam McKenzie, (1998) all document evidence that women are put off by the competitive processes involved in nominating for a public office and the 'masculine culture' including the 'old boy network'. In a small study undertaken in the Western Australian wheatbelt in 1996, (Haslam McKenzie, 1998), agricultural women were asked about their involvement with agri-politics. The results showed that women in Western Australia are not nearly as active in agri-politics as their Eastern States counterparts. In part, responses showed that:

- Four of the twenty one proclaimed themselves as primary producers or farmers. The remainder perceived themselves as indispensable 'help mates' but not 'farmers'.
- All but one had an education equal or better than that of her husband.
- Six said they would be interested in getting involved in agri-politics but only one had actually become involved. She said she felt it was easier for her because her husband was well known in the industry as a successful studbreeder and the committee would be less likely to belittle her.
- The remaining two thirds said that it was scary territory and were afraid that they would be put down for lack of knowledge, lack of political savvy, fear of being thin-skinned and concern that their domestic responsibilities would be ignored.
- All acknowledged the financial commitment in terms of travel and time away from the property and family if one partner becomes involved in a committee, especially a committee based in Perth.
- Three said that their husbands were involved in some sort of agri-politics and someone had to stay at home and keep the place going.
- Three said they knew of one or two women involved in agri-politics and they didn't like the way those women behaved and felt 'put off' becoming involved.

Overt competition for leadership does not sit comfortably with many women, particularly as they have limited support from either women or men. Grace (1997, p. 47) noted, 'if women have to compete with men for office, and if men form the majority of voting members, what are the chances of the men supporting a woman?' For those women who do persist to formal leadership positions, being the 'token' woman can be uncomfortable. As noted by Salce, (1995) and Fisher & Hutchison, (1998), because gender affects both life experience and our perspectives on issues, women are likely to want to discuss issues or agenda items the majority do not consider relevant. As a consequence, women are made to feel marginalised and apprehensive about raising issues in public forums. For these reasons, the State based Rural Women's Networks and the National organisation; the Australian Women in Agriculture (AwIA) have shown phenomenal growth in a short

period of time. These organisations recognise women's desire to collaborate with their male partners in agriculture but facilitate the airing of women's practical approach to the solutions and changes that need to happen to improve rural livelihoods and living, without the competitive edge.

Grace (1997) cites examples in her research of strong traditions which are male-defined and oriented. By that she means that the organisations have been established by men with little, if any, regard for a woman's perspective or an awareness of difference in needs or perceptions. Western Australia rural organisations are the same and many of the traditions can be traced back to the days of Junior Farmers in Western Australia. Women (and younger men), have not had the political apprenticeship that many of the present WAFF and PGA incumbents have had in the old Junior Farmers organisation. An important part of Junior Farmers was learning to debate, speak publicly and develop quite sophisticated political skills. In the post-war years through to the 70's, young men were encouraged to excel in these skills, while the young women generally supported and applauded on the sidelines. Those women who did participate in the development of public speaking and political skills in Junior Farmers had their public careers interrupted by their domestic and childrearing responsibilities while the aspiring men continued in their political aspirations. Many of those young Junior Farmers of the 60's are now the older men who dominate the leadership positions, particularly in the WAFF. It varies from district to district, but often there is a history of who belongs, who has a part in meetings, how things are done. It takes a big effort for women to break into that. Junior Farmers has been replaced by Rural Youth, which for a number of reasons has not continued the huge following enjoyed by Junior Farmers. As a consequence, younger farmers are not learning political and public speaking skills.

This research has demonstrated that many commodity groups and industry organisations tend to meet at night which is a deterrent for many farm women, not only because of domestic responsibilities but also because travelling long distances at night often does not appeal to women in particular. Even when meetings are held during the day, rarely is a childcare service given consideration. The timing of meetings and the assumed domestic and childcare responsibilities of women make it particularly difficult for women to participate and therefore, men effortlessly dominate the attendees. An executive officer of a grower's association was concerned by the lack of women in the decision making positions of his organisation. He recognised their contribution to the industry, particularly their business acumen, their marketing and value adding skills. He claimed to encourage women but with limited success. He knew the most serious deterrent was the timing and location of meetings, which were usually in the local pub at night. He had tried to change the meeting times to school hours but the meetings (at night, at the pub with few if any women present), at which this proposal had been discussed, had voted against it. None of the members present perceived a need to encourage women along to the meetings. The presumption was that 'if women wanted to come, they would come'. (This scenario was typical of many of the larger peak industry organisations; the executive officer recognising the need to be more inclusive of all members, but the membership being complacent with the status quo and unwilling to change the function or structure of the organisation in order that it be more accessible for all members).

Rural women traditionally, have stood behind their man, quiet but nonetheless productive. Many women feel inhibited about speaking publicly, particularly to an audience with whom they are not familiar. Dale Spender has researched women's reticence to have a public voice and concurs that women tend to be 'silent' when men are around. Spender (1995) claims there are cultural sanctions against women speaking out, and women experience and internalise them. This is exacerbated for farm women because of the strong

and long tradition of husband–wife partnerships which manifest strong cultural beliefs and values supporting an ideology of male superiority. Harmony is considered paramount even though it is widely acknowledged that the survival of most family farms would be immediately threatened if wives were to cease their support. A woman may be seen as challenging a male farmer's assumed superiority by taking a public position and possibly a public profile and recognition, and this can be confronting for the partnership, and potentially divisive. Invariably, as this research has shown, women attending producer organisation meetings are more likely to take the supportive role of secretary rather than the leadership of president.

Throughout the Australian agricultural sector women dominate the off-farm income statistics (Elix & Lambert, 1998), even though they may still actively participate in on-farm activities. Membership and voting guidelines such as those of the Western Australian Farmers Federation which clearly state that an 'associate member' of the WAFF is defined as someone 'not part of a farm operation (i.e. off-farm family members/allied businesses)', might preclude a proportion of women who are actively involved in both on-farm and off-farm work. Traditionally women feel compelled to identify only with their off-farm occupation. Research by Lyson (1990) found that few women identify themselves as farmers when asked to list their occupation on any official documents. Lyson lists three reasons for this:

- Many farm women hold off-farm jobs which serve as the locus of their occupational identification (even though they are active farm participants as well).
- Although most farm women are active participants in the family enterprise, they may not identify themselves as the 'primary' producer.
- Farming has traditionally been classified as a 'male' occupation and women are loathe to (overtly) classify themselves as such.

It would appear then that the membership rules of the two organisations have influenced women's access to formal participation in decision making and therefore potential power.

## Discussion

As noted by Connell, (1986) gender is not easily defined because it is not a tightly knit logical system; rather, "it is a network of insights and arguments about connections" (p.343). The analysis of power is a helpful starting point for a social theory of gender. De Beauvoir viewed women's power, or the lack of it around the theme of the subordination of power. As noted by Alston, (1995, p. 14) "feminism became the first theory to focus on the previously marginalised world of women". It is concerned with the premise that Western society is governed in all its spheres by patriarchal beliefs, attitudes and values, and in which women, as a group, are both undervalued and underrepresented. Still (1993) investigated the phenomenon of the 'men's club' and shows its role in preventing women from having the same representation as men in decision-making. Her research and that of others, (see Marshall, 1984; Smith & Hutchinson, 1995; Wajcman, 1999) shows that the 'men's club' has dominated organisational culture since its inception. This is because women were either not visible or at the lowest organisational ranks. Organisations are therefore male forms, fashioned from male contexts with male language and cultural norms. Shepherd (1989, p. 42) states:

*In a structure where male dominance is taken for granted, the assumption of the invisibility of gender can be understood as an ideological position. It masks the extent to which organisational politics are premised on the dominance of one set of definitions and assumptions that are essentially gender based.*

As a consequence, women are not widely represented or accepted into 'male' organisations, particularly while the fundamental patterns of values and behaviour seem highly resistant to change.

Furthermore, while women were drafted to the rigidly prescribed sex role of the emotional and social nurturer of the family, confined to the private sphere of the home, they were excluded from the public sphere, and any woman stepping into the public sphere was therefore 'unwomanly' which then reflected badly on her male 'superior'. Alston (1995) claims that farm women have been particularly disadvantaged by this process, and even though they have actively worked on farms, their involvement has been hidden. While men still control the resources and the public face of agriculture, the potential and different contributions provided by women is lost to the agricultural sector. Now that it is recognised that women are involved in farming and agriculture generally, not to canvas their perceptions, understand their vision for their industries and include their views is to ignore one half of the agricultural sector participants. Cox (1996, p.11), states that "women leaders are needed to extend the abilities and experiences of male leaders so that decisions reflect what men and women want".

From research undertaken in Western Australia (Haslam McKenzie, 1997; Haslam McKenzie, 1998), it is clear that rural women's activism is only at its formative stage. Women have not participated in rural industry organisations for both structural and cultural reasons, (Alston, 1995b; Alston, 1995c). There are pockets of women who feel strongly that women should mobilise politically in order that their roles be acknowledged formally. Many however, consider such activity to be antagonistic, unwomanly and unnecessary which harks back to the expectation that women remain in the private domain of the home and not threaten the masculine, public domain. Women in agriculture have been made to feel they are intrusive and unnecessary in anything but the private sphere. There is considerable evidence that the women's movement has had little effect on farm women in Australia and in fact, agriculture can be seen as the last bastion of female conservatism (Poiner, 1979, p.59; Alston, 1995, p. 11). Women on farms are caught between the image of women fostered in our society and the realities of a situation in which they must react to expectations on the farm to be active in production. Much of what farm women do is done outside the public sphere. The public face of agriculture is a male one. The media, the advertising industry, the urban population in general, even the Departments of Agriculture and farm organisation have often acted as though all the significant aspects of farming are performed by males. Ghorayshi (1989, p. 587) states, "there is no doubt that gender ideology has played a crucial role in masking the importance of women's work. It is in the context of gender ideology that men are equated with farmers and women play down their actual role in farming". There is much written on the interdependence between the family and the enterprise however this interdependence does not translate into equality: There are in fact, fundamental inequalities within the family enterprise. Farms are not owned or controlled collectively by all those who contribute labour. Property relations do not reflect the labour contribution of women. The patriarchal relations that dominate families in farming are reflected in property relations which for the most part have excluded women from the ownership of land, and from actively participating in organisations which directly influence the viability of their livelihood.

## CONCLUSION

Over the last ten years, rural Australia has undergone significant social change, not just in the restructuring of regional areas and rural industries, but in the recognition of the role and contribution of rural women particularly in the area of primary industry. It is now

acknowledged by some, that women contribute a significant proportion of the labour and real farm income in Australia. Increasingly, those qualities found innate in many women such as: a capacity for self-inspection; maintaining a 'wide' view of life; recognising personal and family issues as ingredients of productivity; and building relationships by being accessible and understanding what is important to others are being valued (See Sinclair, 1994, p. x). It is therefore interesting that agricultural peak industry organisations that need to be progressive in order to continue to promote farmers (male and female) and their produce do not seem to be unduly concerned that the number of women occupying formal decision making positions does not even come close to representing their female constituent numbers. While it can be argued that the rules do not overtly discriminate women's participation, there are some rules and practises that exclude them. As a consequence, these organisations cannot take advantage of the female leadership qualities increasingly being celebrated by successful organisations worldwide. At the same time, those organisations that have been created by and for women such as the Rural Women's Networks and AwiA, have grown quickly and are achieving similar political and lobbying power with key government and industry policy makers that the traditional peak agricultural organisations have enjoyed in the past.

Many agricultural women do not want to be 'out front', the 'token woman' and necessarily different. However, it is no longer good enough to assume that women do not wish to participate, or that they speak through their male partners. The onus must therefore move to the organisations themselves to make it normal practice that women (and other contributing members of farm enterprises) have a vote and be encouraged to participate in formal decision making forums. Nor is it acceptable to assume that change will automatically happen if rules change; women have to feel they are valued and be made welcome. This is only likely to occur when it is recognised by industry participants that the inclusion of women is an opportunity for broader organisational development and industry success.

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<sup>1</sup> Up until the last census women were not formally counted as rural workers. Ironically, just before some Australian women became among the first in the world to get the vote more than one hundred years ago, the government decided to officially 'hide' the fact that women laboured in agriculture, fearful that this would send the wrong message 'home' to England about the industry's viability in Australia. When formulating census categories, government officials decided not to classify farmer's wives as engaged in agriculture because of the shame it would bring on a progressive developing country like Australia to admit that "women were in the habit of working in the fields as they are in some of the older countries of the world" (Lake 1987, p. 179). For these reasons it is difficult to properly ascertain the number of women working on farm enterprises this century.



**PART 3      CONTEMPORARY ISSUES**  
**and**  
**VISIONS**

## **Export Processing Zone Style Developments and the Regulation of Australian Women's Labour**

**Donella Caspersz**

Department of Organizational and Labour Studies, University of Western Australia

### **Abstract**

Export processing zone style developments (EPZ style developments) are industrial estates and stand alone enterprises predominantly engaged in manufacturing for the export market under customs free conditions. The relationship between EPZ style developments, labour and women is firstly that three quarters of the workforce in EPZ style developments are women. Secondly, the model of labour regulation in EPZ style developments exemplifies the theme of labour subordination. With the growth in EPZ style developments in an AIE such as Australia, the article poses the following questions: If EPZ style developments continue to grow in Australia, will women predominate in Australian EPZ style workforces as they do elsewhere? Can a point for convergence between Asian NIEs and AIEs frameworks of governance be identified by studying the regulation of EPZ labour? And, if this occurs, what are the implications that this scenario holds for the regulation of women's work in Australia in the future?

### **Introduction**

The term 'export processing zone style developments', (EPZ or EPZ style developments) refers to industrial estates and stand alone enterprises predominantly engaged in manufacturing for the export market under customs free conditions. EPZs have generally been viewed as a post 1945 phenomenon associated with the pursuit of an export oriented industrialization (EOI) policy by newly industrializing economies (NIEs), especially those in Asia. For instance, out of the 871 industrial estate zones throughout the world, 227 are in Asia (Flagstaff Institute, 1997). As well as incorporating stand alone enterprises, EPZ style developments can be found in advanced industrialized economies (AIEs), such as the United States of America, the United Kingdom, and a number of European countries including Denmark and Germany. In Australia, a zone has been in operation in the Northern Territory since 1987. More recently, in attempting to counteract the effects of their withdrawal from Newcastle at the end of 1999, the Broken Hill Proprietary Company (BHP) sponsored the Steel River Zone Project. It is expected that this will be fully operational by the year 2005, (Newcastle Interviews, May 1999). The Australian government has also set in place policy infrastructure to facilitate EPZ developments through the Manufacturing in Bond (MiB) scheme announced as part of the 1997 "Investment for Growth" package which allows for the development of stand alone EPZ style enterprises anywhere in Australia.

The relationship between EPZ style developments, labour and women is firstly that three quarters of the workforce in EPZ style developments are women (World Bank, 1992). However, as well as being distinguishable by the provision of generous taxation and other financial arrangements, a further characteristic of EPZ style developments is that the system of labour regulation exemplifies a theme of subordination. EPZ host countries have used various legislative and administrative measures to limit labour's ability to participate in activities that may threaten investor confidence.

Given this scenario, the following questions arise: If EPZ style developments continue to grow in Australia, will women predominate in Australian EPZ style workforces as they do elsewhere? Can studying the regulation of EPZ labour identify a point for convergence between frameworks of governance in Asian NIEs and AIEs? And, if this occurs, what are the implications that this scenario holds for the regulation of women's work in Australia in the future?

It is suggested that by considering these issues, this paper makes a contribution to the discussion about 'women and leadership' which may not immediately appear apparent. The struggle by women for equality continues in any society regardless of whether it is an NIE or AIE. The realm of 'labour' has always reflected the central themes of this struggle: that is a status of subordination which arises from the social construction that women's work is secondary to that of the male. Thus the topic of women's work is suffused with themes of paternalism and submissiveness, and reinforced by realities such as gender wage differentials and unequal access to institutionalised mechanisms including collective bargaining and training structures which have the potential to redress this inequality. It has been found that the status of women's labour in EPZ style developments in Malaysian and Sri Lankan NIEs reflects this scenario. The question arises: will EPZ style developments in Australia do the same? Unravelling these implications is surely a vital part of any debate surrounding the theme of women and leadership.

### **The Point of Convergence ? EPZ style Developments in Australia and Asia**

The concept of EPZs was first promoted to developing countries by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), in the late 1960s and later by organizations such as the Asian Productivity Association in the 1970s, to address issues of unemployment (Zhu, 1994; Caspersz, 1995, p.3). EPZ activities are concentrated in areas such as textile, garments and electronics manufacturing, although EPZs are also used for the provision of warehousing facilities and service industries such as data processing (Flagstaff Institute, 1997). Since their inception, the original EPZ model has expanded to not only include specifically designated industrial estates, but industrial estates in general, as well as stand alone enterprises. For instance in Malaysia, stand alone EPZ style enterprises can be created under the Licensed Manufacturing Warehouse Scheme. A similar scheme exists in Sri Lanka (Field trip, 1996; Stopford et al., 1992, p.116).

It is suggested that this range of initiatives can be encompassed under the one term 'EPZ style developments', because the conditions of operation underpinning these arrangements are the same. Often described as a 'package', these conditions refer to the use of financial and administrative measures. These conditions include unlimited duration of duty free import concession, (imports are not subject to customs duty), freedom from exchange controls, guarantees concerning the repatriation of capital invested, unrestricted remittance of profits and approved royalties and locally supplied investment finance on favourable terms (Caspersz, 1998). For instance, enterprises located in the traditional enclave style EPZ, specific purpose industrial estate or as a stand alone enterprise in Malaysia all have access to the same package of legislative, financial and administrative arrangements as long as their principal activity is manufacturing for export. A sample of these is illustrated in the table below.

**Table 1. Major Incentives Available to Export Industries ( including EPZs ) in Malaysia**

<i>Policy</i>	<i>Major Features</i>
<i>Foreign Equity</i>	* no equity condition imposed on projects that export more than 80 % or more of production * for projects that export more than 50% but less than 80% 100% equity is allowed if the investor invests more than RM50m or more in fixed assets or implements projects which have a value added of at least 50%
<i>Taxation</i>	* pioneer companies will pay income tax on only 30% of its statutory income * 100% exemption may be granted if project is of national importance * investment tax allowance of 60 % may be granted * double deductions for export credit insurance premiums, and promotion of exports may be granted
<i>Training</i>	* incentives are provided for research and development and for training
<i>Exemptions</i>	* exemptions on import/export of goods and sales tax

Source: Electronics and Electrical Industries, MIDA/Business Times, 1993, pp.17-25.

In Australia, the first steps to establish the Northern Territory Trade Development Zone (TDZ) commenced in 1983 (Montefiore: 1984), while the first factories were opened in December 1986. Since its inception, the zone has commenced a phase two in its development. There are 22 tenants in the zone. Manufacturing is the principal activity for zone enterprises covering diverse interests such as cardboard and packaging, designers and manufacturers of intelligent power systems, chemical, food and engineering based manufacturers (Zone Advantages, Territory Business, 1996). Like the zones in Asian NIEs, the TDZ also offers a similar package of financial and administrative arrangements for investors as well as providing a customs free manufacturing environment for some activities.

In Newcastle, remediation site works are currently occurring at the BHP Steel River project. These will be completed in 2000 while it is expected that the site will be fully operational by 2005. The zone will operate as an integrated cluster of environmentally sustainable industries. Three companies have already taken a development option in the site, including the CSIRO Energy Research Group. The incentives available for investors in Steel River include:

- A 28 day approval process of Federal and New South Wales (NSW) state government requirements for all enterprise applications
- NSW state government incentives such as contributions to infrastructure costs, payroll tax, land tax and stamp duty relief (Newcastle Interviews, May 1999).
- Access to the manufacturing in bond (MiB) scheme which allows approved firms to import dutiable goods into Steel River and re-export these goods in their original or manufactured form free of duty and sales tax; that is, customs free. The additional feature in the MiB scheme that is of interest, is that goods may be moved between MiB premises under duty free conditions, thus allowing for flexible chains of production to develop (Promotional Material, May 1999).

(Newcastle Interviews, May 1999; Promotional Information, Steel River, May 1999).

Provision for MiB was introduced as part of the 1997 Federal government's "Investment for Growth" package which is available to investors throughout Australia. Even though the take-up rate has been slow, the MiB scheme also allows for the development of EPZ style stand alone enterprises anywhere in Australia (Newcastle Interviews, May 1999). Thus, conferring of MiB status on enterprises is not confined to those locating in the Steel River Project (Fact sheet, Tradex and Manufacture in Bond, 1998). The fact that these EPZ style developments are viewed attractively in Australia was illustrated by comments made by Treasurer Peter Costello in response to the BHP Steel River Project: "If I had my way, I

wouldn't choose a small area here to enjoy these benefits and a small area there. I'd choose as much of the country as possible." (Grattan, *The Australian Financial Review*: 25 July, 1997, p. 30)

In summary, the discussion thus far illustrates two factors: firstly that EPZ style developments are not confined to NIEs and secondly, that the conditions under which EPZ style developments operate in NIE and AIE locations bear a resemblance.

### Regulating EPZ style Labour: Comparisons with Australia?

In noting that investors into Asian NIE EPZ style developments are offered a 'package' of financial and administrative inducements, the evidence also suggests that investors are offered a similar 'package' in terms of labour management strategies (Caspersz, 1998). This is because when EPZs were first developed as part of the pursuit of an EOI policy, it was considered 'necessary' to guarantee 'labour peace' as a carrot to attract investors (Frobel *et al.*, 1980; Deyo, 1989; Kuruvilla, 1995; Frenkel, 1995). In trying to illustrate how this 'labour peace' was achieved, studies of the regulation of EPZ labour have generally concluded that this scenario was created through direct means resulting in governance by coercion (Frobel *et al.*, 1980; Edgren, 1984). That is, through using legislative and administrative strategies, EPZ host governments have curtailed the potential for workers to create disruptions by forming trade unions, staging strikes or participating in the bargaining process themselves. Where no outright ban was imposed, EPZ host governments have used administrative means to achieve the same effect. For instance, by classifying EPZs as 'public utilities', governments were able to embrace EPZ industries under Emergency Regulations, thus prohibiting the formation of unions or staging of strikes in the 'national interest'. Countries that have done this include Malaysia, India and Thailand (Caspersz, 1998). Furthermore, where EPZ host countries have allowed the formation of unions in EPZ style developments, these have mainly been enterprise based rather than industry linked. Malaysia and Sri Lanka are both examples where this has occurred.

In Australia, the progressive de-regulation of the centralized wage bargaining system and the move in the 1980s towards enterprise bargaining on the basis of productivity and efficiency, have been highly significant in introducing flexibility into the system of labour regulation. In addition, reforms introduced under the Industrial Relations Reform Act, 1993, provided the means for non-union bargaining to take place in forging enterprise agreements. This acted as a precursor to the introduction of individual employment contracts rather than union negotiated collective agreements and awards under the Workplace Relations Act. The overall effect of these changes is that they have diminished the requirement to conform to standards that are external to individual enterprise needs.

In addition, there are key examples of recent industrial relations disputes that illustrate the introduction of elements of coercion into the Australian industrial relations arena. This is especially with regard to the role of the government. One example is the attempt by the Western Australian government to introduce further restrictions against unions in what has become known as the "Third Wave" campaign. However, a more significant event was the 1998 dispute on the waterfront between Patrick's Stevedoring and the Maritime Union of Australia (Lambert, 1998), which illustrated the willingness of the Federal government to use its powers to negotiate an outcome representative of employers interests rather than union demands.

It is suggested that the transformation of the Australian industrial relations system wrought by these changes extend beyond the realms of structure only, and into the arena of cultural

change. This has been from a system which epitomised collectiveness and cohesiveness, to one now characterized by individualism and a diversity of arrangement (Callus, 1997; Beeson, 1997; Lambert, 1998). It was therefore interesting to note that when asked about the link between investor interest in Steel River and the status of labour in Australia, it was acknowledged that the new climate of labour relations in Australia was now more attractive to investors because of the flexibility created by recent changes (Newcastle Interviews, May 1999).

In summary, while acknowledging that different economic and political conditions between Asian NIEs, such as Malaysia and Sri Lanka, and an AIE such as Australia raise questions about the viability of transporting frameworks governing labour, it is suggested that at the same time, there is evidence relating to both EPZ style developments and the system of industrial relations. This highlights some bases upon which to pose the possibilities for convergence. But where does this leave the status of women's labour? Can similar trends be discerned in this arena?

### **EPZ style Developments and the Status of Women's Work**

EPZ employment became a route through which to increase women's participation in the wage-labour force. Women dominate EPZ style workforces (Shoesmith, 1986; World Bank, 1992; Alwis, 1994; AAFLI, 1995; ITGWU, 1996; Kusago & Tzannatos, 1998). For instance, women represented 69 per cent of the workforce in Bangladesh EPZs while males accounted for 30 per cent (Bhattacharya, 1998). In the Philippines, women represented 74 per cent of the EPZ workforce while males accounted for 26 per cent (Remedio, 1996). During the 1990s in Malaysia, 53.5 per cent of all workers in EPZs were females (Sivalangam, 1994). Fieldwork conducted in both Malaysia and Sri Lanka also confirmed that women dominated EPZ style workforces in these countries (Field trip, Malaysia, 1994, 1995; Field trip, Sri Lanka, 1996).

For women, the mass assembly and often unskilled employment opportunities available in EPZ enterprises matched the minimum level of education and skills they often possessed. The shift system of production in EPZ enterprises was also attractive for women juggling family and work life. However, women are also attractive as EPZ style workers because of a general belief that they are more submissive than men and thus less likely to participate in resistance activity. As one employer said: "females are less likely to walk around and cause trouble" (S.L., 1996). In Malaysian EPZ promotional literature, it has been suggested that the "oriental female is best qualified to contribute to the production line" because she has nimble fingers, is docile and compliant, does not get involved in trade union activity and is less likely to go on strike (Kaur, 1994, p.17).

While these illustrations suggest females themselves possess the characteristics leading to their own subordination, other illustrations highlight the social construction of this scenario. For instance, in most workplaces surveyed in both Malaysia and Sri Lanka, middle managers from the level of supervisor upwards were males. Females dominated the lower work categories such as production operators and quality control officers (Field Trip, Malaysia, 1995; Field trip, Sri Lanka, 1996). One way in which this social construction has affected the willingness of women to participate in resistance activities is by instilling a sense of 'reluctance' within female workers to protest against the male authority figure. For instance, union organizer B.P. quoted the example of a young woman whose brother was involved in a union. She had resigned from the union when her supervisor had asked her to do so. Though her brother urged her to re-join the union, the young woman had refused claiming that she would be betraying her supervisor:

*I went to her house and her brother was a member of a trade union and told the sister, "you should join". And she cried and cried and cried and said "no, I will be betraying my supervisor. He takes care of me very well. I have no problems in the line and now the trade union comes and I have to make a decision. I am betraying... I am doing something which is not correct, it is against my belief..." I was there one whole night and she was crying and crying...she refused to join... (13th July, 1995).*

Fear of reprisal from the company in terms of dismissal from their job, not being considered for promotions or being awarded increments and overtime was another factor inhibiting women's willingness to become involved in resistance activity. This was because of their high dependency upon their income both for themselves and family members. For instance, when asked what stopped workers such as themselves from forming unions, a worker from a group of Malaysian female EPZ workers said:

*it is because we have been threatened. We have been told that we will be sacked on the spot if we form a union. Some girls need their jobs very badly because they don't have proper support from elsewhere, so they don't try and form a union (POM2, 6th February 1996).*

As well as supporting themselves however, many women also support families elsewhere. The women interviewed confirmed this (Field trips, Malaysia, 1995-1996). Similarly in Sri Lanka, a study undertaken by Alwis (1994, table 1.3) of unmarried females and males interviewed in the Katanuyake EPZ showed that the percentage of females contributing to family income was at least five times the percentage of males contributing to family income.

Furthermore, in Malaysia for example, where there is a trend toward an increasing number of married women in EPZ workforces, the double load carried by these women juggling work and family responsibilities often precluded them from being involved in non work activities such as unions. Lack of time represented 39 per cent of responses to the question why it was more difficult to organize women into unions in Malaysia (Field Trip, Malaysia, 1995).

It is suggested that this scenario indirectly sanctions discriminatory action at an institutional level. For instance, despite the Equal Pay for Equal Work Act 1969, there are still gender based wage differentials in Malaysia. Ahmad (1994, table 16) illustrates this across various industry sectors using 1980 data. Data from 1992 shows a similar picture. In the lowest category of machine operator in the electronic and electrical industry for example, daily rated females earned \$336.91RM and males \$345.53RM. Monthly rated females earned \$247.80RM and males earned \$309.54RM (Occupational Wages Survey in the Manufacturing Sector 1992, 1993, table 1.3). The ILO (1998) also found the gender wage differentials in other EPZ locations.

Furthermore, because the labour process in EPZ style enterprises overwhelmingly demands unskilled labour, there is less onus on employers to provide portable training which will improve women's job mobility. Alwis (1994, p.14) concludes that seventy-six per cent of all workers in Sri Lankan EPZ style developments were in the 'trainee', 'unskilled' and 'semi-skilled' categories. Jayanthakumaran (1995, pp.13-14) concludes that in the case of Sri Lanka, eighty per cent of workers in EPZs were in the unskilled and semi-skilled category. Among the skilled category, technical and administrative staff was less than two per cent of the total workforce. The literature affirms this scenario, (Alwis, 1994; Sivalangam, 1994; ILO, 1998; Kusago & Tzannatos, 1998) as did the research conducted. For instance, while all

of the enterprises surveyed in Malaysia provided on-the-job training, only two large electronics multinational companies provided external training programmes.

Research also showed that there were few women employed in managerial or technical positions in either the Malaysian or Sri Lankan zones. A Labour Force Survey conducted in Sri Lanka for the second quarter of 1995 shows that of a total of 339,890 women employed in the manufacturing sector, 2,115 were classified as senior officials and managers, 1916 as professionals while 25,385 were plant and machine operators and assemblers and 33,345 were classified as occupying elementary occupations (Quarterly Report of the Sri Lanka Labour Force Survey, Second Quarter 1995, Table 3B, p. 30). However women in electronics industries dominated the lower end positions of production operators or quality control officers, while women in textile industries were primarily employed as machinists. As Jayaweera (1996, p.114), concludes, "women's 'gains' in employment have been in low quality, casual and marginal economic activities with minimal opportunities for upward occupational mobility".

In summary these trends suggest that women's employment in EPZs resembles that of an enclave or labour market ghetto, characterized by features which can only be perceived as exemplifying a theme of subordination. What of Australian women's labour?

### **Australian Women's Labour**

In Australia, government policy has successfully changed the identity of Australian women from being mainly domestic workers to being both industrial and domestic workers (Johnson, 1997). At the same time however, the pattern of women's work suggests that they continue to dominate part time casual arrangements. They tend to be concentrated in lower paid, lower level jobs with limited chances for promotion and less likelihood of being covered by an award or being unionised. Women's occupational segregation has remained the same for much of the century as they continue to dominate in clerical, sales and personal service areas such as paraprofessionals (Pocock, 1995, p. 100; Gardner and Palmer, 1997, p. 545). In addition, evidence suggests that females are narrowing rather than broadening their industry based occupational spread. Since 1991, females have come to occupy two industry groups; finance, where they represent over half the employees, and community services where women are more than seventy five per cent of the industry's employees (Gardner and Palmer, 1997, p.453). Furthermore, while there has been growth in women's employment opportunities, this growth has been mainly in the area of part time employment. Women represent 75 per cent of part-time employees, and of that, 49 per cent of this group is married (Gardner and Palmer, 1997, p. 455). In summary, as Pocock (1995, p.104) and Gardner and Gill (1997) conclude, while more and more women are entering paid work, they are concentrated in narrow occupations and industries which afford them little protection.

The marginal status of women's work in Australia is being compounded by the trend towards women working as contract workers or out workers. This trend has gained momentum as the after effects of the industry re-structuring programme particularly in the Textile, Clothing and Footwear (TCF) industry are being felt. Women dominate this industry. According to Windsor and Pocock, (1989), (cited in Van Acker, 1995, p.227), there were 107,300 total jobs in 1987-8, but after re-structuring, this was reduced to 80,300 in 1991-2. While always difficult to accurately assess, an Australian Bureau of Statistics survey in 1992 found that there were 307,900 people employed at home in Australia, two thirds of whom were women (Pocock, 1995, p.101). More specifically, a report by the Textile,



Clothing and Footwear Union of Australia (1995), found that for every factory machinist in the clothing industry, there were 14 working from home (van Acker, 1995, p.536).

Even though a gap always existed, Cass (1995, p.47), suggests that Australia's wage fixing system had in the past, been more effective than elsewhere, in narrowing the differentials between men's and women's work. However, it is doubtful that the changes in the industrial relations system as described, will do anything other than accentuate the differentials. There is potential for women becoming the likely recruits for work situations in which they are forced to relinquish rights such as the right to freely organize, in return for employment and a regular income. Evidence available suggests that part time and casual workers in general, were less likely to have access to external and in-house training when compared to their full time permanent counterparts (DEET, 1995, p.6). The most that this group of workers was likely to receive was on-the-job training which is generally non-transferable across industry sectors. In a recent study (Whitehouse *et al.*, 1997), of the status of part-time and casual workers in the retail and hospitality industries, both of which are dominated by women, there was greater access to training for permanent full time staff. Once again, there was limited training provided for either casual or permanent part-time staff. In canvassing employers, Whitehouse *et al.*, (1997) confirmed that there was no evidence to suggest that access to careers and training was a priority for employers.

Findings from other studies show that Australian women are often not in a position to influence the bargaining agenda. For instance, women are poorly represented in management positions, senior management and as trade union delegates (DEET, 1995). Furthermore, a study surveying the effect of enterprise bargaining in some Queensland enterprises (Boreham *et al.*, 1996) found their findings offered little support for the view that enterprise bargaining facilitated the redress of gender inequity issues. This reinforced previous findings (Buchanan, 1993) which showed that specific provisions surrounding issues such as working time arrangements, were more likely to give managers rather than workers, flexibility. Finally, neither Buchanans (1993), nor Boreham's (1996) studies were encouraging with respect to the introduction of other issues such as parental leave and childcare arrangements under enterprise bargaining which would help facilitate women's work experience.

Thus, while again acknowledging the unique factors influencing every country, it is suggested that there is some resemblance between the status of women's work in Australia and Asian NIEs. Thus, the question arises: do these trends set the scenario for women to be the likely recruits for an EPZ style workforce in Australia?

While dependent on a number of variables such as industry structure in EPZ style developments, it is suggested that the possibilities are not as remote as may first appear. If these possibilities are realized, and given the context of changes to labour regulation in Australia, which highlight areas where opportunities for convergence arise in labour regulation frameworks between Asian EPZ style developments and Australia, whither the regulation of women's work in Australia?

## Conclusion

The aim of this paper has been to stimulate a debate about whether there are possibilities for convergence to arise between Asian NIEs such as Malaysia and Sri Lanka, and an AIE such as Australia in the area of the regulation of women's labour. This paper examined the points of comparison between the model regulating labour in Malaysian and Sri Lankan

EPZ style developments and Australia; and the status of women's work in Australia and these Asian NIEs.

As a final note, it is suggested that the thread weaving these possibilities into the same fabric is the neo-liberal model for growth and development which now dominates governance everywhere, regardless of whether the country is an NIE or AIE. Otherwise known as the market-led model, neo-liberalism gained resurgence in AIEs after post 1945 Keynesian policies failed to deliver the economic growth desired; Asian NIEs ratified the neo-liberal model of development when they adopted the EOI industrial strategy from the 1960s onwards. The recent sea-change in centrally planned economies such as the former Soviet Union and East Germany which have led to the adoption of a market model, and the shift by countries such as China and Vietnam to a 'market socialism' model, further support the contention that the neo-liberal model is the predominant model currently underpinning growth and development throughout the world.

Neo-liberalism has had a significant influence in shaping the contours of Australian industrial relations (Campbell, 1993; Bramble, 1996; Beeson, 1997). It has had a similar influence in constructing labour regulation in Asian NIEs (Turk, 1991; Deyo, 1997) and especially in EPZ style developments (Caspersz, 1998). The effects of neo-liberalism on labour are significant as neo-liberalism rejects most labour market regulations as distortions to the free operation of the market. The paradigm is naturally hostile to trade unionism and collective bargaining at the industrial or national levels which can negotiate wage agreements beyond what is construed as the 'market clearing' level (Plant, 1994, p.9).

Given this framework, re-dressing inequality such as women's employment status is not of concern within the neo-liberal model in which it is assumed that the market will provide. Therefore, understanding the ramifications of the debate that has been posed here is even more critical if resilient resistance activities against a further marginalization of Australian women's employment status is to be prevented, with the possible future introduction of EPZ style developments into Australia.

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**Research Material**

Field Trips, Malaysia, 1994, 1995, 1996

Field Trip, Sri Lanka, 1996

Interview BP, 13<sup>th</sup> July, 1995, Kuala Lumpur

Interview POM2, 6<sup>th</sup> February, 1996, Kuala Lumpur

Newcastle Interviews, May 1999

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# **Changing the Paradigm of Governance: Feminist Interventions in Re-Visioning the Future**

**Lekkie Hopkins**

Edith Cowan University, Western Australia.

## **Abstract**

This paper argues that the economic rationalist framework underlying much contemporary decision making is impoverishing, at a personal, local, national and international level. The paper draws on contemporary feminist thinking about citizenship, suffrage, difference and diversity, and on feminist understandings of the concepts of social justice and social capital and the processes of social change, to argue that in order to resist the takeover of our imaginations and language systems by ec-rat-speak, we have to create a new paradigm for governance to take us into the new millennium. Such a paradigm will necessarily be one which is not led by an excluding masculinist mainstream, but rather one which acknowledges difference and multiplicities in ways which require the adoption of a more co-operative, less discriminatory, less cut-throat suite of economic policies. The paper argues that to do this we have to adopt a number of strategies: these include resisting the dominant economic rationalist framework by naming our losses, and refocussing on the intangibles as being present and significant; working on change at the level of the imagination as well as the level of the material world; and, for some of us, enacting our vision, living as if the revolution we seek has already occurred.

## **Setting the Scene**

For a long time now, whenever I've been asked to provide an overview of my apparently diverse research interests, which cross all the conventionally established disciplinary and philosophical boundaries of traditional academia, I've been saying I'm interested in the processes of social change. What I mean when I say this is that I'm interested in the ways society can change to meet with our vision of a more just world, a vision which has its roots in the notion of a feminist re-reading of social justice. Hence I say I'm interested in the relationship between feminist theory and feminist activism; I'm interested in questions of agency and how we enact our vision of a feminist future; I'm interested in women's writing and the ways it carries feminist theories and disrupts masculinist discourses; I'm interested in looking back into the history of women's activism in Australia, recuperating stories of women who, like many of us in the late twentieth century, have been passionate about striving to make the world a better place, so that contemporary women activists have a sense of being part of a much longer process of social activism. In so naming my research interests I've been conscious of being part of a tremendously exciting movement to reframe and rethink the nature of sociological research. This we call feminist scholarship. However, at the same time as there's been a movement away from traditional disciplines and research practices towards a crossing of boundaries which opens up the possibilities of re-imagining the world and the ways we interact with it, there has, of course, been a counter movement; a movement which has been generated not in the activist fringes of society but firmly within the conventional mainstream. Not surprisingly perhaps, the counter movement to which I refer is economic rationalism.

So what is economic rationalism?

Paul Omerod, in his recent book, *The Death of Economics*, explains economic rationalism as the fashionable economic theoretical framework which assumes that Economic Rational Man, given a free market, will automatically live in competitive equilibrium. He acknowledges that, on this basis, the whole emphasis of economic policy in the West in the past ten to fifteen years has been to implement free market solutions to problems. These solutions suggest that Labour markets must be made flexible; industries in the public sector should be privatised; financial markets should be freed of tiresome restrictions and deregulated, both within the domestic economy and in terms of relations with the rest of the world, so that, for example, controls on the movement of capital should be abolished. The prime movers in this recent fashion for free markets were the right-wing administrations in Britain and the USA at the start of the 1980s. But, as we know, these policies are not confined to right-wing governments. Many nominally centre-left governments have been unable to resist adopting these policies. France under Mitterand, Spain under Gonzales, Australia under Hawke and Keating and New Zealand under Lange are all examples of countries in which notionally social-democratic governments adopted most of the policy agenda of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan. Omerod cites a number of disastrous results of such universal adoption of free-market economies and concludes that the major problem with such emphasis on the free market is that the real world is far more complex than is allowed for in the economic model of Rational Man and competitive equilibrium (Omerod, 1994, p. 70).

In this paper, I suggest the shift towards economic rationalism as the very basis of the decision making of governance, carries with it the most profound social change we've experienced for a very long time, centuries even. To my shame I have to acknowledge that until halfway through this decade, I hadn't even begun to notice it clearly, to name it and identify it as a force of (regressive) social change and to be aware of its power to enforce changes. In a sense, I suspect it has crept up on us all, sneaking into our imaginations, creeping into our language systems, slinking into our dreams, sidling into our daily realities. I contend that in its apparent inevitability lies its power.

The 1990s in Australia have been characterised by huge public debates, particularly concerning native title, reconciliation, multiculturalism and republicanism. It seems appropriate in celebrating the centenary of non-indigenous women's suffrage that we recognise that these debates can be seen to echo the *fin de siecle* quest for national identity that characterised the Australia of one hundred years ago. The debates of the 1890s, which gave rise to non-indigenous women's suffrage similarly, concerned the nature of citizenship, and entitlement to participate fully in the society we create. An added dimension to the discussion at this end of the century concerns whether or not we're going to take advantage of the diversity within our society and acknowledge difference within and between categories of people. Such debates have raged in spite of official attempts to stifle them. At the same time as these public debates have been occurring though, there's been a huge amount of dismantling going on. At the same time as these public debates have been occurring, though, there's been a huge amount of dismantling going on: dismantling of the trade union movement, dismantling of the public health system, dismantling of the free education system, dismantling of hard-won services to women, dismantling of all kinds of services to rural communities. Such dismantlings have been fuelled by that other discourse that's crept up on us by stealth, insinuating itself into every possible forum, so that nobody is untouched by it: and that discourse, of course, is economic rationalism.

In this paper I argue that the relentless use of the economic rationalist framework underlying much contemporary decision making is impoverishing, at a personal, local, national and international level. I draw on contemporary feminist thinking about

citizenship, suffrage, difference and diversity, (Caine and Pringle, 1995; Grieve and Burns, 1994; Rothfield, 1994; Gunew and Yeatman, 1993; Yuval-Davis, 1993; Bottomley, 1992; McNay, 1992; Pettman, 1992). I also draw on understandings of the concepts of social justice (Gatens, 1996,) and social capital (Cox, 1995) and of the processes of social change (Weeks, 1994; Gunew, 1990; Curthoys, 1988) to argue that in order to resist the takeover of our imaginations and language systems by ec-rat-speak, we have to create a new paradigm for governance to take us into the new millennium. Implicit in my argument is the understanding drawn from post-structuralist feminist scholarship that the ways we think about things, and the language and discourses we use to we speak about them, really matter (Pease and Fook, 1999; Richardson, 1997; Davies, 1996; Weedon, 1992; Nicholson, 1990; Irigaray, 1985).

### **Re-thinking Power, Discourse and Difference.**

The present paradigm underlying governance - a kind of liberal humanist acceptance of the individual's right to choose freely without too much apparent damage to others - is, I would argue, so based in masculinist individualism that it permits discourses like economic rationalism to flourish. Although thinking towards such a new paradigm might not, strictly speaking, be a gender issue, in that it's not something that only women care about, or indeed something that *all* women care about, I suggest that contemporary feminist scholarship, especially poststructuralist understandings of power, discourse and difference, can help to tease out some ideas about what we can do to help create a paradigm shift which is strong enough to counter the ec-rat framework.

For example, a poststructuralist conception of our relation to the State can free us from seeing the State as a monolithic, unified institution. It will allow us to see it as a complex set of interrelated but distinct institutions, relations, hierarchies, discourses, interests and players, whose power is not fixed but is fluid and changing. As Brown (1992), cited in Wearing (1997), argues, a feminist poststructuralist theory of the State will be less a linear argument than the mapping of an intricate grid of often conflicting strategies, technologies and discourses of power. Although this view of the State acknowledges that the State devalues women, feminist interventions proceeding from this view do not seek equality with men as much as a recognition of women's difference (not inferiority) from men, and difference amongst women themselves. This view challenges the modernist thinking that constructs binary oppositions between public and private, political and social, work and family, male and female. It also insists that reforms can be introduced by localised resistances as well as by specific and generalised political and economic relations.

My reading of such scholarship suggests that it is crucial that the new paradigm we adopt be one based on understandings of the need to dismantle binary oppositions, celebrate diversity, and respect differences across race and class and gender, as well as within those categories. At the same time we need to marry that acceptance of *difference* with the notion of *trust*, which itself implies reciprocity. In adopting such a paradigm, (which I've called, temporarily, for want of a better name, *trust across difference*) I argue, discourses like economic rationalism will be starved out, strangled, exposed for their limitations and absurdities.

So how do we go about such a massive project? As strategies I include resistance, enacted both from within organisational and political structures and outside them, as well as a kind of separatism, a living as though the new paradigm were already in place. I will conclude not with definitive answers but at least with directions for change.



## Resistances: Naming (Regressive) Changes to Women's Services

Part of what we have to do in order to reveal the impacts of ec-rat-speak is conduct the necessary audits to discover just what the damage really is. From there we have to name what's happening, so that workers and users of services can themselves find words to describe the losses they incur and the value of what they do.

Across Australia, many women's services are being reorganised to reflect the new language of ec-rat-speak. Even the most superficial glance at women's services in Western Australia will demonstrate that under the forces of economic rationalism and the new managerialism, many of the necessary services for women which feminists fought for so successfully during the 1970s and the 1980s, (the refuges, the women's health centres, the learning centres, the sexual assault centres), are being forced to adopt models of management and organisation which frequently dismantle and cut across the very carefully developed working practices which grew out of grassroots feminism. Collectives are being forced to reconfigure to adopt more hierarchical models of management, where accountability can be more easily traced and tabbed. Only the quantifiable counts.

As an example of how this affects people's daily working lives, I'm reminded here of Mandy Stringer's keynote address to the Women's Health Women's Lives conference, held at Edith Cowan University in Perth, Western Australia, in May 1998. Mandy Stringer was then the Co-ordinator of the Whitford Women's Health Centre in the northern suburbs of Perth. The Centre runs on a social model of health. In her address she spoke of the sheer frustration of being told to report to her funding body on the health centre's activities in terms not of a social model of health, but rather of medicalised measurable categories which bear marginal relation to what actually happens there. She cited as an example, the form she has to fill in for her funding body to record the Centre's activities, there's no category called Domestic Violence, and there's no category called *Crisis Support*. If a woman comes in to the Centre wanting some help with a violent home situation, she might be referred to the Centre's counsellor, given a medical examination by the Centre's doctor to estimate the extent of physical battering, given access to legal aid, refuge addresses, and maybe also put in touch with a support group. She might also, while waiting to see someone, become aware of another group that meets each Friday to learn parenting skills or to have fun together. Now, under the present funding and reporting arrangements, the only ways open to the Women's Health Centre to report what happens when women come to the Centre for this kind of intervention are to list them as statistics under the categories *Physical Injury* and *Mental Health*. Clearly, including this woman under those categories renders invisible and uncounted all the community building, all the confidence building, all the recognition of need for connection and support which the health centre has in fact tried to provide. This sort of technique of focussing only on the quantifiable, what we can call instrumental, is clearly a feature of economic rationalism. We need to change it.

The impact of economic rationalism goes further than organisational restructuring. In the last five years, severe funding cuts mean that many women's services have closed. Funding cuts and enforced changes to organisational practice mean, for example, that if you're sexually assaulted in Mandurah (which is one hour's drive south of Perth), you can no longer go to the local sexual assault centre for crisis counselling: they can only manage to do long-term counselling now: for crisis intervention you have to come up to Perth!

In order to be able to resist such dismantlings, or even such tampering with feminist models of organisation which recognise the invisible connecting threads, one has to be able to read what's happening, name what's happening, and communicate the nature of the potential losses to funding bodies and to the wider community, many of whom are so busy saving

their own skins that they don't have time or energy to help save other people's. Many women working out there in community based services know only too well that in this instrumentalist age when everything has to be quantified, measured and trussed up, the inability to name invisibilities renders them not just invisible but invalid. A group of women I'm friendly with told me a story recently about the success of their whirlwind campaign to save one position in another Women's Health Centre. They were successful, and they were talking about it as an example of the richness and nourishing nature of women's workings together. However, running parallel to that hugely significant struggle to retain just one woman's position, was the story of the enormity of that struggle, and the story of how they very nearly didn't even bother, because having to find words for, having to name the losses in words that bureaucrats would understand, and having to find the energy to do that, was just so difficult.

I guess it'd be a bit misleading if I were to blame every loss on economic rationalism. It certainly seems clear to me that much of the despair, frustration, the loss of dignity and loss of hope which plagues those people in our society without jobs or self respect, or even those with jobs whose goal has been to acquire great wealth, comes because there's no way under ec-rat-speak to value what's hidden, invisible or intangible in economic terms. That is, the real, messy, chaotic material and emotional and spiritual aspects of our lives remain submerged and invisible under such a discourse.

It's this tendency for economic rationalist policies and values to fail to acknowledge the complexities of the material world in which ordinarily complex people go about their ordinarily complex lives which disturbs me the most. It's my argument here that the value of such a framework as an economic framework is itself debatable, and an issue about which perhaps voters can decide. When it seeps into every forum, every corner of life, when "ec-rat-speak" becomes part of our language, when we see *can we afford it?* as the very basis of decision making, it's time to take stock and say to our politicians and policy makers, "Enough." We'll know that this is happening when we in academia begin to call our students *customers*, when we as a community accept that *downsizing* is an acceptable term for sacking real people and throwing them onto the unemployment scrapheap, when health workers in a local women's hospital will take an ultrasound of only the reproductive organs of a young woman with severe abdomen pain when she's told them that the pain is above her navel, because their funding extends only to diagnoses concerning the reproductive organs. And when is this likely to happen? It's happening now, all around us.

### Resistances: Naming Invisibilities

In her Boyer Lecture series for ABC radio in 1995, Australian feminist economist Eva Cox subversively appropriated the dominant economic discourse by introducing the notion of *social capital* to describe, acknowledge and make visible all the hidden dimensions of political and social life which combine to create a what she terms a *civil society* (Cox, 1995).

In the social services arena, a further example of such naming concerns the relationship between community workers and the competencies they are formally expected to have as listed by the National Training Agenda. My colleague Ann Ingamells is currently researching the embodied experiences of community workers as they go about the connecting work; all the invisible work which is un-named. Her purpose is to flesh out these bare competencies, to name the invisibilities in order that workers and employers will no longer gloss over or discount them, but will value them. This, I would argue, is a crucial act of resistance. (For earlier, related work of Ann Ingamells, see Ingamells in Fook, 1996.)

## Reflections on Resistances

Is resistance the best strategy? Laurel Richardson, a North American feminist whose work is mostly about narrative, writes of the need to circumvent the dominant discourse. Stories written as resistance narratives, she writes, are weak representations, reactive stories, stories which keep alive the dominant culture in the psyches of the non-dominant culture (Richardson, 1997). Nevertheless, I would argue that resistances are crucial as a stage in enacting change, and that they can and must occur alongside the kinds of separatisms and circumventions of the dominant discourse undertaken by radical feminists, black separatist feminists, minority cultural groups whose focus is on difference, and the poststructuralist theorists.

What role can we play as academics in all this?

We can monitor changes through research into the relationship and interactions between funding bodies, policy makers, policies, professionals and the communities they serve;

We can introduce the notion of social capital and/or of community building into public discourse through discussion of research findings and through responses to media statements of all kinds;

We can attempt to equip our students with strategies for speaking and acting in an environment whose ideological base may be quite different from one's own. (As a starting point here we can ensure that they are able to read and analyse the politics of situations from the micro level of the interpersonal to the macro level of the global);

We can act to make changes through action research projects which work with people from the community sector to provide time for reflection, analysis of the implications of current work practices, support through acknowledgment of daily struggles, and strategies for implementing change.

These are all acts of resistance, but of course there are other ways to enact change too.

## Shifting the Paradigm: Working with the Imagination

So how do we work towards not just resisting the economic rationalist framework, but creating a new paradigm, a paradigm I've called *trust across difference*. In its respect for differences of gender, race, class, ethnicity, sexual preference, social status, and economic power, how it will demand a different kind of economic framework and hence provide no room for economic rationalist frameworks to gain the stranglehold they have today? It seems to me that we have to work on many levels, and one of the most crucial of these is the level of the imagination.

There has been much discussion in contemporary feminist poststructuralist research literature of the ways in which we come to know. For example, Moira Gatens (1996), in her recent work *Imaginary Bodies*, cites Spinoza to argue that imagination, rationality and intuition are all aspects of knowing. She also agrees with Spinoza that we are unable to add on bits of knowledge; rather, when we know something new, we become different. Knowing is an embodied experience. To know is to be, not to have.

This idea that epistemology has an ontological dimension is not new. It is, for example, a guiding principle of ancient Vedic wisdom (Chopra, 1993). Lorri Neilson, a Canadian feminist educationist whose interests lie in re-thinking the research process, incorporates such ideas to argue that it is crucial that the creative imaginative work of knowledge

making is never conceived of as being disembodied. Neilson cites Anne Cranny-Francis (1995, p. 113) in writing of the ways in which the body processes the discursive knowings of the texts through which we live. Neilson also writes of the ways in which we must acknowledge the gut responses, the intuitive leaps, the churning stomach of fear and anticipation which lie behind the ideas and experiments and risks and tasks of the research process. She writes too, of needing to allow the imagination to fly, of needing to create gaps and spaces so we can see our world and our experiences anew. "Re - imagining inquiry is re - imagining ways to work with people and ideas which keep us, like the painter, the dancer, and the performance artist, watchfully poised, momentarily still, and yet fluidly in motion", (Neilson, 1998, p. 263). Such notions are not the exclusive province of poststructuralist thinkers. An earlier call to discovery through collective feminist knowledge making which captured my imagination with its suggestion of connections between the body, knowledge and imagination was Adrienne Rich's pre-post-structuralist, radical feminist call to women, in 1977, to "think through the body, to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her own body". Her goal was transformation of the very processes of thinking: "in such a world women will truly create new life, bringing forth not only children (if and as we choose) but the visions, and the thinking, necessary to sustain, console, and alter human existence - a new relationship to the universe. Sexuality, politics, intelligence, power, motherhood, work, community, intimacy will develop new meanings: thinking itself will be transformed". This, she argued, is "where we have to begin", (Rich, 1992, pp. 284 - 286).

I think that these insights are very useful when working out ways to proceed with changing the paradigm of governance, because it seems clear that what the economic rationalist framework focuses on is solely the rationalist, disembodied aspect of knowing. Imagination and intuition, long understood as being part of our bodily experience of life, have to be engaged if we are going to envisage, envision, a future where the paradigm shifts from one led by a dominant masculinist culture to one where difference is acknowledged. And I think we now have to become actively involved in teaching our children, our students, our politicians, our communities, to use their imaginations and their powers of envisioning.

Such insights are familiar in many branches of feminist scholarship. Drusilla Modjeska (1990), in searching for ways to write about her mother's life, transcends the binary opposition between the rational and the non-rational, fact and fiction, hard evidence and soft, by consciously drawing on history, memory and imagination to create an account which becomes a fictionalised biography. Fran Crawford's (1994) research into the training of social workers argues for the development of a 'sociological imagination' which allows students to move from an understanding of the world as it actually is, 'to a locally persuasive vision of how it ought to be' (using social justice, human dignity and equality as frames). She calls this 'working in a home made manner'. Bronwyn Davies (1996), in writing of ways in which we can teach children to disrupt the dominant discourse, similarly argues that children need to be able to see the constitutive force both of what is and of what might be. Feminist stories, she tells us, tell what might be. She warns, though, that the struggle to change [anything] can't be left solely in the hands of writers. The openings up implicit in imagining what might be must occur in language, in individual psyches and in the material and symbolic structures in which we are all embedded. The question of how people introduce a different framework and suite of understandings into the workplace and the political forum with credibility; that is, how they speak these dreams into a hostile world, is the subject of my own current research.

## Shifting the Paradigm: Living as If.... So What Sort of Community Can We Aspire To?

I turn now to a lengthy discussion of a children's theatre performance to illustrate one version of the sort of community we could aspire to. I claim this as a product of the counter culture and the discourses of hope to which many activists interested in feminism, social justice and social change have subscribed over the last few decades.

### *The Island Play*

*In 1997 I spent the entire month of July on Magnetic Island, off the coast of North Queensland. One of the high points of my time on the Island was watching a play which about 20 young Island kids aged from about 4 to 12 years old, put on one evening for a group of interested parents and hangers-on. They'd formed a little theatre company called La Luna, which was facilitated by 3 or 4 adults as an after school out of hours group, and the kids themselves had devised the play.*

*Try to imagine the setting, if you will. It's a warmish windy evening, 6 o'clock. Dusk. We're outside. The performance happens on a cleared, gravel space which is normally a turning circle for cars at the entrance to the Arcadia jetty. It's almost a natural amphitheatre: there's sea on one side, and a steep headland with huge granite boulders, and scattered vegetation almost encircles the rest. When I arrive, about 15 minutes before the play begins, it looks like an Australian version of one of those lovely illustrations that Shirley Hughes does in kids' picture books: there's a jumble of people, cushions, rugs, pillows, picnic baskets, eskies. The rock wallabies which normally congregate here to be fed each evening, have been frightened off by the noise and movement of the crowd, but there's still a possum scampering over the rocks under the jetty. There's a lovely buzz in the air. Tim Winton might call it roisterous. There are rows and rows of kids sometimes sitting, more often squirming, facing a cleared semicircle at ground level which is the stage. Behind the kids, adults sit in chairs they've brought, or stand around chatting in small groups. In spite of the obvious informality here, in spite of the perennial props of land, sea, wind, and people apparently just getting high on the pleasure of being together for a special event, (something which could indeed have come from a Tim Winton novel or a Shirley Hughes illustration nostalgically evoking the uncomplicated 1950s), it's quickly apparent that this is going to be a late twentieth century multi-media event. Behind the stage area, facing the audience, are two huge screens, mounted into scaffolding that provides an elevated stage above each screen. So we have not one stage but three. And behind the audience is a van housing the portable audio visual gear that's going to be used tonight. A generator to work the lights, sound and visuals has been placed discreetly to the side of the space, close to the hillside. Fortunately the wind drowns out most of its noise.*

*The play begins. It's called "What would you Fight for?" It has been promoted as being devised and performed by a non-sexist, non-racist peace-loving theatre troupe. Twenty straggly little kids march on, to the beat of a single drummer. The kids are pretending to be local citizens signing up to be soldiers in World War II. After a brief dialogue to establish time, place, theme and thread, they trail off centre backstage, through a gap in the boulders. The fading single drum beat swells to a much fuller sound as the twin screens light up with scenes of the Island's forts. Everyone knows that the forts, perched on one of the Island's highest rocky outcrops, are now a tourist attraction. The couple beside me, visitors from Down South, whisper amusedly to me that just today they climbed to the forts. An authoritative male voice-over is telling us some of the history of the forts, and of the Island community's engagement with the events of World War II. We're getting oriented. This is going to be a play about allegiances, about hopes, about desires, about change, about needs, about longings, about world movements and events, about the small patterns of daily life. From the outset there's a lovely foregrounding of theatre as theatre, and a sophisticated intertwining of texts, narrative modes, and performance media. It's immediately apparent that this is a multimedia event, using pre-filmed video interviews of local personalities, pre-filmed acting of certain scenes, and a pre-recorded soundtrack with some great music and spectacularly surprising sound effects, all as accompaniment to the acting which occurs both on the dusty ground and on the elevated stages above the big screens.*

*The reason I'm going into some detail here is that I want to give you the impression that this was not a performance by some out-of-touch unsophisticated country bumpkins. These kids, young as they were, knew what they were doing, theatrically and politically.*

*In one engaging sequence, the sound of a rapidly approaching WWII airforce bomber accompanies the screening of twin versions of, simply, clear blue sky. Instinctively we crane to catch a glimpse of the aircraft, our ears tell us MUST be there, somewhere, on the screen: but instead, my attention is caught by some movement above the screen, and there, dangling from a stick held by one of the kids standing on the stage above the left hand screen, a tiny toy plane woven out of cane does a gentle swoop across the top of the screen and is gone. The crowd laughs at its own deception. Again we hear the noise of the approaching plane: this time, anticipating the return of the toy plane, I look above the screen, only to be distracted by a great commotion on ground level, left stage. A huge replica plane, woven in the same cane but 50 times the size of its toy on high, with 6 kids inside it for support, trundles onto the stage. Layer upon layer of meaning suggests itself. Boundaries blur as our focus shifts from what we think we know to what is momentarily there, and further, perhaps, to what is possible. Over the next hour or more the play unravels: in a series of vignettes on screens and stages, through oral history interviews, filmed re-enactments and imaginative performance, we glimpse the values of the 40s. (What are we fighting for? Family, freedom, country); and the social and ideological changes which accompany the currents in local, national and international life in the four decades since then. Woven into this recounting of our histories is an innocent critique of racism, environmental destruction, greed, war, violence and sexism, and an equally innocent welcoming of difference. Underlying it all is the message that we have to replace fear with trust. If we do that then we create a place where kids have the freedoms to live safe, independent, healthy lives, a place where kids can be heard and can listen to each other, a place where kids and nature can thrive in harmony, a place where money is a facilitator, a bartering tool, not a god. And this place, the play tells us, exists: it's right here, on the Island. The Island. Is-land. Being. Life.*

*The crowd claps and cheers, and then disperses good naturedly. I am moved, as I wander home alone, safely, in the dark, across the beach and up the bush road to my Island house. I am moved to think that surely this is what it's all about, knowing trust across difference? Anticipating goodness? Generosity? I am moved because I know that this community is in the Deep North, home of rednecks, home of One Nation supporters, and yet these kids have taken the legacies of the counter culture to enact what they think they are living: a lifestyle free from fear, a lifestyle where hearts are open and generous, where doors stay unlocked at nights, where how you act is more significant than what you own. In the aftermath of the evening these thoughts seem legitimate. Now, a couple of months later, from my home in Subiaco, I wonder at the lack of cynicism in my heart and head then. Is such a performance merely window dressing to the real events of a troubled world? Does such an enactment gloss, simplify and silence the pain and torment which also surely underpins every community, every society? Is this whole performance merely self indulgent nostalgia for the idealism of a hippy past? I leave these questions hanging.*

Do we have a choice in all this? For myself, I have to end up plumping for vision, for imagination, for the kind of globalisation which allows us to understand the detail and the impulse to life, to light, to vision in each others' lives, not simply the Dow Jones Index abstractions about economics. The irony, of course, is that viewed in certain lights, economics itself is an absurd feat of the imagination. It's a great game of Monopoly that capitalists are playing right around the world. It is purely based in abstraction, and yet has the capacity to drastically and finally affect the embodied experience of every person on the planet.

Economic rationalism is not an inevitability. It is merely an abstraction, an economic framework, and we can change it if we want to. One way to do this is to change the dominant paradigm underlying governance. Our interventions can be local, feral,

intermittent, and unremitting. One move has to be to capture the imagination of the Australian people so they understand how trapped we've become in this economic rationalist discourse. Another move has to be to name what's happening as loss, as spiritual and emotional poverty. Another move has to be to keep talking, writing, thinking, acting, *as if* we lived in the world we'd like to create, promoting our visions for a just and sustainable future in every possible forum. It's not enough to be in resistance, for as we know, this simply keeps the dominant paradigm alive. We have also to be enacting the kinds of relationships, interactions and processes which we hope will characterise our future.

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## Relationships in the Healing Century

Marilyn Palmer

Edith Cowan University, Western Australia.

### Abstract

In 1998 Robert Theobald conducted a series of lectures on ABC Radio National called *The Healing Century*. Drawing on the writer's recent research on radical ecological social work practice and Theobald's interpretation of the emerging issues for the new millennium, this paper begins with a discussion on 'new paradigm' thinking. The paper goes on to suggest a way of using Carol Gilligan's work on gender and relationships to improve our own understanding of relationships in community. An example of how this understanding might be used in communities to respond to the issue of domestic violence is briefly explored.

*Karen (police prosecutor): Kevin's Lucy has been arrested - robbery and assault. It's tomorrow so I thought I'd better warn you.*

*Laura (magistrate): I don't know if I should sit on this one.*

*Karen: The defence have said they're fine about it. Besides I think Kevin needs us.*

*Laura: He needs us to sit in judgement on his partner?*

*Karen: Yeah, yeah he does. It would be awful for some strangers to do it.*

This piece of dialogue comes from an episode of *SeaChange*, an Australian television series about a small coastal town called Pearl Bay. The central character is Laura, a successful city lawyer and mother of two, who has recently become Pearl Bay's magistrate. In this exchange, Karen has come to remind Laura of her community (or relationship based) obligation to Kevin who lives in the town. Like a number of similar television series, *Blue Heelers*, *Hamish McBeth*, *Heartbeat*, *SeaChange* (amongst other things), explores the interaction between the legal system and what I'll call the community; that set of relationships in the town, forever 'in progress'.

These television programs often represent to us Tonnies (1955), *Gemeinschaft* notion of community, with its face to face connectedness and sense of belonging. But there is something inevitable about conflict in communities, even small, supposedly homogenous communities. While the focus of the television drama is the resolution to the conflict, (usually with a twist and a turn and a love interest thrown in), the focus of this paper is a more detailed analysis of the complex ways in which community difference and conflict is named and understood. In particular, this paper will explore relationships in communities and how we might understand and conduct those relationships into the new century - what Robert Theobald calls 'the Healing Century'.

This paper will begin with a discussion of how I came to be interested in relationships in communities with an introduction to some of the ideas of Robert Theobald. After a digression to explore the notion of 'new paradigm thinking', this paper presents a way of looking at relationships in communities, based on the work of Carol Gilligan (1982). At the end of the paper there is a suggestion about how this thinking might be applied in communities grappling with the problem of domestic violence as we head into the 'Healing Century'.

My academic interest in relationships in communities was sparked when I was writing a thesis on radical ecology and its influence on social work. Radical ecology is a broad term used to describe a social movement, political ideology and/or philosophy which seeks to re/create and validate the relationship between the human and natural world. Carolyn Merchant (1992) used the term for her book by that name, to encompass various ecophilosophies and socio-political movements such as deep ecology, green politics, and ecofeminism.

Radical ecology is essentially about the relationships between different species (human, other animal and plant) in their various ecosystems. Social work is also about relationships, usually between people (as individuals or as members of gender, class, ethnic or other groupings) in their various social ecosystems.

My research methodology was called co-operative inquiry, a form of so called 'new paradigm' research (Reason, 1988), which involved 15 people coming together over about nine months to talk about what they thought radical ecological social work practice might look like. In this group we focussed particularly on domestic violence, that is, what would we do about domestic violence if we based our practice on radical ecological principles.

Through this research process we began talking about relationships in the context of community. We said that if social work practice was based on radical ecology and we wanted to do something about domestic violence then our focus would be on the community; not just on the individual or the couple or the law but rather on this thing called 'community.' Now we agreed that community means different things to different people. We struggled to define it, to get hold of it but we agreed that whatever it was, it was very, very important.

So, that is some of my background in relation to this topic. Another part of the background is about Robert Theobald, a British citizen who lives in the United States and who is described as an economist, a writer and a futurist. As well as his recent *Healing Century* radio series, Theobald has also written a number of books on contemporary society and the direction in which he believes, we are heading. Theobald has toured Australia a number of times in recent years to run workshops on community development.

Like a number of other writers - Robyn Eckersley (1992), Jeremy Rifkin (1985) and Fritof Capra (1982), Theobald (1998) challenges many of the ideas that drive the modern, global, capitalist society. He strongly critiques the idea of indefinite economic growth, which underpins our current notions of capitalism, globalisation and the commodification of all things, including people and ecosystems. Like these other writers, he believes that the world is in crisis; an economic, environmental, social, and spiritual crisis. According to Theobald, it is imperative that we change the way we think and act in our world, both with other people and with non-human species, if the planet and the civilisation we know is to have any chance of survival. He says:

*Fortunately, the Chinese have taught us that crises bring both danger and opportunity. Danger predominates when we ignore changing realities as our dominant mass communication systems are doing today. Opportunity emerges when we commit to breaking the psychic trance that numbs us at the current time. I hope ... to support the mindquakes we need if we are to understand the radically different world which is already emerging around us (1998, p. 1).*

Although he doesn't use the term 'new paradigm' or 'paradigm shift' in his lecture series, this is essentially what Theobald is talking about, and I want to digress briefly here to explain what I understand by the term 'new paradigm'. According to Lincoln (1989), the notion of paradigm has largely been accredited to the work of Thomas Kuhn (1970). Kuhn described a model of change for the scientific disciplines that begins with a period of 'normal science' where there is general agreement amongst scientists about how things 'scientific' will be done. It was Kuhn's view that as anomalies arise which challenge the commonly held view within an area of study, new constructs are developed (by those who seek to incorporate the anomalies rather than to discard them because they do not fit), and so over time a new paradigm or worldview emerges.

According to Lincoln (1989), the notion of a contemporary 'new paradigm' gained credence in the early 1980s following the work of Schwartz and Ogilvy, who undertook a content analysis of the academic literature across a range of disciplines to see what trends were emerging. They did this in order to predict for their sponsors the kinds of products and services that would be in demand into the next century. Their findings were surprising. Schwartz and Ogilvy found that rather than there being evidence of a steady development of the dominant world view which sees the world as simple, hierarchical, mechanical, determinate and full of objective 'truths', there was a shift in the disciplines to a new set of values or a 'new paradigm'. This new paradigm reflected a view of the world as complex, organic, holographic, chaotic, indeterminate and full of subjective constructions of the world. Schwartz and Ogilvy (cited in Lincoln, 1989), suggested that this 'paradigm shift' was "akin in kind, diversity, and magnitude to the emergence of the Enlightenment in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries" (p. 73).

This 'paradigm shift' can be seen (if one is using a 'paradigm shift' lens to view the world), in a whole range of contemporary processes and phenomena. Lincoln's description of new paradigm thinking is consistent with some interpretations of post modernism/post-structuralism. It also makes sense in light of the critique of scientific positivism as the only valid way of building knowledge; the critiques of rationalism and moves away from hierarchical thinking and structures to more participative, holistic ways of working in families, schools and community organisations.

Now of course this view of the world; one heading in the direction of the so-called 'new paradigm' where collaboration and participation is valued and eagerly sought, is at odds with what some of us might see as a strengthening of the 'dominant paradigm'. This would be evidenced by the obsession in industry, organisations and government with rationalism, technology, hierarchy and managerialism, aspects of what Saul (cited in Lambkin, 1998, p. 6) refers to as the 'dictatorship of reason'. Most of our institutions have become more rigid and hierarchical in recent times, not less. How do we explain this contradiction? Capra (1982) and Theobald (1998) suggest two explanations, although I'm sure there are many more.

For Capra (1982), the current obsession with 'old paradigm' ways is simply a sign of the death throes of the dying culture. Theobald's (1998) explanation, on the other hand, is that 'new paradigm' thinking, which we see in the renewal of interest in things such as consensus politics, restorative justice, mediation and community participation, is a seismic or sub-surface shift. This will eventually erupt onto the surface and create major changes, even though the dramatic seismic or sub-surface changes that are happening at the moment are not all that visible.

Another aspect of 'new paradigm' thinking and part of Theobald's thesis on what needs to happen in the 'Healing Century', is a re-evaluation of the significance of spirituality and relationships in our lives. He says:

*I am aware that the word spirituality is still booby-trapped for many people. The essential point I want to make is that our current emphasis on what can be measured and owned is disguising what we all really want and need from life. I believe that we are hungry for authentic relationships with other individuals and with the natural world.*

(<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/events/rtrtrans1.htm>. 4/13/98. p. 5)

Like Carpra (1982) and Ferguson (1982) and the other writers who talk about an emerging new paradigm, Theobald also talks about the value of community, connectedness, inclusion, and dialogue, acknowledging the need for dialogue and conversations to be happening within families, neighbourhoods and workplaces. M. Scott Peck (1987) in his book *The Different Drum* had similar ideas about spirituality, relationships and community. Heavily influenced by his Christian beliefs, Scott Peck boldly argued that if people could experience true community, a genuine connection through their relationships with other people irrespective of difference, then world peace was possible.

In summary, if we acknowledge that a new, healing way of looking at the world is both essential and possible, then we need to re-focus on community and our relationships within our communities. However, while this sounds easy enough, clearly it isn't or we would have done it by now. If we are going to do something about the social, environmental, economic and spiritual crises confronting us as we head into the new millennium, then we can't assume it is going to be plain sailing. Complexity and contradictions abound in communities. For Peck (1987, p. 319) genuine community "is a safe place where appropriate conflict is actually welcomed and faced rather than dreaded and avoided. It is a group that has learned how to fight gracefully". Labonte (1993, p. 6), acknowledging the role of conflict and process as inherent aspects of community, notes that the "convivial community is eternally imminent, rather than experienced in fact. It is a process of striving for consensus, while accepting the reality of conflict".

However for many, community is not about difference and conflict. It is about a set of explicit 'shared' values with all sorts of social control mechanisms in place for those who deviate from those values. This isn't the kind of community that I'm talking about. Feminist writers have warned us about communitarianism, the conservative revival in the United States of an 'apple pie' idea of community. Communitarianism assumes an easy path to reconciliation, a set of shared values easily arrived at without difference or tension. But this kind of community inevitably excludes difference, and reinforces traditional patriarchal values which do not necessarily serve the interests of women (Mellor, 1992).

For me, a useful way of understanding and working with these contradictions and tensions in relationships in communities, is offered by the work of Carol Gilligan (1982a), who critiqued Lawrence Kohlberg's work on moral development. Many people are familiar with Kohlberg's research where he gave children a series of moral dilemmas and asked them to talk about how they would respond. Probably the most famous of Kohlberg's dilemmas is the story of Heinz - a poor man whose wife is dying from a disease which can be cured by a drug, but the drug is expensive and the druggist won't lower the price. Children are given a description of Heinz's dilemma and then asked, should Heinz steal the drug? As a result of his studies, Kohlberg suggested that there was a superior level of

moral development where universal principles could be arrived at to determine right from wrong and so govern behaviour.

However, Gilligan revisited Kohlberg's work and critiqued it by arguing that Kohlberg had based his original theory construction on the study of boys. Thus, he had ignored the possibility of gender differences in how people resolve moral dilemmas (Gilligan, 1982a). For example, in the accounts of her work where she revisits Kohlberg's 'findings', Gilligan (1982a, 1982b) describes in detail the responses of Jake and Amy, two 11 year old children. Jake is clear that Heinz should steal the drug because using his logic based on rules and justice, a life is worth more than property so it is right for Heinz to steal. Amy by contrast is much less definite. She doesn't make the logical distinction between property and law but is much more interested in why the druggist won't lower the price and what would be the effect of Heinz stealing. He would lose all chance of negotiation with the chemist. He might go to gaol and who would take care of his wife? To quote Gilligan:

*Seeing in the dilemma not a math problem with humans, but a narrative of relationships that extends over time, she envisions the wife's continuing need for her husband and the husband's continuing concern for his wife and seeks to respond to the druggist's need in a way that would sustain rather than sever connection (1982b, p. 204).*

Gilligan also saw these gender differences in her analysis of children's play. She observed that girls tend to play co-operatively in small intimate groups. When there is a conflict, the girls often end the game and go on to do something else. Boys on the other hand, tend to play competitively in larger groups where they have "elaborate systems of rules to adjudicate the conflicts that frequently erupt" (Davis, 1985, p. 108). Gilligan's conclusion was that girls tend to sacrifice the game to maintain relationships while boys tend to sacrifice relationships and have rules in place to keep the game going.

Using Kohlberg's hierarchy of levels of moral reasoning, Gilligan found that girls would often be deemed to have an inadequate level of development, one where relationships and connectedness, not rules, stayed paramount. In her work, Gilligan was at pains to avoid suggesting that this focus on connectedness and relationships was an essential part of women's nature.

*The different voice I describe is characterized not by gender but theme. Its association with women is an empirical observation, and it is primarily through women's voices that I trace its development. But this association is not absolute, and the contrasts between male and female voices are presented here to highlight a distinction between two modes of thought and to focus a problem of interpretation rather than to represent a generalization about either sex (Gilligan, 1982a, p. 2).*

Some subsequent studies have disputed the idea of sex differences as a factor in moral reasoning while others have confirmed "Gilligan's hypothesis to some degree: females do focus on interpersonal issues more than on moral absolutes" (Berger, 1994, p. 401). Either way, it doesn't really matter. Gilligan's project seems mainly to have been about representing a 'different voice' in the theory construction around moral reasoning and this she achieved.

In her writing, Gilligan didn't try to assume a superiority of one kind of morality or behaviour over another. She simply acknowledged them as different and it is this understanding of a difference which sets up for us the contradictions of community life: the both/and rather than the either/or of hierarchy and web, rights and responsibilities, individuality and connectedness, rules and relationships.

According to Ingamells (1993), Gilligan used her reframing of Kohlberg's findings to create a distinction between an individual-society framework (developed from an ethic of justice) and a community-society framework (developed from an ethic of care) which Ingamells refers to as a 'connected community'.

*Gilligan's work alerted me to the contradictions in trying to build connectedness or community using a justice rather than a connected perspective. The justice perspective is more appropriate to the individual/society framework (which sees society as autonomous individuals connected by contracts, obligations and roles) than to a community framework (Ingamells, 1993, p. 79).*

If we accept that there is an inherent contradiction in how we understand community, that community is both consensual and conflictual, that both rules and relationships are important, how does this help us to create the healing environment for the next century, which Theobald asserts that we must? As a social work academic, working in a university where research and publication is revered, I am interested in Theobald's 'call to action'. In his first lecture in the *Healing Century* series, Theobald said:

*In this ... century, we have moved from a world in which access to information was still severely limited to one in which we are all drowning in infoglut. And yet we act as though it is desirable to publish still more words which few people read and even fewer absorb. .... The question for the twenty-first century is access to the needed knowledge and wisdom - not the generation of more words and concepts. People need to be able to find the information they need to make sense of their own context and realities. The challenge is not to find a master theory but rather to enable people to develop the skills which enable them to make sense of their own lives at the individual, family, neighborhood, community, bio-regional and global level. (<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/events/rttrans1.htm>. 4/13/98. p. 3)*

(The contradiction of my supporting Theobald's critique of the written word by writing yet more words has not been lost on me, but still I proceed!)

So what are these skills to which Theobald refers? Firstly, we need to improve our ability to reconnect with one another through a process of dialogue where diversity can be respected and differences acknowledged rather than glossed over. Ife (1997, (pp. 105-7) describes this as a process whereby one is open to hearing the 'discourse of difference' while simultaneously listening for and working with a 'discourse of unity'. Here, dialogue is more than just listening and talking. It presupposes a level of mutuality, respect, communication and connection, which is often not present in relationships between individuals and groups. It becomes a process of exploring difference rather than sameness through a genuine attempt to understand people's subjective experiences and realities.

*Every solution to any problem that involves more than one person has to have a lackey band that stretches and there has to be an opportunity for each person to sort of pull and hang onto their bit of that lackey band and be counted (Alice in Palmer, 1997, p. 98).*

Secondly, we need to re-vision our notion of community as a site of mutual aid and support but without the rigid structures of social control and exclusion often associated with the traditional homogenous community. For example, Schmidt (1995) describes a neighbourhood non-violence study group in Canada, which decided:

*To continue inquiry into the daily content of their lives, particularly hoping to move further from isolating and cynical patterns into life-affirming and community-linking contexts based on simple gestures of weekly pot-luck suppers and friendship. Nonviolence there has been practised by aiding those who were freeing themselves from abusive relationships, celebrating and sharing diversity, and supporting neighbours in work, at home and in the community (p. 118).*

At the same time as we build these neighbourhoods and friendship networks (through book clubs, babysitting cooperatives and the like), we need to ensure that we do not collude with libertarian governments who advocate personal responsibility at the expense of the collective social responsibility to build and maintain the social capital of the civil society (Cox, 1995).

How realistic is it to think that these skills might help us to create a healing environment into the next century? It is impossible to tell. However, in the inquiry group I mentioned at the beginning of this paper, we did some preliminary work with these ideas. We suggested for example, that if we wanted to respond to the problem of domestic violence in our community then we would need to find ways to protect the victims of the violence without marginalising the perpetrator.

James (1995, p. 3) has critiqued the role of the law in cases of domestic violence, suggesting that there are limitations on the ability of "rights based liberalism to effect a significant reduction in the extent of domestic violence by the application of law". In the inquiry group it was acknowledged that a response which relies too heavily on the criminal justice system as a response to domestic violence may be unhelpful. James (1995, p. 51) cites Busch and Robertson to make this link between the violence perpetrated by men against their female partners and the violence perpetrated by the state against offenders, suggesting that such an approach may increase incidences of violence because "[p]ower and control tactics operating on a systemic level legitimise abusers' perspectives of violence". Here indeed is a contradiction. Clearly the legal power of the state is an essential tool to protect people, most often women and children from domestic violence. However, the use of this power may well reinforce the pattern of domination and control that it is designed to prevent.

In the inquiry group we looked at the community as a site of mutual aid for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. So far this has been an area largely outside the gaze of academics, researchers and practitioners interested in preventing and intervening in domestic violence.

*Nor is it solely the responses of agencies within communities that express regard and affect women's dignity and safety but also those of individuals – within women's kinship and friendship networks, their neighborhoods and workplaces. This aspect of community is seldom addressed in domestic violence initiatives, yet in the long run it may prove to be a key resource not only in establishing safety for women and children, but also in beginning to decrease the prevalence of domestic violence (Kelly, 1996, p. 67).*

In the inquiry group we suggested that as friends and neighbours, we become aware of what is happening around us and be willing to intervene where we suspect violence. One woman in the inquiry group told of how she went to her neighbours and told them of her husband's violence, asking them to take her in if she ever approached them. The reaction was mixed. Some had felt uneasy about this request and when the couple finally separated had felt the need to 'take sides'. This had not been helpful. What was helpful was friends of the couple being willing to stay connected to the violent partner after the separation in order to prevent him sinking into the loneliness, isolation and despair most likely to trigger severe violence against himself or others. Such a response however requires an enormous faith in the ability of the community networks to simultaneously provide protection to the victim and support to the perpetrator.

This approach of course leads us to a paradox. If women are more willing (and possibly more skilled) at embedding themselves in the mire of community relationships, how does this 'community' respond to assist victims and perpetrators of domestic violence without the bulk of the work falling to the women victims and their (most often female) supporters? How can men be encouraged to take on some of this hard work at the messy community level? Some elements of the 'men's movement' (particularly that 'strand' which is pro-feminist and anti-sexist), are clearly working on this issue. Unlike the men's liberation, spiritual/mythopoetic and fathers' rights 'strands' of the men's movement (Michael Flood, personal communication, 27 November 1998), anti-sexist men see beyond the gender divide and are working on a healthy construction of 'humanity' (as inclusive, co-operative and non-violent) rather than a construction of essential 'masculinity.'

Thirdly and finally, we need to relish in the contradiction and paradox that is all around us. Paradox has had bad press. Nobody wants to cope with the enduring circularity and contradiction of the both/and when our culture encourages us to think in terms of either/or. It is a part of the hegemony of rationality (Lambkin, 1998) that we assume that contradiction, like conflict, is bad and something to be avoided. However, if we can find some kind of frame for dealing with the paradoxes of community life, something that allows us to keep working with all the contradiction and absurdity, then it isn't so bad. There is a freedom that comes with a 'both/and' perspective that we are denied when we restrict ourselves to the 'either/or' view of the world.

The notion that the world is in crisis and that this crisis is multi dimensional and linked to our destruction of the physical environment in which we live, is not a particularly new or original idea. The call to a more socially just, inclusive and anti-oppressive culture is also not new. These ideas are part of the human spirit and have been present in many cultures in many forms all along. Many of these ideas and values underpin mainstream religions and they formed the basis of the nuclear disarmament, peace and non-violence movements in the 1970s.

This paper has attempted to draw together some of the theoretical notions of new paradigm thinking that underpin Theobald's call for a 'Healing Century'. Carol Gilligan's framework



for understanding and valuing 'women's ways' of working with the tensions, contradictions and 'messiness' of family and community relationships has also been explored. The suggestions about ways forward to a 'Healing Century' are of course, contradictorily, both tentative and definite, underdeveloped and prescriptive, revelational and obvious. Writing this paper when I should be at home engaging in the 'call to action' is also a contradiction but one for the time being that I am happy to live with.

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