

2001

Women in leadership commemorative issue: selected conference papers 1998-2000

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COMMEMORATIVE
ISSUE
SELECTED CONFERENCE
PAPERS

1998-2000

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

- 1998 Women as Leaders: A Global Challenge
1999 Looking at our Future : Listening to the Past
2000 Keeping Gender on the Agenda



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**Editors: Adrienne Kinnear
 Lelia Green**

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PREFACE

On behalf of Edith Cowan University it is a pleasure to introduce this commemorative issue of papers presented at the 1998 – 2000 Women in Leadership (WIL) Conferences.

This year, 2001, is the tenth year of our highly acclaimed WIL conferences so it is timely to produce such a volume to celebrate our achievements in putting into the public domain a better understanding of the complex interplay between gender, structure, culture and strategy in organisational settings. At worst there is discriminatory practice, at best improvement and enterprise. The volume contains 41 papers which have been blind reviewed by peers to determine their suitability for inclusion. As such the set of papers represents a significant contribution in theory and in practice to the emerging areas of gender, leadership, diversity and organisational development.

ECU may be a young University but it has a long tradition of support for women and the provision of opportunities for their further education and training. From our first year in 1902 women were enrolled in teacher education programs. I am proud that my own grandmother is a graduate from the class of 1907. Edith Cowan was a pioneering West Australian who, as an older person, was the first woman elected to an Australian parliament. During her time in office she advocated for legislation which was enacted that allowed women to work in professions such as law. I am sure she would not have been surprised that ECU has had an active agenda for Women in Leadership or that currently we have a female Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professors Poole and Harman.

This volume would not have been possible without the efforts of a number of women, in particular Dr Lelia Green and Associate Professor Adrienne Kinnear. Both of them have worked tirelessly and with utmost professionalism to bring this project to fruition. It is appropriate to also acknowledge here the valuable work of Ms Linley Lord who was formerly the Director of Equity and Diversity at ECU. During her time in this role she was the very active public face of WIL and convenor of successful successive conferences.

I invite you to read these interesting and provocative papers. I hope you will find the time to debate them with others, learn from the shared experiences and apply the insights to your own practice. It is by reflecting on the stories underlying the papers as well as on your own life histories that more women will be in a position to model forms of leadership that can empower all of us.

Professor Susan Holland

Pro Vice-Chancellor

(Cross Sectoral Alliances and Access)

31 October, 2001

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2020 VISION OR Y3K?⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

The mythology of the female principalship in secondary schools.

Kathryn Brennan

NSW Department of Education and Training

In 1989, because of a gross imbalance evident towards males at the secondary principal level (93.4%), the NSW Department of School Education implemented an Equal Employment Opportunity strategy 'to remedy the effect of past discrimination'. This prompted a research study by Brennan (1993), to redress an apparent gap in literature, conceptualising leadership in androgynous rather than androcentric terms. This study described and interpreted the educational leadership style, qualities and experiences of four female secondary school principals. What unfolded was a life and career struggle, a search for empowerment. Seven years hence, an update of this study concludes that the reality of women's experiences does not reflect 'equity' legislative and policy rhetoric, nor the predicted futures for women in the nineties. This paper exposes the mythology of the principalship, serving as a 'wake up call', urging increased understanding, vigilance and renewed activism in pursuit of leadership equality for women in education.

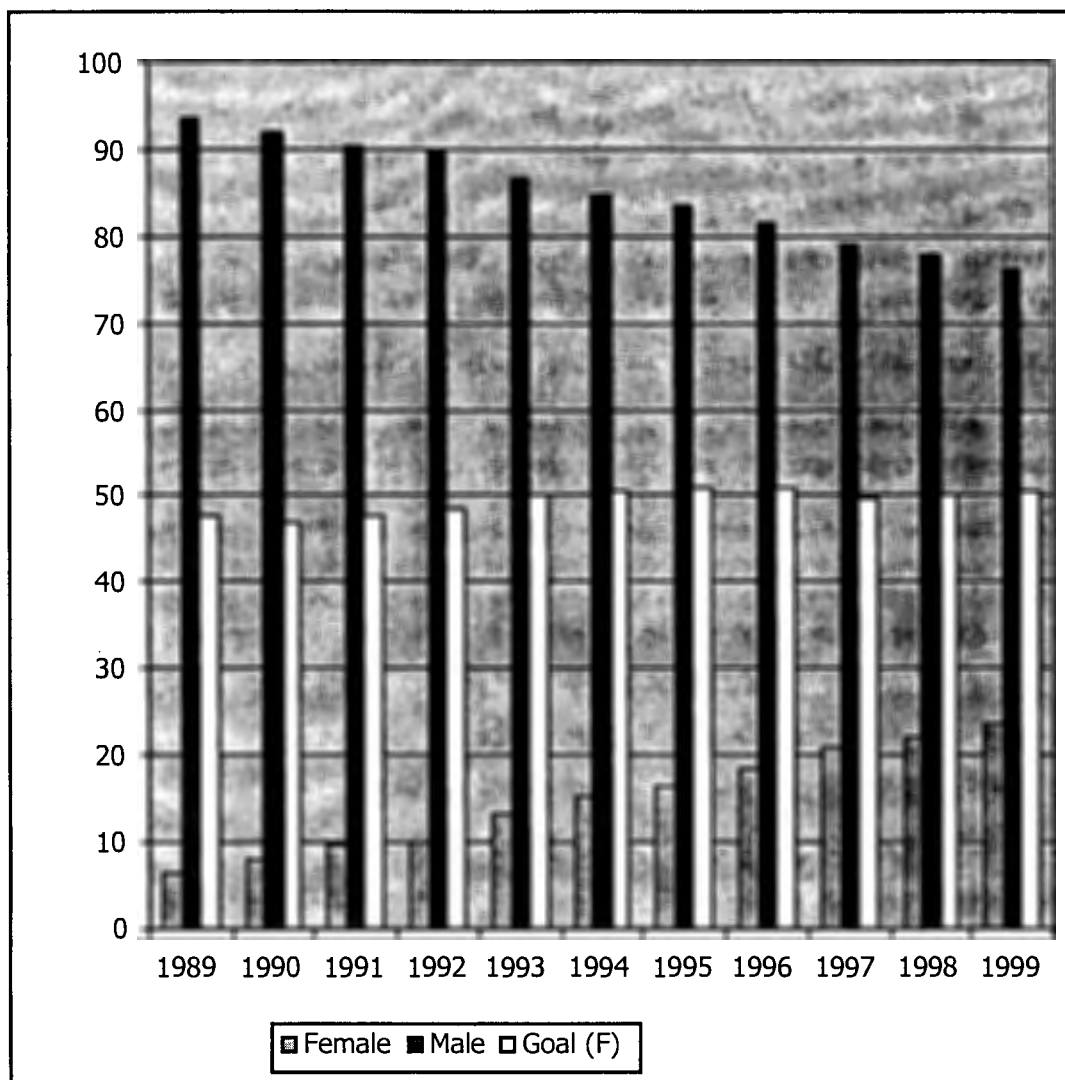
Introduction

The current New South Wales (NSW) Department of Education and Training 12th *EEO Annual Report (1999)* indicates that 23.5% of secondary school principal positions are held by women, while they represent 50.8% of the secondary teaching service staff. This statistic falls far short of the Department's broad objective – "to achieve representation of women and men in promotions positions which is comparable to their representation in the Department of School Education [DSE] as a whole" (NSW DSE, 1991, p.6). This Equal Employment Opportunity [*EEO*] objective was designed "to remedy the effect of past discrimination" (NSW DSE, 1991, p.6). In 2000 the *EEO* rhetoric still underpins DET Performance Indicators such as "progress towards the distribution of each *EEO* group across salary levels is the same as that of all employees" (NSW DET, 2000, p.43). It is notable that half a century earlier (1949), when women had become a 'reserve' army of labour due to the enlistment of men in the armed forces during World War II, they held 20.9% of secondary school principal positions.

In the global context, Aburdene and Naisbitt (1990) in their book *Megatrends 2000* heralded the 1990's as "the decade of women in leadership", Caldwell (1990) translating this into the field of education, and predicting that "women will claim their place among the ranks of leaders in education, including those at the most senior level"(p.1). These were bold predictions at a time when the *EEO Annual Report* (NSW DSE, 1990) indicated an imbalance towards men at all levels, with gross discrepancies evident at secondary principal level. In 1989, only 6.6% of secondary school principal positions were held by women, while women represented 47.8% of the secondary teaching service staff (NSW DSE 1st *EEO Annual Report*, 1990).

Based on these statistics, how many years should it take for women to achieve an equality of representation at secondary school principal level in NSW? A projection based on the trend data of the last decade (Figure 1) indicates a '2020 vision', but a similar projection based on figures of the last half century heralds 'Y3K' !

Figure 1: % Secondary principals by gender 1989-1999



(source: NSW Department of School Education, *EEO Annual Reports Nos 1-12*)

If we cast our minds back over 5,000 years of recorded history, how many examples can be found of a patriarchal society willingly and peacefully handing over power to a subordinate group? Have women in educational leadership discovered the ‘glass ceiling’, with appointments to secondary principal positions beginning to plateau? Is this a cyclic phenomenon, with the ongoing male dominance of the education hierarchy, ensuring that the ‘critical mass’ of women remains below 25%, a level that raises the expectation of influence, but not the reality of genuinely effecting change within an organisation? Could it be that women principals, being forced to enact their leadership role within the constraints of a masculine construct, are becoming victims of role fatigue as they navigate a highly gendered ‘eduscape’? Does the ever present mantra, ‘if you can’t take the heat get back to the kitchen’ prey upon women whose lives, on a daily basis, reflect a ‘professional’ (public domain) and ‘personal’ (private domain) life dichotomy?

This paper addresses issues that arise out of these questions, exposing the mythology of the female principalship in secondary schools. It draws upon grounded theory qualitative research which describes and interprets the educational leadership style, qualities and experiences of four female secondary school principals (Brennan, 1993), *Principal Journals* (Brennan, 1999) and quantitative

data and current literature, to establish if the reality of the female experience in the nineties, reflects 'equity' legislative and policy rhetoric, and predicted futures.

Legislative and policy context.

In 1979 when only 9.6% of secondary school principals were women, a NSW Anti-Discrimination Board study predicted that, based on the existing 'seniority' promotion system, there would be no female principals in secondary schools by 1990. Given equal pay, promotion and access to all schools, following the introduction of *Anti-Discrimination* legislation, men benefited by moving into principal's positions in girls' schools. There was no such parallel movement of women into boys' schools. At that time there was also the shift to coeducational secondary schooling, which saw the amalgamation of many single sex secondary schools. The impact of the *1932 Married Women's Act*, which demanded that women on marriage should give up employment, is also reflected in this statistic.

The introduction of *Amendment IXa, (1980-1982)* to *The Anti-Discrimination Act, 1977* (NSW), formed the basis of *Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)* policy and strategy development, with the legislation requiring all public sector agencies to take positive action to identify and remove discriminatory practices. Within the public school context, *Schools Renewal* (Scott, 1989) foretold that a "new system will give teachers a promotional 'ladder' which will directly relate to their abilities and performance" (p.26). A system of 'merit promotion' replaced appointment by 'seniority', a process that was based upon external assessment (inspection) of a candidate, and placement on a seniority list (not coincidentally referred to as 'the stud book').

While 'merit promotion' was seen as an innovation of marked *EEO* potential, Brennan (1993) found the concept of a promotional 'ladder' problematic, as it is a predominantly masculine construct. The Brennan (1993) case study participants certainly did not perceive their pursuit of the principalship as ambition interpreted as an 'aspiring up', but more an ambition to 'create social change'. For them success was "not measured in moving from job to job in a vertical continuum ... [but] measured by the quality of any job held" (Carlson & Schmuck, 1981, cited in Shakeshaft, 1987, pp.122-123).

[As Yvonne* stated] I can actually make a difference ...I love helping people to make changes in their lives [and] you can do this as the principal...[Narelle* sharing that] I have had students change their perceptions of themselves ... by little things that we introduced into the school, by the fact that I'm principal (Brennan, 1993, p.46).

It is of note that of the Brennan (1993) case study participants, only the youngest may have achieved principal status prior to retirement, if the 'seniority based' system had been retained. Each participant was married and had taken career breaks for child rearing. Resignation was the only option for one, while another had to 'board' her toddlers out with in-laws, as their births were so close together, and leave provisions were not adequate. They had sole or major responsibility for domestic life and minimal mobility, each juggling complex 'personal' and 'professional' lives.

The mythology

Clearly the principalship retains its masculine bias. Women still have to pass through rigorous filters and confront unique problems in a male oriented culture, and are viewed as anomalies. (Blackmore, 1993; Porter 1995; Gill, 1997; Hackney & Hogard, 1998; Hackney, 1999). It is critical at this time, that the mythology of the female principalship in secondary schools, a mythology invented to explain or excuse the real phenomena (ie. the masculine construct of leadership), is exposed for what it is, a proliferation of myths and tales, ungrounded in the female experience or indeed reality (Restine, 1993).

'Women don't have what it takes'; 'women lack support of teachers and the community' (Cupton & Slick, 1995, cited in Hudson & Rea, 1998, p.1); 'women are unable to maintain discipline or control abusive parents'; 'women are not tough enough to handle the political environment' (Hall, 1996;

Restine 1993; Sitterly and Duke, 1988), are but some examples of stereotypes or 'gender schema' (Valian, 1998) that comprise the developed mythology.

The mythology is further compounded by the pervasiveness of socialisation factors and seemingly illusive gender barriers (formal and informal), the tension of the 'personal'/'professional' dichotomy. Whilst sexual bias in the interviewing of women applicants for positions would now be grounds for appeal, women often report that their referees have been asked gender based questions. 'Does she have the capacity to combine career, marriage and family', 'does she have the support of her husband', 'will she be able to handle an experienced majority male staff' and 'can she handle stress', are common anecdotes.

There is also the barrier a female principal faces if she has a male supervisor and 'experienced' male colleagues, as they may feel threatened because she probably had to work exceptionally hard to get where she is. Brennan (1993) found that the majority of study participants held Masters degrees, gained through part time study, which is consistent with Wirt's (1992) findings that women are better prepared (some researchers refer to an 'over-preparation syndrome') for leadership than men.

One of the most striking realities and an immediate gender issue for women who are appointed to the principalship in secondary schools, is that the majority follow a male principal, becoming the first woman head in the school's history. Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) devote an entire chapter to the "New Lady on the Hill" and the problems she faced that were directly related to being a woman in what had always been, in that town "a man's territory... [as] adolescents in secondary schools need to be managed, and this is a job for a man"(pp.89-98). . Carolyn* commented that:

Fathers who had previously left school matters to their wives, now accompany their sons for disciplinary interviews with the new female principal... a level of discomfort with a woman in a position of authority evident (Brennan, 1999).

Hart (1995) suggests that on a daily basis newly appointed women principals have to 'deal with the fact that their behaviours evoke confusion and misconceptions among their constituents' (cited in Hackney, 1999, p.2). Upon accepting an appointment, the female principal becomes the subject of scrutiny, rumour and curiosity, constrained by the style, generation and gender of her predecessor, and the support available from senior colleagues. A woman shoulders the 'burden of proof' that she can do the job on a daily basis, and is regarded as weak if she attempts to establish a democratic process, with male staff and parents often wanting a return to the more autocratic style they associate with male principals.

Often a token woman, the new female principal has to contend with increased performance pressure, visibility, being a test case for other women, isolation, lack of female role models, exclusion from male groups and distortion of women's behaviour by others in order to fit female principals into pre-existing sex stereotypes. She often becomes the focus of hostility from male teachers (a form of competency testing), and has to work harder to get male teachers to 'hear' her (Hall, 1996; Hudson & Rea, 1998; Marshall, 1985; Rosener, 1995).

Yvonne* said that "when I first arrived a lot of the people had been here a while ...no way they were going to work for a woman... I've shaken along a couple of people who weren't performing and were being obstructionist". Gail* recalled that "this school was astounded when [the panel] picked a woman" (Brennan, 1993, p.41 & p.49) and Pat acknowledged that "there was a bit of a flap about my appointment... anxiety was about whether I could actually do the job" (Thompson, 1986, p.7). The President of Jean's* school P&C moved the following motion: "It's ungodly and unnatural to have a woman in charge of a man (whilst the motion was lost 21 to 7, the minutes of the meeting were sent to the Minister of Education)"(Dunshea, 1996, p.5).

Certainly women principals are often asked "who's in charge? or are confronted with demands from parents to be able to "see the headmaster", as the expectation remains that the person in charge will be a man (Hall 1996).

Narelle* said that “a lot of parents that come into the school expect a male principal and are rather amazed when I actually come out of the office” (Brennan, 1993, p.53).

Strategies employed by female principals in this situation, range from the provision of clear school signage, letterhead and business cards which include their name, ensuring that all formal correspondence includes their ‘title’. Carolyn* quipped that “if all else fails, a trusty shredder by the desk, can be quite therapeutic in releasing frustration over the receipt of yet another ‘Dear Headmaster’ letter” (Brennan, 1999).

The interpretation of power and authority both within the school and across the system, and the impact this has upon culture is also a significant issue. After 10 years of *EEO* it is still common for a new female secondary school principal to ‘inherit’ a very authoritarian and confrontational ‘male culture’ (power defined as control/dominance). This requires professional stamina and resilience over time, to effect positive learning culture transformation. Women report that the development of ‘webs of support’ (collegial counsel and coaching), and the modelling of non-confrontational behaviours, are effective strategies in such contexts.

Hall’s (1996) research found that “the women heads’ behaviour and values about school leadership showed them to prefer a ‘practical action’ model in which power for, is preferred to power over...[preferring] collegial rather than judgemental ... androgynous management... a broad integrated repertoire” (p.184 & p.200).

Carolyn* reflected upon the response of staff when she repositioned the ‘principal’ (ie. leadership) at the centre of the school’s leadership and management framework, instead of ‘at the top’ as in traditional hierarchical models of school leadership, staff (majority male) maintaining that “the management diagram for [the school] is a problem... the principal is not the hub of a school”(Brennan, 1999).

Was it preferred that there remain a division between teachers and ‘management’ (the ‘them and us’ 1960s/70s union rhetoric) in which teachers could abrogate responsibility for decision making? It is of interest that the diagram closely resembled a ‘web’, emphasising a flexible and more fluid team approach, and a willingness to share information. Helgesen (1991) found that women were more apt to see themselves in the middle of a tightly spun web, and Rosener (1990) refers to women creating ‘webs of inclusion’. Carolyn* further explained her leadership strategy and rationale for organisational restructure:

In developing a learning community culture, I have sought to create leadership density (staff and student) and informed parent/community and school partnerships...These are enabling strategies, ensuring that ‘non filtered’ information about the school is captured by me, through frequent formal and informal interaction... a style of leadership that is very different from my male predecessor(Brennan, 1999).

Workplace harassment can also be problematic when staff (usually male), attempt to establish dominance/power/status. The journal reflections of Carolyn* included strategies to counter staff intimidation and bullying. “A Code of Conduct was introduced for ‘discussion, comment and debate’, the format of meetings was changed... including decision making ... with ‘what will this mean/model for our students’ the touchstone” (Brennan, 1999).

For women who aspire to the principalship there remain significant impediments to success, not the least being the interpretation of power and authority both within school and across the system, and the impact this has upon organisational culture. Whilst the challenges at times appear formidable for female principals, the opportunity to make a difference for the students in their care and the school community as a whole, bring immense professional and personal satisfaction. Researchers have found that women who have broken through the ‘glass ceiling’, can and do excel in their roles. They have a strong motivational orientation, a sense of mission and a belief that they can effect significant changes in school life (Restine, 1993). “Each express a passion for excellence in their teaching and

leadership and in education generally” (Fennell, 1997, p.4), qualities that were clearly evident in the Brennan (1993) study.

However Hackney (1999) found that women leaders “were both anxious and excited about assuming leadership positions, [speaking] of their fears of not being able to stand up for what is right and of their souls and spirits being crushed in hostile environments” (p. 9). This articulation of ‘fear’ is consistent with findings that suggest that women are often appointed to secondary schools that are in need of significant change. As transformational, futuristic leaders their presence in secondary schools hastens cultural change and reform (Drake and Owen, 1998; Hall, 1996; Regan, 1995; Rosener 1990; Rosener, 1995).

As change agents, female principals need to develop a personal and professional ‘tool kit’, if they are to ‘survive’ the challenges of the role and not succumb to ‘role fatigue’ and ‘emotional burnout’. As Blackmore (1999) explains, “the never-ending housework of the teacher – as ‘mother made conscious’ – is now expected of the good principal who mends the social fabric of school communities” (p167). Tools for self reflection, data capture, context analysis (a psycho-ecological framework) and career development (particularly life-long learning) provide strategies for women to manage the ever present tensions created by the ‘professional’/‘personal’ life dichotomy.

Women principals who are cast as leadership anomalies, within a masculine cultural construct, are profoundly aware of the mantra – ‘if you can’t take the heat get back to the kitchen.’ But rather than ‘retreat to the kitchen’ and/or be ‘run out of town’, as occurred when “Fran and her husband decided they had had enough and left the community” (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986, p.98), women should be clear and rational, ensuring that their role and expectations of others are not ambiguous, and that they are empowered to make appropriate life choices.

Women principals should share and retell their stories, and in so doing, redefine and reposition leadership, women transforming the cultures of the schools they lead, by expressing, not giving up their personal values and feminist attributes.

In conclusion

It is clear that as we enter the 21st century, the reality of women’s promotional experience in NSW government secondary schools, does not reflect ‘equity’, legislative and policy rhetoric, nor the predicted futures for women in the nineties. ‘Looking at our Future: Listening to the Past’, we need to effect a paradigmatic shift from *EEO* (equal employment opportunity) to *EEO&O* (equal employment opportunity and outcomes), by establishing system priorities which result in fair employment outcomes for women, at all levels, comparable to their representation in the Department as a whole. This paper serves as a ‘wake up call’, urging increased understanding, vigilance and renewed activism in pursuit of leadership equality for women in education. The voice of women should be sought, heard and incorporated at the most fundamental levels of understanding and valuing. Women should be actively encouraged to take control of their careers, creating a career path that reflects the synergy of their life experience, rather than passively waiting, expecting to be recognised and rewarded for the work they do.

Note: * indicates name not a real name

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CRITICAL MASS IMPACT: DEVELOPING A NETWORK TO ADVANCE WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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The Australian Technology Network's Women's Executive Development Program, involving five technology universities located across Australia, is an initiative from senior women managers designed to address the continued under-representation of women at senior policy- and decision-making levels in higher education.

ATN WEXDEV has demonstrated the value of establishing a network of senior women. These women, often isolated within their own institutions, have found that they can develop shared interests and greater strength through cross-institutional collaboration. Projects such as national seminars and an e-mail discussion list enable women to exchange their views on emerging management issues in higher education.

It is becoming evident that linking individuals and sharing experiences within the 'micro-climate provided by ATN WEXDEV establishes a basis on which women can build a critical mass. This has increased their effectiveness and impact both as individuals and as a group. The transformation in women's perceptions of themselves and others' perceptions of women as a group, of capacities and capabilities, in turn creates an opportunity for both individual change and changes in organisational cultures.

Introduction

The Australian Technology Network's Women's Executive Development Program is an initiative from senior women managers in five universities spread around Australia. It is designed to address the continued under-representation of women at senior policy- and decision-making levels in higher education. In this paper I argue that by connecting the women and linking them through e-mail and face to face networks, we are building a significant mass committed to changing organisational cultures, and that by so doing, we are breaking down individual and institutional isolation.

Women and higher education management

Public and private sector organisations in Australia have attracted significant criticism in recent years on their lack of inclusive managerial structures and development opportunities for women at the very senior levels (Sinclair, 1995; Industry Taskforce on Leadership and Management, 1995; Smith and Still, 1996). This criticism has been extended to the higher education sector which reflects the wider society in demonstrating the long-term impact of systemic and cultural barriers to women's progress to senior management positions.

While women are now in the majority in all Australian universities, we remain absent or significantly under-represented wherever status, influence and power reside at both institutional and national levels (Ramsay, 1995, p. 91; and see Higher Education Management Review Committee, Australia, 1996).

The recent period has seen a number of national calls for the sector to address the issue more concertedly, leading for example to the establishment in 1994 of the national Colloquium of Senior

Women Executives in Australian Higher Education, which consists of women at the most senior levels. Under-representation of women is true not only of Australia, but reflects world-wide trends. Singh (1998) notes that 'women are grossly under-represented in higher education management' and quotes a UNESCO report that globally 'men outnumber women about five to one at middle management level and at about twenty to one at senior management level'. Within the Commonwealth a recent CHEMS report (1998) confirms this under-representation for full-time staff in both academic and administrative streams, although it acknowledges that both Canada and Australia perform well among the developed countries. UNESCO has argued (1998a) that 'the presence of a critical mass of women in the decision making process remains vastly inadequate'; as a result of this report, the recent World Conference on Higher Education resolved that

Efforts should be made to eliminate political and social barriers whereby women are under-represented and in particular to enhance their active involvement at policy and decision-making levels within higher education and society (UNESCO, 1998b).

It is within this context that the ATN WEXDEV program was devised in 1995.

The ATN WEXDEV Program

The Australian Technology Network (ATN) is a union between five leading Australian Universities (Curtin University of Technology, Perth, RMIT University, Queensland University of Technology, University of South Australia and University of Technology, Sydney). These institutions share a heritage of working with industry, an emphasis on the application of the latest technology and an international perspective and are now developing a united vision for the future. The ATN WEXDEV program was a tangible result of this cooperation. When the Department of Employment Education and Training established the National Priority Reserve Fund to strengthen executive development in higher education, senior women from the ATN seized the opportunity to develop a program aimed at improving the position of women at senior executive levels throughout the ATN. It is interesting that this initiative came from the ATN. Influenced by their strong links with industry and industry-based funding sources, and in particular reflecting the dominance within their structures of industries in which women are poorly represented, such as engineering, mining, business and information technology, it is commonly assumed that they have traditionally masculine leadership cultures. There is, however, little concrete evidence of this bias. Indeed as relatively recent institutions it has been suggested they may be less bound by tradition.

Within countries, such as the UK and Australia, where former Polytechnics and Colleges of Advanced/Higher Education have become universities in recent years, these institutions generally seem to have a better record in appointing women, at all levels of the academic hierarchy, than the older research-oriented universities (CHEMS, 1998, p. 22).

In addition, the large-scale mergers of the 1980s incorporated education and nursing faculties into all five institutions, faculties with higher representations of women at senior levels. The five universities have demonstrated a shared commitment to valuing diversity and ensuring gender equity. All have strong equity or equal opportunity units and are rated as leading edge performers by the Affirmative Action Agency. Nonetheless, despite overt commitment to and success in affirmative action, in 1995, when funds were sought to support the ATN WEXDEV program, women in ATN universities, both academic and general staff, were poorly represented at senior levels, a situation that they shared in common with other higher education institutions. Tables 1 and 2 show the numbers and proportion of women in senior and middle management positions in March 1996 when WEXDEV began.

Table 1: Women General Staff in WEXDEV Target Groups in ATN Universities as the total number and percentage of General Staff, March 1996

University	HEW Level 8/9	HEW Level 10 and above
Curtin	23 (30%)	3 (14%)
QUT	56 (44%)	23 (26%)
RMIT	75 (39%)	10 (36%)
UNISA	43 (49%)	10 (27%)
UTS	52 (42%)	23 (39%)
Total	249 (40.8%)	69 (28.4%)

Table 2: Women Academics in WEXDEV Target Groups in ATN Universities as total number and percentage of Academic Staff , March 1996

University	Level C	Level D	Level E and above
Curtin	46 (21%)	16 (15%0	3 (14%)
QUT	55 (25%)	12 (20%)	9(10%)
RMIT	96 (26%)	25 (25%)	5 (13%)
UNISA	102 (38%)	23 (27%)	8 (16%)
UTS	62 (27%)	15 (16%)	9 (20%)
Total	361 (27.4%)	91 (20.6%)	34 (13%)

The proportions, although considerably better than those highlighted by Singh in her analysis of Commonwealth universities, in fact show no great reason for celebration. This is particularly so when the actual numbers of women are considered. So small are overall numbers of executives that a 14% representation may in fact be just 3 women. Women in these positions can face significant personal and professional isolation. 'As women rise in the university hierarchy, their peer support falls away and they become isolated from other women' (Deane, 1996, p. 11). Such isolated women are described by Kanter (1977, pp. 208-9) as tokens and she warns that they can be both invisible and extra-visible. Attention is focussed on them and particularly on their flaws.

The token does not have to work hard to have her presence noted, but she does have to work hard to have her achievements noted (Kanter, 1977, p. 216).

The consequences of this isolation are highlighted by Sandra Acker.

A further, ironic, consequence of the small numbers of women in the system is that opportunities for organising to improve matters are thereby limited. Women academics are too scattered to provide a critical mass, nor do they hold many positions of influence (Acker, 1994, p148).

This is the essential problem identified by Rutherford in relation to critical mass in nuclear physics: if there are not enough similar elements in the system, there is no possibility of a 'chain reaction', and hence no possibility of change. The WEXDEV program was designed to change this situation. It aimed to link senior women, on both academic and general staffs, across the five institutions. This paper describes how this provided an opportunity for breaking down individual and institutional

isolation, and, through the influence of the critical mass thus established on the policies of the institutions, how this created a synergy in which organisational cultures are themselves being transformed.

The WEXDEV model

The WEXDEV model of professional development for women in university organisations identified its goals in 1996 as:

- increased representation of women in senior university positions
- strengthening of collaborative effort between the five universities of the Australian Technology Network to achieve working environments more inclusive of diversity. There were six objectives outlined in the 1996 application to DEETYA and the Universities for funding; one of these was to establish an infrastructure for enhanced information flow and networking among women executives in ATN universities. In fact the importance of networking became more obvious during the first two years of operation. The Management Committee re-drafted the aims of the program in November 1998 to reflect this. While adhering to the two original goals, the program has now added two more, reflecting an increased commitment to networking as a force for change:
- To enhance opportunities for personal professional development for senior women to gain appropriate skills and experience for emerging management opportunities.
- To support the growth of organisational cultures that value diversity and encourage improved representation of women in senior executive positions.
- To build on the tangible benefits of the collaborative network between ATN universities by providing significant cross-institutional activities for senior women.
- To strengthen strategic alliances with other organisations, nationally and internationally.

Building a network: Intra-institutional

The original focus of WEXDEV was women at the senior levels within each institution, Deputy and Pro-Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Associate Deans, Heads of Departments and Administrative Units. This involved 125 women from the five universities. The program aimed to strengthen their networking. It is suggested that women in senior positions face increasing difficulties in finding opportunities to network even though most are aware of the value of this activity in the earlier phases of their career. There is evidence that women use networks somewhat differently to men. While women are good at networking, the networks they establish are not as powerful as those of their male colleagues (Rothstein and Davey, 1995). Other research suggests that women in particular are more likely to use networks to foster relationships, support one another and share concerns about women's disadvantage, rather than to further their careers (Clark, Chandler, and Barry, 1996). ATN WEXDEV aimed to upgrade the capacity for networking among senior women within each institution. There were two facets to this. The first was to break down barriers between academic and administrative managers. The second was to ensure that networking assisted a process of strategic professional development. In the first year of the program, the focus was on assisting women develop techniques for identifying their professional development needs. A comprehensive questionnaire was completed by a majority of participants and then 72 of them were able to attend needs analysis workshops. Across all five institutions there was considerable agreement on the identification of university priorities (raising revenue, forging links with business and building external relationships). In this context senior women defined their own priorities as oriented to motivating and developing people and teams and to managing change. The subjects identified as important for future development of their careers became the basis of professional development seminars. Both academic and administrative staff gave highest priority in seminar topics to managing external relationships, raising revenue, budgetary and financial acumen, forging international links and developing a strategic focus. The 1997 evaluation of the first phase of the WEXDEV Program undertaken by Curtin University showed that a large majority of respondents appreciated the subject matter of the workshops, but also appreciated opportunities to develop and extend both internal and external networks, predominantly in

order to learn from others. Many of the women felt quite isolated in their own university setting and expressed the wish to 'learn about and meet other women.' For many, the within-university, face-to-face networking opportunities provided by workshops and seminars were amongst the most important outcomes of the Program.

Network opportunities, on-going dialogue with similar minded colleagues and industrial experience are relevant and desirable professional development exercises. (Participant).

The in-house networking has been really important along with the opportunity to discuss the impact of external ideas. (Participant).

Building informal networks and peer support mechanisms at institutional level has continued as a feature of the program through regular seminars. In 1998 the target group for the Program was expanded to provide developmental opportunities for women at the junction of middle and senior management, increasing the target group to over 500 women including a separate stream for over 60 indigenous women. A 1998 program evaluation by QUT endorsed the opportunities for networking among the larger group of women as a crucial component of the program.

Building a network: Cross-institutional

The structure of the ATN provides a unique and effective context within which to work on the issue of the under-representation of women in senior university management. The five universities together provide a near-national network, and, located as they are in five different States, they are able to collaborate without prejudice to their need to be increasingly competitive within the higher education sector. The ATN WEXDEV model for executive development is based on establishing a strong national network of women, using inter-institutional and inter-state collaboration to break down both individual and institutional isolation. This is achieved through various elements. Most significant is an electronic mailing list that provides information and opportunities for discussion for all women in the program. There is a separate but linked list for the indigenous network. We have also established a pilot project involving 8 pairs in mentoring at a distance with support from National Office. The effectiveness of this will be evaluated and if adjudged successful it will be expanded, particularly for women in professional isolation. There have also been major national workshops that have brought women from different institutions together, building the network as well as providing management development. In 1997 women from QUT and Curtin attended workshops in Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. In 1998, the major focus of national activity was the *Winds of Change* conference at UTS, where a WEXDEV seminar drew over 50 participants from the 5 institutions. The program also encourages Inter-Institutional Visits, which are informal and formal visits to enable participants experience approaches to higher education management issues in other universities and other states. Inter-Institutional Visits simultaneously enable individual visitors to fill gaps in their knowledge and raise the visibility of university women in general, particularly if the visitors are involved in faculty or department reviews or are presenting at workshops. It is intended to increase the profile of women in 1998 by developing a planned seminar and workshop program that features the expertise of WEXDEV participants. The program also encourages collaborative efforts, such as the design of a Graduate Certificate in Business (Managing for Diversity), which involved writing teams from the five institutions. Evaluation comments show that women value the experience of inter-institutional contact using the program 'to foster links within the ATNs':

... to network with colleagues in other states and in other areas of university activity;

... contributing to the development of ATN units and making sure senior women figure in the development of the ATN network; and

... to expand my network amongst women at senior levels in higher education and hence access to information, support and advice.

Building a network: Cross-sectoral.

The strong links that the ATN Universities have established with business, industry, government and community organisations have been tapped to generate targeted opportunities for senior executive development. Senior Executive Placements enable participants to undertake a month-long project of benefit to high-performance organisations in business, industry or the public sector. Participants learn how other organisations deal with current management and organisational issues and through experiencing different organisational cultures stimulate their capacity to manage change. Linking ATN-WEXDEV to established business, public sector and community groups builds credibility for the Program – and for the women who are its participants. Ensuring that the placements are linked to institutional priorities in terms of strategic partnerships also adds to the value that is placed on program. WEXDEV has worked to achieve a synergy between the corporate objectives of the institutions, those of the ATN as a group, and those of the program itself. Building a network beyond institutional and sector boundaries can be used to generate a network of senior women who work to improve the position of women executives within universities and outside. ATN WEXDEV is committed to building links with organisations such as Chief Executive Women and the Australian Council of Businesswomen that are taking action to increase the representation of women in the ranks of management. The WEXDEV Home Page already carries links to significant other organisations working on women's executive development. WEXDEV is also pursuing effective linkages with relevant overseas universities, other higher education networks and organisations such as the Association of Commonwealth Universities so as to share views about world's best practice in senior executive development for women. The two evaluations showed that women valued the opportunity of networking beyond the university sector and actively developed corporate sector links. They aimed

to increase links between [the university] and [company] with a view to an on-going relationship – research and development, consulting, contribution to undergraduate courses, networking – especially in light of financial constraints.

Institutional impact of networks

ATN WEXDEV provides a 'micro-climate' within which the critical mass of women at relevant levels has increased participants' effectiveness and impact both as individuals and as a group. Women who are participants in ATN WEXDEV are given opportunities within and outside their own institutions to develop increased awareness of the value they add to their institution. They share information about their successes and difficulties. There are opportunities to consider the limitations of mono-cultural organisations and of women's potential as change-agents, as well as examples of successes in these areas. Senior ATN women as a result are recognising their own leadership potential. They feel more positive in relation to their personal visibility, importance and voice within the university. The WEXDEV takes opportunities to feature reports on worthwhile placements or workshops through university networks at senior level. The women involved have improved not only their perceptions of their own capacities and capabilities, but have also, through workshops, senior executive placements and nomination to internal and external committees, influenced others' perceptions of women, thus providing a basis for both individual change and changes in organisational cultures. WEXDEV has aimed to create synergies between individual and organisational benefits. Placements, for example, are arranged with companies with whom the institutions already have significant relationships, so that women are seen to be extending and deepening these relationships. Through emphasis on these successes within the five institutions, there is a growing awareness of the value of women's contribution to the work of the ATN universities. The universities recognise the value of having a critical mass of women in senior positions. Women's executive development has been established through WEXDEV as a priority on the ATN strategic agenda, with the recognition that this is not a *marginal* activity, but one that is vital for the enhancement of the overall management capacity and strategic planning of the ATN universities, as a

model for further leadership development activities. Its success is demonstrated by the Vice-Chancellors' commitment of funds to maintain a national office through 1999, combined with a commitment to establish the structural and organisational basis to foster broader collaboration between institutionally-based women's leadership programs within the ATN. The fact that WEXDEV is seen to have provided an effective foundation for management development has increased its value among senior managers, and this in turn has stimulated organisational cultural change so that women's capacities and commitments are seen as significant. The fact that ATN is a national network gives the program a further significance, in that it has the potential to affect higher education culture and structures at the sectoral as well as the institutional level. The establishment within the ATN of a critical mass of senior women has the potential to have an impact on the higher education sector, both in Australia and overseas, on the ATN network, on the institutions and on the women themselves.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined the lessons learnt, and being learnt, from the ATN WEXDEV Program as to the value of establishing a network of senior women. These women, often isolated within their own institutions, have found that networking is important for more than information, contacts and support. The focus of ATN WEXDEV on women's professional development and on cultural change within organisations provides clear guidance to direct networking activity towards targeted goals. Linking individuals and sharing experiences provides a positive basis on which they can build a critical mass across the institutions, which in turn has a positive impact on the operation of those institutions and their capacity to involve women as decision-makers.

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CHANGING THE RULES; CHANGING THE CULTURE⁽²⁰⁰⁰⁾

Helen Creed

LHMU, WA and ACTU

At its Congress in June 2000 the ACTU endorsed rule changes which provided for 50% representation of women on the ACTU Executive. Less than 20 years ago, there was not one woman on that body.

This paper examines how such a dramatic change has taken place – not just in the rules but also the culture of the ACTU and its impact on the broader trade union movement. The relevance of these changes to the work environment for women will also be considered.

Finally, the opportunities for building on the experience within the trade union movement for other institutions will be explored.

The headline to the story which ran on page 5 of the Age of 30 October, 2000 simply read “ACTU Executive now comprises 50% women.” The opening paragraphs of the story, however provided more insight into how significant an achievement this was.

The ACTU will make world union history tomorrow with a new executive of 50 percent women.

and

It will also be the first time a major national organisation has adopted affirmative action policies at its highest governing level.

In light of the fact that when Jennie George was elected to the ACTU Executive in 1983 she was the first woman to be so, the achievement of 50% representation in less than 20 years is truly remarkable.

Jennie, in a paper she presented to the Women, Power and 21st Century Conference, held at the Victorian Arts Centre in December 1993, identified the four major steps taken to change such a predominantly male institution and movement as follows :

1. There was a need to align the cause and case of women with the overall objectives and vision of the organisation. Thus, for the union movement to survive and grow it became obvious that change was needed. One of the newspaper headlines at the time of the 1989 ACTU Congress captured this theme with the words : ACTU sends SOS to women.
2. The change had to be supported and led by senior people with credibility. The then Secretary of the ACTU, Bill Kelty for example, took a prominent role in the debate.
3. A strategy was formulated to achieve these goals. The key points included :
 - The creation of three specific and ‘tagged’ positions for women on the ACTU Executive.
 - Of the six vice-presidents, three were to be women.
 - All unions must include at least one female on their delegation to the ACTU Council.
 - Targets were set for the representation of women on the ACTU Executive to rise, in a staged increase, from 25, to 30, to 40 and finally to 50% as the rules were amended at each Congress.
4. Credibility. Jennie George argued that this strategy had already worked because the women on the ACTU Executive had demonstrated their competence, ability and merit. For example, in 1993 there were 8 women on the Executive :

- Jennie George – ACTU Assistant Secretary
- Pat Staunton – Secretary NSW Nurses Association (now MLC in NSW)
- Anna Booth – National Secretary, Clothing Trades Union
- Wendy Caird – then NSW Secretary of the Public Sector Union (now National Secretary)
- Mary Kelly – Vice-President, Australian Teacher’s Union
- Marilyn Beaumont – National Secretary of the Australian Nursing Federation
- Monica Gould – then National President of one of the Divisions of the National Union of Workers (and now Industrial Relations Minister in the Bracks Government)
- and myself.

The rules themselves are not particularly complex. They initially provided that if the required numerical target was not met by women being automatically elected to the Executive, the additional representation was then drawn from among the women on the wider forum of the Council. The difference between previous rules and the current one is that previously where the target was not met, additional women were added as affirmative action members to the Executive. This new arrangement is for a second delegate to be nominated by each affiliate in ascending order of size in order to meet the target. Affirmative action positions on the Executive, as such, have been retained to ensure representation from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workers and young people.

The success of this targeted approach has been highlighted in the 1998 Gender Representation in Australian Unions Report by the University of Adelaide’s Centre for Labour Research. In reference to Peak Councils it makes the following comments :

Women comprised 39% of the members of the ACTU Executive and 41% of the ACTU Council and were therefore proportionally represented. The achievement of proportional representation on these key bodies reflects the success of affirmative action rule changes and policy at the ACTU over recent years.

Having achieved these changes to the formal rules of the ACTU, will we stop there? The answer is definitely not.

Fifty percent members of the Executive is not gender balance across the Union movement and two additional resolutions also adopted by the Congress in June are important to mention.

The first is a resolution that :

Further in the light of rule 14.2(I) requiring that at least fifty percent of the members of the Executive shall be women, Congress requests the Officers to work with affiliates and State Branches to achieve improved gender balance in the representation from those organisations on to the Executive and within the ACTU Officers.

The second is what has been called an “aspirational rule” calling on affiliates to ensure that their delegation to Congress reflects gender parity. This recognises that women continue to be significantly under-represented in Union delegations to Congress (about 30%). As the report of the Centre for Labour Research referred to earlier, stated : “it is important to note that while these are firm policies and rules for ACTU Executive and Council, there are no such policies or rules in relation to ACTU Congress.”

It is also appropriate to examine other activities where similar rules could be applied. The ACTU is the Australian affiliate to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. In 1995, the ICFTU Asia-Pacific region adopted a resolution to address the failure of Unions in some countries to ensure that at least 30 percent of those attending education programmes were women. A policy was adopted that :

APRO Secretariat should monitor the women's selection pattern of affiliates. When an affiliate is recurrently not giving due consideration to this requirement, it will be allowed participation in a given programme only if the nominee is a woman.

For each APRO education and training programme where an affiliate has an allocation of more than one participant, it has to nominate at least one woman for that programme.

These rules have also had some broader impact. For example the ACTU rules do not specify any gender requirements in relation to the elected officers (President, Secretary and 2 recently reduced from 3 – Assistant Secretaries). However the benefits and credibility which derived from Jennie's Presidency cemented the need for gender balance in the senior leadership and once Greg Combet had been supported to replace Bill Kelty as Secretary, the choice of a woman for President became a virtual fait accompli.

These affirmative action rules are also seen as a tangible example of the ACTU's commitment to women. As Greg Combet, the ACTU Secretary, told the inaugural ACTU Women's Congress in Adelaide several months ago :

As you would know, the ACTU has already expressed its commitment to equal representation for women in the most practical way possible. One of the most important initiatives to come from the ACTU Congress in June was enshrining into policy the 50% rule for women's representation on our governing bodies.

We all know that men have traditionally dominated unions. Equally, we all know that affirmative action has been around for a long time. But at last, one has met the other. The wider cultural change in unions that will occur as a result of the 50% rule will be slow, and no doubt there will be some who will be confronted by the need to live by new rules. But it is already happening and will continue.

The Union movement's commitment to working women and the issues we face at work, at home and in the community is well documented and demonstrated every day in the activities we undertake and in the policies we have adopted. For example the ACTU Congress in June committed the ACTU as its key aims, to:

1. demonstrate the relevance of unionism to working women, recognising that this involves issues going beyond the workplace, particularly relating to the balance between paid work and family life;
2. assist women to organise in their workplaces around issues of greatest concern to them;
3. build the organisational strength of women in unions through development of delegate structures and positive strategies to increase female participation, including support for women in male-dominated occupations and industries;
4. develop alliances between unions and women's and community organisations on issues important to women.

Despite these aspects and the differences brought about by the actual changes in numerical strength of women within the movement we still haven't completely succeeded in changing the culture. The way women union leaders are depicted in the media is a case in point.

Kathie Muir in an article titled "Difference or deficiency: gender, representation and meaning in Unions" makes the point that a common representation about women in unions is the stereotype of the masculinised woman. Kathie refers to a caricature of Jennie George printed in the Adelaide Advertiser (1/1/96) which takes this image to an extreme.

BY GEORGE



She says : “Not only is George de-feminised within this image, she is caricatured as a flabby blue collar construction worker. To depict George in a singlet and hard hat ignores her known personal history : her background is the white collar teachers union, a different style of activism altogether. She typically favours a tailored feminine style of dressing and is always well groomed in public. She has reached the pinnacle of the union hierarchy and is no longer a member of the ‘rank and file’”.

I have my own example of the role of the media in depicting union leaders. Some years ago, the Union was involved in a picket line at SCGH that involved about a week after it commenced, the police being used to bring scab trucks through the picket lines to collect the dirty laundry. Here is the cartoon that ran in the West (November 1995).



Again the stereotypical male union official is depicted, which is totally inappropriate in terms of :

- the union’s leadership (woman Secretary; one of the two Assistant Secretaries is a woman)
- the union’s membership (70% women)
- the people who were actually on the picket line at the time.

This same dispute was also discussed in Parliament. One of the state Liberal politicians said:

I do not suppose there has ever been a greater amplified action than the one that was taken over the last few days. That was a disgraceful episode, where there was tonnes of unwashed linen. In fact, the linen looked a bit cleaner than did the union leader, Ms Creed, who was a disgrace. At least she should have had the decency to do her hair. She was a dishevelled looking person, and how anyone could follow someone like that, I do not know.

Apart from reflecting on the likelihood of a male union leader ever being told to do his hair before appearing on camera, this comment also drew a humorous response from one official who provided me with a fold-up brush, complete with a mirror in the handle and several hairclips, which she dubbed the "Ross Lightfoot Survival Kit".

What has occurred with the ACTU rules has not happened in isolation from developments elsewhere – such as the ALP's Affirmative Action targets for the preselection of women to winnable seats in Parliament. Again this was achieved through a change to that organisation's rules. In my view the way in which the rules have been changed to recognise women in leadership positions provides a model for other institutions. While we continue, as the State Government's plan for women does, to identify the core strategies to "increase women's participation in decision-making" as, for example :

- Further improve the gender balance on State Government boards and committees and encourage non-government agencies to reflect gender balance when nominating members or representatives on boards and committees.
- Improve the representation of women in the Senior Executive Service of the Western Australian public sector.
- Recognise and increase women's skills and develop women's confidence in decision-making and management.

Without mechanisms to force the change or sanctions when they don't, progress will be very slow indeed. As Bill Kelty said in his speech to the 1989 ACTU Congress when the Affirmative Action rules were first introduced :

It is simply not good enough for us, year after year, Congress after Congress, resolution after resolution to talk about it. It is about time we started to do it. That is, we have to ensure that women are seen and involved in unions as equal partners. Anything less is a failure.

I will conclude with another quote from an ACTU Congress – this time from Sharan Burrow who in 1995 as National President of the Australian Education Union, seconded the resolution to endorse Jennie George as the President – elect referred to the day as "hugely symbolic" – because "if it's possible to shift the male culture of the trade union movement (in this way), then it's possible to shift anything" (quoted in Martin).

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FROM GRASS ROOTS TO TREES: A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP IN ACTION⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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The challenge facing women who seek to change small community cultures is examined, using a case study to identify the issues which arise. The case study used to illustrate these points is that of a small primary school parent association. Within a year, it was changed from a small, maintenance focused unit to a multi-committed, energetic, large-vision enterprise. Males comprised some 40% of the initial planning group, although the actual change managers were female. While their enthusiasm and commitment were important factors in the rate and quality of change, these women experienced many pitfalls along the way, partly due to a lack of management experience. The move toward a more complex committee structure also required significant changes in policy direction, management practices and communication. Female members of the committee found that past practices of a casual and ad-hoc system were inadequate, given the increased range of contributors. The paper concludes with some cautions and suggested strategies for women who aim to transform community-based organisations into dynamic enterprises.

Introduction

In contemporary Australian society we rely on volunteers to support many community organizations. Volunteers can be defined as those who work for the benefit of the community, of their own volition, and for no monetary reward (Noble and Rogers, 1998). For many community groups, there has been an increase in contribution from retirees and younger people who are seeking the experience for its social value and potential skill growth. However, while volunteering is a growing phenomenon, the proportion of "prime-age" volunteers is decreasing (*Volunteering in Australia*, 1996). With more women entering the workforce, this source of support is increasingly hard to access, leading to changing demands and patterns of volunteerism.

Those who manage volunteer groups will acknowledge the unpredictability of the volunteer cohort. In the first instance, volunteers are likely to be erratic in commitment, due to the pressures of personal and professional obligations (Rotolo, 2000). Secondly, they may have a diverse range of skills and experience, leading to some challenges in allocating appropriate roles and loads. This is further complicated by a lack of choice of suitable incumbents. Despite the unknown backgrounds of the volunteers, committees tend to assume, or hope, that those who participate in the group will have the requisite skills and knowledge to accomplish the necessary tasks. The roles volunteers undertake are very diverse. Roberts and Connors (1998) identified five governance functions which are adopted by those working in trustee roles: setting directions, assuring effective management, enhancing the assets, achieving quality goals or acting on behalf of the community served. These activities are also typical of those who undertake leadership positions within the voluntary sector. While this may greatly extend those who are entering into this area of service, it also provides significant opportunities to experience valuable learning opportunities (Poe, 2000; *Volunteering in Australia*, 1996).

Voluntary parent committees are a critical factor in ensuring successful school environments (Cavaretta, 1998). The need for leadership is critical in school communities, where the parent and citizen organisations provide emotional and financial support to the teachers, students and parents. While these groups have been an important support for schools for many decades, the pressure on their functioning and contribution has become greater. The decreased funding of the educational

sector has placed growing pressure on parents to fund-raise in order to provide basic educational necessities. In Western Australia, for example, many government schools have obtained computer laboratories through the efforts of parents, rather than via centralised funding. At the same time, these parents are being asked to ensure older buildings are maintained, as the infrastructure support diminishes. Women, who form a large percentage of the active members of these organizations, concurrently manage roles which include full or part-time work, as well as fulfilling their roles as mothers, wives, and committee members (Else, 1993; *Volunteering in Australia*, 1996).

Like organisational work groups, volunteer groups rely on structures and terms of reference to define their function and focus. They are hampered, however, by the limited duration of members' involvement. This can lead to difficulties in making a difference, as well as maintaining appropriate records of previous committees. In the case of school P&C Associations, for example, the committee members hold office for one year. Four of those months are across school holidays, leaving only eight months to make a contribution to the development and evolution of the school environment. This creates additional pressures on those who wish to make a difference. Furthermore, the roles adopted by those members may expose them to many new challenges – some constructive, others challenging.

This paper examines one case, where a small community group sought to do more than maintain the status quo. In particular, it explores the issues that arose as change was implemented within this short time frame. The case explores the challenges that arise as women undertake the combined activities of worker, parent and committee member. In particular, it explores the difficulties and dangers facing leaders of such groups.

Methodology

The report of this case study is based on interviews with participants, analyses of minutes and other documentation of the Committee, and diarised notes recorded by the author, who was a committee member for three years during the change process.

The case

DPS, a small inner city government primary school, had been established for sixty years. The school was located in a high socio-economic area, with most children moving to private school education on leaving their primary school. Mothers were generally employed part-time or full-time, although there was also a proportion of wives who do not undertake paid work. Generally, parents were well-educated and financially well-off, with the majority university educated and with professional backgrounds. Most anticipated sending their children to private high schools. In the two years previously, less than 20% of the final year students transferred to a government high school.

Because of the school's age, the school buildings, out-buildings, grounds, gardens, pool and other structures appeared 'tired' to those considering the school as a suitable environment for their children. The numbers of members willing to participate on the committee had also gradually diminished. The commencement of 1997 saw a minimal number of nominees for the positions. As the year progressed, the core members decreased further.

The Committee recognized the need for change. The appointment of a new (female) President late in the school year resulted in a review of the P&C, culminating in a Vision Committee, formed to establish some new directions for the parent body. Volunteers were called for, and some fifteen parents volunteered to meet over a number of months to redirect the P&C focus. The gender balance was initially equal, but as the meetings progressed, the male members predominated in attendance and discussion of directions.

With the coming of the New Year, the P&C was ready with a rejuvenated focus: the plan was presented at the Annual General Meeting by the President, and was accepted with strong parental enthusiasm. The core P&C Committee was easily filled from the parent body, along with representatives on four sub-committees: finance, academic, fund-raising and facilities development.

In all, some thirty-two parents volunteered to participate in this new structure. Only four males nominated for these roles: the rest were mothers in the school. Nearly half of these, including the President and Secretary, were also working full time. Most of the parents involved in the committee had previous work experience, with many of the women having backgrounds in teaching or secretarial roles.

Terms of Reference were established for each committee and they commenced their work. The groups met regularly, with some members, including the executive, meeting with several different sub-committees as well as the general committee. The Committee recognised that it had a large agenda to complete in the eight month time frame, and so decided to take the ambitious step of increasing the family levy by nearly 200%. This proposal was supported by those attending the meetings, although many parents in the wider community disagreed with the decision. The Finance Sub-Committee spent considerable time developing the mechanisms to track and request late payments, but found that only 70% of the parent body paid their requested levy. Despite the reduction in receipt of levy payments, the fees ensured the school was provided with substantial support from early in the year, and reduced the need for many small fund-raisers.

At the same time, the fund-raising and facilities development groups were working furiously. Two large fund-raisers were planned for the year: one in April, the other in November. Both required significant parent contribution in both planning and execution phases. The first function, a fete, led to the resignation of several major contributors, who decided they had contributed sufficiently. Fortunately, new contributors were ready to pick up the threads to plan for the second function: a gala evening and auction. The funds from the first fund-raiser were placed in the bank, and it was planned that these would be merged with the previous years' fund-raising funds to commence the beautification of the grounds and facilities.

Planning for these developments were well progressed by the facilities development sub-committee, which was endeavouring to create a more modern and attractive physical appearance for the school. It had met weekly for several months as it attempted to develop the various project plans. A number of projects were undertaken in this first year of the group. Many of these required significant research and investigation; some of the work replicating previous investigations by prior committees, which were never finalised. The group's function was vast: it intended to prepare a three-year plan of development, as well as the replanting of the grounds and the re-establishment of the gardens. Projects for the first year included the planting of mature trees, the covering of the school pool, the lobbying for a bike and walk path around the school, repainting of external toilets, and the refurbishing of a small building for extra-curricular activities. The initial terms of reference of this committee were all accomplished by June due to the significant contribution made by all members of the group.

At that stage, the group started to lose its cohesiveness. The withdrawal of the President from the role of chairperson, and the increased factionalism of the group, as new projects were introduced into the framework, were key factors in this increased divisiveness. The new projects lacked a central vision across the sub-committee, and frequently reflected the diverse horticultural and architectural philosophies of those concerned, leading to arguments, heckling, and strong factionalism amongst the members. Several members started to bypass the group, and to work on their own projects without reference to the group. A number resigned due to the unpleasant tone of the meetings.

At this juncture, a catastrophe occurred in this very small community: a new parent in the school volunteered to act as the temporary treasurer while the normal incumbent took a five week break. On her return, the Committee discovered that its funds had been siphoned away: the bank balance, which should have been some \$22 000 had become a meagre \$3 000. The culprit, suffering from a nervous breakdown, was unable to account for the funds, beyond admitting she had stolen them.

In crisis mode, the Committee appointed an Action Committee comprising a lawyer (male), a stockbroker (male) and the normal treasurer (female). These three members worked intensively to negotiate a return of the funds – with limited success. At the same time, it was discovered that there were some anomalies in the Committee processes, with some aspects of its Constitution not adequately reflected in the practices for that year – or indeed, for many years previously. This raised

the issue of Committee members' culpability, and also highlighted a number of mistakes made by the Committee during its frenetic six months. As the shock of the theft wore off, the ire of the community increased. Those working on the Committee found they were increasingly scrutinised by members of the parent body. While the majority was very supportive and constructive, there was also a strong parent minority which wished for vengeance. These members were not Committee members, but attended every meeting, and demanded full accountability for every action which was – or had been – taken. They spent numerous hours investigating the constitution and lobbying other parents to attend meetings and protest the actions being taken. This active and vocal group was led by women, and often resulted in meetings become rowdy, angry and highly ineffective. Meetings lasted over four hours because of the interjections and strong opinions from these minority members.

While the majority of the parent group continued to support the Committee, three months were spent debating points of order and meeting protocol, and reiterating decisions made at previous meetings. The strain on the Committee members was highly evident. In particular, the minority members' practice of identifying problems and holding them until the public forum of a meeting created significant stress on those involved. After three months of lobbying and losing, these very active non-Committee members then resigned from the parent body.

The challenge for this Committee was significant: rebuilding a vision, with no funds remaining; re-injecting enthusiasm into the end of year fund-raiser planning to ensure it was well supported, and maintaining the commitment of those involved in the various sub-committees. A much wiser executive was re-elected at an extra-ordinary AGM, and set about the process of consolidation. While the members of the Committee did not plan to offer themselves for re-election in the coming year, they identified a number of principles that should be followed by the new committee. They spent considerable time reflecting on the reasons for the difficulties encountered, and the ways in which other women can avoid being overtaken by circumstances. For many, it was believed that the gender of the participants was a strong factor in the events and their aftermath.

Women as committee members

Women have formed committees for hundreds of years. They tend to be the backbone of these groups, and seek to further the cause of the particular group to which they belong. However, many lack experience in committees and their practices. In this case, the President, while familiar with formal organisational committees and their activities, had little experience with groups in conflict, and argumentative members of the meeting. Standing Orders and Rules of Debate were implicitly understood, but not explicitly used to guide practice. She demonstrated skills that were nurturing and collegial in nature. In the formative stage of the Committee, these were strengths. However this style of management became less effective as the difficulties grew. She needed to change from this more feminist style of leadership to a more task-oriented, masculine style of control. Her failure to appreciate this led to further fragmentation of groups, and increased attempts by others to control the process. Inexperience in the role of leader was a liability as the difficulties grew.

As the challenges of managing an increasingly factionalised community increased, the skills this chairperson held were insufficient to control the process. In addition, the lack of knowledge of the specific constitution was a problem once questions were raised. As a full time worker and a mother, this member elected to miss training sessions run by the advisory P&C support organisation, which were held across two weeks in the evening. Other committee members similarly said they were too busy. The lack of understanding of these issues was a part of the reason for the difficulties subsequently faced. Those who had prior committee experience were also unfamiliar with these issues, since the other committees had not needed such rigorous adherence to the guidelines. The lack of understanding of fundamental committee structures by the committee members could be claimed to be a significant reason for the difficulties faced.

This inexperience in meeting management was also reflected in the style of participation of the female members of the audience. The women were the disruptive members of the parent body. They became emotional, interjected, refused to allow others to express their opinions and were derisive of others. They felt so strongly about the issues that they were unable to approach the problem objectively.

Requests to follow meeting protocol were ignored. The meetings, which had traditionally been participative and co-operative, became more formalised and rule-based, in order to enable some degree of functioning. The tone and atmosphere were markedly acrimonious over a number of months.

The issues of strongest concern to the critics related to the theft, and a demand for strong accountability. The absence of a culprit to vilify led to attempts to censure those who had worked with the thief. The Committee were scrutinised closely, and every small error was exposed and discussed at length. The critics argued for rigid restrictions on the functioning of the Committee in the future. These limitations included gaining three quotes for any expenditure over \$250 and requiring a full parent meeting to approve any spending. This degree of control over an elected committee was rejected by the parents at large, but took two months of debate and lobbying before the critics would accept defeat. In the meantime, it was necessary to abandon the other business of the Committee. The three highly active critics of the Committee spent considerable time researching the constitution and developing their motions and proposals. It was evident that they had a strong sense of justice, but their political skills were limited. They succeeded in alienating a large part of the parent body through their aggressiveness and closed-mindedness. The failure to discuss the issues with the Committee was consistently evident. The presentation of their findings was conducted in the form of ambushes, rather than conciliatory discussion. This served to reduce their power in the community, although many of the issues they raised were most important. It also created a divided and disruptive environment for those committee members who were trying to reconstruct a viable programme of renewal through the school community.

The limited political skills of the group were also evident in the actions of the Committee in the lead up to the theft. Members of this group were contributing many hours a week, while also working full-time. Shortcuts in practices were used to enable the functioning of the Committee. Like many other voluntary committees, day-to-day business was conducted as and where possible, and volunteers were not vetted for either their skills or suitability. Cheques were signed when two signatories could meet – not always prior to the cheque being written. The trust with which the members worked with each other was one of the key strengths of the group – they were a cohesive and co-operative group which functioned well in the initial months. However, this ad-hoc approach to the financial process was also a weakness, and resulted in the opportunity to steal the funds by the temporary treasurer. The executive members were appalled to discover the ease with which they had been duped. They have noted that this implicit faith in the goodness of their fellow members is not something on which they would rely in future.

Similarly, the vocational emphases of the committee members ill-prepared them for the legal and logistical issues associated with recovering the funds and seeking a resolution. The two male members of the Action Committee had also been members of the initial Vision Committee. They had contributed strongly to the planning of the school's directions, and then chosen to withdraw from "active duty". Their willingness to return and drive the process was an important contribution to the maintenance of the Committee's viability. While several women were also involved in the deliberations, the expertise of these two men was necessary, as their backgrounds related to law and finance. None of the women had similar experience on which to draw. The males were also instrumental in addressing the constitutional and meeting protocol issues, and provided training and support to those in the central roles. Upon resolution of the issues, they once again became "invisible".

The particular characteristics of voluntary organisations also place additional pressures on such members. The need to work on committee activities after hours and on weekends places significant demands on the families of the members – particularly for those working as well. The numerous late night and early morning phone calls and additional meetings also placed families under increased duress as the financial crisis was managed. These demands led to many of the women agreeing that they would not nominate for office again. This is unfortunate, as the knowledge and insights they had gained had succeeded in creating some very competent and very experienced – although more cynical – committee contributors.

It could be argued that the management of the change process was a further deficiency of the Committee's programme. It sought to achieve extensive change within a short time frame. It has been claimed that the structure of voluntary groups precludes long-term planning and the more gradual management of change (Hirsch & Moffett, 1994). The Committee was aware of this problem, and aimed to accomplish as much as possible in the short academic year. However, in hindsight, they acknowledged that the rapid rate of change was a major liability, rather than a benefit. People were working hard on projects, and endeavouring to make every week count, without due time to consider the basic practices being followed.

The control of participating members, and encouragement of their commitment to the overall plan was a further problem encountered by the women leading this small community group. As with many other associations the volunteers came from a diverse range of backgrounds and with varying levels of expertise. Their skills in meeting participation and in project management were also highly diverse. The absence of an overall project manager was a significant weakness. In hindsight, this role of co-ordination and liaison was recognized as critical to the success of the change management process.

Males and female contributions to the committee process

Voluntary committees like this one rely on women to function. As evidenced by this particular case, the roles adopted by the male and female members can be quite different (Table 1). The female participants tended to be the active participants in the process phases, ensuring that change was generated, and that the process was well-documented and communicated to other members. The males acted as advisors and mentors to those women in various planning phases, but preferred to leave the implementation to others.

While the women were integral contributors to the whole process, they were also the cause of interpersonal conflicts which marred the recovery process. Their passion for their causes was a strength and a weakness.

Lessons learnt

The lessons acquired by these participants have been many. They have discovered that the process of developing a community environment from grass roots to trees can be fraught with unforeseen events. Their experience has served to identify some key strategies that should be considered by other women undertaking voluntary leadership roles within the community. These include:

- Ensure adequate information on the constitution, rules of debate and standing orders are initially provided, along with other critical documentation (Hurley, 2000);
- Despite implicit faith in the goodwill of those involved, maintain an orderly and well-controlled approach to financial and planning matters, ensuring members are aware of their legal obligations (Tenenbaum, 2000);
- If background experience in managing groups is limited, attend training to build these skills and awareness (e.g. Mackin, 1998), or ensure research is undertaken through published resources (e.g. Fisher, 1993);
- Alter the leadership style to reflect the context in which the group is working (Allan, 2000);
- Develop the volunteers and their skills, and ensure they have opportunities for growth and learning (Ernest, 1998).

Table 1: Role adoption of DPS Committee Members, by Gender.

Male Roles (Advisory / Planning Function)	Female Roles: (Change Agent / Enactment/ Facilitator)
	Change Initiator
Plan Developer	Plan Implementer
Crisis Manager	Management of daily committee activities and functions
Trainer in Protocol	Long term participant
	Record keeper / Communicator
	Critic / Monitor of Procedure

The need to promote an understanding of “best practice” has been identified as a crucial factor in avoiding crises such as these in voluntary groups (Volunteering in Australia, 1996: 105). The challenge of managing volunteers who are not there for monetary gain, or for long periods of commitment needs to be recognized, and addressed. While there are guides to such processes, they are rarely to be found in public libraries or in the resource areas of voluntary organizations. There needs to be a more conscious awareness of the importance of best practice and careful governance of volunteers – particularly in committees which are not allied to a larger organizational structure. There would be value in the provision of community-based public lectures and workshops on volunteerism and its allied issues. This would increase collaboration and support through the local community across various volunteer groups, with experienced organizations acting as coaches to those with less expertise. This sharing of knowledge could become a rich source of support in the community, and extend the sharing of stories, which are currently little known outside the smaller network.

Conclusion

Women need to be involved in these community groups, despite their expanding roles elsewhere. While this places pressure on their work and family roles, it can serve to extend their networks and their understanding of leadership. In addition, voluntary works provides important opportunities to empower those involved, and to achieve social change (Elsey, 1993). It is wise, however, to recognise that groups which seek to change the culture will be open to more criticism and challenges from within and without. The recognition of inexperience, and the use of mentors and training to reduce likely risk is advisable. In these circumstances, careful management of the decision-making processes becomes critical. This may mean a change in leadership style for women who are steering the change process.

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THE POWER OF CHOICE IN THE POSTMODERN CONDITION⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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In recent years, thinking and writing about femaleness has encouraged an understanding of oppression from postmodern perspectives, which holds that this oppression is not merely imposed, but is an act of participation and collaboration by those who are oppressed. This work has begun to generate new intellectual and practical approaches in gender and feminist theory (Brooks 1997, Deutscher 1997, Still 1997, Lather 1995, Taylor 1995, Faludi 1992). One of the central concerns of this paper is to describe the political and ideological implications of the debate on the role of contemporary women with particular regard to the concepts of power/agency and choice and the way in which women as daughters, mothers, grandmothers, lovers, workers, friends or neighbours facilitate this. Foregrounding a postmodern analysis and critique, I investigate representations of women in the popular media and examine the problems of these contemporary yet highly stereotyped and traditional constructions of femaleness. I conclude the essay by asking what the power of choice might be for women along with ways this power might be developed in everyday life.

Introduction

This paper is situated in the problematic relationship between a modern emancipatory project and a postmodern deconstruction. My object of inquiry is the contradictory space between “oppression” and “agency”, how identity is socially constructed and how it underpins division. Although femaleness is a complex and fragmented notion, all women in developed nations benefit from some kind of privilege. I am particularly interested in looking at ways different groups of women enjoy different forms of privilege, as not all women share equally in these benefits – some are disadvantaged more than others – but all receive unearned social benefits as the inheritors of a system based on progress, wealth and privilege. I believe that the vision of “empowerment” in conjunction with the perspective of the “victim”, is capable of transforming the way we think about the female human being as a unique, embodied subject embedded in her own history and culture. The aim of this paper is to examine how we, as politically and socially active female human beings in the post-modern, post-industrial society can make a difference and not submit to what the powerful and faceless say. First I engage in the discourse of “identity”. It is my view that similarity and difference are the dynamic principles of identity. I will investigate the notion of self-identity and public identity in the context of the relationship between power, agency and choice. Second, I will explore ways in which womanhood and women as individuals are perceived, both in modernity and in postmodernity. More specifically, I will investigate some of the ways in which modernity fails to address women as empowered, embodied individuals within social contexts, with private and public histories.

Misconceptions and the need for reassessment

This essay is about femaleness, about people, who are more than just members of a certain gender. It is about the choice we have to brake prejudice and acknowledge our individuality and our differences as well as our sameness. The belief that one’s gender determines human traits and capabilities and that our sex is what makes us superior in, for example, the emotional department and the home-front and/or inferior in the public and professional sphere – are among the most dangerous, although highly common misconceptions. Gender has never been a stable matter, rather the meaning of “female” and “women” are abound with ambiguity and self-contradiction. The politics of this argument have been discussed at length by feminist authors working out of postmodern positions (Brooks, 1997;

Deutscher, 1997; Lather, 1995; Taylor, 1995; Welch, 1985). Although gender is founded in incoherence, an incoherence of definition, misconceptions, prejudice and sexism affect not only the way we value and regard ourselves and our relationships with others in Australia's social web, but rather we are in danger of falling for the stereotypic, oversimplified images of women portrayed day-in, day-out in the popular media. Stereotypes are difficult to get rid of because hearing, believing and voicing them, they become part of our thinking processes. To be aware of these stereotypes and to critically analyze their construction, is one major step to a different mind-set.

Who am I?

I am a woman, a young woman, a white, young woman, a middle class, white, young woman, a Swiss, middle class, white, young woman, a multilingual, Swiss, middle class, white, young woman living in Australia; but I am not only a woman, I am also a teacher, a business partner, a wife, a mother, a sister, a friend, as well as a dancer, a car-driver ... and so forth.

There still remains the question: Who am I after all – what is identity?

Identity is rooted in the latin *identitas*, which means "sameness". However, there are two aspects or components to this concept; similarity as well as difference, one does not exist without the other; where the emphasis is, depends on, the point of view. One thing we women have in common is our difference from "others", defining "us" involves defining a variety of "thems"; also, our similarity is their difference and vice versa, therefore we could term identity as a form of meaning.

Social (individual and collective) identities are systematically produced, and implicated in each other. As Hacking (1990) in Jenkins (1996, p.25) states: "Classification is at the heart of modern, bureaucratically rational strategies of government and social control". Identity is not just something that "is", rather it is something over which struggle takes place as multiple identities exist within each person and are produced within power relations. The diverse ways in which women think, speak, act, participate and relate to other persons, whether they are making, following or going against the rules of social form and structure, are expressions of their different positions within societies and cultures. These negotiations are crucial to the identity formation of women. In our society, where the power of wealth, colour and sex rules, with its destructive, internalized oppression, the identity of women as "the Other", in particular, has become a focus question as we women attempt to engage within our social realities by communicating with and internalizing the oppressor's attitudes. In other words, we are enmeshed in our social realities. This is clearly imprinted in our behavior and our body-image.

By "enmeshment" in social realities I mean, for instance, the experiences of hostility and the undermining of women's rights; which is just one of several powerful forces creating harsh and painful climates for professional women. Marta Ward (1996), for example states: "A vice-chancellor at UNO [University of New Orleans] said, 'Women don't look feminine when they carry briefcases' " (p. xiv). Moreover, when Natasha Stott Despoja became the youngest Senator to be elected to the Australian Parliament two years ago, and we are talking the late 1990s here and not the early 1970s, a radio commentator was more interested in, and concerned about her looks than her words, as Stott Despoja put it:

My now-famous shoes, my Doc Martins, generated more publicity than my political comments (1997;267).

Furthermore, at a recent Journalism Forum, Symons (1998) asks the question of the relevancy of personality in politics. She answers the question by explaining that personality is very relevant because it is about values and values are about outcomes. Then Symons (1998) asks the question of *how much* of a politician's personality is relevant? (emphasis added). "Well", she says, "his or her values are relevant. So why is it that we hear about Cheryl Kernot's 20-year old affair but not about Kim Beazley's marriage break-up some years ago?" (p. 9).

On the same note, a recent Saturday edition of the West Australian newspaper featured an article which professed to offer "news", yet it prescribed more than it observed. The subheading reads: Stepfather has no right to mother's money, *woman says* (Gibson 1998;11;emphasis added). The

interesting point is that one has to read the whole article to figure out who this woman is who said that this “stepfather has no right”. This woman is in fact the lawyer, who represents the man’s stepdaughter and was quoted saying that “she could not comment without the permission of her client”. Not only is “the woman” not acknowledged as a professional worker representing a client, but also the claim of “woman says” could not be substantiated in the body of the article, as her professional ethics do not permit her to comment.

While some of these anecdotes might be debatable in terms of their relevance, I wonder if the credibility of men, old or young, would be so easily challenged? Public statements like these do seductively more than impede women’s careers, promotions and better pay. Not only do they do grievous damage to the self-esteem of professional women, it is reality where ever we look, whatever we do.

Having an identity constitutes having a history, belonging to a specific group or culture. As we have seen, these are not fixed, stable certain groups with rigid boundaries, rather cultural horizons which change as we move about. How women are portrayed in the popular media, is worth special attention, because of its central role in propagating the universalizing aspects of femaleness.

The mass media delivers the prejudice female stereotype to the public through a multitude of services such as news-stories and advertisements, all of which claim objectivity. Media information attains authority not through the reporting of reality, but through the power of specified forms of representation and repetition. These representations when presented with great frequency can make anything seem real. For example, Faludi (1992), who only recently critically analyzed the beauty-trends of the last two decades, uses a face-creme advertisement to illustrate this point:

“Is your face paying the price of success?” worried a 1988 Nivea skin cream ad, in which a business-suited woman with a briefcase rushes a child to day care – and catches a glimpse of her career-pitted skin in a store window (p.238).

Faludi (1992) argues that this ad implies that if the woman in question were to be less successful she would be more relaxed, and consequently her face would be more radiant and she would look maybe younger and feel better about herself (p.238). However, it might also present the double bind in which many women find themselves in, with more responsibilities and work and less time to care for themselves, or a combination of both. Working at the point of such intersections, this paper argues that there seems to be a clear contradiction as women are, on the one hand, perceived, portrayed and reproduced as members of a homogenous universal group of people. And on the other hand are, for marketing reasons, divided, categorized and fitted into neat and tidy ‘stock-types’. Faludi (1992) again:

In a new round of perfume ad campaigns ... fragrance merchandisers focused their marketing drives on three stock ‘feminine’ types: the upper-class lady of leisure, the bride and the little girl (Faludi 1992;244).

The change from the industrial to the information age, brought with it changing notions of reality. It is no longer possible to study the appearance of reality, instead there is a representation of female images in terms of newspaper articles, slogans and advertisements, such as the ones mentioned above. It could therefore be said that “the production of meaning” to use Giroux’s (1995) terminology, has become equally important as the “production of labour”. Shapiro (1995), contends that “advanced countries” of multinational capitalism, such as Australia, appear to be places where spectacle and appearance have become interchangeable with reality.

In the light of these stereotype representations of femaleness, it is not surprising that many feminist scholars in the last two to three decades have passionately investigated the origins of men’s and women’s differences. Much of the work seeks to challenge the longstanding convention of defining male behavior, (that is, the behavior of middle- and upper-class, white men) as the norm and the female behavior as an abnormality. Their aim has been to describe women’s strength and to account for the reasons that they are not valued. Here is the important link between the recognition of identity and postmodern perspectives of women as “empowered” beings.

We might begin from the position that we can never entirely escape from our own social construction. Indeed, such constructions are embedded in our subjectivity. Without being aware of one's multiple identities and history, there is no possibility of "empowerment" and "choice". Part of this framing construct is the undisputed inequitable distribution of power for different social groups, defined by boundaries of gender and/or race and/or class and/or age etc. These unequal abilities to assess power are often concealed from those who are oppressed as well as from those who benefit from these inequalities.

Discourse into postmodernism

The relationship between feminist theory and postmodernism is an important one. It may be time to state some of the differences between postmodernism and modernism. Postmodernity or postmodernism is a term and movement of considerable controversy which cannot be easily reduced to any oversimplified characterization. Currently, the notion of postmodernism is used to label discourses in art, economics and architecture as well as philosophy. According to Carroll (1997), the phrase "postmodernism" appears in writing as early as the 1940s and correlates with the cultural as well as with the economic development from a manufacturing to a service economy (p. 145). The "post" in postmodernism may imply that it is used to signal that social relations have been overcome and have replaced old concepts which are no longer valid. I might follow Lyotard (1992) and characterize the difference between modernism and postmodernism by the following features: a) the disappearance of the close boundaries and universal bonds which once linked the project of modernity to an ideal of the progressive realization of social and individual emancipation encompassing all humanity, and b) the disappearance of the idea that freedom and equality are progressing. This use of the concept of "post" is, however, highly problematic, as I am, through this representation, automatically implying that there is a simple succession, a demarcational sequence of periods in which each one is clearly identifiable; where the "post" indicates a conversion, a new direction from the previous one, a follow-on, a new approach to an old problem. The difficulty with this interpretation is, that this linear and chronological black box model, is, itself perfectly "modern" (Lyotard 1992).

The notion of "postfeminism" has become equally fashionable in academia. According to Brooks (1997;1), "postfeminism can be understood as critically engaging with patriarchy and postmodernism as similarly engaged with the principles of modernism". She makes the point that this does not, however, mean that either patriarchal or imperialist reference points have been replaced or superseded. Thus, postfeminism challenges hegemonic assumptions that patriarchal and imperialist oppression was and still is universally experienced oppression. Therefore it could be said that postfeminism is about recognizing differences as well as similarities in order to strip the universal mind-models which work ultimately to confirm the old power structures, what ever they may be (Brooks 1997; 2-10). Brooks argues:

Postfeminism as understood from this perspective is about the conceptual shift within feminism from debate around equality to a focus on debates around differences. It is fundamentally about, not a depoliticisation of feminism, but a political shift in feminism's conceptual and theoretical agenda. Postfeminism is about a critical engagement with earlier feminist political and theoretical concepts and strategies as a result of its engagement with other social movements for change (1997; 4).

As Poland (in Brooks, 1997) maintains, "any movement or philosophy which defines itself as post whatever [postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism or postfeminism] is bound to be reactive. In most cases it is also reactionary" (1997;2). To put it differently, the shift from modernism to postmodernism is a multilayered and reflexive process, which is influenced by factors acting and reacting upon each other. The modern conceptual frames of reference are clearly focused on the issue of gender-equality. Although modernist positions represent a view of womanhood which is reluctant to shift from structural analysis and meta-narratives, postmodernist views make the point that it is difficult to see how womanhood as a unified group with clearly defined boundaries can be

labeled in any meaningful way. As I have suggested, gender is but one strand amongst many within the matrix of a person's identity.

Postmodernist critical analysis within feminism and from this perspective, is about the female community's conceptual and theoretical agenda. It is also about a critical engagement with modernist, imperialistic concepts and strategies as a result of its engagement with the political, ideological and social movements for change. As such, postmodern feminism represents a dynamic movement capable of challenging modernist, patriarchal and imperialist frameworks. In the process this facilitates a broad-based, pluralistic conception of the application of female identities and might more successfully address the demands of marginalised, previously unheard voices. This in turn may lead to a feminism capable of giving voice to local, fragmented, and at times, paradoxical female identities. However, it is not assumed that this postmodern "multi vocalism" is capable of granting all voices equal power and representation. Instead, it offers greater possibilities of awareness that each person operates out of various power positions at various times. I can no longer state or believe that because I am a woman, I am powerless.

Women like you and I might hope or dream of a more egalitarian society for us and our children. What is more important is that we understand how we can act. We all have power, the power of choice, the power of our voice, our presence, the power of our biological identity. But in particular, we have the power of our multiple identities, with their many levels and sub-levels of power. What do I mean by that? I may be disadvantaged as a woman in the patriarchal society I live in, but I am also privileged as a young, *white* woman. So my powers are multiple. I might be oppressed and disadvantaged because of my gender, but, at the same time, I am also a beneficiary of a system based on class and race, simply by being a young, middle-class European. I am not however, arguing that people should find their positions of privilege and maximise their advantages. Instead, I am arguing that people should become much more aware of the various relationships of power and how the advantage of their power position might either be utilised, resisted, or transformed to inflict change. It is my strong belief that the multiple identities we hold can be used as transformational forces to change society. Lyotard (1992;93) captures exactly what I mean:

When it [postmodernism and postfeminism] is understood in this way, the "post" of "postmodernism" [and postfeminism] does not signify a movement of comeback, flashback or feedback, that is, not a movement of repetition but a procedure in "ana-": a procedure of analysis, anamnesis, anagogy and anamorphosis ... (emphasis in original).

What Lyotard has been recommending is of vital importance, as through the process of deconstruction, acceptance and reflexivity, it might be possible to arrive at different vantage points, to take a different direction and convert the meanings of concepts such as "identity/difference", "power/agency" and "privilege/oppression".

Indifference is insupportable

This paper attempts to establish a basis for the distinction between the modernist perspectives of womanhood as a homogenous body of experiences such as "oppression" "power/agency" and "identity" and a postmodern perspective of difference as a multitude of ideological and political practices. Whatever role we choose to take on, whatever our identities might be, we as daughters, mothers, grandmothers, workers, friends, neighbours etc., need to be aware of our multiple identities and power positions, so that we can take a stand and act upon our positions of power in order to make active and informed choices. Indifference toward our positions in relation to power/agency and oppression/privilege is totally acceptable.

The topics I explored will, I hope, inspire many to investigate, defend and dispute their positions and opinions on subjects and discourses that matter to them. To change traditional social and cultural principles and practices, particularly those phrased in terms of equal rights, we need to begin by changing people's perceptions and attitudes. Women need a different mind-set, to step out of indifference and to stop ignoring the signs of change.

I would like to end this essay with the words of Maria Montessori, the first woman to graduate from medical school in Italy in 1896, and an activist in the emancipation of women (and children):

Propagated by ignorance, the plague remained dreaded and invincible for thousands of years. People of all nations accused their enemies of using poisoned needles to spread the plague. Thus, while blaming others, no people of any nation thought to look within their own environment for the invisible source of their suffering.

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WOMEN ACTIVATING LEADERSHIP

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This paper, drawing on a book by and about women who combine leadership and activism, explores links between collective action and women's structural powerlessness. It identifies some of the tensions in feminist accounts of women leaders, and the ways in which women's initiatives can go unrecorded as 'leadership'.

Introduction

Women, leadership and activism. We rarely see those terms used together among Australian researchers. When feminists write about the Australian women's movement we do of course explore activism but we usually avoid the topic of women's leadership. Similarly, when researchers turn their attention to questions of women and leadership, as has happened increasingly during the 1990s, we generally ignore the question of women's activism. Why are leadership and women's activism so rarely explored together?

The answer is complex. The influence of women's liberation, which instilled an ethic of women working and acting equally in movement feminism, and the isolation and backlash invariably faced by women in leadership have combined to make many feminists reject the leadership label for themselves (and for other women). In Australia the emphasis on sisterhood has made most feminists reluctant to criticise women leaders, in the interests of womanly solidarity and the valuing of femaleness (Eisenstein, 1996). Yet the collective impulse among Australian feminists has had its own critics. From at least the 1970s, Aboriginal and immigrant women have rightly challenged the discourse of solidarity as an assimilationist practice which inhibits a politics of difference (Huggins, 1994; Yeatman, 1994). Other feminists criticise the strategic value of a focus on 'women and leadership'. Amanda Sinclair (1998), for instance, expresses concern that such a focus is too narrow since it risks characterising women as 'the problem'; it may be more effective, she argues, to problematize the concept of leadership itself. Some writers go further, suggesting we should avoid the topic of leadership altogether. Jill Blackmore (1999, p. 222) for example, wonders whether feminists should reject "the focus on leadership" since "it is the biggest barrier to gender equality". Ironically, Blackmore has herself just produced a book-length study of the gendered discourses of leadership, in which she concludes that the masculinism that suffuses the concept remains all but impossible to avoid.

Although we understand the frustration that prompts Blackmore's, we disagree with her strategy of avoidance. There are good reasons for turning a feminist lens on the concept and practice, particularly if we link that focus to women's activism. Firstly, as Blackmore herself states, with managerial texts tending to technicise leadership as a set of generic competencies the concept is being drained of its social, political and ethical dimensions (Blackmore, 1999, p. 5). Secondly, women who view what they do as leadership are rare, and this hinders them taking on more formal leadership roles (Sinclair, 1998; Kirner & Raynor, 1999; Blackmore, 1999). Thirdly, unless the concept of leadership is understood as relative to dominant power and gender relations the entrenched nexus of leadership, rationality and masculinity will remain shrouded in normality (Eveline, 1994). We suggest, therefore, that feminists need to examine how the ruling concept of leadership can be expanded by linking it to accounts of activism, collaboration and empowerment.

To illustrate our case we turn to a recent collection called *Carrying the Banner: Women, Leadership and Activism in Australia* (1999). The book had its genesis in 1996-97, when the editors envisaged a contribution that would celebrate the 1999 centenary of women's suffrage in Western Australia. The

resulting book, declares the introduction, is “a different kind of monument, not the sort erected to men’s successes ... a patchwork of chapters by and about women leaders, in which some little-known or unnamed achievements would be stitched to some more renowned emblems” (Eveline, 1999, p. 4). Here then we turn to the stories in that book in order to flesh out some preliminary ideas about empowerment, collective action and leadership.

A rich legacy

For more than a century, in countless marches and demonstrations, feminists have carried their banners and chanted their demands. They have won campaigns and lost others. Throughout, they have struggled to retain a sense of sisterhood and solidarity, the rich legacy of passionate commitment left by their activist foremothers. A century ago, as Joan Williams (1999) illustrates in *Carrying the Banner*, West Australian suffragists compiled a mile of signatures in the pursuit of voting rights. If we were to make a list of West Australian women who have taken public action since then, on justice for themselves and their communities, it would stretch at least that symbolic mile. *Carrying the Banner* celebrates that long history of women’s activism: a tradition of women taking the lead in workplaces, politics, communities, health, education and governance but doing so, very often, in ways which they do not celebrate as ‘leadership’.

Reluctant leaders

For many of the contributors to *Carrying the Banner*, ‘leader’ is a term that generates discomfort when applied to themselves. For all of them, taking a leading role means doing leadership very differently from the conventional approach of taking the limelight and leading the troops. In wishing to avoid characterising themselves as ‘leaders’ these writers are similar to many other women in leading positions, as Sinclair (1998, p. 10) shows in her study: “Women generally found it quite difficult to talk about themselves, and themselves as leaders, describing it as ‘feeling self-indulgent’.” The women writing in *Carrying the Banner* show no evidence that they worried about self-indulgence. Rather, their concern was with being labelled with a term which for them symbolised individualism, self-interest and domination. They give a number of reasons for their lack of affinity with the notion of leadership, all of which hint at their need to countermand the relative powerlessness of women in a male dominated and masculinist society. To quote but two of them:

Women are all too often reluctant leaders ... We mostly tread carefully and quietly at the top because we are so acutely aware that many men feel uncomfortable when a woman leads or holds power (Shorter, 1999, p. 132).

Leadership has been far from my mind, and even now seems alien, a masculine construct which bears little resemblance to what I have been doing for the last twenty-five years (Giles, 1999, p. 43).

In similar vein, Donella Caspersz (1999, p. 153) speaks for many of the contributors when she writes:

I prefer to see myself as an ‘activist’ rather than a ‘leader’. Activism better describes what I think is the crux of leadership: that is, leadership equals trying to change things for the better.

Activism

Amanda Sinclair (1998, p. 13) uses the notion of ‘enacting’ leadership, which for her means leadership which is “produced in words and actions, in images and artefacts, and it requires constant demonstration to be sustained”. Our point is that the women writing in *Carrying the Banner* are ‘activating leadership’, which adds the activist component to Sinclair’s concept of enacting. From the stories they tell we gain a sense of how extensively activism defines their identities. In fact we find them coming to leadership through activism. Leadership is born of their perceived need to act on an issue; mounting a campaign or pursuing a cause necessarily prompts a form of leadership. Leadership is integral to the action while the activity prompts the demand for leadership.

For activists the idea of leadership is antithetical to the philosophical premises upon which social movements are based – collectivity, mutual support and change for the greater good. Wendy Weeks (1996, pp. 22-23) illustrates that premise as follows:

The history of white western feminist action has been in groups coming together to create a programme, organise an event or develop a campaign. Observation suggests that often one or two women initiated action, but what was significant was that the group or collective became the ‘voice’ of the women, subsuming individual identities and keeping the issue in the forefront.

Subsuming individual identities demands a generosity of spirit that is foreign to the image of the competent, hard-nosed, individualist leader fashioned by managerial agendas. In mounting any activist campaign or feminist project it is often the case that one or two women will carry the responsibility, the planning, and the bulk of the hands-on work. Yet the idea that the effort has been a cooperative and collective one remains an essential part of the feminist face generated by the women’s movement. Most of the contributors in *Carrying the Banner* saw this self-presentation as perfectly legitimate in getting the job done, since ‘the job’ entailed not only the task at hand but also projecting a positive image of an active and engaged feminism. Pat Giles, whose work in the union movement, in national and international politics and in myriad community organisations upholds this image of shared collectivity, writes:

The philosophy of the modern women’s movement that we work cooperatively, sharing skills and rotating executive positions, is one with which I am perfectly comfortable. Obviously this does not translate easily into bureaucratic systems, but I am frequently reminded that women together often work in generous and constructive ways, circumventing hierarchical barriers and log jams (Pat Giles, 1999, p. 43).

Barbara Buick, with a long history of feminist lobbying in Papua New Guinea and Australia and a founding member of Western Australia’s Equal Opportunity tribunal portrays a similar view of the collaborative and altruistic spirit of activism:

There are many thousands of women like me who have worked through voluntary and/or professional organizations for most of their lives. Sometimes this leads to positions of responsibility, occasionally to a more prominent role. More often than not our names are unknown. Mostly the work is unpaid, although some of the skills we use derive from our work in a wide range of professional and semi-professional occupations. For us, agitation for improving the world around us is, in the vernacular of my friends in Papua New Guinea, more like ‘private bisnis’ (Buick, 1999, p. 197).

Theory vs action

Do these self-portrayals essentialise the diverse contributions of ‘women’? The tendency to characterise women as the ones who care about the world, society’s change agents as it were, is a common theme in the feminist literature on women activists and becoming so in studies of women and leadership (Adler *et al*, 1993; Blackmore, 1994; Grogan, 1996; Young, 1992). Ozga (1993, p. 11, cited in Blackmore, 1999, p. 57) typifies that research:

Women emphasize cohesiveness. They are much less individualistic and spend time fostering an integrative culture and climate ... women cope more readily with ‘routine stress’ and defuse conflict. They do not engage in displays of anger as control mechanisms and hence may be judged as weak ... Group activities are much more highly valued by women than men.

This woman-centred perspective draws heavily on cultural feminism, and has been criticised by some feminist theorists as essentialising women's role as 'the mothers' of social justice and the nurturers of the world (Cornell, 1991; Yeatman, 1994; Blackmore, 1999). For most of the contributors to *Carrying the Banner*, however, debates within feminist theory were less important than identifying themselves as women who cared about feminist principles, whether or not they were prepared to call themselves 'feminist'. In this, they were as much driven by a pragmatic response to the politics and economics of their communities as by any romantic or outmoded view of women as the 'saviours' of civilisation. Their experiences show them that gender politics circumscribe discourses about women and leadership, and they strategically place themselves to plug the current leaching away of equity policy for women.

The concern of the need to protect feminist principles, that many of the contributors to *Carrying the Banner* convey, is well-founded. In the early 1990s the neo-traditional conservatism of the West Australian government, led by Richard Court, began to dismantle the focus on women as a target group for supportive policy. From the mid-1990s a similar discourse has dominated Federal government policy, so that increasingly equity has been conceptualised as a choice that individual organisations can voluntarily exercise. This reinvention of liberalism's rights-oriented possessive individualism has made it increasingly difficult for feminists to argue for redistributive policy based on needs. In maintaining a stance which emphasises the collective over the individual and collaboration over competition the writers in *Carrying the Banner* are evoking their passion for a feminist principle. Just as significantly, they activate a pragmatic strategy for trying to keep the broader issues of gender politics on government and organisational agendas. The question of whether 'women' and 'men' are essentially the same or different, the 'umbrella' debate which has vexed feminist theorists since Mary Wollstonecraft (Pateman, 1989; Bacchi, 1990), is of far less concern than the pace of their lives, the pots they have on the boil, their passions, networks and visions.

Carrying the Banner therefore is not so much about whether women do leadership differently from men, but about a wide variety of women who activate leadership in ways that have much in common. Activating leadership entails what Allen (1996, p. 145) describes as getting "to know power better" by understanding "a theory of power to do". As the introduction to *Carrying the Banner* explains, the book's contributors reveal a crucial way in which their activating of leadership differs from the norm:

The usual image of the leader is of a towering figure exercising power over others. Yet the most frequent exercise of power for these women is their ability to give it away – their capacity to empower others. (Eveline, 1999, pp. 9-10).

For Pat Giles it was the satisfaction of seeing other women empowered which formed the heart of leadership as she activated it:

When I pause to recollect, satisfaction comes from having spread a little empowerment, as this is the means by which all women's lives can be enhanced. This is a vastly different concept from that of self-promotion (1999, p. 43).

Val Marsden, by contrast, focusses on the style as much as the process. Val writes about her time as the inaugural Co-ordinator of WIRE:

I came to liken our new approach (to leadership) to that of a conductor of an orchestra made up of expert players in their own right, rather than a general in charge of the troops. It is a model of 'supported leadership' which means in practice a sharing of the load (1999, pp. 179-180).

Among feminists the expectation that the sisterhood will avoid doing leadership 'like a man' has been part of the larger struggle against a patriarchal state. As Eisenstein (1996, pp. 87-89) shows this could make life particularly difficult for the 'femocrat' whose roots were in the women's movement, but whose final allegiance lay with her employer. For the women in bureaucratic positions who tell their stories in *Carrying the Banner* the answer to the dilemma of taking a 'mandarin or missionary' approach lies in privileging a feminist identity over and above that of being an agent of government.

To quote Annie Goldflam (1999, p. 225) "In taking on genuinely feminist leadership roles, we are challenging the foundations of patriarchal structures".

Paying the price

What happens when women do challenge those patriarchal structures? They can encounter resistance, bias and a marked degree of isolation. Fay Gale (1999, p. 136), for example, faced "a lot of opposition from women as well as men", when she became Vice-Chancellor of UWA. Some colleagues in that old established centre of learning, and a few in the wider West Australian community, took it as a personal affront that a woman was now leading the way forward, and let her know in ways which threatened to damage her professional standing and destroy her personal well-being. The way of the woman leader, therefore, can be an isolating and dangerous experience. Ex-senator and anti-nuclear activist Jo Vallentine, for example, has always been prepared to go to gaol for her beliefs, and in fact was cooling her heels in a Belgian gaol (for demonstrating against the Nato bombing of Kosovo) when *Carrying the Banner* was launched. Among the other contributors, sports leader and environmental activist Shirley de la Hunty has suffered a recent fire-bombing of her car and Carmen Lawrence (now a Federal politician, formerly a State Premier) has survived a prolonged attempt to ruin her credibility and her career.

Why does the groundbreaking woman leader evince such reactions? It is evident that just the mere fact of stepping into a leadership role makes a woman appear subversive. She's not supposed to be there. Some women leaders find they are positioned as activists whatever their intention, as Joan Winch (1999, p. 191) found when she lost several jobs for speaking out about the exploitation of nursing staff. In male-dominated organisations, women in leadership are often viewed as change agents, and as such bear the brunt of the social anxiety that surrounds the strong or outspoken woman (Kennedy, 1999; Crawford, 1999). Those who seek to promote gender equity further challenge the established order, which has historically worked to advantage men of a particular colour and class (Marsden, 1999; de la Hunty, 1999).

Activating leadership

The tension between women's activism and leadership is ongoing, as they attempt to juggle different 'recipes' of activism and more formal leadership roles. The path to activating leadership, therefore, is not for the faint-hearted. The constellation of women, activism and leadership blends passion, principle, courage, wisdom and vision. Principles of social action such as collectivity, mutual support and change for the greater good combine with the feminist principles of empowerment and autonomy in making visible and maintaining a focus on both the issue at hand and the quality of the lives it affects.

What is it that keeps these women going when the going gets tough? What grounds them and gives them their flair, passion and courage? For a start they have stitched together hybrid lives born of different cultures, different locations, proactive goals and changing times to shape rich complex identities which defy simple categorisation.

The roots that anchor the contributors to *Carrying the Banner* along their uneven journeys are the colours, sounds and smells of lives lived fully and generously. Josie Boyle (1999) writes of rolling around in acres of sturt peas and of newborn babes being rolled in the red bulldust of the Kalgoorlie outback; Debra Shorter (1999) tells of lying on her belly spreadeagled across a suburban bush track, dangling a thread in the gilgy-filled creek near her home; Annie Goldflam (1999), Barbara Buick (1999) and Rachel Cleland (1999) write of the lush greens of Papua New Guinea; Carmen Lawrence (1999) yearns for the stunning colours of the Kimberleys; while Mali Valamanesh (1999) remembers the vivid clothing and harsh countryside of Iran. For all these women, the pleasures of childhood mix with the urban landscape of rattling trams, roaring traffic, stuffy offices and political activism.

A key way in which the contributors deal with the failures and the put downs is through humour. Helen Creed, for example, found the slings and arrows of political scrutiny easier to bear with some humorous support. An outrageous remark made by WA Liberal politician Ross Lightfoot about an

industrial action, led by Helen, declared the incident to be “a disgraceful episode, where there was tonnes of unwashed linen. In fact, the linen looked a bit cleaner than did the union leader, Ms Creed, who was a disgrace. At least she should have had the decency to do her hair”. Helen goes on to say that several of her colleagues reflected on the likelihood of a male union leader ever being told to do his hair before appearing on camera. Promptly one female colleague presented Helen with a fold-up brush, complete with a mirror in the handle and several hairclips, which she dubbed the “Ross Lightfoot Survival Kit” (1999, p. 107).

Equally crucial is the ability of these women to pick up and carry on after their losses. Most significantly, they intimate that a recognition of one’s powerlessness lies at the heart of leadership. As the introduction to the book states: “coming to terms with one’s own times of powerlessness is a key lesson if empowerment of others is the aim.” Empowering others:

involves seeing ‘leadership’ as a practice that nobody can forswear. Yet if the project is one of empowerment, how do we deal with those times when our own powerlessness seems irrefutable?

Analysts of leadership rarely address that question. Instead... male-dominated institutions make invincibility emblematic of leadership....Self-aggrandisement, self-absorption and no-holds-barred aggression are not only expected, but also highly valued; there is no recognition that the powers of successful leadership are limited and fragile (Eveline, 1999, pp. 9-10).

In a very real sense the need for collective organisation is linked to the institutional, political and societal powerlessness of women. Feminists have understood for some time that power needs to be seen as productive, not simply as ‘the enemy’ (Butler & Scott, 1992). As Brown (1988, p. 207) argues, it is important to recognise power “for its potency and not just domination, as exciting and not only dangerous, as productive and not simply repressive”. Working collaboratively, according to most of the writers in *Carrying the Banner*, is a potent source of productive power. Activating leadership in this framework entails taking responsibility for the task at hand and learning by doing and reflecting. As often as not, this means that what they do will go unrecorded as ‘leadership’.

The women telling their stories in *Carrying the Banner* use the lesson learnt through collective action to challenge their structural powerlessness. For Antoinette Kennedy (1999, p. 152), WA’s first woman judge: “My dream is that each woman will have a power base made up of every other woman”. A further outcome, and one which most of them would seemingly view as unimportant, is that by pursuing their collective visions they have expanded the ways in which women can activate leadership.

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THE POLITICS OF 'TEACHING 'MANAGING DIVERSITY' IN THE UNIVERSITY⁽²⁰⁰⁰⁾

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This paper explores our dilemmas, as feminists involved in the research and development of equal employment opportunity, in designing and mounting an undergraduate unit on 'managing diversity'. We identify some of the tensions between the culturalist aims of the managing diversity movement and the redistributive goals that generated affirmative action and EEO strategies and suggest how an analysis of those tensions may promote increased student understanding of the topic. Secondly, we assess how a unit may juxtapose industrial relations and human resource management concepts to the benefit of curricula in both. In planning a new unit, moreover, it is not only the content which needs to be considered but also the students' prior learning experience and the politics of persuading one's colleagues of the proposal's worth. Thus an account of these more pragmatic issues is integrated into the discussion.

Introduction

In July 1999 the Australian Government funded its Productive Diversity Partnership (managed by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs). The Partnership was designed to use the lessons learnt in universities and TAFE's to generate a broad discussion of diversity management in Australia and to provide the resources for diversity training and education that would attract business interest and support. The Productive Diversity strategy involved 3 stages:

- resource development through 8 funded research projects;
- a major conference and pre-conferences showcasing that research;
- the refinement and development of the subsequent resource material to generate "curricula material and management tools for use by business managers and diversity management educators in Australia" (Summary, Productive Diversity Partnerships, p2).

At the time of writing this paper (November, 2000) research and conferences have taken place and resource development is underway. We were pleased to see this because when we set out to design a unit called 'Managing Diversity' at the beginning of 1999 resource materials suitable for university teaching were sadly lacking. What was not lacking however, was debate over the concept itself, debate which was being fostered by a number of feminist theorists based in Australia and New Zealand (for examples Humphries and Grice 1995, Bacchi 1999b, Wajcman 1999, Sinclair, 2000). Before outlining the gist of those debates, however, we place them in the Australian context.

Background to diversity movement in Australia

The business case for 'productive diversity' was highlighted in 1994 by the Industry Commission's Task Force on Leadership and Management Skills. The Task Force's report *Enterprising Nation* (also known as the Karpin Report) identified "Capitalising on the talents of diversity" as one of five key areas for immediate action for upgrading management performance.

By 1996, however, Government research was indicating that Australian businesses appeared not to have taken up the challenge to use their human resources as a competitive tool. It was apparent that many businesses did not see the management of diversity as a priority for their own business.

In response the Australian government turned to its public services to deliver the goods on diversity management. In 1998 the Australian Public Service Commission issued Guidelines for 'Managing Workplace Diversity' programs to be in place by 2000. Universities and TAFE's began to respond to this not only in regard to recruiting and monitoring for diversity, but also to encourage curriculum changes which would reflect and assist that diversity.

At the same time (1997) the Dept of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs commissioned the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) to explore more deeply why Australian companies were not establishing Productive Diversity work practices and management principles. That research discovered something that distinguished the Australian ideas on Managing Diversity from their North American forerunners: that business wanted to keep a strong focus on gender in its strategies for diversity management. Indeed this concern for gender patterns had also been the case with universities and TAFEs.

Despite the evident popularity of 'managing diversity' in the US and increasing interest in Australia, debate about the benefits of the approach has been heated. The two of us sit on our university's Equal Opportunity Advisory Committee, so we are aware of how a focus on diversity is being introduced as a complement and at times a challenge to the concerns and procedures of equal opportunities. Through our research projects we are also aware of the debates between those who promote diversity strategies and those who caution against it. We're keen to introduce students to these debates so they can develop wide ranging and sophisticated analytical frameworks for understanding the issues. Feminist researchers have provided most of the cautionary tales about the diversity movement, although not exclusively so. So what are those criticisms?

Feminist debates

The concept of managing diversity grew out of affirmative action (AA) and equal employment opportunity (EEO) policies (Kramar 1996). Importantly however critics of the concept argue that diversity management represents a significantly different perspective on equity issues (Humphries and Grice 1995, Bacchi 1999b). Such critics itemise the differences between the discourses of equal employment opportunity and managing diversity as follows:

Different targets

Focussed on eliminating prejudice, sexism, racism and discrimination, AA and EEO were primarily supposed to benefit the targeted groups or classes of workers; By contrast, the diversity movement focusses on the financial and competitive advantages of valuing and managing a heterogeneous workforce, stressing the benefits to the organization and to its complement of white, male employees (Baker 1996:140; Kramar 1999). The Productive Diversity Partnership Strategy is keen to maintain this difference. In the summary of the research done on business concerns about managing diversity the report says: "Confusion among business managers was also caused by other terms and concepts such as Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action – these inadvertently being perceived as Productive Diversity-related initiatives" (2000, p5).

Groups vs individuals

AA/EEO places the focus on equalising differences between groups, while for managing diversity the emphasis is on responding to individual needs and aspirations (Humphries & Grice 1995: 22, Bacchi 1999b).

Varying concern for inequality

In AA/EEO frameworks, unequal outcomes are strategically challenged. Managing diversity adherents, by contrast, do not necessarily see differing outcomes as problematic (Humphries & Grice 1995:23, Bacchi 1999a).

Resistance vs acceptance

AA/EEO is said to generate a high degree of resistance among white males; managing diversity is said to 'explicitly include' white males in its discourse, and therefore to overcome the resistance of this dominant group (Thomas and Ely, 1996).

It is somewhat misleading, however, to compare the features of EEO and 'managing diversity' as if each of these approaches is uniform. Both approaches are used in specific historical and political contexts and can be deployed by government, business and activists themselves to serve particular goals. Feminist critiques of EEO and affirmative action have shown, for example, that a focus on the 'bottom line' became a key strategy for selling EEO to business during the 1980s (Poiner and Wills, 1991; Cockburn, 1991) and Bacchi (1996) demonstrates in her study of six countries how managerial 'ownership' of equity strategy was built in to the development of AA policy as a way of gaining organizational compliance. The stress placed on organizational benefits in managing diversity approaches therefore is in many ways an extension of the way that EEO strategies were shaped to serve the needs of business economics and government legitimacy.

Increase redistributive justice

Moreover, the criticism that an individual focus is supplanting an emphasis on target groups obscures two important, inter-related elements:

- why the diversity movement has been so important to many activists;
- the ineffectiveness of AA policies that concentrated on erasing differences.

For a start, the diversity movement did not stem from the needs of individuals *per se* but out of the need for recognition of, and redistributive justice for, previously ignored, marginalised or deprived groups (Young, 1990; Fraser, 1997). In Australia most gender equity policies were devised and brought into being in the 1980s. Although there were also policies for Aboriginal and non-English-speaking background peoples the policies devised by 'femocrats' tended to treat 'women' as a homogenous group (Eisenstein, 1996). In one sense the women's liberation movement aided the assumption of homogeneity among women, and this was particularly so in the Australian context. By instilling an ethic of women working and acting collectively in the women's movement Australian feminists hid or downplayed conflicts between various groups and individuals. Ideas of sisterly solidarity and unity, therefore, helped generate policy in which 'women' gained a core place on the list of so-called disadvantaged groups (Eisenstein 1996).

Theoretical critiques of EEO developments arose from a number of quarters, including O'Brien (1984) account of 'commatization', critiques that such pressures for equal opportunity with men presupposed a male norm (MacKinnon 1989, Bacchi 1990) and the theory that the focus on 'women's disadvantage' allowed 'men's advantage' to remain unremarkable (Eveline 1993). These critiques of the ways in which institutional discourses 'normalised' the dominant groups and 'othered' those at the margins (in this case 'women') owed their origins to a great extent to de Beauvoir's (1952) account of how the feminine is constructed as the deficient 'other' to the masculine.

From the 1970s the collective impulse of feminism came under fire, in particular from black women, working class women and lesbians who argued that the strategies being developed by the women's movement privileged white, Anglocentric norms. In Australia, such critiques came mainly from Aboriginal and immigrant women who took the feminist critiques of sexism and used them to show that feminist theory could be blind to any analysis but gender, in the same way as masculinist discourses were gender-blind. Australian feminism was not alone in responding to such critiques. As Nancy Fraser (1997:7) notes, between the mid 1980s and the late 1990s the meaning of 'difference' in US feminist theory "shifted from 'gender difference' to 'differences among women' and then again to 'multiple intersecting differences.'" The idea of 'managing diversity' therefore gains credibility from interest groups concerned with the diversity movement. Such groups tend to see the proliferation of differences in a managing diversity framework as a way of countering the assimilationist tendency of EEO. Indeed they also view the increasing individualism of that movement as a realistic counter to the backlash experienced by target groups who are singled out for remedial or redistributive action (Kymlicka, 1989; Fraser, 1997:2).

White males, who are generally absent from EEO target groups, certainly voiced their criticisms of EEO and it is important to recognise the ways in which activists and policymakers responded to those

criticisms. In Australia such criticism was particularly strong in the late eighties and early nineties when the Affirmative Action for Women Act was being brought into play, with male-dominated employer groups being particularly vocal (Business Council of Australia, 1986). However, as Bacchi (1999b) points out, resistance to the policy diminished markedly among employers when it was placed within a discourse of 'equity equals good business sense'. That discourse gave equity officers and human resource managers a firmer foothold in organizational planning. It is not surprising, therefore, that the framework of 'managing diversity', which depends to a large extent on equity practitioners to drive it, should also include such ideas about organizational benefits. Nor indeed is it out of alignment with the pragmatics of equity practice to ensure that the discourse of inclusivity that drives the diversity movement should also tend to explicitly include white males, if the aim is to soothe and allay their overt suspicions and fears. The point here is that the concepts and language of both EEO and managing diversity are subject to 'capture' by particular political and economic interests, including those of social movements.

The important question for policymakers, therefore, as Nancy Fraser (1997) argues, is to determine whether the goals of equity and diversity programs (whether run through EEO strategies, managing diversity ideas or a combination of both) need an exclusively redistributive strategy (for eg when dealing with class issues) a recognition of diversity which cuts across other axes of difference (eg gays and lesbians) or a combination of redistributive and recognition policies (eg on the grounds of gender and 'race').

Diversity as contested concept

Today, managing diversity is a highly contested concept. Managers often see 'managing diversity' as EEO under another name. Some EEO officers and people responsible for equity, on the other hand, tend to regard managing diversity as a 'sellout to management, an agenda aimed at sanitising a conflict-laden issue' which gives the appearance of dealing with inequalities that is no more than rhetoric (Sinclair forthcoming: 4). Others see it as an opportunity to keep equity issues on the agenda, in a context in which globalisation is forcing employers to face the downside of limited ethnic and cultural understandings, of the need for global competition for markets and highly-trained, culturally diverse staff (Greenslade, 1991).

Our interests

There were several elements in the managing diversity debates that caught our interest in mounting a unit of that name:

For a start we both teach in the Department of Organisational and Labour Studies at UWA in which arts, commerce and social science students take majors and units in IR and HRM. Part of our job is to elaborate the changing nature of labour markets and what that means for work organisations in national and international contexts. The effects of globalisation on Australian labour markets has its counterpart in the pressures for internationalisation in higher education. Australia is following the pattern of most Western democracies in that workforce diversity is increasing. A study cited by Amanda Sinclair in 1997 showed that in 1996 there were 187 ethnic groups in Australia and that women's engagement in the workforce continues to increase despite the efforts of some governments to return women to the home. Our workplaces are increasingly reflecting that diversity among its workers and to some extent its managers. According to the influential Workforce 2000 study in the US, women and immigrants now comprise 85% of the growth in the workforce. Research has indicated that while many Australian managers acknowledge the benefits of increasing diversity, they do not have the management skills or 'know how' to adequately address diversity issues. It is crucial for management and labour studies students to recognise and understand the conflicts that arise from that diversity.

Secondly, there is the question of what we are preparing students to do and to be. Many of our students will be or are hoping to be working in HRM occupations or in IR areas in which they will need to know about how equity and diversity are being managed (or mismanaged). Research has shown that those who are given responsibility for implementing managing diversity programs are facing high levels of role stress in their organisations. HR is designed to make the system run

smoothly and support the status quo, employment equity involves shaking up the system. So our second aim is to give students a framework for understanding the tensions they are likely to encounter when they go into their jobs.

Thirdly, we wanted to design a unit which would cater for the increasing diversity of our student population. Our faculty, Economics and Commerce at UWA, has a high proportion of overseas students (over 30%), and about half the students are women. As research on schools and universities has shown for a long time these students have diverse experiences of learning from the time they enter primary school. That means that what grabs their attention and therefore prompts them to learn at university level can also be quite different. The two of us are keen to recognise and utilise these diverse experiences in the units we teach, and to encourage the department as a whole to acknowledge diversity in its overall curriculum and teaching methods. Among our complement of units Trish teaches Asian Business, Joan teaches Women, Management and Organisations, and we both provide a gender and multicultural analysis in all our units. From our teaching experiences we've come to see how crucial those frameworks are for generating an inclusive curriculum. We also see how exciting that new material can be for many students. So in designing this unit we wanted the content and the teaching techniques to interweave in promoting an inclusive learning experience.

Fourthly, there's the educational issue of making students aware of trends developing in the business world. In the latter half of the 1990s Australia has begun to emulate the focus on diversity that began in the US during the 1980s. In that trend discussions about equity have moved away from a framework of 'equal opportunity' and towards one of 'managing diversity'. Today, it is clear that managing diversity has become a new growth industry in the US and that Australia is moving in the same direction. A US study in 1997 shows that 25% of the large organisations it examined were training supervisors in managing diversity. In Australia the pressure has been on business and government sectors to reach the same level of commitment.

Finally, in designing the unit our aim was to steer away from a decontextualised and a historical approach to workplace diversity and to situate student learning within the wider framework of social, political and historical literature such as that canvassed above. This goal presented us with some practical problems.

Debates, resources, legitimacy

Teaching on how to manage diversity in the workforce can encounter a number of problems. One criticism is the problem of 'category politics' (Bacchi, 1996) – that teachers usually end up mounting courses that single out women, Aboriginals, differently abled people, older people, and gays or lesbians, or they focus on gender, race and ethnicity, sexual preference, disability, age, etc. What is not usually done, 'is include time and space in our teaching to consider the dominant group Diversity is seen by dominant groups to be something to do with other people and it requires ingenuity to redirect this focus' (Sinclair, 2000:5), Our aim therefore was to place diversity in a broad historical context in order to show why people stereotype and how prejudice comes about.

Lessons from feminist sociology and political economy were important here, since they offer important challenges to the psychologizing that can dominate a managing diversity agenda. The reminder by Nancy Fraser (1997) that equity is necessarily about both economic and cultural justice has direct relevance to an analysis of EEO and managing diversity concepts and practices. It provides a way of weighing up, at least in theory, the relative merits of choosing to focus on cultural recognition, economic redistribution or a combination of the two when planning strategies for diverse but specific groups. The writings of Iris Young (1990) are also important for assessing how different groups as well as group differences are themselves implicated in the design and implementation of social justice policies.

The range of academic studies and analytical texts which provide historical and conceptual analyses of managing diversity are extensive in the USA but less prolific in Australia. Prasad *et al* (1997) is a useful resource but we decided against using the text in full because of its North American bias and its strictly critical flavour. Another North American text treats 'managing diversity' with more coverage of HRM concerns and strategies but we found its workplace focus too decontextualised and a historical for our purpose (Kossek and Lobel 1996). In the end we decided on a book of readings (as

happens often in IR teaching but rarely in HRM) which juxtaposes material from critical and strategic texts including some Australian content (such as Kramar 1996; 1999). The conceptual framework we have adopted involves an overall concern with making the construction of 'otherness' more visible, contextualised within the social and political frameworks of feminist theories of equality and difference, economic justice and cultural recognition. This framework and literature is used to generate questions around the case studies which students are invited to assess and critique in the formation of their own strategic planning projects.

In developing the case studies we drew on companies, government agencies and organizations which have won industry or government-sponsored awards for best practice in a range of areas including Family Friendly Workplaces, Affirmative Action and Aboriginal Employment. One of the things we wished to avoid was the framework that places people into mutually exclusive categories of 'women', 'migrants', 'Aboriginal', 'disabled', etc. So we sought out case studies which cut across all those categories, and in those cases where we found a lack of suitable material we cross-selected a number of Australian case studies and wrote them up into short, relevant and lively hypotheticals.

Our research with public sector organizations proved most fruitful in this regard, with support from government agencies, both federal and state, plus trade unions.

Convincing some of our colleagues that the department should mount a new unit, particularly one on 'managing diversity' to be taught from different disciplinary perspectives, required considerable consultation and careful planning. In an era of one-line budgets, the issue of getting the best from teaching resources was an issue for some. Consequently the need for market research was mooted. In the planning we had already consulted a number of colleagues in other universities, and we used the information we gained from them, along with the market research we subsequently did with prospective students, to argue the academic and economic viability of the unit.

Lastly there was the question of why we called it 'managing diversity'. Why not 'workplace diversity'? or 'sexism, racism and equity'? We chose the title for both pragmatic and scholarly reasons. As we point out above part of the politics of getting a new unit up is to generate support from colleagues and students. In our areas of teaching it's become a fact of life that anything with 'manage' in the title is popular with students and that carries weight with departments whose funding is directly linked to student numbers.

Conclusion

Our research in preparing for the unit confirmed our initial premise that concern for equity issues in the curriculum of IR and HRM can usefully cohere on the topic of 'managing diversity'. We may do students a disservice, however, if we teach them about 'diversity' purely within a technicist and decontextualised framework, or if we concentrate on a 'valuing of individual differences' approach. Australia is following the pattern of most Western democracies in which workforce diversity is increasing. So it is important for HRM and IR students not only to value and learn about ways of managing that diverse resource but also to recognise and understand the conflicts that arise from the social, political and discursive processes which constrain and construct diversity among workers and managers alike, while affording them unequal opportunities.

In mounting the unit we learnt that currently there is no comparable topic among our university's units, and that university offerings in this regard in Australia are invariably confined to an occasional lecture. Our central aim in designing the unit was to give students a depth of knowledge, skill and understanding on two fronts: firstly, about the topic as a workplace issue and secondly, about their own experiences of working with diversity so that their analytical frameworks are informed by a qualitative mix of self-knowledge and socio-political awareness.

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WHAT IS A BUSINESS WOMAN? VIEW FROM THE MICRO-ECONOMY OF A BOLIVIAN CITY⁽²⁰⁰⁰⁾

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If entrepreneurs are society's innovators, what is the role of businesspeople in poor countries – particularly, the small-scale businesspeople that make up the majority? In Sucre, Bolivia, many women are independent business owners, recognised as such by their spouses, families and people in their community. Does their role as businesswomen mean they can act as forces for positive, locally driven economic change – despite the small scale and relative poverty in which they work?

Case studies collected over a period of six years suggest that women's businesses (as well as men's) generally have very limited ability to effect economic change in Sucre's poor economy. The constraints which businesses face in an environment like Sucre are great. However, women's recognised role as businesspeople does mean that they can control resources, take advantage of opportunities, and gradually stimulate change.

Introduction: Business and entrepreneurship in poor economies

Wanted: Entrepreneurs

The role of an entrepreneur is innovation; literally, the entrepreneur is one who “goes between” – bringing together people, ideas and resources to create something new. Entrepreneurs are lateral, creative thinkers and change-bringers. They are people who “carry out new combinations” (Schumpeter, 1934) and “create organisations” (Gartner, 1988, p. 26).¹

The most familiar manifestation of an entrepreneur is a businessperson – someone who mobilises capital and labour in innovative ways to meet market needs. In practice, of course, not all businesspeople are really entrepreneurs, nor are all entrepreneurs businesspeople. But business does provide a wide field for the exercise of entrepreneurial abilities. When looking for entrepreneurs, businesses are a good place to start.

In poor economies, which suffer from high unemployment, stagnant cash flow, low levels of social services, insufficient infrastructure, and so forth, entrepreneurial qualities are sorely needed. Resources are scarce and poorly distributed, and people face sharp constraints on their opportunities for education, work and self-realisation. Ideas are out there, but continually battered down by costs, obstacles, and the memory of past failures.

Entrepreneurs are needed to make new connections, find ways around constraints, and create ways to maximise and distribute resources. But who are these entrepreneurs? Are they the businesspeople? Are they businesswomen? And can they, truly, make change happen?

Microbusiness to the rescue?

The international development field, seeking to act as a catalyst for locally driven social and economic change, has gone looking for its entrepreneurs among local businesspeople – specifically, small-scale business or “microenterprise”. The actual scale of “small-scale” business varies widely.

¹ Quoted in Sharma and Chrisman 1999.

It encompasses self-employed sidewalk merchants with only a few dollars in stock, as well as shop-owners and tradespeople with thousands of dollars' investment.¹

Responding to the widespread presence of small-scale enterprise in poor economies, a key anti-poverty strategy of the past twenty years has involved support to these businesspeople, often referred to as "microentrepreneurs", via access to microloans and/or business development services (such as management courses and marketing help). From the World Bank to the tiniest local non-governmental organisations, development interventions have embraced microentrepreneurs as key to unlocking the potential of stagnant economies and creating healthier societies. The fact that many microentrepreneurs are women has been seen as particularly positive – because of studies which have shown a strong tendency for women's income to be spent on household well being (see eg. Blumberg 1993).

The flexibility and adaptability of small-scale enterprise, as well as its important contribution to national economies, has been recognised (eg. Cook and Binford, 1990; MacGaffey, 1987; Buechler and Buechler, 1992). Relying on "the intensive exploitation of available labour, organised through personal relationships, trust, and a network of exchanges and obligations" (Roberts, 1978, pp. 128-129), many small-scale businesses provide employment and ensure delivery of local services even when larger or more formalised enterprises would be forced to shut their doors.

Microenterprise is flexible and adaptive. But is it innovative – or simply reactive? Can it really stimulate change in poor economies and build healthier societies? And if so – why hasn't it done so yet?

To the rescue of microbusiness

The viewpoint of the international development community is that microenterprise has great but unrealised potential – its potential must be unlocked. Certainly, the academic literature acknowledges that microentrepreneurs often work in adverse social and economic settings: frequently low trust, unstable economic environments where institutions for protection of property rights, enforcement of contracts and provision of services are weakly developed (eg. MacGaffey, 1987; De Soto, 1989).

Facing such constraints, the owners of small-scale businesses are forced to innovate. As Ulf Hannerz states, "social resources are created and used to compensate for inadequate technical and financial resources" (Hannerz, 1985, p. 148). In Bolivia, for example, the long-term social trading relationship between buyers and sellers known as the *casera* relationship – similar to the *pratik* relationship described by Mintz (1961) in Haiti – can be economically advantageous for both the buyer and the seller, cutting down on transaction costs as trust develops between the two parties. The merchant benefits from a steady clientele; the buyer from discounts, quality advantages, and availability of desired products.

Microentrepreneurs may stretch and combine limited resources in amazing ways – but they have too little to work with. Many microentrepreneurs don't have a "cash cushion" to absorb shocks. They rely on the business for a significant portion of their livelihood and often have no social safety net – a strong disincentive to undertaking risky innovations. Market information, higher-level technical skills, and other key resources may also be lacking. Observing these gaps, "microenterprise development organisations" enter and attempt to provide solutions – with varying degrees of success. The goal of such organizations is to enable microenterprise to perform to potential – to fulfil its entrepreneurial role and drive the transformation of communities.

To date, however, this "support for microenterprise development" has mainly taken the form of working capital loans, marketing assistance, and courses in business management – useful, but limited. Analysing the impact of such programs is beyond the scope of this paper.² However, the importance which development professionals attribute to small-scale business as a motor for

¹ The cutoff for the 'microenterprise' definition in the international development field is generally five or fewer employees. Some organisations make a distinction between "small scale economic activity" (generally self-employment at subsistence level) and microenterprise.

² On impact assessment see eg. Harper M. and Finnegan, G. *Value for Money: Impact of Small Enterprise Development*, Intermediate Technology Publications 1998.

economic change is huge. In the 1980s, for instance, the World Bank sanctioned about three billion dollars in credit lines for small businesses.¹ Most “integral community development” programs worldwide now include an enterprise component. But the real potential and limitations of small-scale businesses are poorly understood.

Micro businesswomen: A force for change?

Chief among the appeals of microenterprise development has been its focus on women. “Increasingly,” writes Malcolm Harper (1998, p. 9), “support programs are being designed to promote income-generation activities and micro and small enterprise development for women.” Many of the world’s small-scale businesspeople are women, and many poor women have been encouraged by outside organisations to launch small-scale businesses, with the goal of generating a degree of financial independence for them and improved livelihood for their families.

Yet in focusing on women’s businesses, many programs stumble in their overestimation of the control women exercise over their business earnings once these reach the household. One study of clients of the Grameen Bank’s flagship microenterprise loan program in Bangladesh, for instance, found that Grameen loans were nominally taken out by women for their “businesses”, but were often used by male family members (Rahman, 1999). When women do not control resources directly, they have little leverage to stimulate change in their communities as independent entrepreneurs.

Yet when women can truly launch businesses of their own and maintain control of these, the opportunities are much greater. In Bolivia, for instance, women are the traditional retail traders and believed to be the most reliable money-managers for households. When a woman starts a business, this business is her own. Though in some cases her husband may “help” in her business (as she may “help” him in his), the lines of ownership are well demarcated (Eversole 1998, p. 128). Thus, it would seem that women entrepreneurs are well placed to control resources and act as forces for positive economic change in their households and communities. The question is: do they do so?

Women’s businesses in Sucre, Bolivia

While the “microentrepreneurs” of urban Bolivia’s streets, markets, mini-shop-fronts and back rooms are both male and female, women dominate the retail trade and have a strong presence as business owners in service and production sectors as well. Sucre, a city of about 165,000 people, is the capital of one of Bolivia’s poorest regions.² In Sucre, microenterprise is plentiful; few business have more than two or three employees, and most tend to be small, low-capital, and household-centred. Slightly better-off downtown shops, wholesaling operations, tourism operations and small factories are also present, and women are visible as owners and co-owners in these. However, the majority of Sucre’s businesswomen – and businessmen – work at a very small scale, as “microentrepreneurs”³.

Petty retailers

Many of the products available in Sucre are sold from the market stalls of independent vendors. While there are a handful of small walk-in grocery stores and a few boutique-like shops downtown, as well as various tiny shops (hardware, stationery and the like) in the Campesino Market area, the majority of Sucre’s retail commerce is carried out in the city’s marketplaces and, to a lesser extent, on the street.

¹ Harper and Finegan, 1998:2.

² The department of Chuquisaca has Bolivia’s second-lowest production per capita (after Potosí department) and its second-lowest growth rate (after Pando department) Cámara de Industria y Comercio de Chuquisaca, 1995 (Data are from 1992). According to principal poverty indicators, 77% of families in the department have “unmet basic needs” (quoted in ALA 1997:6).

³ Data for the following sections come from Eversole 1998, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, based on field research carried out from August 1, 1996 to May 30, 1997 and August-October 1994; and follow-up research in 1998, 1999 and 2000. The methodologies used were semi-structured open-ended interviews with business owners and participant observation in businesses, microenterprise-development organisations, and as a local customer.

Market vending is not a temporary or informal activity; rather, market vendors are established merchants. These vendors have usually been at their posts for many years, particularly in the older markets. The majority of vendors are women, as retail trading is traditionally a women's activity in Bolivia; in one survey of local retailers women were 88% of the total.¹

Women control their own stalls, own their stock, and pay rent to the *sindicato* (merchant's guild) which in turn pays the city or other property owner. Market women work in strictly regulated environments, where each product may only be sold in a specified section of the market, and categories of stalls are strictly defined: for instance, flour vendors may sell oats and dried beans, but not pasta. Raisin and nuts vendors may sell flour, but not fresh fruit or baking tins.

Street-selling is market-selling's informal counterpart. Street sellers tend to have less stock than their market-vending counterparts; they have usually been in business less time and are often among the poorest microentrepreneurs, earning barely enough to cover subsistence living costs. Some pay daily fees (50 *centavos* a day, about 10 US cents) to City Hall; others operate illegally in areas (such as many sections of sidewalk) where selling is not permitted. Over time, street sellers may become market vendors, often via political action in which they unite with other street sellers and pressure local government or powerful political hopefuls to open up market space for them.

Market vendors, on the other hand, seldom leave their market stalls to open shops. The markets remain popular shopping destinations for nearly all Sucre customers. At the same time, stiff competition – in which rows of merchants offer identical goods to a near-saturated market – and constraints on innovation imposed by the regulated marketplaces, limit these businesses. With gross before-wage earnings of around one or two hundred US dollars per month for full-time selling,² there is little expansion potential for market stalls.

Though earnings figures are small, women market retailers frequently achieve earnings at or above what their husbands may earn with wage labour in construction, transport, or other typical areas of employment. For married women, this means a secure economic position in their households. Retail selling is also a visible, public role for women entrepreneurs. The ability of even street sellers to pressure for market space suggests that this visibility has its advantages.

Thus, women entrepreneurs in the petty retailing sector may be able to attain relative economic security and even, ultimately, a small measure of political voice to influence change. However, petty retailing's ability to impact the economic fabric of a city like Sucre is extremely limited. The consumer pool on which these retailers draw will remain small and cash-poor until people and money can be attracted from other quarters. The retailers can only respond to the city's economic circumstances; they are not in a position to shape them.

Producers in key sectors

Sucre imports much and exports little. Its employment opportunities are extremely limited and many of its people are poor.³ Economic change would require creating value locally – preventing cash from flowing out of the community, and attracting cash in via external customers and investors. While economic development alone cannot solve the problems of poverty, it can give communities resources to work with. Without it, Sucre continues to rely heavily on the central government and outside agencies to meet the basic needs of its population.

Production, retail and service activities all create value; however, in the absence of a strong retail location such as a port, production and service businesses are the most likely to draw money into a community from outside. Sucre, unfortunately, does not have particularly strong production or service businesses. In production, Sucre has one petroleum enterprise,⁴ a relatively large cement

¹ Eversole 1998:201, a survey of clients of a microenterprise support program offering small loans

² Minimum wage in Bolivia is around \$43 US dollars a month; usually the entrepreneur relies on her own labour with one or more children (or an unemployed husband) "helping" (unpaid) part-time.

³ A 1992 Bolivian study found that about 40% of Sucre households are poor and an additional 22% are borderline poor, based on an analysis of unsatisfied basic needs. (Jetté *et. al* 1998, p. 69).

⁴ Petroleum and natural gas are Sucre's major export products, both to other Bolivian regions and abroad, with a 1992 department-wide production valued at about 200,000,000 bs. (about US\$66.6

factory, and a handful of small factories (chocolates, hats, wood products, sausages, and so forth); the rest of Sucre's manufacturers are artisan-level microenterprises which produce primarily for the local market. Sucre's manufacturing sector is not seen to have high "export" potential.¹ In the service area, universities (four of them) are the main economic drivers attracting money in, and there is also a small tourism sector (primarily hotels). The remaining local services, from computer installation and repair to cooked curbside lunches, cater principally to the local market.

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The production sector in Sucre is dominated by the "artisan" trades – carpentry, metal mechanics, tailoring and so forth – which tend to be traditionally men's areas. Women producers tend to work in the areas of sewing, sweater-knitting (both machine and by hand), and production of foodstuffs (bread, cakes, jam, sausages, candy, chocolate, etc.). Women's manufacturing businesses tend to be home-based, with low earnings. Even among a group of microcredit users,⁴ earnings for women's manufacturing businesses only averaged around \$60 US dollars per month.⁵

Chocolate production is an area where both women and men are actively involved. Chocolate is also one of the few products Sucre regularly sells in other parts of Bolivia. When Bolivians think of Sucre, they think of chocolate, particularly, the creme bonbons which are the city's best-known product. Sucre's chocolate producers – five small factories and ten home-based microenterprises – turn out around 15,000 kilos of chocolate per month. The five factories produce the great bulk of this.

Both men and women are involved as owners and managers in the chocolate sector. The tiniest chocolate enterprises tend to be owned and run by women, or by couples. The factories vary: one is owned by a woman, two by men, one by a couple, and one by a partnership involving both men and women. Women manage two of the five chocolate factories.

None of Sucre's chocolate makers export their products; and even in-country they face stiff competition from other South American chocolates. With their less-sophisticated machinery and low production levels, Sucre's producers cannot compete with Chilean and Argentinean factories in price. At the same time, Sucre chocolate's less-than-elegant packaging (and producers' lack of market

million). Very little else is sold abroad, however, and the products sent to other Bolivian regions are also few.

¹ From a study commissioned by the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Export potential is calculated by comparing the size of the local manufacturing sector (versus the national manufacturing sector) to the local consumer population (versus the national consumer population).

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⁴ Presumably these are among the more economically stable small-scale businesses, as they have passed screening by loan officers

⁵ Based on a survey of clients of a microenterprise support program offering small loans (Eversole 1998)

contacts) prevent it from tapping into luxury niche markets. Thus, most of Sucre's chocolate producers are working under capacity; they could produce more, but they can't sell it.

Like chocolate-makers, other producers in Sucre face difficulties related to limited market access, low-tech machinery, and the need to transport most raw materials from elsewhere. Carpentry, for instance, is one of Sucre's largest sectors, and enjoys a strong demand for its goods from within the city and surrounding region. However, Sucre's many carpenters – estimates range from 150 to about a thousand¹ – work with basic, often rustic machinery, and sell to an almost exclusively local market.

Competition from cheaper, lower-quality furniture brought in from the wood-producing centre of Sta. Cruz has made retailing hard for carpenters, as has their small productive capacity and limited working capital. Therefore, most carpenters have chosen to focus on special orders rather than producing items for direct sale. As a result, cash flow is small and irregular. Carpentry shops find it difficult to accumulate sufficient capital to invest in new machinery and continue to rely on the scarce labour of master carpenters. Thus, the "best" shops are limited in the amount they can expand; instead of absorbing new orders and profiting from them, these shops must turn work away.

While carpenters are almost exclusively men, furniture merchants are frequently women. In addition, women as well as men are often involved as co-owners and administrator of the largest carpentry businesses. Carpentry is one of the most lucrative production sectors in Sucre; income varies, but gross profits of around \$200 US dollars per month would be the average. This can be compared with nearly \$400 US per month for a furniture merchant, \$100 US per month for a chocolate-making microenterprise – and only around \$40 US per month for a sweater-knitter. (See Table 1)

Women's production businesses are seldom lucrative. Most of these businesses rely on non-unique skills: nearly all women in Sucre can knit, bake, sew, make jam, and so forth, so producers' competitive advantage is slight. Conversely, few people outside male-dominated trades possess the necessary skills and equipment for carpentry, metal mechanics, shoemaking, and so forth. Chocolate making is one of the few areas of unique skills where women play a key role.

Table 1: Small-Scale Businesses in Sucre

Sweater-knitter	200 bolivianos/month
Neighbourhood grocery owner	350 bolivianos/month
Homemade-chocolate maker	500 bolivianos/month
Tailor	600 bolivianos/month
Produce merchant, central market	900 bolivianos/month
Carpenter	1000 bolivianos/month
Shoemaker	1200 bolivianos/month
Retail Shoe Merchant	1300 bolivianos/month
Furniture merchant	2000 bolivianos/month

(At 5.15 bolivianos/US dollar. Source Eversole 1998:153)

Industry, then, is weak in Sucre – and women's role in industry is also weak relative to men's. As businesses become more successful, women often become involved (often in administration and/or marketing activities), and in various cases have come to function as co-owners alongside their

¹ ALA (1996) had the lower estimate; a carpenter who works for a local NGO, had a list of 200 (some of them duplicates), but I found quite a few carpenters who were not on his list. The president of the carpenter's union, gave the estimate of "about a thousand, most of them hidden"; more likely, there are about 1000 *carpenters* but only 250-300 shops.

husbands or fathers. Yet women are unlikely to start up manufacturing businesses – or even service businesses – on their own, outside of traditional domestic activities (cooking, knitting, baking etc.). Women's scope for entrepreneurship is limited; when contemplating starting up a business, most women still speak of bakery shops, snack bars and of course, small-scale retailing.

Women as entrepreneurs – opportunities and challenges

Blocks to business potential

In Sucre's economy, dominated by micro-businesses, women are recognised as “entrepreneurs” in a variety of business sectors. Their role is visible, public, and self-determining. At the same time, they are constrained by a weak economy with limited earning potential, and the need to provide for their families in tight economic conditions. Their businesses help them to survive their environment, but not to change it.

As entrepreneurs, women use their business activities to squeeze a living, and sometimes a better lifestyle, out of a poor economy. Yet their work is in most cases still poorly compensated drudgery – businesses seldom grow to the point they can hire labour and free the entrepreneur for strategic management of her firm. Nor do the businesses in Sucre seem to be stimulating any real change in the region's economy. Both men's and women's businesses tend to be small in scale and to focus inward, at Sucre's own impoverished market. Few have the technology, production volumes or market savvy to compete successfully even in national markets outside of Sucre.

The reasons for Sucre's weak economic situation are varied. Part of the problem is with social institutions and communication. For instance, trustworthy distributors are hard to find, and information about distant markets is limited or non-existent. Trade with other Bolivian cities often involves a close friend, relation, or the producer herself travelling with the goods by bus into little-known markets, representing a high transaction cost and much trial and error. Also, easy, inexpensive institutions of contract enforcement do not exist. Finally, business people have a strong disinclination to work with partners from outside the household group. Businesses rely on their own limited resources drawn from within the household rather than risk stretching out to join forces with others.

Other difficulties are financial and economic. There is no large industry pumping money into the local economy, so Sucre relies strongly on its micro and small businesses. Yet these businesses are hampered by the sorts of problems listed above, plus low levels of available capital for machinery, infrastructure, and working capital. Competitive technology and bulk purchasing of inputs to lower cost are beyond their means. Financing is extremely limited, with loans above \$1000 impossible to obtain for most. Producers face the catch-22 of small industry in small markets: they need to lower costs and increase productivity to both dominate and move beyond their small markets, yet within their small markets, they cannot generate enough sales to purchase the equipment and inputs they need.

Opportunities for entrepreneurship

Florence Babb, in her study of Peruvian market women, writes in detail of the long work days, limited opportunities for social mobility, and other aspects of the economic lives of Peruvian market women; she argues that it is not a lack of entrepreneurial ability or interest that have kept these small-scale businesswomen from accumulating capital and expanding, but rather, the external constraints which they face (Babb, 1989, p. 50). The situation in Sucre is similar; women do a great deal with the little they have, but businesses are constrained by low earnings margins in the local market and the obstacles (particularly, information and logistics) involved in reaching distant markets.

Like many poor economies around the world, Sucre does not provide steady employment for many of its residents. Yet whether by choice or necessity, the fact that many women are businesspeople – *not* wage labourers, or pressured into housekeeping by husbands with steady jobs – opens up opportunities both for them and for their city. Business ownership creates a space where creative thinking, strategic decision-making, effective problem solving, and other such entrepreneurial abilities can pay off in increased incomes. And these abilities, once developed, can be useful in spheres

outside of business. A critical mass of entrepreneurial thinkers in the population offers hope that social, as well as economic solutions will emerge to address local problems.

The potential is there, but it is unrealised.

What is needed for women in poor economies like Sucre to realise their entrepreneurial potential? In reality, these abilities (in both men and women) have been beaten down by years of political uncertainty, economic scarcity, and the dysfunctionality of social and political institutions. To *arriesgarse* – literally “to risk oneself” – trying something new, is not part of Sucre culture. Nor is it often practical economically, in a country with no social safety nets. Thus, entrepreneurship works only within limits. In the entrepreneur’s cost-benefit analyses, past experience casts a strong weight against new ideas: experience shows that obstacles will appear, services won’t work as they ought, and losses are likely to be greater than gains.

Thus, any change is slow change. It begins with small risks and small successes. The gradual diversification of a product line, the initial forays into markets in a neighbouring city, the enthusiastic plying of one’s personal networks in search of a business opportunity – these actions by the businesswomen of Sucre’s microeconomy are hearteningly common, and full of potential. Each small success builds confidence: the quick market acceptance of Sucre’s first moulded chocolates, the opportunities – first local, then national – in wooden-flooring manufacture, the sweater-knitter’s discovery of a wide-open market for specialty baby clothes – these are the small breakthroughs which can build the confidence to create large ones.

Businesswomen in adverse environments may be poor, but they are still entrepreneurs. Their skills in independent thinking and their ability to seize opportunities has long been key, not just to the survival of their businesses, but of themselves and their families. While their ability to transform their local economies and societies is still severely limited by larger constraints, these women are continually developing the tools and confidence, as businesspeople, to circumvent obstacles and seek out opportunities. Recognising these women’s abilities, and facilitating their endeavours when appropriate, may be key to turning poor economies into something new.

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DON'T LOOK NOW – THE VULTURES ARE CIRCLING: CHALLENGE OF THE MEDIA FOR FEMALE POLITICAL LEADERSHIP AND REPRESENTATION⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

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Women are an increasingly visible force in national politics. In New Zealand, the leaders of the two main political parties, Labour and National, are women, and Parliament has the eighth highest proportion of female politicians in the world. However, more women has not automatically resulted in a more positive relationship between political women and the news media. Although the relationship between journalists and politicians is necessarily symbiotic as each needs the other to function, there is evidence that women remain marginalised and trivialised by the media (Tuchman, 1978).

Women leaders in New Zealand have spoken publicly about the media's "relentless, cruel and vicious stereotyping" which deals with women's hair, clothes and make-up rather than speeches, policies or principles. This paper presents material from interviews with political women (including current members of parliament), who talk about media representations of female candidates and offer strategies for self-preservation.

In 1978, Gaye Tuchman argued that women are "symbolically annihilated" by the mass media, through omission, trivialisation and condemnation. She turned to the concept of 'culture lag' in an attempt to explain why media representations were not reflecting the reality of women's lives. Culture lag suggests that ideas and attitudes (nonmaterial conditions) are slower to change than material conditions (such as participation and status in the workplace). Consequently, we can expect media representations to shift gradually, over time. But as the end of the century approaches, what progress has been made?

The Inter-Parliamentary Union's ranking of 178 of the world's Parliaments (lower or single House) shows that women still have some way to go until they are equally represented. Scandinavian countries have the highest proportions of women in Parliament, with Sweden leading on 42.7%, followed by Denmark (37.4%). New Zealand is currently ranked eighth, on 30.8%, and Australia is ranked twenty-first, on 23.0% (<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>, accessed 21 August 2001).

As a minority group in politics, women throughout the world are subject to trivialisation and condemnation. Some examples:

- Australian politician, Joan Kirner (first elected in 1982, Premier of Victoria 1990-1992), claims that Murdoch-owned newspapers consistently published the worst possible photographs of her, and were determined to depict her as incompetent, and the 'suburban housewife'. Kirner and Carmen Lawrence (Premier of Western Australia 1990-1993) were portrayed as wives and mothers, with an emphasis on how they would keep their home roles going, and what the children were going to do without their mothers (Helen Leonard cited in *The Media Report Transcript*, 1997).
- When Kim Campbell became Canada's first woman Prime Minister, she was initially the "darling of the media". But after two or three months, "they got into her personal life, and her appearance. They talked about her marriages, she'd had several, her looks, her hips, her clothing...her mouth, the fact that she was outspoken" (Sylvia Spring cited in *The Media Report Transcript*, 1997). Campbell was in power for just five months.

- In France, there has recently been a call for anti-sexist legislation to deal with “the vulgar, misogynist abuse of the country’s top women”. According to Florence Montreynaud, the founder of Chiennes de Garde (a group of prominent women, whose name means ‘guard bitches’), it is evidence of “the whore-madonna complex. We are never judged on the same basis as men. There’s always an element which identifies public women with their sexuality or with the way they look” (quoted in Herbert, 1999, p.8).

The New Zealand political situation

The women who led the two major political parties into New Zealand’s 1999 general election campaign achieved icon status, dubbed ‘Xena’ princesses and appearing, in cartoon form, in chocolate biscuit advertisements. However, the high profile of these women obscures the fact that there is still a relatively low proportion of women in national politics, although the introduction of a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) system of government, in 1996, has seen an increase in this figure. Indeed, proportional representation promised a more diverse parliament, better gender and ethnic representation, and an era of consensus politics, at a time of disillusionment with the political process. According to Boston, Levine, McLeay and Roberts. (1996), MMP appeared to offer people the chance to regain political influence, after a long period of market liberalism.

There are two types of MP under MMP: electorate MPs are elected in a particular territory and are required to represent the interests of those living there (just over half, 65, of MPs represent electorates); and list MPs are selected from lists of candidates put forward by parties. “A party’s complement of electorate MPs will be topped up from its list of candidates until the number of seats it holds in Parliament is in proportion to its party vote” (Boston *et al.*, 1996, p.23). The list is regarded as an important mechanism for increasing the proportions of women and other minority groups in parliament. List MPs do not have a direct link with any particular geographical region, but their parties may require them to look after certain local problems or politically important groups or communities (Mulgan, 1997). The list is an important tool for increasing women’s representation, but the perceived “second-class” status of list MPs may add to the difficulties women politicians experience when dealing with the media (see Fountaine, 2000 for further exploration of this issue).

The study

At the end of the first term of MMP government (1996-1999), there were 35 women in parliament, 22 (62.8%) of them in the two main parties, Labour and National. This paper discusses contemporary portrayals of these women, with particular emphasis on the two leaders, and draws on interviews with 15 of these MPs, conducted during the build up to the November 1999 election. Six of the women were from the National government, and ranged from a Minister outside Cabinet to backbenchers. The other nine interviewees were from the Opposition Labour party, and include the leader, Helen Clark, and other front, middle and backbenchers. (Since this paper was presented, there has been a change of government in New Zealand. The Labour party won the most seats in the November 1999 election, and now leads a coalition government). In addition, this paper includes extracts from an interview with Deborah Morris, a former New Zealand First MP, who at the age of 26 became a Minister in the first coalition government (but has since left politics), and Margaret Wilson, a former President of the Labour Party (and now a Cabinet minister in the newly elected Labour government). All the women were asked about the way they are covered by the news media, their relationship with the news media, and the strategies and tactics they use to deal with reporters.

The media challenge

An historical analysis of the Australian media shows that early news stories about women in politics had a chivalrous streak, often mentioning family life and domestic duties (Cathy Jenkins cited in The Media Report Transcript, 1998a). However, since the 1970s there has been more interest in women’s private lives, and their sex lives in particular. In the case of Cheryl Kernot, this has been quite vicious, which Jenkins suggests may be linked with the rise of feminism and its potential threat to society. A similar turning point occurred in New Zealand in the 1970s, when tabloid newspaper, the

Truth, ran a story claiming National MP Marilyn Waring had a lesbian relationship, and calling for her resignation. When the newspaper tried to raise the issue again, in 1978, Waring responded by questioning whether a male politician would be asked the same type of question (McCallum, 1993).

The fact that two women were vying for the job of Prime Minister during the 1999 election campaign was of great interest to the media. According to the president of the Labour Party, Bob Harvey, "We're interested in a male country, which we are, in seeing two women battle it out – the two Xena princesses. That's what it's about. It's the combat" (quoted in Venter, 1999, p.2). The news media appeared to be watching for signs of a 'catfight'. For example, after the first televised leaders' debate, political editor of Wellington's morning newspaper *The Dominion*, Victoria Main, wrote that "Miss Clark kept her claws in, opting to avoid the catfight expected of the two women leaders" (Main, 1999, p.2). The emphasis on conflict also occurs in coverage of electoral races involving women. In an article entitled 'Warrior women MPs clash', Helen Bain (1999) wrote about the female candidates in Auckland Central, describing them as parliament's staunchest warrior women, stropky sheilas, and one of the candidates as "glamorous, with a mane of dark hair and warrior-princess looks" (p.8).

While appearance is a consistent theme in the media coverage of women politicians, there was a change of focus in the first election campaign in which New Zealand had two women vying for the role of Prime Minister. Many MPs I interviewed spoke of the gender factor being neutralised by the existence of two prominent women leaders, particularly for voters who could not use this as a point of differentiation between the parties. However, the campaign was marked by greater interest in the personal lives of the two women, particularly in terms of family, and comparisons between the two were quickly made.

After becoming Prime Minister, Jenny Shipley brought her family into the spotlight, clearly positioning herself as a mother. A family frame, which set up Shipley as mother-of-two, with good-looking, ever-present husband, evolved, in implicit or explicit contrast with Clark, who has no children and an intellectual husband residing in a different city. Early campaign advertisements also positioned Shipley as a mother, opening the way for television news headlines referring to her as 'the mother of the nation'. Clark's childlessness was deemed important enough to be the topic of a question put to her in the final leaders' debate, but some in the media took a more cynical approach to Shipley's family focus:

National's going strong with Jenny Shipley the mum not just the politician, during the campaign. But cute shots of the Prime Minister drinking cappuccino with husband Burton and grown-up kids Anna and Ben aren't necessarily going to attract the family vote. (Edwards, 1999, p.2).

Helen Clark had a similar view, stating on current affairs programme, 'Assignment', that Shipley's stance ignored the diversity of New Zealand households. Public response to National's message (eg. Cross, 1999; Gallagher, 1999; Mainwaring, 1999; Metherell, 1999), and the election result, suggests the move was not beneficial to the National party.

The level of media interest in the private lives of the two women political leaders was without precedent in New Zealand politics, although there is a global trend towards greater scrutiny of the political figures generally. During my interview with Helen Clark she questioned whether the media would have made a 'day in the life' programme, as it did with her and Shipley, about two male leaders.

Women MPs respond

Jenny Shipley (Prime Minister from 1997 to 1999) and Helen Clark (newly elected Prime Minister) have both spoken publicly about the media's emphasis on their appearance. Jenny Shipley, speaking at the 100th anniversary dinner of the Newspaper Publishers Association in 1998, said that too much attention was devoted to her glasses, clothes and haircut and not enough to her policies (Shipley wants better media coverage for her policies, 1998, p.2). During the 1996 election campaign, when Clark was the only women leading a main party, she spoke out about "relentless, cruel and vicious

stereotyping” (Kilroy, 1996, p.2), and the different criteria by which women are judged, often related to personal appearance and the degree of emotional connection expected.

During the interviews I conducted for this research, many Labour women MPs commented on the coverage Clark has received since becoming leader of their party. Labour backbencher Judy Keall indicated that Clark had suffered from being edited, that male editors did not like her, and that she came across better when she went straight to the people, such as during the leaders’ debates. Her colleague Marian Hobbs expressed frustration over the attitude of some in the media:

Editors say, oh, but she’s [Clark] so cold. And I think, oh God, that’s your image, you think a woman should always be warm – and they don’t have to be.

A Labour frontbencher, Annette King, suggested the media could be cruel about women leaders, and particularly vicious about Clark.

It’s almost like they can’t cope with her intellect, so they have to find something else. So they don’t listen to what she’s saying, they just look at her and they say, ‘Oh, I don’t like her hairdo’, or ‘She doesn’t look nice in that’.

Fellow Labour MP Lianne Dalziel remembers that “there was this long period when Helen’s hair was an issue and I used to say to people, aren’t you more interested in what’s inside her head than what’s on the outside?”

Many of the MPs interviewed felt that the women leaders were treated especially harshly, but they also made general comments on the media treatment of political women. For example:

A male politician could wear the same suit for a week and nobody would comment. If a woman politician, a woman leader, wore the same suit for a week, there would be a headline, when’s she going to change her clothes? (Helen Duncan, Labour)

Despite the fact that people use examples of the ‘occasional male’, it is the woman politician who is sussed out for her lipstick, her clothes, her hairstyle, the depth of her voice...all of these things are commented on freely in the media and although it’s irrelevant, it isn’t, because it impacts on how people think about you. (Lianne Dalziel, Labour)

Generally, the gender stereotypes still exist in terms of comments about voice level, type of clothes, whether you are married or not, whether you have children or not – these issues are only important if you are a woman, of course – one almost assumes that men don’t wear clothes, get married or have children! (Ruth Dyson, Labour)

Several of the women also made comments relating to the type of language used by the media to describe women. Labour MP Lianne Dalziel said,

I always remember the editor of the Dominion describing me as the increasingly shrill member for Christchurch Central, in an editorial once – that was my personal favourite. I felt that that language was really directed at a woman.

Another example comes from a National backbencher, who was annoyed by a reporter describing her in relation to her brother-in-law, a more prominent National MP. She said,

Every time she mentions me in any story, it’s always [in] brackets, sister-in-law of Max Bradford, Minister of Defence...it strikes me as extraordinarily petty to write every story about me as though the only reason I’m here is to support my brother-in-law’s pretensions to a leadership bid that isn’t happening. (Annabel Young, National)

Deborah Morris summarises it this way. Coverage of men, she says, "is on a different level, it's interested in different things, it's interested in what is being said and what is being done, rather than how things appear".

Conclusion

It has been over twenty years since Tuchman (1978) wrote about the symbolic annihilation of women by the mass media, and suggested that culture lag would, in time, see the media reflect the reality of women's lives. In the last twenty years, political women in New Zealand have made some real progress. There is currently a record proportion of women in Parliament, and women lead the two major parties. But in the lead up to the 1999 general election, the news media continued to show signs of stereotyping and trivialisation.

The extent to which this sort of coverage reflects wider social beliefs, or contributes to their creation and maintenance, remains unclear. Theories of agenda setting posit that the news media do not tell people what to think, but do influence what they think about. Applying this line of argument, the media does not influence what people think about women politicians' images, but does keep this aspect of their leadership in the spotlight. In a personal interview, Helen Clark suggested the media's focus on her appearance is part of greater interest in female politicians generally, but also questioned whether the personal lives of two male leaders would have been scrutinised to the same degree. While the old maxim that all publicity is good publicity may ring true for MPs in an increasingly mediated society, Sreberny-Mohammadi and Ross (1996) raise concern over female politicians' belief that the media are simply reflecting the public's interests.

Perhaps political women really do believe what they say about the journalistic motivations behind the discursive framing of women, or perhaps their generous readings of unconscious sexism are a survival mechanism, an acknowledgment of their need for the media's patronage. But there are serious dangers in such complacency... While all women politicians continue to make excuses about male-dominated media, and do not take seriously the problem of sexism in media reporting, it is difficult to see how media-ted images of themselves will change or how strategies can be developed that challenge such gendered coverage. (p.116)

The news media continue to pose a challenge for female political representation in New Zealand. While women continue to lead the two major parties, it is impossible for the media to omit coverage of them, but examples of trivialisation and condemnation continue, despite the increased feminisation of New Zealand journalism. That the newspaper quotes about a catfight between Clark and Shipley, and the warrior women MPs in Auckland, come from articles written by prominent female reporters, suggests there are wider structural barriers contributing to the symbolic annihilation of female politicians. Furthermore, this year's election campaign also suggests that some women are, perhaps unwittingly, colluding with the media. The persistent framing of Jenny Shipley as a mother may have been seen by party strategists as a beneficial move, but short-term point scoring does little to advance portrayals of political women. In addition, the election result suggests that the positioning of Shipley as a mother did not work in her favour.

New Zealand now has its first elected woman Prime Minister, who has successfully guided the country into a coalition government for the new century. The way the media records these achievements is important for political women, the wider public and the democratic process. We all need to remain vigilant. Perhaps it is only our scrutiny that will stop the vultures from circling.

Tips and tactics

The following points were consistently made by women MPs I interviewed, in response to a question about what they have learnt, and what advice they would give other political women.

- Develop a relationship with the media. Be courteous, approachable, and honest in your dealings with them.

- Embrace media training. While there is not always a lot of training organised by the parties, seek informal feedback (eg. from staff and colleagues).

You need to keep your hand in with TV. TV requires a certain amount of acting, and people aren't born actors. (Helen Clark, Labour)

Appearance matters! (Although it doesn't). There is a balance for women politicians:

If you go overboard in the make-up and the clothes you get just as much a hard time as the ones who abandon all that. I certainly am conscious about appearance and making sure I don't go too far one way or the other. (Belinda Vernon, National)

By making the odd concession to these things then I have the ability to connect with a wide range of people, and I think that's a good thing. (*Lianne Dalziel, Labour*)

- Have a strategy for dealing with the media. Decide beforehand what it is that you want and how you wish to be portrayed.

A political woman should decide, quite clearly, what she wants to be in the media for. (Marian Hobbs, Labour)

If you create stories with your own branding, which show you how you want to be shown, then they will not dig where you don't want them to. (*Annabel Young, National*)

On a more practical note, try to answer the question and then stop talking. Beware the 'exit interview'.

Do your homework. Find out what the reporter wants before you talk to them. Before a major interview, run through possible questions and answers.

- Attacking the media does not help.

But every now and then I go in and I say these are the last five press releases I sent you and not one of them has been covered, can you explain why. And I smile. (Judy Keall, Labour)

- Be open to a range of media. Some, such as women's magazines and specialist publications, may be more accessible to female politicians. For example, Marian Hobbs (Labour's spokesperson on Broadcasting, Communications and Information Technology) believes computer magazines have no gender bias at all, but are interested in their subject to the exclusion of everything else.
- The way to ensure coverage is to find an angle that will appeal to the media. List MP Annabel Young's background in the territorial army and interest in defence works in her favour because it is unusual. Referring to a published photograph of her on a rifle range in Hawkes Bay, Young points out "it would've been a bit interesting to have a man on the rifle range...but it's very interesting to have a woman on a rifle range".
- Know yourself and trust your judgement.

[You] Have to be comfortable with your image, because one day you might be off guard. (Margaret Wilson, Labour)

Ultimately you are the best person to understand yourself. I don't think people should try too hard to follow all the hints – you have to tailor them to yourself...If

you're not comfortable, let the opportunity go. Think of your long-term reputation. (Pansy Wong, National)

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GENDER, MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP: SOME INTRODUCTORY PROPOSITIONS⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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This paper is a theoretical piece arguing for the adoption of the concept of trans-gendered management as a way of thinking past the male/female split. It describes the various femininities and masculinities that currently dominate organisation life and presents an alternative approach that values gender without prescribing roles. It is based in current work that questions the existence of homogeneous categories (male/ female) and values diversity at work. It discusses management, but is applicable to the experience of gender in organisations in general.

To think manager was to think male' (Schein 1975, p. v)

According to Kirkham (1985) one of the key differences between being a member of a majority group and being a member of a minority group is that the majority group members do not think about what it means to be a member of the majority group, whereas minority group members give much thought to the meaning and effect of being in that minority and to the dynamics of the majority group. This paper is an attempt to explore the experiences of both the majority group (men) and the minority group (women) in management and leadership roles.

"In 1990, the major Australian national daily papers ran a small article on Miss Jean Arnot. It described how fifty years before, she had shocked the Trade Union Conference by demanding that the Public Service Association of NSW adopt 'the principle of equal pay for equal work, irrespective of sex'. Half a century after Miss Arnot's historic speech, women still earn only 79% of the average male wage" (Still, 1993, p. 101). Women are still, on average, paid less than men and are generally less represented in the management and leadership roles in organisations, even in professions which are dominated by women.

Overview of gender

In Western industrialised societies, there exist only two 'sex categories' and individuals are assigned at birth to one or the other. Moreover, in all social situations we attempt to adorn ourselves with culturally appropriate 'female' or 'male' fashion, and in every interaction, we consistently engage in gender attribution, identifying and categorising people by appropriate sex category while simultaneously categorising ourselves to others (Cheng, 1996). The concept of gender is often confused with sexual orientation and thus some definitions are required.

Hearn, Sheppard, Tancred-Sherif, and Burrell (1989) provide some definitions on gender and related issues which are useful:

Sex: The biological categories we know as male and female.

Gender: The social construction of biological sex, how we take biological differences and give them social meaning. In the process, we create a set of practices and norms for interpersonal behaviour, roles for individuals to perform, ways of being, ways of knowing, standpoints and worldviews.

Gender Power: Power that results from our gendered (e)valuations of things and behaviours, our ways of being, behaving and structuring social relations. It is rooted in interpretations that give meaning to biological sex and extend from the fact that we understand sex differences to be very important to the way we establish the social order.

Trans-gendered: Moments or behaviours that occur when we no longer believe a trait or behaviour to be appropriate only for men or for women, yet we recognise that gender still matters.

When discussing organisational life, management and leadership, one is concerned less with the biological differences of sex and more with the issues of gender and gender power. It is our contention that management and leadership within organisations should become more trans-gendered. That is, effective management should be seen in terms of competencies rather than as a set of issues related to gender.

Durest-Lahti and Kelly (1995) outline eight contentions about gender which serve to frame the broader context in which men and women partake in organisational life. These contentions are as follows:

1. Gender is different from sex, which is rooted exclusively in biology. Gender consists of a broader social construction, ultimately prescribing, and generally leading to, an entire way of being.
2. Gender is not limited to femaleness and maleness, but includes men, masculinities and manliness as well as woman, femininity and womanliness.
3. Gender extends to normative sets of beliefs, which can be considered as feminism and masculinism. Masculinism is more than a way of being. Like feminism, it can be thought of as an ideology.
4. All facets of human interaction are gendered, although social science has historically ignored this aspect of social being. Consequently, it has produced biased results and partial truths.
5. Masculinism is considered the norm of being and acting in white Australia, with feminism and femaleness considered deviant to this norm. This gives men a privileged position in interpersonal and institutional relations and in the important structures of society.
6. Gender power emanates from the behaviour patterns and social reality that gender fosters. Gender power can be assessed in any human interaction.
7. While gender power varies by circumstance, since men have controlled social and political institutions and conventions and have constructed those institutions in such ways as to suit their founders, men generally are advantaged inside the institutions they have constructed. Masculinism operates whether or not participants are aware of its influence.
8. Leadership in particular, has been defined in terms of masculinism. As a result, women and feminism are particularly disadvantaged in this crucial domain.

These contentions have a direct impact on the role that men and women play in organisational life and in particular, management and leadership.

Men in organisations

Gender and gender relations have long been deemed to be absent or relatively unimportant within the study of organisations. The gendered nature of organisations and their management has not been part of the dominant mainstream traditions of theorising on organisational activity (Burrell and Hearn, 1989, p. 1).

This fits with the view of the majority having no concern for the minority. Organisations have been places where men dominate and therefore the idea of considering gender issues has never occurred to

them! However,"... gender is fundamental to the way work is organised and work is central in the social construction of gender" (Game and Pringle, 1983, p. 14). This construction of gender and its relationship to organisation has, historically been biased towards men. Cheng (1996, p. iv) believes that this is due largely to the fact that "... men's primary identification is with work ...". Masculine identity is socially constructed through work which is embedded in an occupation and often within an organisation. Occupations and organisations traditionally have provided a homosocial context, an in-group devoid of women and femininity. Gherardi (1996) suggests that women are seen as guests in male organisations. This view is supported by Seidler (1991, p. 36) who states that "...men form a homosocial community with other men". This 'men's group', unlike idealisations of male behaviour, may not be filled with 'male bonding', but instead with hegemonically masculine norms giving rise to man-to-man relationships in which men are automatically suspicious of other men, who are always potential competitors. Men learn not to need anything from other men, because they fear this will give them power over one another. This form of masculinity is referred to as hegemonic masculinity (Seidler, 1991).

The notion of hegemonic masculinity is a culturally idealised form of masculinity in a given social context (Seidler, 1991). It is culturally honoured, glorified and extolled at the symbolic level in the mass media. In Western industrialised societies it is characterised by work in the paid labour market, the subordination of women and heterosexism (Connell, 1995). He further suggests that hegemonic masculinity describes men who meet the current social definition of what it is to be a man – successful, capable, reliable and in control. This is about men in power, with power, and of power who are aggressive, ambitious, competitive, individualistic, self sufficient and heterosexual.

Collinson and Hearn (1994) have identified that hegemonic masculinity may be enacted in a number of different ways. They call these ways of being 'masculinities' and suggest that different men and different organisations adopt different masculinities as normative behaviour. They describe five of the different forms that masculinities can take in organisations: authoritarianism; paternalism; entrepreneurialism; informalism and careerism. Each of these are outlined briefly below:

Authoritarianism refers to the intolerance of dissent or difference, a rejection of dialogue and debate and a preference for coercive power relations based on dictatorial control and unquestioning obedience. Based upon bullying and the creation of fear in subordinates, it celebrates a brutal and aggressive masculinity. This excludes men who will not bully and who wish to be collaborative.

Paternalism is a seeking to exercise power by emphasising the moral basis of cooperation, the protective nature of their authority, the importance of personal trust relations and the need for employees both to invest voluntarily in their work task and to identify with the company. Power is exercised for the 'good' of the recipient. This tends to exclude young men and men who disagree with their senior managers.

Entrepreneurialism is the hard nosed and competitive approach, where men identify with other men who are as competitive as themselves, willing to work at a similar pace, endure long hours, be geographically mobile and meet tight production schedules. This excludes some men who are not considered 'man enough' or predatory enough, as well as the older men who cannot take the pace.

Informalism results from the development of informal workplace relationships based upon shared masculine interests and common values. Men are often concerned to identify with the 'in group'. The discourse will often be based around sport, cars, sex, women and alcohol. This excludes men who have different interests and lifestyles and particularly gay men.

The last masculinity, careerism is the widespread preoccupation with hierarchical advancement and the attempt to validate masculine identity through upward progression. Men develop an excessive concern with impression management and the differentiation and elevation of self. This excludes men who seek professional fulfilment through doing a particular task and men who take time out of the paid workforce.

Women in organisations

In the same way as it possible to identify and describe masculinities, it is possible to identify 'femininities'. Women who aspire to become leaders and managers also discover that there are a number of different ways in which they can construct their role.

Women can become trespassers by entering non-traditional professions and/or male dominated organisations. Their legitimacy to be there is continually questioned. They may be removed (Cann and Seigfried, 1990). Women who reach senior positions are sometimes labelled as 'Tall Poppies' (Boucher, 1997a). They are viewed as having risen above their nominated 'place' in the organisation. They may be cut down.

Women who adopt stereotypical male mannerisms in organisations are often derisively referred to as 'women with balls' (Cox, 1996). They are often described as being tougher and more demanding than the men. They are often criticised for not being feminine.

Some women attempt to gain influence at work by finding a man who is prepared to be her 'public face' in the organisation (Cox, 1996). The man gets all the glory for the work everyone knows has been done by the woman. These women are often not rewarded for their work.

Women in quite senior roles at work often take on 'mothering' roles where they are responsible for managing emotions (Helgeson, 1990). They are often found in customer service areas, or in Human Resource Management. They often carry a lot of the emotional baggage of the organisation, but are not rewarded for it.

Another traditional femininity that women can adopt in organisations is that of the 'dutiful daughter' (Boucher, 1997a). Women find mentors or protectors, men who like them and will further their careers. These women often have trouble gaining legitimacy in their leadership roles.

Probably the most controversial femininity associated with women who wish to become managers and leaders is the use of female sexual power to further one's career. Women who physically or metaphorically 'sleep their way to the top' are described as 'prostituting themselves for their career' (Marshall, 1994), that is, selling out their beliefs and values in exchange for promotion. Their integrity is often questioned.

One femininity which seems to be uniquely Australian was adopted by women in the early 1970's. The 'Femocrats' (Eisenstein, 1991) gained senior jobs by specialising in 'women's issues', eg. EEO, childcare, health. They were more often found in public sector and risked being typecast and not being able to move into other areas. Whether Femocrats still exist and whether they still have power in the public sector is a matter of some debate (Smeaton, 1997).

The final femininity to be identified here is the 'Good girl', the woman who acts out traditional female roles in organisations in the hope that she will be rewarded for obedience (Boucher, 1997a).

In each case, the attempt to gain a leadership role leads to women adopting behaviours that are largely prescribed by men and which result in them acting in ways that feel uncomfortable. They are not able to act authentically and they sometimes feel that their values are being threatened (Boucher, 1997a). These feelings may ultimately result in a decision to leave (Marshall, 1994).

Phillip Adams (1993, p. 16) summarises issues of gender in organisations with the following:

Go to any meeting of business heavies and you will see them, the serried ranks of suits. The might of the male is unchallenged in the upper echelons of capitalism, just as it remains unassailable in the corridors of political power. Sit in the visitors gallery in any Parliament and look down on the boys at play. Suits, suits and more suits ... Women have a real place in the corridors of power. Pushing the tea trolleys ... from Pankhurst to Greer, feminism has only nibbled at the edges of masculine privilege. The blokes cannot, will not be budged ... You, female person, can be a nurse, a secretary, a receptionist, a first lady, a wife, a hostess, a mother, a check out girl. But you can't be, except in exceptional circumstances and then

through masculine miscalculation, the boss ... Twas ever chattels of men, and it is their lot in life to be grateful, respectful, obedient.

In 1984 the Affirmative Action Paper (Bartol, Martin, Tein and Matthews, 1995, p. 393) described the position of women in the workforce as follows:

1. Women are concentrated in a narrow range of occupations and industries.
2. Jobs held by women are lower status and lower paid with limited career prospects.
3. Unemployment levels for women are higher than for men.
4. More women are in part-time, less secure employment.
5. Industries changing technologically are female dominated, resulting in fewer job opportunities.
6. Seemingly neutral employment policies tend to exclude women.

Women remain underrepresented in organisations and receive lower average salaries. It is not, therefore surprising that they are also underrepresented in management and leadership roles.

Gender issues in management and leadership

There has been an increase in the number of women managers. "They swell the ranks of lower management, likely to encounter the glass ceiling without even advancing into middle management" (Kleinman, 1992, p. 63). The glass ceiling is a term used to describe a barrier so subtle that it is transparent, yet so strong that it prevents women and minorities moving up the management hierarchy (Tanton, 1994.).

The glass ceiling that prevents women from making it to the top has been cracked – but not yet smashed. According to the official employment statistics, the number of women in managerial roles increased by 24000, or 11.5% between 1991 and 1994, which indicates that companies can no longer ignore merit. Although a quarter of all Australian managers are women, the top positions remain a male domain. It is largely in middle management that most women have made the inroads, in supervising sales and services as well as in specialist spheres' (Bartol, Martin, Tein and Matthews, 1995, p. 392).

"It is also important to point out that research on leadership has been almost exclusively, the study of male leadership. Interest in female leaders has only occurred in the last 20 years" (Bass, 1990, p. 4). Much of the content which is taught in management and leadership is still largely as a result of male research on male subjects (Tanton, 1994).

The masculine hegemony of most organisations has been a solid barrier to women accessing management and leadership roles. Boucher (1997, p. 154) links the lack of women leaders to the absence of appropriate role models. She found that the women in her study:

...identified that the construction of women's leadership that they had developed were located in the home and in the community. Men went to work. They were the ones who led organisations. Girls knew little of this world, their fathers did not discuss their work at home. Knowledge of organisational life came from what little their mothers told them. Women were absent from the construction of organisations and therefore they found taking on leadership roles difficult and uncomfortable.

When considering the lack of women in leadership roles and the difficulty that many women experience in these roles, Martin (1994, p. 24) suggests that in organisations, two sets of characteristics are used to assess effectiveness as a manager. One set is valued by the organisation and the other devalued. These characteristics are outlined in Table 1 below. Inspection of these columns reveals the hidden assumptions. The devalued characteristics are all, traditionally, more likely to be associated with women and femininities than with men and masculinities.

The very nature of the assumptions carried around by men, who hold the balance of power in most organisations, are detrimental to what has been assumed to be the characteristics required to be a good manager and leader. As we will see shortly, however, this is beginning to change. Nonetheless these views are part of the reason that women are not found in management roles. For many women managers, the attempt to emulate the valued characteristics has resulted in them being described in terms of some of the femininities discussed earlier such as ‘she’s got balls’ coming to the fore. Tanton (1994, p. 64) when discussing women in management roles, states “... there has been an adverse effect – women have gained entrance into previously male-dominated areas at the cost of isolation and loneliness. Historically, women bosses have been viewed as being more like men than men themselves”.

Table 1: Valued and Devalued Characteristics in Organisations

Valued Characteristics	Devalued Characteristics
Objective	Subjective
Rational	Irrational
Expert	Untrained
Abstract	Case by case
Dehumanised	Humane
Detached	Involved
Impersonal	Personal
Unemotional	Emotional
Authoritarian	Nurturant
Unequal	Egalitarian
Graceless	With grace
Unsympathetic	Sympathetic
Untouched by gratitude	Moved by gratitude

(Tanton, 1994, p. 30)

In addition to the primary values and assumptions which prevent women from getting into management positions, there is also the issue of differences in career plans. Models of career progression in management reflect the male pattern of continuous employment and high work load which often intrudes into family life. This combined with current age requirements for management mean that senior management positions can only be achieved without the interruptions of child rearing and with the freedom for geographic mobility (Tanton, 1994).

Towards a new model

There has been considerable research and discussion with regard to gender differences in management and leadership. There is considerable evidence that there are distinctions between masculine and feminine management styles. The former emphasises control, use of power to dominate others and separateness of personal and work issues, while the latter emphasises integration, process communication, cooperation, openness and contact (O’Leary and Ryan, 1994). As a result of an extensive meta-analysis of the research on the differences between male and female leaders, Eagly

and Johnson (1990) concluded that in laboratory studies, the proposition that women lead in an interpersonal oriented style and men in a task oriented style was supported. Game and Pringle (1983, p. 71) add to this from their research and state that "...in talking with women department managers we were struck by the overlap with the mothering role, with the willingness to shoulder the burden of the smooth running of the department, to anticipate what has to be done and get stuck in and to it". This perceived difference in style of management and leadership has, in the past, created barriers for women who choose to move up the management hierarchy. Current trends towards a preference for harder, strategic and task oriented management styles exacerbate the problem (Cox, 1996).

A recent shift has been to recognise the growing need for a different set of management and leadership skills. There is an increasing acknowledgment that the skills and attitudes which have historically been associated with femininity and in the past have been discredited from organisational life are actually important. The Karpin Report (1995) refers to these as the 'soft' skills and they reflect more closely the attributes outlined by Tanton (1994) earlier which are traditionally feminine and devalued. With most organisations today having a focus on cultural change and human resource management there has been a recognition that the 'natural' style associated with women managers now has a place in organisations where women have previously been excluded from positions of power (Helgeson, 1990). "Women are represented as embodying the qualities and aptitude which are most appropriate to modern organisations as they encounter external volatility or as they participate in the creation of new organisational cultures" (Maile, 1995, p. 76).

It has been suggested that this trend provides women with the opportunity to lead in the ways that they feel more comfortable with, free from the restrictions of attempting to make it in a man's world by replicating male ways of managing.

Although some women have adopted a 'command and control' style of managing others, a style which she sees as generally associated with men in large, traditional organisations, a new generation of women managers is drawing on skills and attitudes developed from their shared experience as women. Here the emphasis is on collaboration, building relationships, sharing information and valuing the views and contributions of all (Court, 1994, p. 3).

The skills and attitudes referred to above are those which are described in most modern management and leadership texts (cf. Boyatzis, 1982; Gardner and Hosking, 1997) and reflect the current competency movement towards the softer skills.

We would argue that the answer will not be found in the obliteration of traditional male stereotypes (a one-sided, exaggerated and normally prejudicial view), to be replaced with female stereotypes. Nor will it be found in a blend of male and female stereotypes. Androgynous approaches to leadership, like androgynous approaches to management developed in the 1970's (Sargent, 1978) are not the answer as they imply that sex and gender issues can simply be removed from organisational life (Duerst-Lahti and Kelly, 1995). What we need is approaches to leadership and management practice that transcend gender stereotypes, that is, they are trans-gendered "... (m)oments or behaviours that occur when we no longer believe a trait or behaviour to be appropriate only for men or for women, yet we recognise that gender still matters" (Hearn, Sheppard, Tancred-Sherif & Burrell, 1989).

Trans-gendered management and leadership would allow men and women to adopt a range of behaviours which would not be judged on the extent to which they conformed to a stereotype of masculinity or femininity. Nor would greater value be placed on stereotypically male behaviours. Rather, behaviour could be judged on the extent to which it contributed to the quality of organisational life experienced by individuals and to the prosperity of the organisation as a whole.

Principles underpinning trans-gendered leadership

At this stage it is possible to begin to sketch some beginning principles which might underpin trans-gendered leadership. At the core is the notion that trans-gendered leaders would act authentically, that is, their ways of leading would genuinely reflect who they are rather than the adoption of a

stereotypical role. This authentic behaviour would include authentically gendered behaviours that are congruent with the ways in which the leader creates and constructs themselves as a gendered individual.

New types of leadership behaviours might emerge as leaders find different ways of expressing and exploring the intersection of male/femaleness and leadership that are very different from the masculinities and femininities described earlier. Fine (1988) refers to this process as 'exploring the hyphen' and suggests that there is a particular richness to human activity because of the differences between individuals. As we explore the gender – leadership hyphen we open up possibilities for exploring other ways of leading that may develop from other multi-hyphen intersections such as gender-sexuality-leadership.

The question that arises however is how do we move from the current stereotypical models of leadership and management practice to a position where infinite variety is possible. First, we need to continue to critique the dominant models of leadership that are inherently based on stereotypes and which remain popular in the management and leadership literature (Cox, 1996). We need to encourage the development, documentation and popularisation of new and different ways of leading, particularly those which disrupt traditional stereotypes (Court, 1994; Gheradi, 1996; Boucher 1997a).

It has been argued elsewhere (Boucher, 1997b) that the use of consciousness raising as a leadership development tool and as a support mechanism may assist women and other minority members to resist the stress, ambivalence and dissonance created by being forced to lead in ways that are stereotypically masculine. This approach could be employed with both men and women to support them in the development of trans-gendered leadership behaviours.

Some literature suggests that significantly increasing the number of women in leadership roles will, of itself, change the way in which leadership and management is practiced in an organisation (Sinclair, 1995; Affirmative Action Agency, 1996). However, Eagley and Karau (1991) disagree, suggesting that the way leadership is constructed as part of an organisation's culture has more influence on leadership behaviour than the natural 'traits' of the leaders. The truth may lie somewhere in between. While the nature of an organisation's culture is undoubtedly influenced significantly by the (usually male) elite, evidence suggests that it is not controlled by them (Turner, 1990). As more members of minority groups enter middle and senior management roles in organisations, they will have the opportunity to work to create cultures that are more supportive of trans-gendered ways of leading.

As followers, leaders and researchers, we can work to resist the dominant constructs of gender as played out in the leadership of our organisations (Cox, 1996). It is possible that some researchers working within the interpretive and radical humanist research paradigms are at risk of seeing women in organisations as victims (Haug, 1992) and of denying the agency of women and other minority members, and their ability to improve their lot, to change, through their own political and personal actions, the nature of their experience of leadership and the ways in which they choose to lead (Haug, 1992; Stanley, 1990).

Conclusions

"In the broad area of work, particularly work as paid employment, class and gender mediate occupational identity" (Maile, 1995, p. 77). Gender is a variable which has been used for centuries in our society to distinguish and discriminate men and women and the roles they play. The associated sex role stereotypes are determined very early in life and are, at least in part, learnt from the environment in which we live. Traditionally in our society the area of organisational life has been dominated by men with a resulting masculine hegemony. This is particularly the case in regard to management and leadership where women have generally been under-represented. The very nature of organisations and the skills, characteristics and attitudes considered to be appropriate for leadership roles were founded by men and suggested stereotypically masculine traits. More recently however, there has been an identification of the need for a different approach to management and leadership and the characteristics, skills and attitudes associated with femininity have been identified as the most appropriate way to go. As such there has been an opportunity for both men and women to manage in

a style more in line with their personal preferences. Time alone will tell if these new styles will be able to emerge or will the masculinities which dominate our organisations continue to dictate who leads our organisations and how they are to be led.

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THE CENTRE FOR RESEARCH FOR WOMEN: DOING IT DIFFERENTLY⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

Annie Goldflam

The Centre for Research for Women

This paper focuses on the Centre for Research for Women (CRW) as a case study of a feminist organisation which is flourishing within the academic sector. CRW is successful despite its insistence on operating from a philosophy which is antithetical to that of mainstream academia. I will discuss how CRW has managed to thrive within a competitive, market driven environment.

CRW was conceived by eight feminist academics, two from each of the public universities in Western Australia, at a picnic in 1991. These visionaries and those who have since joined them on the CRW Board have come from a range of backgrounds within and beyond the Academy. They share a commitment to feminism and the will to make CRW work effectively.

CRW carries out interdisciplinary, inter-university and inter-sector research. Furthermore, it relocates from one university to the next every three years. The Centre is viewed positively by the four auspicing universities for its vibrant program of seminars, symposia and conferences. More importantly to the universities perhaps, the Centre has secured nearly \$1 million of research funding in its five years of operations.

CRW does it differently. It is not content to accept the new managerial and competitive practices being fostered by federal government policies and practices. It has, instead, chosen to operate from another paradigm. It promotes and practises co-operation through collaborative research, mentoring programs and information sharing. The 300 researchers who are committed to working under the Centre's auspices are testament to the need for feminist ways of operating within academia.

Introduction

In this paper I will discuss how the Western Australian Centre for Research for Women (CRW) does things differently, sometimes due to external constraints, but more often due to the feminist commitment and determination of the people who have been involved in establishing and developing the Centre over the last five years, in times when the academic sector has undergone significant changes. CRW's central aim is develop, promote and support feminist research.

One of the earliest decisions the board of Management and staff made was whether to portray CRW as a feminist organisation, rather than a women-centred one. The concept of "feminist" has been so battered through successive cycles of women's activism and male backlash that some Board members were concerned that the "F-word" could alienate people. However, we decided that we would refuse to be silenced regarding our identity. CRW's brochure features Rebecca West's 1913 statement on feminism: "I myself have never been able to find out precisely what feminism is; I only know that people call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat." (Rebecca West, 1913)

Eighty years on, feminism has proliferated and diversified – it is no longer so easy to say what feminism is or not. CRW does not take a particular feminist stance. We strive to embrace and work with feminists from a range of perspective's and backgrounds.

Feminist research

So, in the midst of this diversity, what are some definitions of feminist research? Roslyn Wallach Bologh observed that feminist research occurs when “feminists begin to question and challenge the implicit male perspective of the dominant paradigms, methodological strictures and theoretical assumptions of the various disciplines” (Bologh, Roslyn Wallach in Reinharz, 1992, p. 3). US sociologist Marjorie DeVault wrote that “the dilemma for the feminist scholar, always, is to find ways of working within some disciplinary tradition while aiming at an intellectual revolution that will transform the tradition” (DeVault, Marjorie in Reinharz, 1992, p. 3). The revolutionary aspect of feminist research is crucial. The research that CRW has undertaken – whether it has focused on equity in schools; processes for reducing domestic violence; the distribution of resources in TAFE (Technical and Further Education); tertiary instruction about Female Genital Mutilation or women in non-traditional occupations – reveals gender inequities and puts forward recommendations for change. CRW’s research has been used as a lobbying tool by policy makers, practitioners and members of the general community.

Yoland Wadsworth and Kaye Hargreaves observed that “feminist research understands that all research is essentially value-driven, that the research questions, and otherwise, exposes the reproduction and perpetuation of power relationships that subordinate women “subjects” as objects of someone else’s study and that it hears and reflects back exactly what is of most concern and interest to women” (Wadsworth and Hargreaves, 1993).

Shulamit Reinharz has identified the key features of feminist research in her definitive text, *Feminist Methods in Social Research* (Reinharz, 1992, p. 240), as follows:

- Feminism is a perspective, not a research method
- Feminists use a multiplicity of research methods
- Feminist research involves an ongoing criticism of non-feminist scholarship
- Feminist research is guided by feminist theory
- Feminist research may be transdisciplinary
- Feminist research aims to create social change
- Feminist research strives to represent human diversity
- Feminist research frequently includes the researcher as a person
- Feminist research frequently attempts to develop special relations with the people studied (interactive research)
- Feminist research frequently defines a special relation with the reader

Feminist research combines the best features of Social Research with an appreciation of feminist theory. As Professor Reinharz’ fifth point indicates, it may be transdisciplinary. CRW is keen to bring together interdisciplinary research teams in order to promote productive collaborations between researchers from diverse backgrounds. For example, Carol Thorogood, from the School of Nursing at Curtin University, and Bev Thiele, who heads Women’s Studies at Murdoch University, have benefited from the synergy of their collaborative work on homebirthing.

CRW also looks for opportunities to bring together more and less experienced researchers. Much of the research that the Centre undertakes is of an applied nature, drawing from a wide range of academic disciplines, including Women’s Studies which is interdisciplinary itself in nature. The researchers affiliated with CRW have experience in diverse areas such as health, employment, ethnicity, management, domestic violence and religion. It is that breadth of specialist expertise that enables CRW to carry out such a wide range of quality research.

In feminist research, the researchers and the people being studied are not necessarily women. The crucial factor is that the work is guided by feminist theory. For example, for CRW’s research on the gendered organisational culture of Murdoch University, a male researcher conducted focus groups for male staff. Another of CRW’s research projects focused on the decision-making process of how tenured male academics manage childcare and integrate it with their paid work demands.

The Centre's beginnings

The Centre for Research for Women began operations in September 1993. The idea was conceived by eight feminist academics, two from each of the four public universities in Western Australia, at a picnic in 1991. The picnic was called at a time when there were rumours that the federal government might be convinced to fund a key centre in women's research, and at a time when feminist academics in Western Australian universities were, despite trying, clearly not going to get their individual institutions to recognise and acknowledge the extent and quality of feminist research on campus. Not being willing to give up the argument that feminist research deserved a higher profile, and as Women's Studies was being taught at three of these institutions, it was agreed that it would be inequitable for the women's research centre to belong to just one university. These visionaries were determined to do it differently, by establishing the centre collaboratively, thereby fostering co-operation among universities, in an economic climate which is increasingly coercing universities into competing against each other. The CRC concept argues against this.

Their original intention was to appoint a fulltime Director at Associate Professor level, a fulltime Administrator and a halftime Research Associate. Unfortunately, the Vice-Chancellors were not prepared to provide that level of funding. After much bargaining, the staffing structure was reduced to a halftime Director (Lecturer Level B) with a 0.3 time Administrative Assistant. A Memorandum of Agreement was drawn up and signed by Professor John Mahoney, Professor Roy Lourens, Professor Peter Boyce and Professor Fay Gale, the Vice-Chancellors of Curtin University of Technology, Edith Cowan University, Murdoch University and The University of Western Australia, respectively. The Centre's truly inter-university structure is somewhat of an anomaly in this competitive age, but it has actually worked to CRW's advantage.

There are other women's research centres in Australia: the Australian Women's Research Centre at Deakin University; the Research Centre for Women's Studies at the University of Adelaide; the Australian Institute for Women's Research and Policy at Griffith University; the Women's Research Centre at the University of Western Sydney and the Institute for Women's Studies at Macquarie University. There are also Centres which deal with specific women's issues, such as the Key Centre for Women's Health at Melbourne University and the National Centre for Women (which focuses on women in non-traditional occupations) at Swinburne University of Technology. Although these Centres have varying resources bases and areas of research strength, they all operate from a feminist base.

So how is CRW's structure different? CRW is the only Australian research centre which is fully committed to being inter-university, to the extent that we relocate every three years. We are certainly the only Australian women's research centre which belongs to more than one university. Furthermore, as the part-time Director, I do not conduct research or teach. I am not a high profile research professor. My background is in working (paid and unpaid) on feminist issues in the public, community and private sectors – an unusual situation for the Head of research centre, but it works for us!

Financial support

The Centre was initially located at Murdoch University as support in kind, in lieu of the financial support provided by the Vice-Chancellors of the other three universities. Since then, the four Vice-Chancellors have contributed annual operating grants of \$15 000 each to the Centre's operations (although the Vice-Chancellor of The University of Western Australia, Professor Fay Gale, was more generous on two occasions). An annual budget of \$60 000 is meagre in the tertiary sector, as university departments pay for all their staffing and infrastructure costs, except for accommodation, furniture and basic central services.

CRW also derives income for the Centre from administrative overhead fees charged, where permitted by the funding source, for the services provided to researchers who gain funding under CRW's auspices. These services may include an invitation to apply or tender for funding; assistance in drawing together a consortium of researchers; increased credibility through involvement with an

academic research centre; access to CRW's infrastructure support; assistance in preparing submissions; financial management of the project; and the possibility (for independent researchers) of co-publishing research and/or related papers with an academic mentor.

Principles, policies and practices

Although the Centre is located in the academic sector, we have adapted some principles, policies and practices of organisations in the community sector, at times because of our meagre funding, but more often due to our commitment to feminist ways of operating. By including dedicated positions for members who work outside of the academic sector, we ensure that decisions are not made purely on academic grounds, and that broader feminist communities can retain tangible links with CRW. This is not to say, however, that there are not inspirational pockets of feminist activity in the tertiary sector.

CRW's Board of Management is determined to include feminists beyond the "ivory towers". The Centre's Memorandum of Agreement stipulates that the Board should comprise an academic from each of the sponsoring universities, a representative of the host institution, four members of the wider community (including a postgraduate member), up to two co-opted members and the Director, in an ex-officio capacity. In addition, the Board has maintained a commitment to have at least one Board member who is not Anglo-Australian.

The CRW Board has resisted external pressure to appoint a formal Chairperson, by assuring university administrators that we can operate well without one person being the figurehead. The role of meeting facilitation rotates monthly. Having established a decision making policy that relies on consensus, with a vote being held if consensus is not reached, we have never had to resort to voting. Although members of the Board represent their own constituencies as well as CRW, the *esprit de corps* is so strong that we balance our diverse perspectives with CRW's objectives. We use creative problem solving strategies to find ways to stay true to our principles in the often challenging context of the current political and economic climate. It is exciting to be part of a group of people from within and outside the academic sector who are so committed to CRW and keen to be involved in different ways of working.

The make up of the Board provides a model for the way in which the Centre operates. We promote and support interdisciplinary, inter-university and inter-sector research. An important part of my role is to link research needs, research needs, researchers and funding sources. Three hundred feminist researchers have joined the Centre's database, which I consult to locate appropriate researchers for collaborative or individual tender bids and research work.

CRW does not just implement research. As feminists we have advocated and lobbied for the maintenance of women's services, including teaching programs; the legal right to abortion; better conditions for women prisoners; the continuation of women's radio programs; the cessation of violence against women; women's industrial rights in developing countries; and a host of other issues. We are keen to maintain our networks with a range of women's organisations so that we can work with them on the issues which are important to them. Our research is informed by the values of feminism, in that it focuses on areas where gender inequity persists. Furthermore, we organise networking, mentoring and academic events so that feminist researchers can pause from their often lonely work to reconnect and learn from each other.

We also produce a monthly newsletter which publicises funding sources, women's events, feminist publications, CRW's current research and other relevant issues. Our electronic list augments this material between newsletters. CRW acts as an information base for women throughout Western Australia, especially around the time of Reclaim the Night, International Women's Day and other feminist "actions"! The Centre organises occasional Feminist Friday seminars, regular seminar series, annual symposia. We also hosted the successful Australian Women's Studies Association conference in 1996.

The staffing structure for the Centre could have resulted in an isolated and unsupported situation for Christine Giles, the Administrative Assistant, and myself. We both work part-time and our hours only

overlap one day each week. However, due to the availability, commitment and ingenuity of Board members, we have been strongly supported through triumphs and challenges alike.

The organisation of the Australian Women's Studies Association conference in 1996 was one of CRW's major successes. The generous paid and unpaid contributions of academic and post graduate students ensured its success.

At times when we have been hampered by institutional rulings which do not acknowledge CRW's unique situation. Key academic and general staff members have provided CRW with strong and effective support.

CRW's external review

In 1996 an Independent Committee of Review was appointed to assess CRW's progress, standing and viability, so that the Vice-Chancellors could decide whether to continue funding. The Committee comprised Professor Judith Chapman (Chair – Graduate School of Education, UWA), Associate professor Susan Magarey (Director, History and Research Centre for Women's Studies, University of Adelaide) and Dr Shirley Sampson (retired from Education, Monash University). They considered thirty written submissions and conducted interviews in August 1996. The Committee was impressed with the breadth of support demonstrated for the Centre's activities.

They reported that CRW had an excellent record in:

- assembling widely experienced, inter-disciplinary research teams;
- undertaking research which is highly valued, particularly in its capacity to integrate multi-disciplinary perspectives and address the concerns of policy, research and practice;
- attracting outside research funding – over \$0.5 million in the first two years of its operations;
- providing community outreach and service;
- achieving co-operation among Perth's four universities and between universities and the public sector;
- providing a supportive and co-operative environment in which women can locate their research and scholarship;
- facilitating networking and mentoring and breaking down isolation, particularly among female postgraduate students and less experienced researchers in Western Australia
- achieving university wide goals in respect to gender equity

Key recommendations included:

- a three to five year commitment of core funding by the universities;
- the appointment of a fulltime, tenurable Professorial Scholar by the host University;
- funding for a halftime Research Assistant;
- extension of the term at each university from two to three years;
- increased efforts to produce academic research publications

The first recommendation was implemented, with CRW receiving a three-year commitment of core funding. The recommendation to appoint a Professorial Scholar was rejected, hardly surprising in the prevailing climate of severe funding cuts to the tertiary sector. Unfortunately, neither were funds made available for the less ambitious recommendation of a halftime Research Assistant. The sensible suggestion that CRW stay an extra year at each university was accepted, with some relief by the staff in particular. I find that it takes up to two years to establish networks, adapt to differing organisational cultures and administrative processes and implement worthwhile initiatives to support feminist research within each host institution.

The Centre is keen to produce more academic research publications, as was recommended by the external reviewers. As so much of our research has been contracted out by the public sector, it was been difficult to build on our academic publication record. When CRW undertakes consultancy

projects, the client retains the intellectual property of the research. We have negotiated permission to publish articles derived from consultancy work in some cases, where we are assisting independent consultants to collaborate with academics in order to access publishing opportunities.

Another publishing initiative has stemmed from CRW's fortnightly program of Suffrage Seminars, funded by the Celebration of Women's Suffrage Committee in the WA Women's Policy Development Office. We are currently seeking a commercial publisher for this series of papers.

As the Centre has gradually acquired more financial security we have been keen to give support back to feminist researchers, so many of whom have supported CRW over the years. In 1998 we trialed CRW's Small Publishing Grants, which are designed to assist researchers, in conjunction with the Centre, to have their findings published, as we are mindful of the importance of CRW producing more academic publications. In the inaugural funding round we provided financial support for a Doctoral candidate to write a journal article; for a national, community based women's organisation to include a chapter on feminism in their history; and for an academic to pay for graphics in a book that is being published. The results were so successful that we have decided to offer another funding round in 1999.

As a result of a recent Planning Session, we have decided to pilot a new funding scheme next year. We are keen to support community-based, non-profit organisations to implement and publish feminist research. One of the selection criteria for the grants is whether the community has failed to access funding through other sources. The Board felt that this criterion was crucial at a time when it is increasingly difficult to secure funding for progressive, feminist research. It is essential that financial support is provided for such research which does not meet established funding guidelines. The grant(s) (up to \$30 000 in the pilot round) will be used for CRW to employ a Researcher (who may be seconded from the community organisation or external to it) and to assist with associated costs. CRW will support the progress of the research through a Steering Committee.

Reflections

In the early days of the Centre's existence, I felt that CRW was teetering somewhat on the edge of academia, with our meagre budget of \$60 000 per annum, our limited security of tenure of twelve months, our strong links with the public and community sectors, our different ways of operating our strengths in applied research. However, since the centre secured its first three year grant from the four Vice-Chancellors in 1997, following the External Review, we have been more able to plan ahead and take risks in initiating new strategies. We have noticed that the universities have taken on board some of the innovations we have trialed. We have noted that research has become more collaborative and applied in recent years, and that the principles of feminist research have been used more widely. Every time we choose to do things differently, we are effecting change in individuals and the structures in which they work.

CRW's core funding arrangement is relatively stable, relying as it does on an agreement among the four Vice-Chancellors. As the host institutions benefit from CRW's contribution to their Research Quantum and the vibrancy of feminist scholarship, their relationship, their relatively small investments provide excellent returns, to frame the situation in economic rationalist terms!

CRW has reduced the isolation of feminist researchers working in different fields, different universities and different sectors, including those based in physically remote locations. They have received formal and informal mentoring; become aware of scholarships and research funding (and been successful in bidding for them); honed their skills in preparing tender bids and funding applications; networked with other researchers; been inspired by their "fellow" postgraduate students; and been involved in interdisciplinary and inter-sector research teams.

In a time when the tertiary sector is being starved of funds and the remaining staff members are being forced to deal with ever-increasing workloads, it is important that we work together to subvert the dominant paradigm of managerial and competitive practices and ensure that feminist research endures and thrives in its many forms.

Acknowledgments

I would like to pay tribute to the members of CRW's Board of Management, past and present, and the host of other people who have contributed unpaid work to the Centre by organising conferences, facilitating workshops, assisting with mailouts, developing our new Web page, sitting on selection panels, developing policy, writing submissions and carrying our Suffrage banner. Mind you, women doing unpaid work is hardly doing things differently! The Centre has also employed or contracted an average of thirty people per year to carry out our work. Their professionalism and commitment has been greatly appreciated.

Thanks very much to Bev Thiele, Suellen Murray and Pamela Weatherill for their support. They provided whilst I was writing the article.

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A RIPPLE IN THE POND: A MINI MODEL FOR LEADERSHIP FOR MAXIMUM IMPACT ON MANAGEMENT⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

Irena Harrison and Moira Watson

West Coast College of TAFE

Life in organisations in the twenty first century will not just be about doing a job. It will be about managing one's contribution to the work of the organisation so that the work of the organisation is enriched and done well. Women and men in organisations will need to renew their mindsets and methodologies for leading and for managing their work so that they optimise their own vitality and skill and artfully promote and fulfil the vision and strategic intentions of their organisational communities.

This paper describes how a strategic workbased women leadership management project reframed the notion of leadership in work to impact on the corporate life of the community at West Coast College of TAFE. The paper outlines the thesis of leadership management underpinning the project and describes the way in which the project participants sought to verify their leadership and scope its meaning for managing the day-to-day reality of their employment in vocational education and training. It identifies seven core issues considered to be key to the success of any leadership management development and outlines the impacts the Women Leadership Management project had on the strategic development of West Coast College.

Background

This paper presents the Women Leadership Management project run in 1999 at West Coast College of TAFE. As one of the largest public providers of vocational education and training in Western Australia, West Coast College endorsed this Women Leadership Management project as a means of assisting its personnel to achieve competency in leadership management thinking and skills. The project was seen to be an opportunity to demonstrate the West Coast College culture of enquiry and finding solutions and to cement the College's position as a leading provider of innovative vocational education and training. From its inception, this project was predicted to be a catalyst for transformative change.

The relationship between leadership and management development and improved whole-of-organisation-performance has long been established as a key factor in improving local and international competitiveness (Ray and Rinzler, 1993). Most governments have initiated strategies to enhance the development of these skills (Senge *et al*, 1999). Despite this move, there is a decided lag in the commitment by enterprises and organisations to the implementation of long-term leadership and management development programs aimed at achieving sustainability and doing good business in the new millennium (Karpin, 1996). Increasing globalisation, widespread technological innovation and pressure on business to customise products and services for client satisfaction is compelling organisations around the world, in both the public and the private sectors, to rethink how they do their internal and their external business (Ray and Rinzler, 1993; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992).

The desire to increase human capital and ensure Australia's future in the Global Village has galvanised government and business sectors to investigate innovative ways for skilling emerging leaders and managers (Hawke, 1999). The aim has been to offer training to managers so that they can compete professionally in diverse and complex markets and enable their constituents to do likewise.

In recent years, the national training industry has experienced vast changes, including the introduction of policies for restructuring and outsourcing, and management reforms to improve accountability,

efficiency and effectiveness of service (Hawke, 1999). Advances in information technology and quality systems have been resourced but it is becoming apparent that there have not been equivalent resources allocated to the support of entrepreneurship and the discovery of favourable factors for best practice organisational development (Karpin, 1996).

If Australia is to successfully skill its leaders and managers so that they prosper at home and abroad, a new paradigm of leadership and management is urgently needed (Karpin, 1996). Commitment to becoming a learning organisation will become the standard philosophy for these Australian organisations and enterprises wishing to flourish in the future (Karpin, 1996). Learning at individual, team and organisational levels will enable the redefinition and reframing of corporate structures so that they more accurately reflect the reality of the work being done and the people doing the work (Bradshaw, 1999; Dixon, 1994; Senge, 1990).

Project

The Women Leadership Management project aimed to provide an innovative, workbased, academically sound, professional development opportunity for women from West Coast College of TAFE. The project was timely as global activities on gender issues had been stepped up and there was a greater emphasis on the role of women in management areas (Brush, 1999; Hammond and Holton, 1999). It was envisaged that through this initiative, the project participants would investigate and enhance their leadership management thinking and strategic action, develop an organisational model to advance the status of women's leadership and management at West Coast College, and identify issues to be addressed by the West Coast College community in the provision of further programs for leadership management development. Workbased learning was selected as the methodology for this project as individual or team workbased learning can lead to organisational learning and transformative change (Boud, 1997; Garrick, 1998).

Expressions of interest for participation in the Women Leadership Management project were solicited from women at middle and senior levels in the West Coast College community. Eligibility for participation in the project was based on completion of an Expression of Interest and confirmation of availability by line management. Prospective participants were shortlisted for the project by demonstrating a match to the project requirements:

- investigate and enhance their leadership management thinking and strategic action;
- develop an organisational model to advance the status of women's leadership and management at West Coast College;
- identify issues to be addressed by the West Coast College community in the provision of further leadership management development.

The participants were further required to demonstrate their understanding of the project aims, capacity to contribute to the project and enthusiasm for leadership management development at West Coast College.

Transformation 2000, with its focus on transformational organisational change, was contracted to develop and facilitate the project so that it encapsulated the desire of West Coast College to holistically integrate leadership and management development with its strategic intentions. The project was supported by an Associate Team of experts in management, human resources and staff development from West Coast College who championed the implementation of the project. The Managing Director of West Coast College positively and actively supported the project.

The Women Leadership Management project offered the participants a structured workbased learning opportunity to consider leadership and management roles and to investigate the thinking and behaviour that encourages personal mastery and the energy needed for achieving organisational goals. Workbased learning methodology was chosen as it has been a preferred format for many staff development projects in the vocational education and training sector in Australia (Carter and Gribble, 1991; Mather *et al*, 1997; Field, 1999; Mumford, 1997).

The fifteen participants in the Women Leadership Management project were West Coast College staff who were at levels 4 to 7, or who were principal lecturers or team leaders. A series of workshops provided the framework for the project, allowing for a combination of inspiration and practical advice. Each workshop was conducted using an active mix of theory, case studies, simulations, round table discussion and self directed learning. The workshops accommodated the self-defined different learning styles of participants and the principles of adult learning theory and action learning (Field, 1999).

The project used a theme approach and action learning practices to consider a range of theories of leadership and management and to apply them in their vocational education and training settings. Wide ranging models of leadership were considered as foundations for learning about leadership and for determining individual leadership style. Contemporary discussion of approaches to management were also investigated for their value in bringing innovation to vocational education and training. Throughout the project, participants received comprehensive notes for later reference.

Project participants also considered leadership management development, as it might be broadly actioned in the vocational education and training context and, more particularly, at West Coast College. Through reflection, discussion and written commentary, issues to be taken into account for further leadership management development programs were identified. During the project, participants were able to affirm current competency and practise new skills using generic examples and current projects in their work. An individually designed, workbased project, actioned by each of the participants across the length of the project, enabled them to gain insights into their leadership and management and to exemplify new learning. Some opportunities for executive shadowing enabled participants to shadow college directors over a two-month period with regular meetings at fortnightly intervals. This enabled the participants to test their thinking and their skills in the practicalities of the formal management positions at West Coast College, thus enhancing the integration of their learning in the workplace.

Learning opportunities associated with leadership development and with success in management were continually identified by the project management team and flagged to the participants. Across the project, participants attended an industry networking breakfast and a book launch for celebrating the centennial successes of Australian women. They were also advised of leadership management sites on the Internet and were alerted to any new publications that might support their leadership management development.

At intervals during the project, guest speakers offered the project participants insights into the practicalities of leading and managing in the workplace. Other speakers, prominent in politics, business, education and training, and community development in Western Australia, were invited to address all the women and men of the West Coast College community on the challenges of personal leadership, the leadership management intersect and leadership in vocational education and training. These speakers helped to establish a positive context for the project. Project participants also considered leadership management development, as it might be broadly actioned in the vocational education and training context and more particularly at West Coast College. Through reflection, discussion and written commentary, issues to be taken into account for future leadership management development programs were identified. Both the individual opinions and the collective thinking of the participants were coalesced in a report about whole-of-organisation leadership management development. The report was tabled by the project team and the project participants at a presentation to the Executive Board of West Coast College.

Mindsets

The Women Leadership Management project saw knowledge, the ability to learn, to change and to innovate in new and fluctuating local, national and international conditions as essential criteria for selection to positions of leadership and management. Building these competencies into ongoing, systematic education and training for entrepreneurial leadership and management was seen as a crucial first step for organisations in the process of establishing Australia as an enterprising nation (Karpin, 1996).

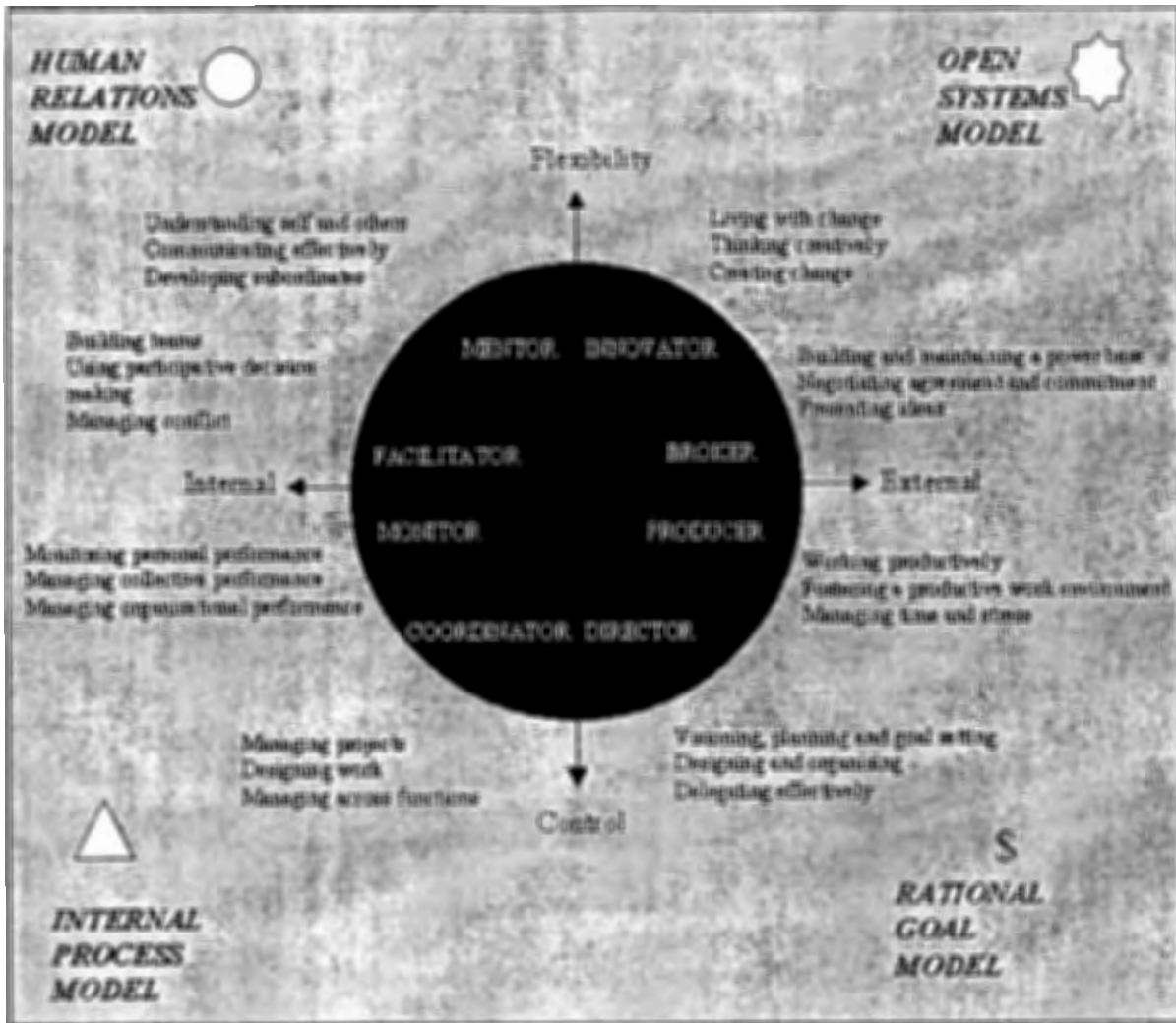
The Women Leadership Management project adopted the thesis that leadership is an integral, particularised and universal role. Leadership is best seen in personal mastery and in commitment to doing 'good work' in the world. Management positions in organisations provide prime opportunities to exhibit and expand leadership. With the assumption that there is this overlap in the functions of leadership and management, the project participants were invited to consider that the vitality of managed work rests upon the clear and collegial recognition of individual leadership.

The thesis was considered to be a critical reference point for the Women Leadership Management project. It not only underscored the importance of 'discovering' one's leadership through lifelong learning and practice, but it confirmed the importance of meshing a variety of leaderships to align corporate and constituent vision. It also highlighted the role of leadership in the day-to-day work of accruing competitive edge.

Current situational, transactional, citizenship and charismatic models of leadership were considered as foundations for the project (Bradshaw, 1999; Covey, 1989; Spears, 1998; Wren, 1995). Additionally, contemporary contingency, systems, organisational culture and strategy models of management were investigated for their value (O'Connor and McDermott, 1997; Ray and Rinzler, 1993; Wheatley, 1994). Given the context and the timeframe of the project and the availability of the participants, it was considered that the Quinn Competing Values Framework (Figure 1) captured the diversity and realities of working within Vocational Education and Training (Quinn, *et al.* 1996). This framework was chosen as the conceptual base for the Women Leadership Management project. It was seen as the mechanism for best expressing the paradoxical nature of leadership, the interrelationship of the leadership management competencies and the competing tensions of formal and day-to-day leadership and management in vocational education and training organisations.

The leadership management roles showcased in the Quinn Competing Value Framework were considered in the project both as personal and as organisational roles. They were seen as roles relevant to West Coast College and which, when integrated, enabled mastery of leadership and management in the constantly evolving, complex, dynamic systems of current vocational education and training.

Figure 1: Quinn's Competing Values Management Framework.

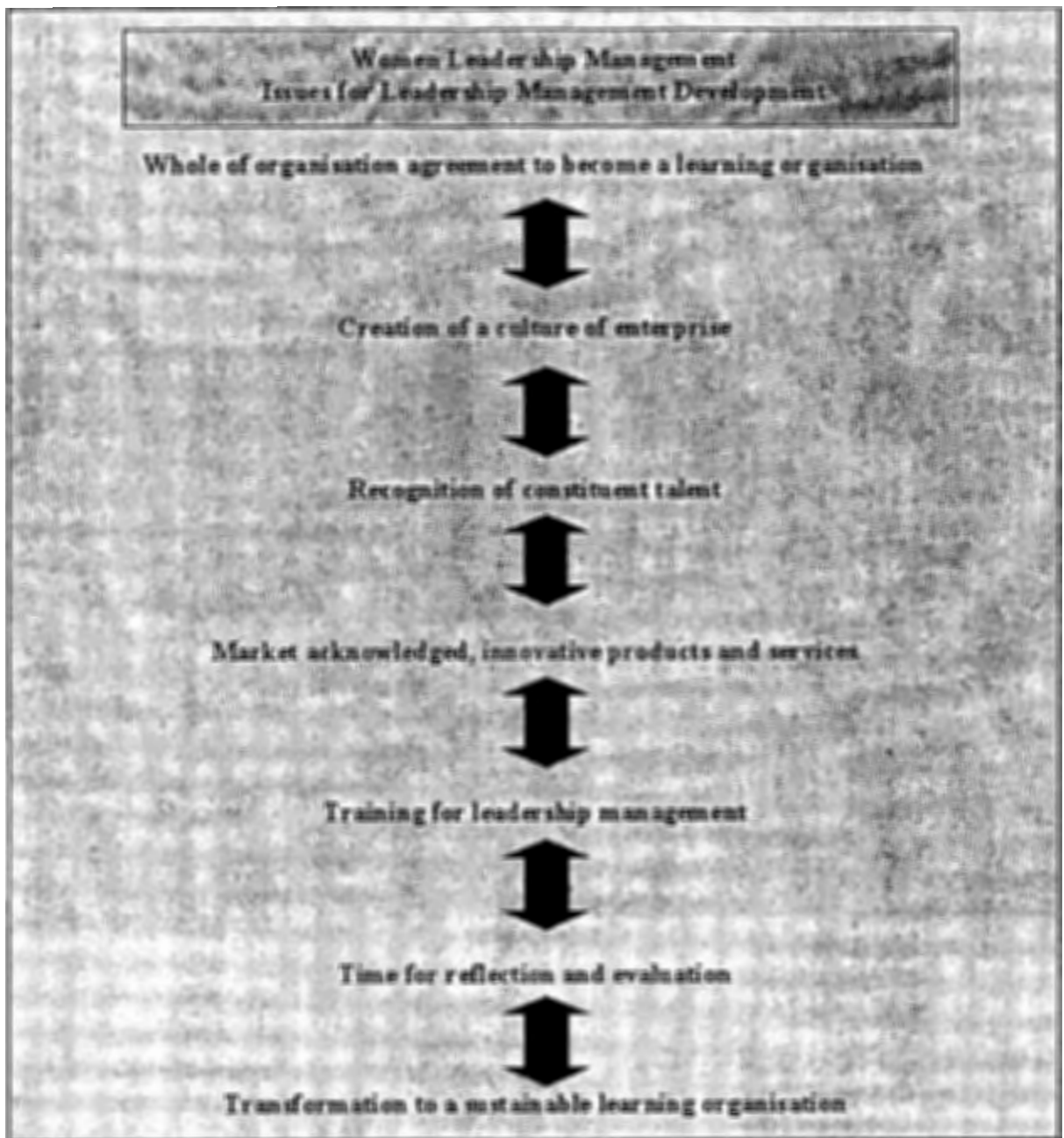


Source: Quinn et al, 1996.

Issues

The Women Leadership Management project identified seven interrelated core issues to be addressed by West Coast College of TAFE for the successful implementation of further programs for leadership management development. These issues are shown in Figure 2. All of these issues were considered to be significant for the College in undertaking a transition from the as-required training for leadership and management currently in use to more embedded, whole-of-organisation, sustainable leadership management development. Grouped, the issues promoted a collegial perspective that sustainable leadership management development is best achieved as a whole-of-organisation endeavour. The steps are an expression of individual participant's beliefs that whole-of-organisation leadership management development is an integral mechanism for the evolvement of West Coast College as a learning organisation.

Figure 2: Women Leadership Management Issues for Leadership Management Development.



Source: Participants in the Women Leadership Management project, West Coast College of TAFE, 1999.

The participants took each issue and identified actions that West Coast College needed to take to make the transition to whole-of-organisation leadership management development.

Issue 1: Whole-of-organisation agreement to become a learning organisation.

Actions: Developing shared vision.
Allocating resources to ensure return on investment.

Issue 2: Creation of a culture of enterprise.

Actions: Encouraging College personnel to develop and maintain links with professional and industry bodies.

- Issue 3: Recognition of constituent talent.
- Actions: Employing the best people for the job.
Optimising the use and development of staff talents and expertise.
Establishing succession planning.
- Issue 4: Market acknowledged, innovative products and services.
- Actions: Creating a climate of innovation.
Attracting and retaining skilled and experienced personnel.
Establishing benchmarks for the production of innovation.
- Issue 5: Training for leadership management.
- Actions: Establishing a whole-of-organisation model of leadership.
Designing training for leadership management competence.
Supporting the development of College communities 'practicing leadership'.
- Issue 6: Time for reflection and evaluation.
- Actions: Developing the capacity and capability for reflection and evaluation.
Instituting collective reflection and evaluation.
Streamlining practices for reflection and evaluation.
- Issue 7: Transformation to a sustainable learning organisation.
- Actions: Seeking transformation.
Achieving sustainability.
Prioritising learning as a renewable resource.

These core issues articulated the perspective of women for leadership management development and for advancing the status of women's leadership and management roles at West Coast College. The issues were documented as a template for inclusive whole-of-organisation leadership management development. Key recommendations were made for facilitating its implementation.

Outcomes

In the Women Leadership Management project participants expanded their understanding of leadership management philosophies, theories and principles and evaluated their positions on a leadership management preference and performance continuum. They also noted insights regarding their own leadership and proposed incremental change in managing their work. Through their workbased project, participants constructed and evaluated strategies for change in their leadership management.

Through reflection on the project, participants reported that the project outcomes had been met and that these outcomes had both personal and corporate significance. The participants reported that they particularly valued the learning, stimulation and networking offered by the project and the opportunity to practically contribute to future leadership management development at West Coast College. They noted that, although an end point for the project had been set, each individual journey to that point had been very different. Overall, the synergy of their agreement to travel together had been productive and rewarding. This critical reflectivity was seen as important as it leads to empowerment of workers in an organisation (Mezirow, 1981).

The participants in the Women Leadership Management project recommended three key actions for implementing sustainable leadership management development at West Coast College of TAFE.

1. A second phase should be developed for the Women Leadership Management pilot project. This phase should have staged structures and generous allocations of time so that there are maximum

opportunities to process informational and interpersonal demands. In this second phase, participants from the Women Leadership Management project pilot would be able to further investigate organisational leadership management in vocational education and training. They would continue to improve their own leadership and management skills and their ability to become catalysts for insightful change.

2. A taskforce representing all the stakeholders in the West Coast College community should be instituted to convene a leadership management development process and to oversee its implementation. A multi-faceted taskforce would ensure the representation and support of all stakeholders. It would guarantee the use of only the best models and methodologies for leadership management development and would attend to the logistical and strategic success of the development. The taskforce would also be responsible for the collection of qualitative and quantitative data
3. Leadership management development at West Coast College should be resourced as a strategic priority. This move would confirm the importance of leadership management development in achieving the existing College commitment to becoming a learning organisation.

Impacts

The ripple effect of the Women Leadership Management mini model of leadership has had a profound influence on management thinking and on a number of management practices at West Coast College of TAFE. The presentation of the report on the project to the Executive Board provided a forum for examining the project's model for whole-of-organisation leadership management development. Issues arising from the report were discussed and the practicalities of applying the strategies explored. At the subsequent West Coast College annual strategic planning days, the Women Leadership Management project report was considered to be a key document in determining the organisation's strategic directions for 2000-2005.

The Women Leadership Management project structure formed a template for the development of a frontline management initiative to be implemented in 1999 and 2000. It was decided that, in this whole-of-organisational initiative the emphasis on the leadership management intersect, on workbased learning and on collegial organisational growth would be both a focus and a commitment. Agreement was reached that the climate of conversation for leadership management development momentum, created by the challenging input of the guest speakers in the Women Leadership Management project, should be maintained. The speaker program for the year 2000 is currently being assembled. To support continuing skill development in leadership management throughout the West Coast College community a network of emerging leaders is being established. There is an intention in the organisation to further develop its body of knowledge and expertise around leadership management. As a first step in this, the issues papers of the participants in the Women Leadership Management project will be published.

Ensuring that ongoing maximum impact is gained from the Women Leadership Management project will be the challenge for all stakeholders. Its success will be best demonstrated when it actively contributes to the construction of West Coast College as a sustainable learning organisation.

Already, as a result of the project, there is renewed commitment in the College community to continue to encourage this transformation. Through celebrating the development of leadership rewarding incremental change can be actioned. Inner shifts in people's values, aspirations and behaviours must be aligned with outer shifts in processes, strategies, practices and systems. Celebrations of these combinations will assure vitality.

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WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: THE VICTORIAN EXPERIENCE⁽²⁰⁰⁰⁾

Elizabeth Hartnell-Young, Leonie Morgan, Jenny Wills

Women's Participation in Local Government Project, Victoria

In 1997 a coalition of local government organisations and women's groups was formed to work towards equal participation of women and men in local government in Victoria. A Victorian Local Government Women's Charter was widely consulted and published and councils were encouraged to adopt it annually. The research and publication of *A Gender Agenda*, designed to encourage women to stand for council and to give them practical assistance, followed in 1998. This paper discusses the goals of the coalition: equal representation of women in Victoria's 78 Councils, strengthening local communities and democratic local governance, and the strategies which have been developed to achieve them.

Women's political representation in local government in Australia has never reflected the proportion of women in the population, although women are frequently involved in community activities and community activism. Currently Victoria is second only to the Northern Territory in the percentage of women councillors representing their local communities, with 26.8% of councillors being women. Fifty-nine per cent of Victorian councils still have two or fewer women. (Municipal Association of Victoria, 2001) and fewer than 20% of mayors are women (Cumberland, 2000). A Victorian project is addressing this by building on the momentum of recent initiatives and results of the 2000 council elections and developing a co-ordinated plan of action focussed on increasing women's participation in this important third tier of government in Australia. The project, supported by a coalition of local government and women's organisations and individual women, has sought funding from the Victorian Government for a three year program which will see the establishment of a secretariat dedicated to the challenge of achieving equal representation of women and men in Victoria's 78 councils.

In 1919 the first female Australian councillor, Cr. Berry, was elected in South Australia and this was followed in the next year by the election of Cr. Mary Rogers in Victoria. It was to take another ten years for a Victorian woman to be elected as Shire President and further ten years for a metropolitan council to elect a female Mayor. With suffrage based on land ownership Victoria lagged behind several states, not achieving universal suffrage until 1982: 60 years after Queensland and 40 years after New South Wales (Sinclair, 1987). Both the Victorian branch of the Australian Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA), formed in 1963, and the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL) local government action group, established in 1972, played important roles in this development.

The 1980s was an important decade for women's rights. In Australia we saw the introduction of the Federal Sex Discrimination Act while the first UN Women's Conference was held in Nairobi in 1985. However women still constituted only 13.4% of Victorian councillors in 1986 (Sinclair, 1987), and in order to encourage greater representation, the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) jointly funded the publication, *Getting the Numbers: Women in Local Government* (Sinclair, 1986) and produced the video, *Hats in the Ring* for the Australian Bicentennial Authority (Municipal Association of Victoria, 1988).

The Victorian initiatives met with some success and by 1993, 21% of all councillors across Victoria were female. The percentage of women was greater (45%) in the eleven inner metropolitan councils than in rural areas.

However this positive trend was brought to a dramatic halt in 1994 when the Kennett state government introduced a policy of council amalgamation, reducing the number of councils from 210 to 78, and replacing the 2125 elected councillors with 229 appointed commissioners, only 37 (16%) of whom were women (Office of Local Government, Victoria, 1995).

The amalgamation of councils was seen by many as an assault on democracy. With growing concerns that the gains being made by women in local government would be permanently eroded a group of women including Angela Munro, Jenny Wills, Ro Roberts, Louise Glanville, Priscilla Pescott and Lyn Allison (now a Senator) formed Women for Local Government, a lobby group to promote women's participation as both councillors and active citizens to shape communities in the interests of all people. This group issued press releases and held sessions encouraging women to stand for council, using former councillors to speak on the role of local government, the unique role of women and the challenges ahead. Following the 1996 elections in 20 of the newly amalgamated 78 councils, the urgency of achieving gender equity was once again underlined. Seven hundred thousand Victorians now had no female representation – compared with only 20,000 in 1993 prior to the council amalgamations (Cumberland, 1997).

Some of the reasons for this situation are related to the structure and operations of the new councils. The 1994 amalgamations meant that the size of each local government municipality increased, with greater distances for councillors to travel and a larger and often more diverse population to represent. Restructuring as a result of amalgamation also changed the emphasis of the work of local government. The Kennett government indicated that Councils were to run like corporate boards and it was commonly believed that different sorts of councillors would now be required, with less emphasis on local community knowledge, more emphasis on corporate and business experience, an increase in workload and a focus on strategic planning (Local Government Board, 1995; Ernst, Glanville and Murfitt, 1997). This change of emphasis appeared to influence many women not to run for election (Cumberland, Glanville and Roberts, 1997) and only 134 women were elected in Victoria in 1997, compared with 453 prior to amalgamation (Cumberland, 2000).

Community and individual attitudes to power have also been an influence. As with other areas where there have been significant and historical issues of gender inequity, the community was unused to seeing women in positions of power and decision making. In these circumstances, serving as a councillor was often seen as men's work, as men have always been the ones who do these things. Data and anecdotal evidence gathered from across Victoria (Mathew, 2000) indicate that this attitude was more prevalent in rural areas, however it also existed in some urban areas. Many women appeared reluctant to challenge this balance of power by putting themselves forward to stand for election.

As a result of the developments in Victoria, Jenny Wills, then the MAV's Director of Social and Cultural Policy, was invited to join the Task Force which drafted the International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) Declaration on Women in Local Government and prepared a policy paper and status report on Women in Local Government. The Worldwide Declaration on Women in Local Government endorsed by the IULA World Executive in Zimbabwe, November 1998 includes the following clauses:

4. Recognising that the reasons as to why women are not represented equally in local government are multiple, and that women and men throughout the world live under different conditions and women do not have the same access to and control over economic and political resources as men;

5. Considering that local government, as an integral part of the national structure of governance, is the level of government closest to the citizens and therefore in the best position to involve women in the making of decisions concerning their living conditions, and to make use of their knowledge and capabilities in sustainable development;

6. Emphasising that the mission of IULA cannot be realised without the equal and systematic integration of women into democratic local decision-making and that democracy cannot be realised without adequate representation, participation and the inclusion of women in the local governance process;

10. Local democracy is not just a formal value; it must be continuously updated and revised, ensuring genuine equality and participation to all. We emphasise, in particular, the essential role women must play as representatives and citizens, and the duty to ensure that all our services take their leadership skills, needs and aspirations fully into account;

(International Union of Local Authorities (IULA), 1998, pp.1-2).

It is these values that underpin much of the work done by the Victorian Local Government Women's Participation Project described in this paper. In response to revived concerns for gender equity, the Women for Local Government group joined forces with ALGWA, Women's Planning Network (Vic) Inc. and Professional Women in Local Government and the nucleus for the Victorian Local Government Women's Participation Project was formed. The coalition now comprises the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV), Victorian Local Governance Association (VLGA), Local Government Women's Association (ALGWA), Women's Planning Network (Vic) Inc., Women's Electoral Lobby (Vic), YWCA, Stegley Foundation, and LOCAL (Ladies of the City Action League, based in Dandenong).

This Project depends, like so many women's activities, on the time volunteered by individuals. Currently in kind support is offered by the MAV and VLGA. One of the first achievements was the development of the *Victorian Local Government Women's Charter* (Municipal Association of Victoria, 1997). The Charter evolved from a series of debates and planning meetings held by a broad group of women's and local government organisations. It aims to encourage councils to formally recognise the important role women can play in local government both as elected representatives and as paid employees and contains four key principles: equal representation; local community and social development; planning and integrated development; and reconciliation. These principles are linked to eighteen strategies that can assist Councils to reach the goal of increased women's participation. Councils are requested to endorse the principles and begin to implement the strategies, such as provision of a carers' allowance, revised sitting times and training to encourage and enable women's participation. To maintain a constant check on progress, the Women's Participation Project developed and disseminated A Women's Charter Implementation Checklist in 1999. The Checklist suggests designating a responsible committee and council officer, developing a municipal action plan and allocating funds in the annual budget. It can be used by Councils to assess their progress in implementing strategies in addressing under-representation.

The publication of *A Gender Agenda – a women's participation kit* (Morgan and Charlesworth, 1998) has been a highlight of the project. Funded by a philanthropic trust – The Stegley Foundation, *A Gender Agenda* aims to provide practical assistance to women candidates for local government, and their supporters. The kit provides information on running campaigns, communicating with the media and electors as well as strategies on how to become an effective councillor. Case studies illustrate how individual candidates and councillors have dealt with specific aspects of campaigning and representation. The kit describes what they actually do, and aims to show women that they already have the necessary skills and experience to represent their communities. The kit has been widely distributed in Victoria and is currently in its second reprint.

Progress towards full gender equity across Victoria's councils has been slow. In spite of the activities described above, by 1999 only 24 % of Victoria's nearly 600 Councillors were women, (compared with 21% in 1993). There were 13 Councils without any women Councillors and around 600,000 Victorians now lived in municipalities without female representatives. Strategic statewide action was required and in 1999 a project officer, Carol Mathew was appointed to coordinate Phase 2 of the Women's Participation Project. Funds were once again provided by The Stegley Foundation, with Victorian Women's Trust also contributing. By linking with ALGWA's "200 by 2000" campaign, funded by the Victorian Government, a statewide focus was possible. Local activities were facilitated

and supported, and women were encouraged and assisted to run in the March 2000 local government elections. Twelve workshops were run throughout Victoria, supported by a mentoring program for female candidates and the establishment of databases of contacts for further information.

A media and publicity campaign with professional advice resulted in numerous articles in local papers, several letters to editors, and a small rally outside the Melbourne Town Hall but no large scale media coverage was achieved. Pamphlets about the project and women's representation in general were distributed at International Women's Day activities. Close to the election a Lord Mayor's Reception for women candidates was held at the Melbourne Town Hall to show support for their candidature. In the last days before the election all candidate lists were analysed by gender, a website was established and arrangements made with electoral officials and scrutineers for early results to be forwarded to the steering committee. This laid the groundwork for the Women's Tally Room to monitor the election results (Mathew, 2000).

The workshops were frequently held in conjunction with local council officers, which was a way of sharing expenses and resources. Facilitators distributed *A Gender Agenda* (Morgan and Charlesworth, 1998) and focused on why women's participation was important, strategies to encourage and support local candidates and discussion on practical issues such as running campaigns, handling the media, and using mentors. Experienced councillors and campaigners from across the state were asked to supply contact details, as well as background information on their experiences and interest in local government. From this information, a contact list of approximately 30 women and 1 man was developed and widely circulated. Women with questions about standing and/or campaigning were encouraged to make contact with one or more of those on the contact list and informal mentoring matches were facilitated. An information workshop on mentoring and the use of the contact data base was also held, and all women standing at the 2000 elections encouraged to attend (Mathew, 2000).

As a media strategy, the concept of the Women's Tally Room proved very successful in the March 2000 poll. A first in Australia, the Tally Room was simply a gathering of steering committee members, assisted by an experienced local government analyst, Dr Rosemary Kiss. The room was in a metropolitan Town Hall and journalists and candidates were invited to call in on the Sunday following the election. The Australian and Victorian Electoral Commissions emailed updates on counting as they occurred, and all evidence of the vote for women was extracted and analysed. This was supported by a website (www.results.aust.com/results) which enabled the general public and the media to monitor the progress of women. The resulting media coverage in the metropolitan dailies and the major radio stations was the widest the project had received to date.

These proactive statewide strategies proved successful. In March 2000, 29% of all candidates in Victoria were women and only one municipality had no women candidates. Ninety-nine women were elected, bringing women's participation to 26.8% – the highest of any Australian state. More significantly, a number of councils which were previously all-male returned women. Following the elections a Women's Power Workshop was held in June 2000 in order to provide some practical support to first time women councillors and to facilitate networking. Participants discussed strategies for ensuring they worked effectively in council and with their local communities with former Victorian Premier Joan Kirner, who has documented practical strategies and skills for women in her book with Moira Rayner (Kirner and Rayner, 1999).

The next stage of the Women's Participation Project involves the development and publication of a companion guide to *A Gender Agenda — Now You're a Councillor* — an information kit for new women councillors. Secondly a project officer will be employed to provide information sessions at local level to encourage women to consider standing for the next round of elections. Both of these activities are funded by the Victorian Women's Trust.

Dr Rosemary Kiss has analysed Victorian local government participation rates from the 1970s to date. These indicated that during the late 1970s and 1980s the female participation rate generally increased by 1% each election. There was a plateau during the 1990s, but if the present rate of increase can be sustained, further significant gains in gender equity are possible during the 2000s. The percentage of women councillors in local government in Victoria (26.8%), is now comparable with that in the

Victorian State Parliament (23% in the Legislative Assembly and 27% in the Legislative Council) and in the Federal Parliament (22% in the House of Representatives and 28% in the Senate), although clearly these figures do not represent gender equity. Still more has to be done and more strategic and proactive initiatives implemented, linking with other local and statewide initiatives. To this end a three-year proposal¹ has been developed, focusing on gender specific training, local and regional network support and updating materials.

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¹ In July 2001 the Premier of Victoria, Steve Bracks, announced that the submission for \$300,000 from the Community Support Fund had been successful.

DEVELOPING MULTIMEDIA PORTFOLIOS: A VEHICLE FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN TECHNOLOGY⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

Elizabeth Hartnell-Young

Results Unlimited Pty Ltd

Women@the cutting edge is a team making a deliberate attempt to regain some ground for the notion of working together and setting the agenda in an increasingly individualised and controlled world. The women came together after participating in a leadership course. They shared the need to develop a professional portfolio of achievement for promotion, performance review or professional development planning.

Women@the cutting edge believed that the need to develop technology skills and to prepare portfolios could be linked in a single professional development project.

They understood about learning and were prepared to take some risks, but had almost no experience of multimedia production, and limited experience in its use.

The team succeeded in its initial aims: to produce a prototype multimedia portfolio for CD and Internet, to contribute to conferences and professional journals and to gain funding to develop the concept as a professional development program for others.

In 1999 the professional development program — Portfolios @the cutting edge — and the website supported by AT&T were launched.

The context

This is the story of a grass-roots professional development project initiated by a group of women interested in exploring the use of technology. Kathy Bail has said "...rather than wait to see if cyberspace turns into something that we like, we should, like the boys, attempt through our use of the technology, to shape the media structures of the future" (Bail, 1998). Women@the cutting edge — a group of women in education — have taken their first step in this direction.

In the education community greater use of learning technologies is being demanded of both teachers and students. In many Victorian schools students are required, and teachers are assisted to purchase their own laptop computers, while on-line course delivery is being developed as a way to provide students with cost-effective education, and to enable universities to expand enrolments and compete globally.

In this context we see many academics and teachers working with students who are more familiar with technologies than they are. The teacher has important content knowledge to share, but often feels deskilled in the teaching process. Even computer-literate academics are finding that writing and delivering on-line courses is not just a matter of putting a course on the Web. The desire to understand and make use of the available technology in our work was a primary motivation for our project.

Technology and gender

If the use and practice of new skills is important in learning, women are already at a disadvantage with communication technology. While accurate statistics on use are difficult to obtain, it appears, for example, that men dominate the use of the Internet. A UK report suggests that only 4% of women use the Internet at work compared with 15% of men, and women are less confident with technologies than

men (Wilkinson and Howard, 1998). On a brighter note, a recent article in *The Age* newspaper refers to research which indicates that 37% of regular Internet users in Australia are women (Derkley, 1998). There are numerous examples of women's email lists where debate and discussion on issues of importance to women takes place all day and night. Email is a wonderful tool for mobilising women, as communication does not have to be time-specific. But if all women are to have the opportunity to become involved we should not be complacent: the cost of hardware, software and connection time still mean that access is difficult for many. High demand for access to affordable services is more likely where women have experienced the communication possibilities of the technology. While consumption of the Internet is increasing, *women@the cutting edge* focuses on production through publication.

Understanding how women view the medium can help us plan for greater use of communication technology. A recent Victorian report on women and information technology stated that while men tinker with and explore technology, women want to see its usefulness to their work (Delaney and Dyson, 1998). Dale Spender suggests that most women don't see computers as useful or necessary to their lifestyles (Spender, 1995). The many advertisements which concentrate on the features of a product rather than its applications, and photos of equipment without people, might have a role to play in this perception.

Professional development

In the face of this, professional development is seen as a means of giving teachers and other professionals the required skills and knowledge to move forward. But professional development is still more likely to be *about* learning technologies than being achieved *through* the technologies. The technology drives the learners, rather than being the servant. So in the technology area courses in Excel, Word or the Internet are devised, rather than purposeful courses in keeping budget records, writing reports or researching funding sources.

As Hargreaves and Fullan (1996) argue, much professional development is imposed on a top-down basis by experts, with little recognition of the degree or pace of adoption of skills, showing disrespect for teachers' professionalism. Some is imposed by (often inexperienced) university leaders driven by budget considerations and anxious to achieve enormous change in a short time. In our experience the delivery is often characterised by a "masculine" discourse of certainty in which the trainer directs the learners through a set sequence of skills and knowledge, using terminology which confuses rather than clarifies. The identification of current skills is frequently neglected, and the learner is made to feel inadequate.

Other barriers to successful professional development have been identified. They include difficulties with self-esteem, lack of mentoring and role models, gender discrimination, difficulties balancing career and family responsibilities and poor training models (Pearl *et al*, 1990). Taking these into account, we believe that women must work together to demystify and use technology to meet our needs. We can create mentors and role models as we go, building up a critical mass. We can learn from Kathryn Turnipseed, coordinator of *Electronic Witches*, a large group of women in the wartorn former Yugoslav states, who writes:

Women understand the power of information, its potential to enhance their social change goals, and the need to share it widely. This group, however, has enjoyed neither regular access to computing resources, training appropriate to their needs, nor encouragement to creatively explore the potential uses of the computer. Overwhelmingly, the computer has been placed outside of women's familiar framework; it has been mysticized and generalized as the domain of men. Women who have used typewriters for years, for example, don't immediately see the linkage of skills as computer technology has been mysticized (Turnipseed, 1996, p 23).

Women@the cutting edge have a long term focus beyond skills transfer and demystifying technology to increasing self-confidence and influencing social change. In order to make a start in our own

context, we looked for a meaningful vehicle for professional development in technology, using it to create and communicate, to produce multimedia for work and enjoyment, and eventually to create new forms of empowerment through communication and increased employability. We chose the professional portfolio.

The professional portfolio

The portfolio, commonly used by artists to showcase their work, is becoming more popular in universities and the professions as a means of recording achievements, for planning professional development, or engaging in reflective practice (Seldin, 1991; Laws and Des Roches, 1996; Kimeldorf, 1997; Edith Cowan University, 1998; Griffith University, 1998). There are many reasons to develop a portfolio. It can provide a record of activities, professional growth or career highlights, provide evidence for a performance review and support an application for a position or professional registration. With a systematic collection of information, writing a résumé becomes more straightforward.

Briefly, the main steps in the portfolio development process are these:

Collecting evidence of achievements, which can be in various forms: written reports, curriculum documents and journal articles, photographic and video evidence of activities and events, feedback from students and clients.

Listing criteria for organising the evidence, such as key selection criteria, promotion guidelines or major abilities.

Selecting appropriate evidence from the collection to illustrate abilities and achievements.

Reflecting on the evidence, using a framework of questions such as:

- why did I choose this evidence?
- how does this fit with my values?
- what was I trying to achieve with this activity?
- how well did I achieve my goals?
- what were the critical factors helping or hindering achievement?
- what have I learnt/ what would I do next time?
- what are the implications for me, the job and the profession?

A great deal has been written about professional portfolios, particularly in universities and professional associations, sometimes accompanied by detailed guidelines and templates (Jones and Martin, 1994; Wolf, 1994; Burke, 1997; Winsor, 1997; University of Western Australia, 1998; Hartnell-Young, 1998; Hartnell-Young and Morriss, 1999; Linnakylä *et al.*, 1999).

In our view, it is the person, not the portfolio, which should be the focus of attention: the portfolio merely provides the framework for planning and action. Many people find that one of the most important outcomes of developing a portfolio is the self-esteem that comes from recording professional achievements and reflecting on career successes. It is not unusual to hear statements like this:

My portfolio was prepared for me to take into an interview. During three interviews no one asked to see it even though I had it with me and told them I had it. At first I was disappointed that no one had taken the time to look at it. Then I realized that building my portfolio had been a professional growth experience that had made me focus on all my areas of strengths as a teacher (Wells, S, Pers. Comm. 1998).

The cutting edge project

Underpinning the two trends — learning technologies and portfolios — with the consideration of gender, the group of women teachers in primary, secondary and tertiary settings came together at RMIT in 1997 to make a CD-ROM. We brought a range of experience and knowledge to the project, but none of us was expert in multimedia production. We planned to use the hands-on approach to devise a professional development model or program which would assist others in breaking down the mystique of technology. This, we argued, should result in skills which would assist teachers understand more about on-line learning, develop appropriate curriculum materials and gain some control over the medium. It should also result in a greater understanding of reflective practice and portfolio development for both their colleagues and their students. We also believed that teachers deserve to spend some time on themselves.

The team comprised Angelique, a teacher in a P-12 college who had responsibility for Information Technology and Professional Development Planning; Charmaine, a member of the leadership team in a secondary college; Gillian, an Assistant Principal with little computer experience; Glenda, a primary teacher who became an Assistant Principal during the project, and has published books linking literacy, science and technology; Maureen, a teacher educator at RMIT University, interested in exploring ways in which information technology is influencing learning and teaching in language and literacy, and Elizabeth, a former teacher with a passion for learning and enabling others.

At the first meeting we determined to show that women can lead the implementation of technology in materials development, training and teaching, by naming the team *women@the cutting edge*. This was a positioning tactic, a description of where we wanted to be rather than where we were. We aimed to show, through developing multimedia professional portfolios, that women can be confident, collaborative producers of multimedia as well as sharing their learning in an inclusive way, modelling aspects of feminist pedagogy (Maher and Tetrault, 1994). The notes of this first meeting record the grand scale of our idea, and our belief in what we were doing.

Some of us had previously developed print-based portfolios, usually rather bulky collections in plastic covered binders. At “the cutting edge” we imagined a streamlined multimedia portfolio where readers could make their own pathway through hyperlinked material, going deeper into the evidence to read complete articles or see a video clip. It seemed logical to store it on CD, as it would take up too much space for a floppy disk. Of course it could also go on the Web.

We also wanted to be sure that others could share in our learning. We documented our discussions and processes, and made sure that the equipment and software used was likely to be widely available, and suitable for Mac and PC platforms. We used the web editor incorporated in Netscape Communicator™ to create simple pages incorporating images, text, video and sound. No knowledge of HTML (hypertext markup language) was required, although it was always possible and interesting to look at the “source” of a page created in this way.

In mapping out the content of our prototype CD, we decided to include three elements: a compilation portfolio made up of examples from our own lives, “how-to” a guide to others who would like to produce their own portfolio, and some personal information about the members of the group. We decided on five criteria to provide structure for our compilation portfolio: Developing others, Teaching and learning, Leadership and management, Assessment and evaluation, and Communication skills. Each member contributed items of evidence to one or two of these areas, such as policy and planning documents, photographs of classroom activities, or excerpts of publications. We quickly developed a team approach, providing feedback to each other on the quality and relevance of the items. Those who have developed portfolios often report that the process is as important as the product in encouraging reflective practice, feedback from colleagues and professional conversations. Portfolio development can be undertaken alone, but our experience indicates that great learning occurs when groups of people work together. In this project we taught each other when the need arose. One recent participant commented “The combination was great: flexible working partnerships as the need arose. I did a lot of the trialling work on my own but could bounce ideas around with Rhonda from time to time” (Reynen, personal communication, 1999).

Over a period of five months we met infrequently to learn more about the technology, such as scanning images, creating links between material or improving the design of our portfolio. Communication was supported by the email list (cuttingedge@mars.eu.rmit.edu.au) which we established after the first meeting. Messages from this list indicated that we sometimes had difficulty deciding how or what to present, and workloads interfered with our planned deadlines. Our critical friends took their role seriously, as the following posting indicates:

Immediately I see that this may well enhance one's learning of the technology but also exclude a great many women who do not have access to the technology. Is the focus on enhancement of technology on portfolio development or on the rich resource of one's working life and how to effectively present one's skills, knowledge, accomplishments? Form and content or content and then form? (Latham, G., Pers. Comm., 1997).

Such reflection was a discipline we agreed to at the outset. We felt we needed to practise and model reflection at all times. We therefore wrote reflective commentary about our portfolio material and kept a record of the complete project to track our own growth.

Conclusions

Hargreaves and Fullan (1996) suggest, and our experience has shown, that learning through technology is likely to be tentative and provisional, and the learnings themselves likely to change over time as further exploration is undertaken. We have encouraged risk-taking, play and loosely-structured activities, and we promote extensive recording and reflection as a means of individual and collaborative learning and development. One participant wrote "I believe it was a true example of a feminist model of teaching and learning" (Chambers, K., Pers. Comm., 1999).

We have given ourselves and others the opportunity to see possibilities in using and producing multimedia technology for themselves. We found, as we had suspected, that the computers at home and work, our cameras and a scanner had the capability to produce multimedia. Our major focus was on learning, so our intention was not to produce a commercial product but to unlock the secrets of those machines. We learned that writing for multimedia requires us to be succinct and organised. Hypertext is a wonderful way to reveal layer upon layer of our work, but we also need to make navigation simple if we are to communicate with an audience. We also learnt that pleasing and interesting design can be difficult to achieve, so we have started studying more about this aspect.

We are aware of a danger that in an increasingly competitive and individualised environment, teachers could become even more isolated than they have been. Working together on portfolios may become even more important in alleviating teacher isolation and increasing collegiality. As a group we have different knowledge, skills and experience, as well as different learning styles. We have used this to build up a body of shared experience and to coach and mentor each other to achieve similar goals. We want to have a collective approach to influence education and social policy.

In the increasingly flexible labour market, with its contract, part-time and casual employment, individuals are challenged to create their own work, rather than relying on organisations to provide "a job" (Bridges, 1997). Notwithstanding the broader problems this flexibility can cause, we believe from our experience that the production of a portfolio can assist people to be "employable" by clarifying and articulating their values, and showing how they make a difference. Using multimedia adds to self confidence and understanding the potential of technology. "The depth and range of our colleagues' experience, skills and achievements haven't really surprised me, but seeing them on screen and celebrating them together has been more powerful than I might have imagined" (Pearce E. Pers. Comm., 1999).

As a result of our marketing and persistence, the telecommunications company AT&T funded further work on this professional development program, and a website at www.cuttingedge.rmit.edu.au. AT&T shares our excitement in seeing women making technology work for them in a purposeful way. Women@the cutting edge started with teachers, but we can see

anyone, employed or unemployed, engaged in multimedia production to celebrate their life history and achievements. We do not want to be seen as a single issue group. We want to make sure women have the opportunity to know what technology exists, what they might do with it, how to get access to it, and how to influence decision-making by spreading information and gathering support for ideas.

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STRATEGIES FOR THESIS WRITING: A CASE STUDY⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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Women frequently have an uphill battle in completing a PhD or Masters degree given that, while studying, they are often also performing other competing and demanding roles. Urgent and important matters in other areas of life often intervene and result in procrastination, lack of progress, and ultimately the questioning of whether it is all worth the effort.

This paper provides basic advice on how to manage the research role, while performing a variety of other roles. It focuses on efficient completion of a thesis, and offers ideas and suggestions within a framework of motivational, cognitive, and environmental aspects of learning. The paper draws upon the author's experience of completing a PhD in less than three years while working full-time. It includes topics such as time lines, monitoring progress, motivation, writing techniques and other practical strategies.

Introduction

As we approach the millennium, a woman who aspires to complete a PhD faces challenges very different to those of the last generation. Lack of opportunity and role models—factors which frequently limited women's study options in the past—have been replaced by a whole new set of pressures and predetermined expectations about what women should and should not try to achieve. People happily pass judgement on whether a woman really needs a higher degree, whether she'll be able to cope, whether her job will suffer and whether the children will miss out. In this paper, I document my experiences of completing a PhD. As such, it is a very personal treatise and aims to give heart to women in similar situations who may ultimately question whether it is all worth it. In the paragraphs below, I document some of the motivating forces which kept me going, and many of the self-regulation and cognitive strategies I used in writing the thesis in the most efficient manner possible.

Over the past decade or more, many theorists and researchers have examined the learning process within a framework of factors comprising the *motivational, cognitive, and social/environmental* aspects of learning (e.g., Bandura, 1993; Boekaerts, 1997; Zimmerman, 1995). Such a framework is particularly useful in examining the self-regulation processes that govern successful completion of dissertations. Schunk and Zimmerman (1997) include under the mantle of academic self regulation: 'Planning and managing time; attending to and concentrating on instruction; organizing, rehearsing, and coding information strategically; establishing a productive work environment, and using social resources effectively' (p. 195). Many authors have addressed the adoption of cognitive and metacognitive strategies both from the learner's perspective (e.g., Harris & Graham, 1996) and also from the point of view of the teacher hoping to enhance students' use of effective learning strategies (e.g., Volet, 1991; Chalmers & Fuller, 1996). This paper will examine many of these motivational, cognitive and social issues related to the completion of a doctoral dissertation.

Getting started

When I first enrolled in the doctoral degree, subtle comments questioned my ability, my disposition, my sustainability, my mettle and my motive. It occurred to me that in pursuing my goal, I could turn all these gratuitous and judgemental comments into a motivating force. Put simply, I became determined to prove that I could do it.

In setting out to complete a doctorate, one other factor also provided initial and sustaining motivation for me as I completed the research. This was an interview I happened to hear with Anne McMurray, a Professor at Edith Cowan University, who was being interviewed about her book on non-custodial parenting (McMurray, 1995). During the course of the interview, she revealed that the book was based on her doctoral research and that she had completed the thesis in two years, whilst working fulltime. The interviewer asked how she could possibly achieve this, to which she replied: 'I worked on it every day'. This, to me, was the key. My own anecdotal experience of thesis completion was that people took many years to complete, that there were frequent lapses and periods of inactivity, and that the task could become a millstone around the neck, rather than a challenging and motivating experience. Working on it everyday would ensure that it became habitual, that I would not waste valuable time trying to recall where I was up to, and above all that it would ensure the task was a priority throughout the course of the degree.

This paper describes some of the strategies I employed that enabled me to write my thesis in less than two and a half years, whilst working fulltime, with a fulltime-working partner and three children under 10. The entire process—from enrolment to submission, resubmission and receiving the final endorsement from University Council—was completed within three years. In describing the strategies that I used to enable this progress, I have not discussed the research process itself or the steps necessary to complete the degree, such as the formulation of research questions, public seminars, proposals, ethics consideration and so on. Nor do I describe the research study I completed for the degree: a qualitative study into how students responded to multimedia based on a situated learning model (although that has been done elsewhere, e.g., Herrington & Oliver, 1997; Herrington & Herrington, 1998; Herrington & Oliver, 1999; Herrington & Knibb, 1999). This paper focuses on the cognitive and metacognitive strategies that enabled me to produce a thesis of almost 100,000 words well within the recognised timeline for such a task.

Prior to enrolment, I had spent about a year thinking I should do a PhD, and had conducted some library searches to try to find a suitable topic. This had been fairly fruitless and, at times, I felt that I would never be able to focus in on something worthwhile. The catalyst to enrol came from the colleague who would become my supervisor, who encouraged me to break the task up into a series of smaller tasks that seemed much more manageable. He also helped me to explore the areas I was interested in pursuing, rather than pushing his own research agenda. At the time of enrolment, I had a handwritten page of ideas which seemed to have the potential to grow into a worthwhile, interpretive research study.

In terms of essential tools to complete the task, one stood out from the rest. Apart from the obvious essentials for the completion of a PhD—such as a quiet place to work, appropriate resources and references—a laptop computer was my most invaluable tool. For me, the laptop became indispensable because it fitted so well into my work and study habits, and it meant that I carried my thesis around with me at all times. I could devote spare pockets of time to the thesis, and it also gave me increased flexibility in how I used my time. For example, when I worked in my study, I would work on the difficult thinking and writing tasks. However, in my efforts to work on the thesis every day, I could have the laptop on my knee while watching television or listening to music, and complete many routine tasks such as formatting text and tables, and spelling and grammar checks. A laptop computer enables you to have your thesis within arms-length, and removes the association between thesis and fixed location which can often be such a formidable barrier to progress.

Monitoring progress

Monitoring progress was an important metacognitive strategy which was highly motivating, and it was a task I undertook from the day I enrolled. In careful monitoring of my own progress, I could compare my performance from month to month, and year to year, and I could revel in the knowledge that visible progress was made. Three types of monitoring were particularly useful for me:

Keeping records of time

From Day 1, I kept records of the number of hours I spent working on the thesis. I was prompted to do this by a calendar program on the computer, which was in the start-up file. This meant that every

time the computer was turned on, the calendar was loaded and appeared on the screen automatically, and it was easy to remember to record the time details. I recorded the number of hours worked per week on a graph, which I periodically printed off and attached to the notice board above my desk. While I attempted to work on the thesis every day, of course this did not happen. But the graph helped to ensure that I worked every week. Throughout the period of enrolment—over two Christmases and other holidays, conferences and work pressures—only four weeks show no thesis work.

Maintaining a hard copy

It was also useful to see the physical evidence of a thesis emerging. The first draft of the first chapter was placed in a small ring binder, and each additional draft chapter was added as it was written. It was very gratifying to see this file grow and be replaced by bigger binders. It was also an added security to always have a fairly recent complete version of the thesis on paper, and it was useful to take to meetings with my supervisor.

Keeping a word count

Once a substantial number of pages of draft thesis had been produced, I kept a record of the number of words completed and translated this into thesis pages. I was aiming to write at least 75,000 words (the recommended lower limit in my discipline) and this translated to about 300 double-spaced pages. It was useful, and very motivating, to see the graph approach and then pass that word limit.

The combined effect of these monitoring processes also proved to be highly motivating, and powerful enough to keep me on task, with the end-product clearly in mind.

Time management

Time management is of crucial importance if a finished product is to be achieved within the time limit of the traditional three years.

While my original intention to work on the thesis every day did not eventuate, I did set aside some non-negotiable times which I knew I could count on. The 'quality' writing times were every night after the children were in bed (about 8.30 pm at their ages) and Sunday mornings (from as early as possible). Weeknights (after working all day) were not highly productive, but they averaged out to 3-4 nights a week. Setting aside these minimum timeslots was very productive and helped to ensure that the research was incorporated into my day-to-day routine.

I found it useful to seek out whatever support I could from my employer to help find an important release from other duties. In the second year, I applied for one day a week support from a staff development fund within the University. This gave me another whole day a week for a year to concentrate on the research. In the final year, I applied for, and won, three months study leave, which was taken as three days a week while continuing in my job. In total, this support amounted to about 100 days which was used to optimum effect (some would say obsessively) towards the completion of the research.

Being single-minded in pursuit of my goal was critical. This meant resisting the temptation to take on other, possibly more interesting, projects. By this, I do not mean *essential* work and family-related tasks. I refer here to those possibly career-enhancing, interesting projects that can wait, or that overdue home renovation which suddenly becomes compelling. I made a concerted effort to resist these urges and focus on the thesis, which became a high priority.

Writing the thesis

Many doctoral and masters students find that the writing is the most difficult stage, and that each word comes like blood from a stone. They put off as much writing as they can until after the data collection and analysis, until they have reached the stage on their timeline called 'writing up'.

In my own case, I began writing paragraphs for the thesis from the first article I read for the literature review. I rarely took notes, but attempted to summarise articles as if they were to appear that way in the finished thesis. While preparing the research plan, I wrote the paragraphs as if I had already

completed the study, that is, in the past tense. While collecting data, I wrote observations and thoughts in notebooks, and typed them up as paragraphs each night. The writing focus was always on the element or unit of the *paragraph*. With word-processing capability, this was readily moved, edited, and reshaped as appropriate.

Many writers talk about the value of separating the writing from the editing process (e.g., Brown, 1996; Mitchell, 1987). This process involves writing without judgement, getting the ideas down as quickly as possible, and then at a later stage, preferably the next day or later, coming back to the passage as an editor. This is a particularly useful strategy for dealing with 'writer's block', and it will possibly help to increase your output considerably. You might also find that you are a particularly harsh editor/writer, but that your composition without that inbuilt critic is not so bad after all.

Because each and every paragraph represented some great effort on my part, I was determined not to lose even one to the vagaries of technology. We have all heard the horror stories of the hard disk crash claiming the only copy of the almost-completed thesis. In order to avoid that occurrence, I scrupulously saved at every opportunity. I assigned a Function key on my computer to the *Save* command, and even now as I write, I habitually press that key to save after each sentence or so. I backed-up copies of the whole thesis regularly and kept them on my laptop, on my work computer, and on floppy disks kept in the car. I sent disk copies to my sisters interstate. I also had the non-digital form, the hard copy in the folder, which I could scan if absolutely necessary. Barring a catastrophe, I was covered.

The literature review

The writing of the literature review is a part of the thesis writing process that can cause particular anxiety and misery. Many people spend a great deal of time reading copious numbers of articles, underlining passages, noting ideas and thoughts in the margins, and taking handwritten notes. I found that a better strategy was to write the literature review as I read the literature.

The system I used to complete my initial literature review was comprised of several discrete steps. First, I would read an article from the collection that I had assembled and decide whether to use it or reject it. If it was useful, I entered the details into *EndNote* (ISI ResearchSoft, 1999). (*EndNote* is a bibliographic reference system which is one of the most useful tools you can use in thesis writing. Details are entered once only, and when prompted, the software will compile your reference list in the referencing style of your choice.) Next, I would enter some summary notes in a notebook, and then type a paragraph or two in the style of a finished literature review. The quotation below is an example of a word-processed paragraph together with *EndNote* markers in brackets:

Bransford, Vye, Kinzer and Risko [, 1990 #36] discuss research that has shown that specific content knowledge is important for thinking and the acquisition of new knowledge. They contend however, that factual content is not enough, because such knowledge can remain dormant. Students often do not use the knowledge they have to solve problems even though it is relevant. Bransford, et al., [, 1990 #36] describe a model of instruction they call anchored instruction which teaches specific content knowledge in the context of problem solving. They argue that this approach 'helps students to acquire content knowledge in a way that renders it more accessible in later, transfer situations' (p. 391).

At the rate of about 15 articles per week, after 10 weeks work on the initial review, I had a great deal of material to work with. The next four weeks were spent ordering writing, rewriting, linking and editing to produce, after 14 weeks, a 10,000 word literature review. Of course, the process continued throughout the life of the thesis, but less than four months after enrolment, I had a workable foundation upon which to build my study.

Cognitive strategies: Concept maps and tables

In the analysis stage, concept maps and tables were integral to the analysis and presentation of data. However, I found them useful as cognitive tools throughout the writing of the thesis. Concept maps are devices which enable learners to visually represent concepts, together with links representing relationships. They helped to organise my writing, and were always the starting point when I set out to write a section in any part of the thesis.

As I had done a qualitative study, tables were extremely useful in the presentation and display of data. However, as a cognitive tool, they enabled me to organise my approach and extract meaning from the data in a far more perceptive and thoughtful manner than I could have without them. For example, I used them to set out the parameters of the research in the proposal, to summarise the literature review, to compare my research with others on a number of dimensions to show that I was not duplicating earlier research. A table was used to provide a questionnaire schedule, together with a rationale and categorisation for each question.

In Table 1, recommendations for further research have been comprehensively listed in table form to show how each element of the research has led to further questions, both analytic and systemic. This short extract of a much larger table, shows how a research agenda can be established thoughtfully and comprehensively in this way, rather than in brief paragraph form.

Table 1: The use of a table to provide recommended systemic and analytic research

Aspect of research	Rationale or limitation	Systemic research	Analytic research
Situated learning model	The situated learning model comprised nine critical elements based, not upon a large research base, but on the review of literature.	Are all the critical elements of the situated learning model essential? Can the components be refined to a more succinct model?	Is a situated learning model appropriate for all learners or does it meet the needs of a particular type of student, e.g., self-regulated learners?
Collaboration	An interesting finding in the research was the notion of collaboration 'by stealth' when opportunities were not provided legitimately.	Do students collaborate by stealth when they are expected to work in isolation on interactive multimedia program? On what aspects of the task e.g., procedural, path of action, metacognitive?	Is individual use of the interactive multimedia program on assessment without collaboration as effective as with collaboration, e.g., by distance students working in isolation?
Reflection	The findings suggest that an authentic context and an authentic task enable students to reflect without the need for external cues or reminders.	Does the use of external cues and prompts within an interactive multimedia learning environment facilitate reflection?	Are external cues and prompts more effective in promoting reflection than an authentic task and context?

Tables provide a way of thinking about relationships, and of investigating factors across a number of dimensions, that enables greater perceptiveness, analysis and originality.

Completing the final product

The hardest stage of thesis writing for me, was moving from the first complete draft to the finished product. I made the mistake of believing that the thesis was virtually finished, and yet the process of polishing and editing of the final stages was time consuming and required attention to detail. In dealing with these particulars, it was useful to compile comprehensive lists of the jobs to be done, that is, items, references, details and so on that are required for each chapter. These were then ticked off as each was completed.

In spite of these final changes and edits, motivation to finish was high. The final recommendation I would make is that, even in these days of spelling and grammar checkers, it is worthwhile employing an editor to check your work. You (and your supervisor) are too close to notice the obvious mistakes in the text, and it is the final quality control that you should leave to someone else.

The thesis writing process is one which requires a great deal of effort and dedication. However, a little strategic planning, a little monitoring of progress, and a few cognitive and metacognitive strategies can enable you to continue to enjoy the rest of your life while you complete the task which, later, you will see as one of your greatest achievements.

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WOMEN CRAFTING A STRONGER PRESENCE IN FUTURE AGENDAS⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

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August 1999 marked one hundred years since the women of Western Australia first became eligible to vote. The Material Women '99 project, initially funded by the Centenary of Women's Suffrage Committee, set out to celebrate and document the achievements of women and to record their stories in a medium that has both historical and current significance for the survival of women and their families. This paper reports the outcome of a feedback survey of the project participants. The survey had two objectives; first to gain information as to how and why the participants had contributed to the project and second, to ascertain the views of participants as to whom they perceived as their role models, what they understood to be the issues confronting women of the day and what strategies they had learned from the process of storytelling that might influence women in the future.

Introduction

The Material Women '99 project was one of many projects in celebration of one hundred years of women's suffrage in the state of Western Australia. It was developed as a result of the shared concern of the two authors as to the invisibility of women's stories. It was in 1996 that this concern converted itself into the seed of an idea, actually sown at the Women in Leadership conference later that year. The term 'converted itself' is used advisedly because those people who became familiar with the project would know that over the following three years this project developed a life of its own. As with women, Material Women '99 has its own story; it is primarily a woman's story and therefore we are determined that it should not become invisible but that it should be told.

The project had several components, the central one being an exhibition of quilts, each one depicting the life of a Western Australian woman. Through the use of extensive advertising at women's groups, the WA Quilters Association and also 'word-of-mouth', any interested person was invited to choose a woman whom they recognised as having contributed in some way to community life, to identify her occupations and achievements by literally piecing together incidents and stories from her life. As a result, quilters and nonquilters took up the challenge and eventually sixty-four quilts were made. These were exhibited for one month at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital in Perth, and over the following 13 months they travelled to various locations in small country towns and some of the larger regional centres in Western Australia. Fifteen quilts also travelled to the United Kingdom for display there. In addition, the stories of each of the women depicted on the quilts are published in the book 'Material Women '99 – Quilts that tell Stories' (Hill and Ross, 1999).

The quilters

The project participants were quite diverse. Few were experienced quilters although most clearly had experience with needle and thread. They ranged in age from five years to the late sixties or seventies. Some quilts were made by one person only, others involved groups of people who came together for the specific purpose of making their one quilt, and others were made by family groups comprising both men and women. One man made the quilt that depicted Walter James, the Member of the Legislative Assembly who took up the cause of women's suffrage despite hostile and derisive opposition. The project coordinators do not know exactly how many people were involved in the

project as some chose not to name all who were involved in the planning, execution and story writing: the best estimate is approximately 150 to 200 people.

The participants had many reasons for becoming involved in Material Women '99 but the following quote from one speaks for many:

It was with excitement that I read about the Material Women '99 project, knowing the magic of weaving women's stories and the wonderful living metaphor that quilting provides. Coincidentally the Zonta Club of Perth had been considering an appropriate way of acknowledging our pride in one of our members, Dr. Penny Flett, being awarded the 1998 Telstra Business Woman of the Year. (Sjardin, story teller for the Penny Flett quilt)

The chosen women

It was anticipated that quilters would depict women whom they admired and who were known to them as a result of local knowledge. The final collection of quilts was an interesting mix of people including those with a public profile such as Dr. Fiona Stanley, Elizabeth Jolley and Edith Cowan. There were also those known primarily within their chosen profession such as the textile artist Elsje Van Keppel, the occupational therapist Carolyn Webster, and the Methodist missionary Sister Ella. Finally, there were quilts depicting the quiet achievers known only in their local community, for example, Elizabeth Gardiner whose service to the community was recognised by the Shire of Dardanup by a Citizenship Award, and Joy Motter, a community nurse in Fitzroy Crossing who not only received the Fitzroy Crossing Citizenship Award but also the Fitzroy Crossing Community Education Award.

When the quilters were asked how they chose their subject their responses heavily reflected the themes of wanting to pay tribute to a particular person, that they admired her, were inspired by her and wished to acknowledge and recognise her. This was also the case for the man who depicted the story of Walter James. Quilt subjects not personally known to the quilters were Grace Bussell, Edith Cowan, Walter James, Elizabeth Jolley, Janet Millett, Fiona Stanley, Vivian Statham, Ethel Toussaint, Gertrude Walton and Sister Ella. However, in all other cases the woman chosen was already known to the quilter or quilting group. These women were sisters, mothers, grandmothers, aunts and friends. Participation in the project was also linked with some sort of personal benefit to the quilter:

I have always loved making things, especially practical things, which drew me to quilting in the first place. However, once everyone in the family had a quilt my enthusiasm began to wane. Then along came Material Women '99 which started me off again and made me finally do something to acknowledge my great grandmother Emily. She was just one of all those young single women who left their old world and everything they knew to make a hazardous and difficult journey into an unknown future. I wanted to pay tribute to her great character and tremendous courage. (Judith Cohen, quilter of the Emily Annear quilt)

Feedback from the participants

Once the first phase of the project was completed the coordinators sent out a feedback questionnaire to the quilters. Initially there had been no plans to collect any feedback as it was believed that if quilts were made and people came to see them, the project would have achieved what it set out to do. However, it was about this time that the call for abstracts for the 8th Women in Leadership conference came to the attention of the project coordinators. The questions posed under the heading Generation A – X were stimulating and were seen as having particular significance to the Material Women '99 project. As consequence, a feedback questionnaire was developed which not only aimed to collect information about the conduct of the project but to also address these stimulating questions.

Thirty eight questionnaires were sent out to the women who identified themselves as the contact person for a particular quilt. Feedback forms were not sent to the 16 children who had each made a quilt, nor were they sent to the man who made the Walter James quilt. Participants were told that they

may make copies of the questionnaire if the women in their group wished to respond individually, consequently it is not known how many participants actually had an opportunity to respond. Thirty-three responses were received and at this point it is relevant to point out that none of the participants had any idea that our feedback survey was going to include anything more than their views about participation in Material Women '99. At no point in the project had we asked the participants to consider the role of women as role models or pace setters, or their part in setting agendas for the future. If any such consideration had occurred during the course of their participation it was either accidental or as the result of exploring the life of their chosen quilt subject. For example, a quilter was asked to make a quilt honouring Edith Cowan. When she was first approached she indicated that she knew nothing about Mrs. Cowan but would 'look into it'. Within a few days she contacted the coordinator with excitement in her voice:

I had no idea how much this women has done for the women of Western Australia. What she did was wonderful, and the way she did it is amazing. I have passed that clock tower so many times but I never knew. (*Reference to the Edith Cowan commemorative clock tower at the entrance to Kings Park, Perth*)

Role models for each generation

The Material Women '99 participants were asked if they thought that each generation needed to have women from their own era as role models and pacesetters. For the most part the respondents gave strong support for this idea, one person summarising those responses by writing "I'd like to think that all women can be role models – especially mothers ... if they go on to be pace setters then that is a bonus". Another participant wrote:

A woman's experience of life is different from a man's so we need to look at how other women have reached their goals.

Next we asked participants to identify their role models. Three people chose to leave this question unanswered but the remaining thirty people named a total of forty-seven women. Six of these were quilt subjects and not surprisingly were named by more than one participant. The others fell into the loose categories of writers, political figures, activists, and people with a media profile such as Ita Buttrose, Robyn Archer, Veronica Brady and Cathy Freeman. Those named by more than one participant included Ita Buttrose, Janet Holmes a Court, Carmen Lawrence, Dee Margetts, Ruth Reid and Mother Theresa.

The next question put to the participants was if these women are influencing the agenda for change and in what way. It seems the respondents found this question difficult, nine people chose not to answer the question, one honestly answering 'I don't know' and another questioning the existence of such an agenda. The remaining participants agreed that their role models were influencing an agenda for change and described them as stretching the boundaries and inspiring others. Many went on to identify the characteristics of their role models as being essential to the change process. These characteristics included courage, dedication, being principled and respected, persistent and not afraid to speak up on unpopular issues. One respondent said:

.... by setting their goals for change and staying the distance often at great personal cost and sacrifice.

Looking to our future: listening to the past

One question posed for the Women in Leadership conference was whether the issues that spurred previous generations of women to take action differed from the issues of today. Two thirds of the respondents considered that issues in political, economic and cultural spheres were different, however, some were uncertain and seven felt that issues had not changed and that many women were "waiting for better opportunities in education, health, and employment for their families and others". Several commented that women and children still suffered the greatest from poverty and inequality.

Some respondents noted that although settings are different and times have changed, (particularly due to the influence of technology and modern communications), women needed to continue to make efforts to become well educated and more prominent in the workforce. One participant commented that one hundred years ago women worked on basic local survival and individual rights, while now they are working for equality, opportunity and a safe global environment for their children and grandchildren. In many instances these responses were coupled with statements that women needed to continue to be energetic and unified as there would always be issues of concern. Change, said one participant, “relied on other women being motivated by injustice and inequality, women who were driven by compassion and sensitivity to realities of life”.

Storytelling

An important part of the Material Women ‘99 project involved storytelling. The project participants were asked if collective storytelling is important for Western Australian women, and if so, why. Most of the participants felt that the storytelling aspects of the project had helped the process of identifying women’s history and culture. Nine women noted that it is important to learn about the past so that future generations could be inspired, especially from tracing “the history of so many pioneer women who survived those tough early years”.

One premise behind the development of the Material Women ‘99 project had been that storytelling holds a significant place in the growth and development of people in society. This storytelling, in turn, becomes storymaking through the process of sharing experiences with others. It is a component of shaping identity and social status and may even determine the influence and power of the central characters. In many cultures oral history maintains the legends, symbols and rituals that are passed down and valued by the group and from the very beginning the project coordinators had determined that the telling of women’s stories was an important aspect of increasing the visibility of women. This, in turn, would lead to an acknowledgement their contributions and a valuing of their achievements in Western Australian society.

We cannot extrapolate from our questionnaire the degree to which participation in the Material Women ‘99 project had influenced an awareness of the invisibility of women’s stories. However, the view that women’s achievements were poorly recognised by both men and other women was clearly held by half of the respondents. One commented that while it appears that the achievements of men far outweighed those of females, in reality it was women who were the unsung heroes. Another said:

...women contribute half or more to society but do not receive recognition. Their contribution is taken for granted or even belittled.

Tapping the past to influence the future

The respondents were asked to identify strategies learned from the past that could be used to ensure the future of women. They named characteristics such as determination, courage, persistence, confidence, cooperation, hope, compassion, and the ability to take a stand and realise that women can make a difference. One woman wrote that we should “not be swayed from our own arguments and to be strong in the face of adversity, not to give up trying”. Some strategies were closely linked with women’s family responsibilities and coping with the demands of retaining independence while maintaining a commitment to family life. There was a warning from one participant that women need to learn as “every generation seems to repeat the same mistakes – unless they study women’s history – education and knowledge are the keys to learning from the past”.

Many strategies revolved around working together and supporting each other, in particular the “pace setters who are often lonely”, and required to make “certain sacrifices, and be good organisers, and have strong family support”. Another participant suggested:

We need to use our brain power rather than violence to get change. For example, I loved the story about the women with their placards embroidered on their aprons.

The challenge is to continue telling women's stories if only, as one participant said, 'to awaken people to the influence some women have on the way the world is run'.

Suffrage, feminism and beyond

The impact of the Material Women '99 project cannot be quantified, nor can we determine the extent to which the participants and visitors to the various exhibitions during 1999 –2000 have an increased recognition of women's issues. However, the project coordinators set out to collect women's stories and have them translated into creative designs for quilts. The purpose was to raise the awareness of women's contribution to their families and communities by telling their stories in creative ways. Comments on the feedback sheet lead us to believe that many of the participants did, indeed, gain an increased respect for the work of pioneer women, specially their own grandmothers and mothers.

It made me think about all that women have done for Western Australia to make a strong community.

We still need to be committed to telling women's stories from all spheres of life whether it is to acknowledge their achievements in local family occupations or in global corporations. The clarity of female voices in debates concerning all aspects of community life and social structure is a necessary extension of the work begun 100 years ago when the women of Western Australia first gained the right to vote.

Note: The presentation of this paper was accompanied by many slides and quilts from the Material Women '99 project and interwoven with stories of the women depicted.

Reference

Hill, K, and Ross, M. (1999). Material Women '99: Quilts that tell stories. Perth: Curtin University of Technology.

MAIMUNAH WORKPLACE RELATIONSHIPS: SOCIAL SUPPORT OR STRESSOR FOR SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

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Relationships at work and the experience of stress: What 'being different' means for women supervisors.

This research explores what 'being different' means for women supervisors and what 'difference' means for both relationships and stress at work. A sub-cultural approach to organisations suggests that a non-gendered interpretation of relationships at work overlooks issues of diversity (Hatch, 1997). The individualistic and medically based discourse has dominated stress research in the workplace (Handy, 1996). Researchers have noted that although relationships at work are a stressor they propose that it is the individual's personality that moderates the impact or the experience of stress (Cooper, 1986; Cooper and Cartwright, 1994). Alternatively social support theory (Lim, 1996) suggests that relationships rather than individual attributes such as personality type may have a moderating effect on the experience of stress at work. However, both these approaches consider relationships and stress at work as gender neutral. The study examined the social support women supervisors received from their colleagues, superiors and subordinates. Their responses were critically examined and compared with those of their male counterparts. The results suggest that the cultural nature of the group, and the context of work and gender have different implications for the moderating effects of relationships on perception of stress by women supervisors.

Introduction

Stress at work has been a focus of organisational researchers' correlation between psychological and physical health. However, these approaches argue that the stress-health links are managed by the individual (Newton, 1996). The individualistic approach to stress in the workplace focuses on individual differences rather than collective experiences, which may have social and cultural origins (Harlow and Hearn, 1995). According to Handy (1996) individualist approach to stress sanitizes organisational life by placing the onus of coping on the individual. Focussing on individual differences overlooks the social and collective context of stress and thereby excludes any examination of the effect of diversity in organisations (Handy, 1996). The origins of individualism had its roots in the idea that organisations were rationally designed to solve the conflict between collective needs and individual wants. Thus organisations were scientifically designed to subsume sectional interests within institutionalised collective goals. Implicit in this view is the underlying assumption of modern organisations that they are rational entities (Reed, 1996). The idea that stress is an individual problem implies that solutions to stress must focus on the individual rather than the social context (Newton, 1996).

The individual origins of stress

The notion of stress at work had its origins in Selye's (1974) research. He drew attention to its physiological component focusing individual and medical nature of stress.

A cognitive approach suggests that stress may be determined by the perception of a stressful situation (Monat and Lazarus, 1985). However, a cognitive approach to stress focuses on the individual and

misses the cultural and social context of stress. Cooper's (1986) model argues that this perception is firmly based on an individual's personality. Thus the experience of stress is contingent upon whether an individual has Type A or Type B characteristics. Thus a Type A personality is prone to the experience of stress whereas a Type B personality has the capability to better cope with stress at work. The focus on the individual not only provides a rationale for the use of individual stress management techniques in organisations as a way of reducing stress but it also obscures the study of how women are affected by the context of work (Dunahoo, Geller and Hobfoll, 1996). Although the model identifies various sources of workplace stressors, one of which are relationships at work the ability to moderate their effect lies with the individual.

According to Handy (1995), Cooper (1986) has extended the medical view of stress. She argues his approach sanitises the experience of stress in organisations. The medical view of stress implies that it is pathological and requires individual treatment. Handy (1995) has challenged this view of stress suggesting that it requires rethinking because it isolates the individual worker from the rest of the workforce and the work environment.

Organisations as cultural constructions

In contrast a cultural perspective of stress at work directs attention away from the current emphasis on individual coping techniques to the workplace context thereby requiring a re-examination of the rationalist model of rugged individualism (Dunahoo, Geller and Hobfoll, 1996: p.185). A cultural approach to the study of stress at work argues that the workplace may be both a source and moderator of stress.

A cultural approach proposes that organisations are culturally complex and comprised of multiple realities. Alternatively, culture can be seen as integration. This view is based on a rationalist understanding of organisations (Smircich, 1983). It focuses on the instrumentality of tasks and is less interested in the emotional and human aspects of work (Harlow and Hearn, 1995). In contrast, if organisations are understood as shared symbols then the focus is on language, which asserts or confirms stereotypes. For example, women can be represented as emotional and irrational and men represented as unemotional and rational. Organisations are currently constructed from a rationalist perspective, which privileges rational processes and individual decision-making (Harlow and Hearn, 1995: Calas and Smircich, 1993). Calas and Smircich (1983) argue that current organisational knowledge should be recast to reflect on the gendered nature of organisational behaviour. The concept of culture acknowledges the less rational and intangible aspects of organisational life. It allows for the examination of shared assumptions and meanings (Harlow and Hearn, 1995, p. 180). Therefore a cultural approach enables the study of organisational diversity and the possibility that relationships at work may have differential effects on stress for different groups.

Relationships as a moderator or stressor?

Researchers have argued that the presence of a network of good social relations can have a positive effect on the well being and health of workers (La Rocco, House and French, 1980). Social support is considered as the degree to which a person's basic needs are gratified through interaction with others (Thoits, 1982, p. 147). Lim (1996) has found that support derived from work colleagues and supervisors may moderate an individual's assessment of the magnitude of threat and enhance their ability to cope. Thus good relationships can moderate an individual's perception of workplace stress (Lim, 1996: 196). More recently research has revealed that relationships at work have subcultural implications for the experience of social support. Elera (1992) has studied the effect of different groups and the social support received. She found that only subordinates were perceived by supervisors to be supportive. Social support research has resulted in some inconsistent findings concerning relationships at work. These findings create difficulties for the conceptualisation of social support as uniform experience for different levels in the organisation. Further, studies have shown significant gender differences in perceived social support (Wolgemuth and Betz, 1991). Narayanan, Menon and Spector (1999) also suggest that there are differences in how stressors are perceived.

Meyerson (1994) have noted that there may be different cognitive and symbolic systems for different occupations and the meanings of stress may be socially constructed.

Relationships, stress and gender

Management typically portrays the workplace as gender neutral. Fenlason and Beehr (1994) propose that social support can be defined in several ways and can be divided into two global types, instrumental and emotional. Emotional support is characterised by the actions of caring or listening sympathetically to another person. Alternatively, instrumental support is characterised by rendering tangible assistance, such as physical assistance or aid in the form of advice or knowledge needed to complete a task (Fenlason and Beehr, 1994, p.158). Mainero's (1986) research suggests that men tend to be socialised to deal more instrumentally with stress while women tend to be socialised to express emotion. Therefore that access of support at an interpersonal level places women at a disadvantage to men.

This study examined the effect of relationships at work as a stressor and/or moderator on men and women supervisors and managers. The implications of the effect of different levels on relationships at work (subordinates, colleagues and superiors) were also examined. Questionnaires were used to elicit information on stress levels and personality type as well as relationships and stress. To overcome the possibility of a gendered view of relationships and stress at work this study used both a qualitative and quantitative approach. The qualitative approach enabled a more in depth understanding of the issues underpinning the questionnaire. The quantitative approach was included to replicate previous research and allow for a comparison with the qualitative results.

Methodology

The research consisted of a mixed-method case study carried out in a state subsidiary of a national food company. Twenty-one respondents completed a questionnaire and were also interviewed about relationships, social support and stress using a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire and interview schedule consisted of 68 open and closed questions. It was organised into the following sections:

- A demographic section;
- An occupational stress indicator (Cooper, Sloan and Williams, 1988);
- Relationships at work, adapted from Kaplan et al., in Ganster, Fusilier, and Mayes (1986). The scale yields indices of social support received from your superior work colleagues and subordinates.
- Type A and B characteristics based on Cooper's adaptation of characteristics drawn from Bortner's scale (1969). Questions addressed characteristics that identify stress prone behaviour. The scale 14 bipolar adjectival scales were measured on an 11 point Likert type scale. For example, competitive versus not competitive.

The questionnaire was also designed to separate instrumental from emotional support. The second part of the study consisted of semi-structured interview questions, which were designed to allow the interviewees scope to comment. This was done to overcome the gender neutrality of the questionnaire. Thirty-seven percent of the respondents were lower level middle managers and sixty-three percent were first line supervisors, four of which were women. Three additional women were drawn from other middle and lower level management positions. The majority of supervisors (63%) worked in production with 31% employed in the sales, and the rest in distribution and vehicle maintenance. The interview data was analysed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) data display matrices. The rows and columns enabled the comparison of a summary of the responses to the questions for all the respondents. The matrix allowed easy viewing of the data in order to ascertain any patterns that may emerge. It also allowed the emotional content of the responses to be examined, that is, whether the social support received was emotional or instrumental. In addition to the questions contained in the questionnaire, it was decided to ask the respondents three additional open

questions concerning their relationship with their superior, colleagues and subordinates in order to ascertain the emotional versus the instrumental nature of the support.

Results and discussion

The study found that relationships at work acted as a stressor for some of the respondents and as a moderator for others. The findings were that the social support received was different for each level, superior, colleague or subordinate, and the cultural nature of the group.

Ninety-one percent of the respondents were identified as Type A. This result suggests that these respondents should exhibit Type A characteristics such as being preoccupied with time pressures as well as exhibiting a tendency to worry and show impatience. Thus people with type A characteristics should score highly on the occupational stress indicator and those with type B should obtain a low score. However, not all of the respondents who exhibited type A characteristics achieved a high score on the Occupational Health Stress Indicator (OCI) (Cooper, Sloan and Williams, 1988). Thirteen of the Type A respondents achieved a high score on the OCI whereas nine of the Type A respondents scored quite low on the OCI. Because type A personalities scored both high and low stress scores this research suggests that personality may not moderate the perception of stress. Thus support for an individualistic approach to stress was not found.

Although the findings showed that overall 90% of the respondents stated that relationships at work were a source of stress, a closer examination the study revealed a more complex view of relationships in the workplace.

Support from superiors

Although 63.6 percent of the supervisor/managers interviewed stated they felt they had an overall sense of support from their superior, 31.6 % (women respondents) stated that the support was not enough for overcoming the experience of stress at work. However, six of the seven women supervisors stated their supervisors contributed to their experience of stress. Although two of the women supervisors rated themselves as moderately concerned about the lack of support their interview comments revealed that they compared with the women who rated the support from their superiors as minimal. This finding was typical and the difference between ratings and interviews comments often contradicted each other.

The women respondents expressed frustration with their superiors and their comments were consistent with Kanter's (1992) research and mirrored the powerless experience of middle managers while contrasting with those of the male supervisors. The stories emerging from the interviews showed more clearly how isolated and alienated the women felt as a result of the lack of social support received from their superior. Managers expressed their relationship difficulties as frustration focussing on the instrumental aspects of work. Alternatively the women were looking for more understanding and appreciation. Typical comments by the women who stated their superior added to their stress were as follows,

When you go and talk to him and you have problems, they should listen to your problems and do something about it. Instead of sweeping it under the carpet like it happens most times. I went up with a stress thing and all I get told is you won't get a transfer. So don't even ask for a transfer, if you don't like it there's the door. ... after you've worked for the company for so long it shouldn't be like that. ..They should try and make it easier for you. ((FR) Female Respondent)).

They are useless (FR).

The lack of interest, the lack of appreciation definitely contributes to stress. I tell myself I have to think like a man, I get paid and should be happy with that and shut up (FR).

Another female supervisor felt she couldn't talk to her superior because she couldn't trust what he would do with the information. Her superior enforced the notion that personal problems must stay at home. When a woman supervisor mentioned she needed to drop her children off at school and would be 15 minutes late she was asked if she had any problems at home. She stated that the organisation made it quite clear that personal and health problems are to be kept out of the work environment. Showing signs of stress was considered to be a weakness. The following interview excerpt is an example,

Well if it was something really crucial that he thinks is important he would probably do it. If it's something that I cause, he wouldn't do it. He is not supportive at all. Probably physical support a little bit and emotional support it would be none. I could not go to him to say that I need emotional support he would see it as a weakness on my part, I could go to a female and say that I have some problems in my area and the females will come to me. But I couldn't go to him (FR).

Rather than express their true feelings the women tried to maintain an air of rationality and focus on the job. The following comments were by a manager who worked for approximately seventy-five hours a week trying to keep her work under control,

At the very top I don't express my feelings about how I feel because I am here to do a job... I like to keep things positive and I always feel if you let on that you are either very frustrated or not coping especially as a female. I don't think my job would be under threat but it is a personal thing and I like to keep it out of the business (FR).

Emotional labour is a term developed by Hochschild (1983). She argued that the private and commercial uses of feeling placed a great deal of pressure on employees in organisations. Emotional labour is experienced most strongly when employees are asked to express emotions, which contradict their inner feelings. Emotional labour is used to describe the way roles and tasks exert overt and covert control over emotional displays (Putnam and Mumby, 1996). Therefore women not only experience the stressful situation itself, but also additional stress when they are unable to express their emotions.

Although middle managers rated relationships with superiors as non-supportive and their rating appeared to be similar to the experience of the women, the qualitative data showed they had a more instrumental and rational justification for their supervisor's behaviour. Typical reasons given by middle managers for the lack of support from their superiors were as follows,

I've seen how he works and how he handles things. I guess you got to be cruel to be kind (Male Respondent – MR).

If he listens to you and helps you... is not a problem at all. But you do get stressed because you go and see him and he still hasn't sorted it out (MR)

While on the other hand typical responses by male supervisors who had a supportive relationship with their superiors were as follows,

He makes it easier for me. (MR)

He's so easy to get along with. (MR)

Answers given by male respondents concerning the support received from superiors were qualified by comments such as support 'was not complete' or that 'it depended on the top' or 'it's more to do with the company constraints rather than his own position constraint'. Overall the male supervisors were able to rationalise the notion that superiors could only give the support they were allowed to give within the framework of company constraints.

Support from superiors was more problematic for all of the women in the study. Women were a minority among the managers and supervisors. Out of the 21 respondents only seven were women. Social integration is affected by similarity in attitudes, race, gender and education which impact upon a group's cohesiveness and this is particularly an issue for superior-subordinate relationships (O'Reilly, Caldwell and Barnett, 1989). These findings also suggest that male supervisors are more instrumental in their interpretation of relationships at work and the forthcoming support.

Support from work colleagues

Although the literature suggests that support from colleagues may moderate stress, only twenty-seven percent of the respondents (male) rated support from work colleagues as high whereas 13.3% rated this support as moderate. However, 59% of the respondents (women supervisors and middle managers) rated support from colleagues as low. More importantly even when the support was forthcoming the women did not believe this support was enough for overcoming stressful situations. The qualitative data revealed that those who rated support from work colleagues as moderate showed that the support they received was extremely fragile. Problems such as politics, jealousies and lack of communication emerged from the comments given during the semi-structured component of the interview. Approximately sixty percent of the respondents stated that support from colleagues was not enough to overcome the experience of stress at work. Fifty two percent (of whom 50% were women) stated that work colleagues contributed to their stress at work.

Ferris et al (1996) showed that organisational politics were a potential source of stress for individuals in the workplace. Although some of the male supervisors did refer to organisational politics it was apparent that it was more of a problem for the women. They reported that relationships with colleagues were difficult to establish. For the women, relationships with work colleagues acted as a stressor and not as a moderator. Comments such as,

I won't even worry about relying on them for any sort of support at all. They wouldn't mean it half the time...(FR)

They find me a threat. (FR)

Some of the problems that I do get are caused by other supervisors ... making my job harder and undermining me. (FR)

In contrast comments by the male supervisors were less emotionally charged and felt they were given support by their colleagues,

It has to be a team (MR)

I think we are team oriented.(MR)

They are always there when you need them.(MR)

The contrast between the comments made by the men and women suggest that women socially construct their experiences differently from men and that this may impact on their ability to identify with each other. O'Reilly, Caldwell and Barnett (1989) have shown that social integration is dependent on the attraction to the group. Therefore the form of social interaction among group members reinforces the stereotyping of the outgroup. The difference between the comments for men and women suggests there is a gendered interpretation to what social support actually means.

Lim, Thompson and Teo (1997) found that social support was higher for men than women in the work place. Comments made by the women in this study suggest that although they attempted to discuss issues with superiors and colleagues, their approaches were discouraged and or blocked. Mainero (1986) found that men deal with issues at work instrumentally and that this approach is more acceptable in a male dominated environment. In contrast women prefer to express their problems emotionally to a caring and sympathetic listener. Consequently their male superiors and colleagues are unable or unwilling to deal with issues when they are emotionally charged.

Support from subordinates

In contrast to findings concerning relationships with superiors and colleagues relationships with subordinates appeared to be problematic for the majority of the respondents. Interview information showed that 54.5% of the respondents found that support from subordinates was not enough to help them overcome their experience of stress.

Interview comments revealed during the interview that motivating subordinates to do the work proved to be a major problem for the majority of respondents. Supervisors attributed the problem to employee attitudes. This suggests that some subcultural effects were evident in the relationships between the respondents and subordinates indicating a division between managers and employees. According to Fortado (1992) subordinates are more concerned with how a person is treated during turmoil than the tangible issues involved. However, this problem appears to be characteristic of both men and women in this study suggesting that the actual process of managing subordinates is no different for men or women. The perception of women supervisors of their management ability appears to be based on their relationships with superiors and colleagues. A comment made by female supervisor suggests some difficulty coping with subordinate resistance,

I try not to be too emotional. I want to avoid that. I want to be as professional as possible. That why I try to think like a man with no feelings. It's a hard thing to do.(FR)

They put you under pressure... telling you what to do when you already know what to do. (FR)

According to Parkin, the duality of 'emotion-less' men and 'emotion-full' women highlights the gendered nature of organisational life. She suggests that this emotional divide is another form of harrassment for women (Parkin, 1996:186).

Conclusion

The study found that relationships at work acted as stressors for some of the respondents and as moderators for others. For the managers and women lack of support from superiors and colleagues contributed to the experience of stress. On closer examination of the qualitative data the women expected emotional support whereas the men were content to receive instrumental support. However, relationships with subordinates were considered by the majority of respondents to contribute to the experience of stress at work. The quantitative results were somewhat bland and did not reveal the depth of feeling contained in the stories associated with the subjective responses arising from the semi-structured interview. The interview responses often contradicted the responses elicited from the closed questions. For women supervisors, relationships acted as stressors across all groups. They stated that they were unable to socially integrate with, and be accepted by, their colleagues at work and argued that this contributed to their consistent experience of stress. Although eighty-nine percent of managers believe that relationships at work are a source of stress, this was true only for relationships with subordinates. Relationships with work colleagues and superiors had different outcomes for different respondents. These outcomes gave a rather more complex picture of organisational life than the either Cooper's model of stress or social support theory would suggest. Women appeared to experience multiple levels of stress. They experienced the stress of the workplace relationships with subordinates similar to male supervisors. Along with middle managers they experienced workplace relationships with colleagues and superiors as stressful, which suggests a subcultural effect. However, they also experience the additional stress of workplace relationships of 'being different' due to the effect of being dissimilar in a male dominated environment. This was manifested as 'emotional labour', which was an outcome suppressing private feelings due to the need for emotional rather instrumental social support in their workplace relationships.

Cooper's individualistic model of stress overlooks the cultural and emotional basis of organisational stress. Collectivity and emotionality have quite a profound impact on how we theorise organisations and this ultimately has an effect on the perception and positioning of women in organisations. Calas

and Smircich (1993) argue that theorising should be constructed to reflect diversity and not homogeneity in organisations. It is necessary to rethink what we regard to be true and good and this may require a reconsideration of the values which underpin organisational theorising. This is particularly important for understanding work place relationships, stress and its implications for women.

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THE MOTIVATIONS AND WORKING STRATEGIES OF WOMEN IN MALAYSIAN ENTREPRENEURSHIP-CUM-POLITICS: VOICES AND EXPERIENCES⁽²⁰⁰⁰⁾

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A case study was conducted among a group of women who were involved in entrepreneurship and politics in Malaysia. The objectives of the study were to examine the socio-economic and political profiles of the group and, based on their experiences, to gain insights into what motivates them to venture into entrepreneurship and politics, and the strategies they adopted in exercising the two roles. The identification of the respondents was based on a snowballing research technique. These women were entrepreneurs at the same time as they had political posts at the federal, state, and divisional levels of the leading political party. The study used qualitative data gathered through in-depth interviews with a total of 13 women respondents. The framework of this study was governed by the three broad approaches used to explain factors motivating men as well as women in entrepreneurship and politics. These three approaches are trait theory, structural opportunities, and social and cultural development factors.

Introduction

The creation of the New International Economic Order by the United Nations in 1970s, in parallel with the Decade of Women (1975 to 1985), has enabled women to progress in two sectors of development, namely, economy and politics. Why has there been a surge in the global women's movement in the last 20 years? Analyses indicate three interconnected reasons (Jaquette, 1997; Dolan and Ford, 1995). First, the rise of women's movement worldwide has heightened women's awareness of their economic and political potential. Second, a new willingness by policy-makers and political parties to ease the constraints on women's access to economic and political participation. And third, social issues have become priority concerns in the post-Cold War political environment and opportunities have opened for new styles of leadership, which have subsequently promoted gender equality in economic and political participation. One specific area of women's economic participation is entrepreneurship.

Malaysia is a developing country where women seek employment in all sectors, including entrepreneurship and politics, as a means to overcome occupational segregation and contribute to national development. The dual involvement of women in both entrepreneurship and politics is a relatively new phenomenon worldwide, and especially so in developing countries like Malaysia. This group of female entrepreneur-politicians, which is increasing in number, is considered a new class of career women (Maimunah, 1999c). They are either entrepreneurs-turned-politicians, or vice versa. In the past these women entrepreneurs-cum-politicians were drawn from the ruling elite, but now they can be found among other socio-economic classes, as a result of upwards social mobility.

Given the increased number of women entering entrepreneurship and politics, and given that little information is known about these women, it is important to understand their experiences in both entrepreneurship and politics. This article reports the results of a study on a group of Malaysian women with responsibilities in both entrepreneurship and politics. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the following research questions: What is the socioeconomic profile of these women? Based on their experiences, what motivates them to venture into entrepreneurship and politics as their career option? What strategies do they use in exercising these roles?

This piece of research is significant in developing knowledge and theory about women's participation in two important sectors of any nation entrepreneurship and politics, both of which used to be male-dominated. Investigating Malaysian women's experiences in entrepreneurship and politics can provide new insights into organizational theories that have been until now male-biased and usually drawn outside the Malaysian context. The results would also assist women who are, or want to be, involved in the two professions of politics and entrepreneurship in terms of strengthening meaningful participation. The study will also help to financial and advisory institutions responsible for supporting women's career progression as one of their goals in human resource development.

Literature review

Women in entrepreneurship: Motivation and working strategies

Studies in women's entrepreneurship are extensive in developed countries, especially the USA, Australia, and the United Kingdom (Moore and Buttner, 1998; Still and Timms, 2000; Cromie and O'Sullivan, 1999). These studies have contributed to theories of female entrepreneurship such as the socioeconomic profile, performances, problems and motivations of women entrepreneurs. However, research on women entrepreneurship in developing countries is very scarce (Allen and Trumen, 1993). This presents a problem in understanding the role of female entrepreneurship, including motivations and working strategies, in such transitional economies.

There is a conventional theory of the sociology of entrepreneurship. This theory employs McClelland's trait theory as it relates to the need for achievement (1961; 1965). He argued that high economic and social growth in some societies encourages entrepreneurship, as a result of the societies having a high need for achievement. Later research found that other socio-political factors also contribute to the growth of entrepreneurship. The factors identified include political climate, governmental policies and transition within the society (Shapero and Sokol, 1982; Aldrich, 1990). Spatial location – such as availability of low-cost facilities or land was also important to new enterprise formation, was accessibility to transportation (Copper and Dunkelberg, 1987). Equally important was the professionalization of entrepreneurship through graduate training programmes for entrepreneurs (Romanelli, 1989). Past research on entrepreneurship also indicates that interpersonal factors such as the need to have power, control and influence over another person or group seem essential in motivating entrepreneurial growth (Winter, 1973).

A close look at the above studies reveals that factors which motivate the growth of entrepreneurship in the developed countries are based upon the experience and perspective of male entrepreneurs, and are a product of patriarchal societies. Later research among female entrepreneurs found that some of the motivating factors for women included family concerns, (viz. the opportunity to pass the business on to children, (Langan-Fox and Roth, 1995), and the founding of enterprises by women as an expression of maternal thinking – especially in businesses related to restaurant management and dress making (Hurley, 1999). Langan-Fox and Roth's research conceptualized an entrepreneurial type among women, which they dubbed 'pragmatist entrepreneurs'. This group of female entrepreneurs displayed evidence of an interdependence of motives. One characteristic of this is that they are not highly motivated by the need to achieve or the value of influence and power. They display moderate levels of both. Instead, the findings indicate that family concern and the expectation of earning more money in self-employment are the chief factors motivating women to become entrepreneurs..

Since the 1980s, entrepreneurial literature has indicated that "push" factors are the most important ones for motivating women to start businesses. These factors are often related to frustration and boredom in their previous jobs (Hisrich and Brush, 1985). This situation is different from men, who start businesses primarily as a result of "pull" factors such as the opportunity to work independently, to have control over one's work, and a perceived need to improve their position in society for themselves and their families (Buttner and Moore, 1997). In recent years considerable attention has also been devoted to the perception of a "glass ceiling", the seemingly impenetrable barrier that prevents many female mid-managers from rising to executive level (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Moore and Buttner, 1998). This again helps explain why "push" factors motivate women into entrepreneurship.

DeLollis (1997) reports that some women are motivated to start small businesses by the hope of making a personal contribution to society, by a desire to accommodate work to family life and by the irresistible urge to explore a niche market. She further suggests that some women simply prefer the opportunities of self-employment to the prospect of working for a big organization. Similarly, according to Olson and Currie (1992), family security is the most important benefit for women entrepreneurs. As popular business literature suggests, women are leaving companies and starting their own businesses to have more flexibility to manage their dual responsibilities in the public and domestic spheres, and to help achieve a more balanced life gaining satisfaction through freedom and flexibility. These are more important to women's motivation than just economic reasons (DeLollis, 1997; Buttner and Moore, 1997).

Recent literature from Peru indicates that female Peruvian small-scale industrialists find their jobs liberating and empowering. Women talk about having changed as a result of the experience of independent work. They become strong, confident, and brave; sure about what they do (De Bowman, 2000). In the transition economy of Hungary, Hisrich and Fulop (1994/95) report that women's motivations to venture into entrepreneurship include opportunity, independence, money, economic necessity and job satisfaction, achievement, status or prestige, power and security.

In a study on women managers in family firms in the United Kingdom, Cromie and O'Sullivan (1999) report upon a number of strategies adopted by these women in running their business. The strategies include pursuing women-only training settings which focus on women's unique issues: the acquisition of knowledge and political skills through mentoring; the establishment of networks to gain access to information, to share resources and to build political coalitions; advocating the notion that "female" traits and values such as sensitivity and power equalization are needed by contemporary organizations; and the avoidance of – or delay in – marriage and having children. Other strategies adopted by women entrepreneurs include internalizing the concept of treating small business as a way of life, i.e. to produce a product and to sell it to people (DeLollis, 1997).

A study among 455 successful women entrepreneurs in five Asian countries (Thailand, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia and Singapore) found that most of the respondents were highly educated and from middle class families. They tended to have grown up in a major metropolitan area or a large city (Licuanan, 1992). Their motivation to begin entrepreneurship varied. Most of them had worked in formal organizations, such as educational institutions, banking and finance companies, and government agencies. Many had moved into entrepreneurship as a result of dissatisfaction with working in large organizations, disappointment with their chances for promotion, the need for change and wanting to do something challenging. Many women entrepreneurs from the study exhibited a high degree of social commitment and were able to balance business, personal, and family needs. Most of them had a good support system, which included spouses and they tended to live within an extended family with appropriate household help (Licuanan, 1992).

A study in Australia also found that women managers in business adopted flexible work practices. They were considered less willing to delegate responsibility and control to others, and hence preferred collegial rather than hierarchical managerial strategies (Still and Timms, 2000). Among a group of Malay women in Malaysia, additional factors motivating them into entrepreneurship (other than achievement, managerial and pragmatic variables) included values such as nationalistic spirit, image building, gender awareness, and religious motives (Maimunah, 1998a; Maimunah and Rusinah, 1999). These values, quite apart from economics, drove them to work. This again indicates that women's involvement in entrepreneurship has offered opportunities to develop control over traditional and career roles.

Women in politics: Motivations and working strategies

In some ways, politics is just another public function which involves all citizens, including women. The involvement of women in politics has a long history. From a global perspective, Jaquette (1997) reports that New Zealand became the first country to accept women's suffrage, in 1893. By 1920, 10 countries had granted women the vote, including the United States. Many European countries, however, did not allow women the vote until after World War II, including France, Greece, Italy and Switzerland. In Latin America, Ecuador was the first country to recognize women's political rights,

(in 1929) and in Central America, Mexico embraced women's suffrage in 1923. Japan and South Korea both emancipated women in 1945, after the U.S. occupation. In the former European colonies in Africa and Asia, men and women equally participated in elections, and in voting, once they gained independence: from the late 1940s into the 1970s.

The representation of women in political posts varies from country to country, even though the global average rose from 7.4 percent in 1975 to 11 percent in 1995. The Nordic and northern European countries have been the most successful in integrating women into elected positions with women comprising 36.4% of national legislatures in 1997. In China, North Korea and Vietnam the figure is about 20 percent. The proportion of women holding political office was lowest in the Arab States, at about 3.0 percent, from 1977-97 (Jaquette, 1997; ESCAP, 1994). In Malaysia the figure for 1997 is about 9.0 percent female participation in government (Maimunah, 1998b).

Many reasons are given for why women are motivated to move into politics apart from the reasons which involve men. In the post-Cold War shift in national priorities, from defense and security concerns to social and structural adjustment, the need for effective social safety nets have been put high on domestic agendas in many countries. Social issues are a traditional female concern. One of the indirect impacts of many political scandals in post-war years is that women are seen as having "purity" protection against scandals and corruptions resulting from processes of economic reforms in which they were not involved. This status is being capitalized upon and is seen as a social strength. In the last 10 years, therefore, it is not so much the case that women have come to politics, rather that politics has come (almost naturally) to women (Jaquette, 1997).

Fox and Schuhnam (1999) found women in public administration, were more likely to define the concept of "public service" in terms of helping to improve the community. These women saw public service as a contextual, community-oriented matter. Other literature on women in politics also indicates that women's entry into political life is often related to crisis periods which create opportunities for women. These include the death or dismissal of their husband, who himself was a politician, and the influence of a "political family", in which girls as well as boys imbibed the political culture (Walby, 1996; Stacey and Price, 1981).

Strategies adopted by women who work in the political arena are generally similar to those of women in other managerial or leadership positions. Based on a study by Kelly and Marin (1998) among professional females in corporate organizations in the United States, women often adopt strategies that will help overcome barriers to upward mobility. These include gaining new skills, changing one's existing attitudes, seeking counseling and enrolling in management training programmes. Another familiar strategy for women in politics is mentoring and networking with supportive social contacts (Keeton, 1996; Burke and McKeen, 1990). Even though the potential benefits of mentoring might seem less dramatic than the other strategies, it is still recognised as important in promoting favourable work outcomes among women. In a review of the literature by Keeton (1996), most respondents suggested they had been guided by mentors at various points in their work history. Mentors could be male or female, but they occupied senior positions and were more advanced in their career. Dolan and Ford (1995) studied women state legislators in the U.S. and suggest that 'a feminist identity' was correlated significantly with women's mentoring priority, i.e. in encouraging other women to be involved in politics.

A study by Tremaine (2000) of women mayors in New Zealand found a strong theme of women leaders' commitment to their community. Concern for the community's well-being had motivated some women to stand for that mayoralty. The study also found that the women mayors viewed leadership as having good communication with the public, together with a certain degree of openness, modesty, and directness. They tended to see themselves as down-to-earth and lacking in desire for personal prestige, and encouraged the involvement of people in politics for the good of the community. Leadership, to this group of women mayors, meant a transforming rather than transactional experience, which included their desire to do what is best for the community. In short, they worked in a web-like fashion of allegiances, rather than hierarchically.

The preceding literature review has indicated that the motivating factors and the working strategies of women in entrepreneurship reflects many variables, such as individual characteristics, concerns for

family and community development, and socioeconomic and environmental factors, (which are also influenced by the stage of the development of the country). Based on this theoretical framework, the study reported here addresses factors or situations motivating women to become involved in entrepreneurship and politics, and some strategies they have adopted to help in playing the two roles.

Methodology

The respondents of this study were 13 female Malay entrepreneurs, also active in politics. They held political posts either at the federal, state or divisional level of the ruling party. Besides the interests of the researcher, Malay women were chosen as the research population because only over the last two decades have the Malays made some inroads into business life compared to their Chinese counterparts. This group of respondents is illustrative, rather than representative, of Malay women involved in business and politics. The respondents were identified using a snowballing research technique, in which earlier respondents were asked to name other respondents whom they know to be active in both fields. All respondents were from the Malaysian states of Selangor, Perak and the Federal Territory.

In-depth interview techniques were used to gather data. Each interview took from two to three hours at the respondents' house or office. Formal appointments were made, and the interviews were tape-recorded with permission. The constant-comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was used to analyse the data. This involves a multiple-case analysis which combines and integrates the qualitative data collection and analysis of individual cases. The data collection occurred in a pulsating fashion – interview followed by analysis, continuing with more interviews and analysis, until the research was completed.

Results

Table 1 address a general description of the respondents. Their ages rang from 31 to 60 years, with an average age of 43. This characteristic of entrepreneurs-cum-politicians seems to conform with finding by Currel (1974) and Kirkpatrick (1974) in the United States, that many women politicians had succeeded because they were older, and held political posts after their childbearing years. The range of women's political involvement in this study, however, varied from five to 30 years, and in entrepreneurship from five to 17 years. The types of entrepreneurship that the women participated in included consultancy and professional training, food manufacturing, plastic and furniture manufacturing, contractor of construction work, supplier of industrial workers, security force management, plant nursery and landscaping, and travel and tourism. Six women were involved in entrepreneurship prior to their involvement in politics, while a similar number became entrepreneurs after political involvement. All of them revealed that their involvement in one field had an influence on their interest in the other. The political posts held by this group of women were mostly leadership positions at divisional and sub-divisional levels; there were also a state executive council member, and a federal executive council member.

Motivations into entrepreneurship

Several themes emerged from the transcribed interviews pertaining to what motivated these women to become entrepreneurs.

1. An interest in entrepreneurship from a young age due to past parental involvement in business.

Four of the women interviewed revealed that they chose entrepreneurship as their present career due to an interest in business stemming from their early years. This interest came about as a result of their parents being engaged in business, even though at a low-performing level. One of the women said, [Translation]

My parent had started this food manufacturing business when I was a school girl. When in school I used to sell snack foods, and birthday cards that I made myself, to my friends. It was very enjoyable because I made my own money. (R2)

A recent study by Maimunah (2000b) among Malay women entrepreneurs' and by Licuanan (1992) in the Southeast Asian Countries, supported this finding.

2. An interest in business materialized due to family or spousal support.

All respondents mentioned that they started their enterprise after receiving support from family. Seven of them said that the support was especially from their husbands, as also indicated by the evidence that their business started after marriage. It is not surprising that the seven women with husbands having a similar interest in business had their husbands as their business partners. This result again seems consistent with findings of research conducted in South East Asian countries among women entrepreneurs by Licuanan (1992), and by Maimunah and Rusinah (1999).

3. A higher education in a business-related field.

The area of specialization in respondents' tertiary education studies also, influenced them to go into business. Six of the respondents mentioned that their interest in starting a business was strengthened as a result of knowledge gained after university education in areas such as accountancy, business administration and marketing, political science and economics. Four women held a diploma while one had bachelor's and one a master's degree in business-related fields.

4. Nationalistic Spirit.

All respondents were Malay. A motivating factor common to all respondents was their aspiration to develop themselves and their businesses with a "Malay identity", so they became at a par with other races in the country, such as the Chinese, who are very advanced in the business sector. This finding seems to be consistent with other research among Malay entrepreneurs (Habrizah, 1996; Maimunah 1999c) in which the Malays, both men and women, struggle to attain their target equity of 30 percent the country's economy. The government, from 1971 to 1990, implemented the New Economy Policy (NEP). One objective of the NEP is to restructure the society towards having a fairer participation and contribution to the economy according to ethnicity. Therefore, the slight increase in Malaysian women's participation in business after the 1970s may partly be due to the thinking and aspirations of women and their awareness of their role in the country's NEP.

5. Opportunity.

It is undeniable that opportunity plays an important role in initiating a new business. Almost all the female respondents strongly believed that their present enterprising venture was partly due to their seizing an opportunity when they decided what type of business to opt for. These women took the opportunity when they decided to start their business in relation to other factors such as economic climate, partnership options, government policy and family support. One woman respondent said, [Translation]

Due to my considerable experience of working in the Personnel Division of a Multi-National Corporation, the time had come for me to open up a training and consultancy firm that I could manage myself. (R2)

On a similar note, another respondent revealed, [Translation]

Given the economic boom of the early 1990s, it was the right time to start any business, whether you were a male or a female. (R4)

Government policy, through which facilities such as seed money or loans were made available by many ministries and financial institutions, encouraged the growth of many small and medium industries.

6. The necessity of business for political survival.

For respondents who had ventured into business following their involvement in politics, many had the opinion that somehow business experience is needed in order to sustain political life. Five respondents mentioned that political activities were voluntary work that received no allowances from the government. Money was needed for meetings, parties and gatherings. The expenses of these are

covered by the person holding the political post. In many instances, somebody holding a political post at the grassroots level has to spend money to help needy people with emergency expenses such as the poor, single mothers and the orphanage. One woman shared her experience, [Translation]

Our work in politics is a voluntary one, with no fixed schedule, and no budget allocated for any gatherings or meetings. Business is a good foundation for those in politics. (R6)

Another woman disclosed, [Translation]

Politicians come and go, and the position of a politician is not a stable one. If you have a strong foundation in business, you become strong economically and this helps determine your destiny in politics. (R11)

On a similar note, another respondent gave her view on the importance of a politician having a strong business foundation, [Translation]

In a period of economic crisis, as we are facing now, it (a [business] foundation) would determine whether one is a pure/self-made entrepreneur or one is an instant entrepreneur due to political connections. So, involvement in business is one of the ways for one to sustain (public life) in the political arena. (R2)

Motivations into politics

1. An interest in developing the community, especially to benefit women.

All respondents mentioned that they went into politics due to their interest in developing the community, particularly for the benefit of women. This sense of social obligation was partly due to their awareness that women face many constraints and problems, socio-culturally and economically, partly reflecting the multiple roles women perform. Respondents felt that women, especially those with consciousness and money, were best placed to help other women in need. One woman commended, [Translation]

I love to give service to my community because we are among the educated, [and we] should be able to help others in need. This is good for the people, and also for the whole village. This is in line with the mission and vision of the leading party in this country, especially regarding women. I target those of middle age. (R6)

In the past many politicians, especially the men, have become involved in politics for self-interested reasons (Jaquette, 1997). For this group of entrepreneurs, however, who joined politics later in their career, the perception is reversed. One respondent who has been in business for 25 years revealed, [Translation]

When I'm in politics, I always ask myself... What is my contribution to society and to the nation? Driving by that value, I promise myself that politics is an avenue for me to assist the community especially those in rural areas. At present, I am on the Board of Directors of the Rehabilitation Centre for Women, and the Youth Association in my state. (R7)

2. A "Political family" background.

Five of the respondents revealed that they had been exposed to political culture since they were very young. Two respondents mentioned that both of their parents were involved in politics, while two said that grandmothers were active in politics when they were young. Two respondents indicated either their mother or their father was. Literature has demonstrated that "political family" background is an important factor motivating children (whether males or females) to be inclined towards politics as a career when they are adults. (A political environment in the family enables boys as well as girls to inherit a political culture (Stacey and Price, 1981; Walby, 1996). Therefore, it is not uncommon to

see some prominent females from well known “political families” rise to national and international prominence. Examples include Megawati Sukarno from Indonesia, Khaleda Zia from Bangladesh, Benazir Bhutto from Pakistan and (recently) Arroyo Macapagal from the Philippines.

3. Popularity in business.

Six of the respondents had involvement in business prior to their involvement in politics. These women claimed that their popularity in business helped them try their luck in the political leadership. They were already known to their community due to the products or services of their enterprises. Walby (1996) indicates that someone’s public popularity is indeed a significant factor pushing him or her to enter the political circle.

4. The complementary roles of business and politics.

Ten respondents convinced were that politics was an arena complementing their existing, or newly established role in entrepreneurship. Six respondents held their present political post after being involved in entrepreneurship, and suggested that it was useful to have a good foundation in enterprise prior to entry to the political circle. One respondent said: “In business one should know many politicians.” Another commented: “To be involved in politics, one should have money; and business is the way to always have money.” A response from a third was: “Business and politics complement one another. Politics helps business expansion.” A respondent who had been in politics for 16 years blamed the need for business skills upon the fact that politics is a materialistic endeavour. Without money, it seemed to her, one’s involvement in politics is peripheral.

5. Being a single parent.

Five of the female respondents were single parents. These women consistently mentioned single parenthood as a reason for them to join politics. Two clarified that they had a lot of free time besides engaging in business. Another three made it clear that their children were already grown up and doing well in education. Besides bringing up their families, these women developed an interest in helping people through their involvement in grass-roots politics. This finding seems to support a study in Peru by De Bowman (2000). The single parent status of a number of female small-scale industrialists compelled them to be active in their business, and in other leadership roles. They found that entrepreneurial jobs were liberating and empowering. They felt they had become a better person, and were able to make a significant contribution to society through their economic and public activities.

Working strategies

All respondents believed that it was challenging to work in both entrepreneurship and politics. To do this well, one needed to prioritise activities to be undertaken, otherwise conflicts would arise. The following strategies were revealed by the respondents:

1. Constant Mentoring.

Eight respondents commended that they were very focused at the stage of initiating their enterprising and political ventures, partly due to help from experienced and trusted advisers and mentors. Constant mentoring was needed by the women, especially those under 40 years old, and through this mentoring they obtained advice, encouragement and new ideas about ways to face problems, to negotiate with business and political clients, and to deal with key events or turning points that might affect their business, or their political stability. All of these respondents held roles in low to medium levels of the political echelon. This meant they were closer to the political electorate. Therefore, the mentors they cited tended to be female representatives of their area to state assembly councils who were more experienced in the ups and downs of political life. Entrepreneurial mentors played a similar role to political mentors, but they were not necessarily from similar areas; they could be from other places, but the respondents used to meet them during business meetings and functions, and at other social networking occasions.

One interesting note about mentoring is that it supports the notion that women perceive leadership as a transformational process rather than a transactional one. This means that mentors not only help other women be successful, they also see themselves as within the community rather than above the community. Tremaine (2000) conceptualised mentoring as part of transformational leadership as exercised by women mayors in her New Zealand study, arguing that it is more web-like than hierarchical.

2. A commitment to self-development.

Another strategy that was regularly cited by respondents was a commitment to self-development. According to human resource development literature, commitment to self-development is an indicator of high performance at work (Putti, Aryee and Ling, 1989). A commitment to self-development means that someone is motivated to improve cognitive abilities, knowledge, and practical skills. Both formal and informal learning helps raise work performance.

Data show that these women are highly motivated. Being dual-career individuals active in entrepreneurship-cum-politics, they represent a new breed of ambitious career women. Several women commented they had undergone some formal academic training for their diploma or bachelor degree during the formative years of their career. One respondent, who was a Class F contractor, revealed that she had attended formal training in Financial Management for Contractors over the past 20 years. Others mentioned alternative training including business law, accounting, specific skills in pastry and cake-making, bridal beauty salon management and English language proficiency. The Managing Director of the Security Force firm had regular individual training in various aspects of large-scale investment management in order to keep abreast of changing economic circumstances. The research also showed that self-development was fostered through respondents' reading and through the use of Internet.

3. Spousal and family support.

Family support, particularly that of husbands helped determined the success and sustainability of the women's involvement in both entrepreneurship and politics. Husbands' support included their consent for the women to choose involvement in entrepreneurship and politics in the initial stages of their career. Support was also shown through constant caring, understanding and sharing by the husband for the entire duration of his wife's involvement. Failure in spousal support could lead to marriage breakdown, and this had been experienced by five respondents. Besides the husband's role, support could also be obtained from other family members such as parents, parents-in-law, friends and adult children. All the women indicated that they had domestic helpers to help run households, and to do domestic chores. Four women indicated that they were lucky to have very supportive parents-in-law who helped them in taking care of their growing children. There is an extensive literature which reinforces the significant contribution of support for a woman's career performance from husband and family (Licuanan, 1992; Maimunah and Rusinah, 1999; Maimunah and Aminah, 1999).

4. Smart time management.

Smart time management is another strategic approach practiced by excellent workers and high flyers. Entrepreneurship or politics is tough enough without attempting both careers at the same time. All the women in this study said that smart time management was very important. The women followed daily routines strictly, were disciplined, and all jobs were done to achieve specific outcomes, whether for entrepreneurship, politics or family. One respondent, who had another job as a nursery teacher, commented, [Translation]

I have no domestic help, but have managed and divided domestic chores with my older children. In the morning after my nursery job, I rush home to prepare a family lunch. After my youngest child has done his Quran learning, I leave for the state legislature for political matters such as house to house meetings with other female politicians... until night. (R6)

There were times when the women had to slow down their engagement in politics because of family commitments such as looking after sick family members, and when they had their business involvement because of economic crisis or difficulty.

5. A view that in politics “one needs to sacrifice”.

Not many people are born into leadership. This research indicates that only six out of the 13 female respondents had “political family” roots, and only four had prior parental involvement in business. Given this, the remaining respondents were self-made entrepreneurs and political actors. Three of the women convincingly argued that to be in politics one has to make many sacrifices, including forgoing their private life, their time, and changing work priorities. One of them said, [Translation]

My mentor who is in the state legislature wants to find someone who can replace her later [so] I am willing to take up the baton. This means that I have to sacrifice. I do not want to see that my area is not on the political map any more once she retires. (R2)

The value that “one needs to sacrifice” seemed to be felt more among single parent respondents because of the multiple roles they play, compared women with husbands.

6. Making use of diverse past job experiences.

The average time respondents had worked in business was 10 years, while their average time in politics was 12 years. Given that the average age was 43 years, this indicates that in general the women had multiple jobs, especially in government, since they were 30. All respondents had diverse job experiences, especially in the public service, before they ventured into entrepreneurship and politics. The jobs mentioned in the research were teacher, human resource personnel, factory worker, tourism promoter, finance officer, clerk, and secretary. Two respondents were directly engaged in business life after completing their schooling.

Long service in other types of employment meant that this group of women were already matured workers before they entered self-employment, or politics. One respondent commented, [Translation]

I had many jobs before, in government as well as private firms. Actually, through this string of jobs I gained a lot of experience. In government I was very frustrated because people looked for paper qualifications. There were many barriers for me to overcome. In private firms you have to work harder because firms are very profit-oriented. Those experiences I actually use now to make myself stronger to survive in my present business and political ventures. Qualifications could not substitute for my past experiences... (R11)

7. Other strategies.

Other strategies used by this group of respondents in their entrepreneurship-cum-political ventures include the significance of religious knowledge, communicative skills and honesty. Local studies among Malay entrepreneurs show that religiosity is one of the determining success factors, together with honesty and respect for others. One specific religious principle in business repeatedly mentioned by several respondents is that “nine out of 10 sources of income in life are through business” (Habrizah, 1996; Maimunah, 1999c).

Conclusion

In general the women in this group were working to reconcile their gender and their career expectations in entrepreneurship and politics. The women’s experiences of working in both roles varied somewhat. The themes motivating them to move into entrepreneurship could be divided into socio-family, economics and environment-related factors. Socio-family factors included: women whose interest in business had been developing since they were young; and those for whom an interest in business materialized after marriage, due to support from husband and family. All respondents with supportive husbands established business partnerships with them. Such arrangements were both important and justifiable, and studies have indicated that the success of

married women in entrepreneurship is determined by the degree of their husbands' involvement in the task, either as business partners or as managers (Licuanan, 1992; Maimunah, 1998a).

The economic and environmental factors on the other hand include tertiary educational achievement in business-related fields, nationalistic spirit, business opportunity, and the necessity of developing a business to ensure political survival. These factors are also supported by other studies done in developed countries (Hurley, 1999; Gibb and Ritchie, 1982). Factors motivating women to move into politics can be seen as an extension of the women's progressive career in entrepreneurship. About half of the respondents established themselves in entrepreneurship prior to their involvement in politics. This is due to the fact that politics has high expenses, and needs money for organizing activities. To some respondents, politics also means being able to help needy individuals in the community especially women in need. Another theme is that respondents' have a family background in politics, which has inculcated them in the "political culture" since a young age (Walby, 1997; Stacey and Price, 1981). Popularity in business, complementary roles between business and politics, and being a single parent were found to be three other motivating themes which explained why this group of respondents found themselves in politics.

Work strategies adopted by this group of women in exercising their roles in entrepreneurship and politics included social and psychological factors. Among these strategies is mentoring. Through mentoring, the women received continuous advice from other experienced and trusted individuals in both fields, who undeniably also acted as their role models. Respondents also showed commitment to self-development by attending specialized skills training. Social supports were particularly available from husbands and families; and women demonstrated self-discipline through practising smart time management. All the above strategies are commonly used by successful career women, especially those in the higher occupational hierarchy (Maimunah and Aminah, 1999). Otherwise women would face career conflicts and marriage failures – two situations that every woman would wish to avoid in pursuing their career. Other less mentioned strategies include a psychological perspective that says, "In politics one needs to sacrifice". This was seen as applying to time, private life and work priorities. Strategies also made use of past job experiences, and helped practice religious knowledge, communicative skills, honesty and respect for others. For women hoping to win the votes in the electorate, political representatives need to stay in constant personal touch with them.

The results of this study should be taken up by authorities concerned in the management of women's career development. The findings are useful to women and their significant others in that knowledge of the working culture is specifically related to motivations and to the working strategies of successful women in entrepreneurship and politics. This is very significant since it establishes a culture of good management with some emphasis on gender. Hence, women's roles in entrepreneurship and politics are not seen in isolation, rather it is understood that these roles are performed within the dynamics of women's multiple functions and interactions within the sphere of the individual, family, socioeconomic and environmental factors. The study recommends that further research should be conducted on motivations and working strategies, and this should compare large-scale entrepreneurs and top-level politicians by gender.

Table 1 General Descriptions of Respondents

Respondent	Age (years)	Entrepreneurship Owned	Years in Entrepreneurship	Political Post	Years in Politics
R1	44	Security force (Managing Director)	17	Federal Executive Council	5
R2	35	Professional training (Managing Director)	6	Deputy Head (Division)	5
R3	46	Light food factory (Manager)	4	Committee member (Sub-division)	14
R4	38	Plant nursery and landscaping (Manager)	5	Head (Division)	17
R5	39	Plastic factory (Managing Director)	4	Secretary (Division)	5
R6	31	Contractor for construction Work (Assistant Manager)	9	Head (Sub-Division) Treasurer (Division)	8
R7	38	Food manufacturing (Managing Director)	25	Head (Sub-division)	5
R8	48	Supplier of workers (Managing Director)	19	State executive council (Committee member-division)	5 (28)
R9	42	Contractor for construction work (Manager)	20	Secretary (Sub-division)	10
R10	49	Professional training (Manager)	5	Head (Sub-division)	10
R11	47	Travel and tourism agency (Manager) Leather good manufacturing (Manager)	6	Treasurer (Division)	16
R12	43	Management consultancy (Manager) Furniture marketing (Manager)	5	Head (Sub-division)	6
R13	60	Furniture and box factory (Managing Director)	15	Head (Sub-division)	30

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THE CONTRIBUTION OF WOMEN TO THE CHANGE PROCESS IN A RURAL COMMUNITY IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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In the past, traditional organisations such as Parent and Teachers' Association, Country Women's Association, Red Cross, and St John's Ambulance (to name only a few) provided an opportunity for women to demonstrate leadership and contribute positively to implementing change at the community level in rural communities. The fact that these types of organisations are encountering difficulty in recruiting volunteers is well documented. Rural communities have lost the services of a big group of able, intelligent but 'unemployed' people because of their participation, for financial reasons or otherwise, in the paid workforce. However, women have not withdrawn from their involvement in grass roots organisations and can be found in numerous leadership positions across a variety of community groups and organisations.

This paper has emerged from a larger doctoral study examining how rural communities are adapting and coping with change. Four communities in the South West of Western Australia are participating in the research – the Shires of Nannup and Plantagenet, and the towns of Pemberton and Northcliffe in the Shire of Manjimup. As part of this study, I have conducted focus groups and interviews with key members of each community, in an attempt to identify important factors which contribute to the successful negotiation of the change process. Many of these key informants are women.

The women of Northcliffe provide a particularly cogent example of women's leadership, in both grass roots organisations and traditional institutions. Information from discussion groups with these women, exploring their contribution and role in bringing about radical change, forms the basis of this paper.

Introduction

This paper has emerged from a larger doctoral study examining how rural communities are adapting and coping with change. There are four communities in the South West of Western Australian which are participating in the research; the Shires of Nannup and Plantagenet, and the towns of Northcliffe and Pemberton which are located within the Shire of Manjimup.

The common link between the four communities is the forestry industry. Pemberton, Nannup and Northcliffe have been involved in native forest logging since their beginnings, while Plantagenet is part of the developing Bluegum plantation industry.

A substantive theorizing framework has been utilised in the research, that is, a bottom up approach. There are no hypotheses to be tested, and the issues have emerged from the communities themselves. In accordance with this type of approach, a variety of data gathering methods have been used. For example in building up profiles of each community I have used census data, crime and unemployment statistics, real estate sales, newspaper analysis, oral histories with long term residents, community discussion groups, and community surveys.

It was during the discussion groups, which focused on community change and change strategies, where gender comparisons regarding participation and leadership, both within and between communities, became obvious. In particular, the women of Northcliffe provided a cogent example of

women's leadership at the grass roots level. Northcliffe has two council representatives, one of whom is the only woman on the Manjimup Shire Council; both the Principal and Deputy Principal of the district high school are women, and the large number of groups and organisations that exist in this community are headed and run by women. Consequently, their ideas and beliefs about women in leadership will be an important part of this paper.

I will start with a brief outline of the general nature of rural communities, followed by a discussion of women's participation and leadership roles in these communities. Information provided by the Northcliffe women will be interwoven with this discussion with as much as possible in their own words so that their voice is heard. The paper will conclude with ideas as to why Northcliffe has such a strong women's culture.

Rural communities

While Australia is one of the most highly urbanised countries in the world, the rural sector has had particular relevance in Australian sociology, history, economics, and ideology. As Kapferer (1990) stated, "In song and story, art and literature, history and international relations, the ruralism of what has been called 'the Australian identity' is emphasised" (p.87). Celebrated deeds and exploits of underdogs such as Ned Kelly, Clancy of the Overflow and hundreds of nameless diggers and pioneers combine to present an image of a people battling both the harshness of the climatic elements, and the injustices of the colonising power.

In describing Australian rural communities, there are two primary factors that are considered to have important and wide ranging impacts on the nature of these communities; they are isolation and tradition. In Australia, rural communities tend to be geographically isolated due to their dispersed population patterns. Consequently, education, employment, entertainment, housing, and health care are all affected by the problem of geographic distance (Smith, Bishop and Pelligrini, 1994).

Physical isolation has had other effects on the residents of these communities. It has created the need for rural communities to be tight-knit, self-contained entities, and has led to a prevailing culture of self reliance amongst residents. This can be seen most clearly in the way members of rural communities fundraise and volunteer their time in order to provide equipment and services that we, as city dwellers, expect as our right.

Bush mythology makes mention of many rural characters, often a product of community isolation. As summed up by one of the women in the focus groups "*the more isolated you are as a community, the richer the inner life becomes*".

The second factor influencing the nature of rural communities is tradition. Kapferer (1990) highlights the comparison of rural virtue with urban vice, and rural conservatism with the more 'liberal' views of urbanites. In line with this image of conservatism, a study of rural communities in South Western Australia undertaken by Coakes in 1995, identified the prevalent traditional patterns of male-female relationships. Commonly these traditional attitudes result in women being service providers, with little financial control and ownership of land. The conservative nature of family relationships has also been associated with high rates of rural suicide, domestic violence and other health issues (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, 1988; Coakes, 1995; Coakes and Kelly, 1997; Samyia, 1987; Smith *et al.*, 1994).

The image of life in the bush is largely a male one, where it is assumed that male superiority and men's political dominance is the norm. There has tended to be a lack of recognition of the role that women play in rural life, and studies in the area have indicated that women's contributions are both invisible and underestimated.

Kingston (1990) coined the term 'composite role' to describe the role of rural women. Rural women take care of the major sphere of family and domestic responsibilities; they may work in unpaid positions on family farms or in family businesses; they often combine these roles with paid employment to supplement household income; and as if that were not enough, they contribute

significantly to the community through voluntary work. It is through this contribution at the community level that they are often the instigators of change.

Community participation

Community groups and organisations are the common vehicle for participation of rural women. According to Florin and Wandersman (1990), participation in community groups and organisations is voluntary, and the number and nature of these groups are an indication of residents' commitment to their community. Furthermore, the operations of the groups tend to be informal, and the groups themselves are usually initiated at a local level in response to local conditions and issues.

While rural communities have always needed to provide some basic services themselves, the economic rationalist agenda set by successive governments over the last decade means that services that are available in rural communities are in decline. Alston (1996) argues that community members need to work harder to support and sustain their communities as these services contract, and the greatest burden for dealing with these changes is falling on women. It appears that women's commitment to community may be the reason for this, as illustrated in the following comments from the Northcliffe women:

Women really do have a good sense of community, they want a good environment for their children and they will try to provide that and wind up helping the whole community. That really does happen in small country communities where things are not laid on, and women make it happen.

In a broader sense, for women, life is a lot bigger than just their family home. Women very much realise that the broader community is what is meaningful to you in your life. Women have a good sense of vision, they have the ability to visualise and make those things happen.

It's for your children, not that we all have children, but you need to look at what is being done what's out there for them, so that it's the community that's important. I sense that women feel the need to look further.

As women we are socialised to look after more than the self, and most of us grow up with a belief that relationships are important. For women living in rural communities this is clearly a strength, and perhaps the survival of many rural communities may well depend on women's sense of community.

A second point about participation is also important here. While services available in rural communities are contracting, resulting in a greater reliance on community members for their provision, the pool of people (women) available to provide the services is also contracting. As previously outlined, women are broadening their roles into 'composite roles'. This has happened because of economic hardship and the changing status of women.

The affect of this on rural communities is summed up in comments by women from the discussion groups:

The community used to be run on the spare time of housewives, but many women are now working for financial or other reasons. We have lost that big group of able, intelligent but unemployed people in the community.

You do have to do twice as much, you need to put a lot into the community because there is such a small pool of people doing so much but you also need to work a bit harder than city women, you do more.

Conditions in rural communities have, and are continuing to change, and as a reflection of this, the types of groups and organisations that exist within rural communities are also changing. Many of the traditional organisations that women have been involved with in the past (eg Red Cross, Country Women's Association – and I make it clear here that their strength varies from community to

community), have not been able to address many of the social and environmental issues prevalent in contemporary rural communities. According to Alston (1996), women are now creating their own organisations to fulfil these roles.

One particular area that rural women have become strongly identified with concerns environmental issues and ecological sustainability. In the communities involved in my research, finding the balance between conservation of the native forest and sustaining employment of community members dependent in varying degrees on the logging of that forest, are very real issues. Women in these communities are playing a strong role on both sides of the debate, and are therefore instigating change by forcing local, state and federal governments to address the social, environmental and economic issues that surround the problem.

Alston (1996) argues that it is women who are raising awareness of the prevalent social, environmental and community issues because traditional organisations have tended to ignore them. In the agricultural industry, for example, many of the people initiating local landcare groups to address problems of salinity and land degradation, are women.

In the community of Northcliffe there are a variety of groups and organisations that have been initiated to address local concerns. Many of the Northcliffe women are actively involved in forest conservation and have initiated local groups to gather support to fight to preserve native forest blocks within the community. On the other side of the debate the President of the local forest industry group (called the Forest Protection Society – FPS) is also a woman.

Community leadership

With all the changes that are taking place within rural communities, community leadership is vitally important. Traditionally, overt leadership has been a male domain with its rural public face seen in Shire Councils, Rotary, Lions, Apex etc. Women have been members of auxiliary organisations, and played a supporting (usually fundraising) role.

From a feminist perspective, femininity has been stereotyped as being dependent, submissive and conforming, and therefore lacking in leadership qualities. However, as has been argued, the problem may well lie in the way leadership is defined. There is obviously a male bias in the description of a leader as someone who is in command or control.

Problems with traditional definitions of leadership are captured in the following comment:

You are treading a very fine line between going ahead and saying what you think, and being labeled pushy. I think that's a problem for women, we have to redefine what leadership is. The way in which women lead is totally different to the conventional hierarchical leadership and therefore a lot of the women are saying, I don't want to be that.

Many of the women in the groups stated that they '*accidentally*' found themselves in leadership roles, a '*well I'll do it because no-one else wants it*' approach. They believe that women accept leadership in a much more co-operative way.

Barker and Young (1994) described two types of leadership. The first, transactional – an exchange between leader and followers – is more about commanding. The second type, transformational – “when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality” (p.18), more aptly fits women's type of leadership.

I think that the shift in thinking that has occurred in the community development area is particularly relevant to the way we define leadership. It has become clear that any change at a community level must involve community ownership, and women's leadership style is very well suited to bringing about grass roots change in the community. In fact, in Northcliffe this is already happening:

We need to question the structures that we have inherited. They seem to be patriarchal structures. I mean Youth Voice was the first example I have seen of a committee of the whole where no one person had absolute power, and they worked very very well together and I liked that.

I think women are more capable than men of knowing that something in the community will never succeed if it is just something of yours. You have to make sure that everyone is included so that everyone ends up with a sense of ownership. If it's a one man show in some way the project will just disappear and I think women are more capable of making sure that it remains owned by a larger section of the community.

The women from Northcliffe believe that one of the biggest differences between men and women's leadership is that men are taught to get the power whereas generally, that is not the modis operandum for most women.

Women tend not to be so hierarchical, not so interested in who's top dog and bottom dog. They work more as peers so there is a better atmosphere of communication and cooperation than male structures where they tend to want to go after the position. I have found that when I work with women on committees and things there is definitely a good flow of information and there is not this grasping for power. I have found it so much more satisfying.

Women don't always accept the structures, they will create their own culturally appropriate set of structures for the situation. Men tend to stay within the structures and so their meetings are a scream. You know, move one and second one and it all stays so rigid because they haven't allowed themselves the types of structures that work a hundred times better.

These women believe that women's ability to integrate thinking and feeling can be used "*to take the power of the group into creating stuff*". It is also the combination of the "*feeling and the head stuff*" that means women (and ultimately the community) can end up with a win win situation.

While men and women are equally good at coming up with ideas, these rural women believe that women understand the importance of sharing information in a group situation.

I think women are really conscious about the power of information, and you share all your information. The first few committees where there was a male, suddenly this male was just constantly keeping all the information to himself and the whole committee basically degenerated and went defunct.

It appears that women do have different ways of participating and leading at the community level. Quite clearly participation is a social activity and involvement in community is a way to establish social support and friendships. Bishop and Coakes (1998) warn that if rural communities are to survive, they will need to become 'flatter' in their hierarchies, and women's ability to network in an inclusive way is very conducive to both instigating and managing change at the community level.

Why are the women so active in Northcliffe?

As previously outlined, many of the institutions and groups in Northcliffe are headed and managed by women. Northcliffe is a relatively small town (population approximately 820), and yet has a wide variety of community groups and organisations. Of the four communities in the study, Northcliffe is the only one that did not complain about difficulties in getting people involved in groups.

Interestingly, there are very few community groups specifically for men where they can have input. Other towns have Apex, Rotary and Lions, but in Northcliffe "*the hub of the men's spirituality groups is the fire brigade or the golf club. That's about it.*" In contrast, the Country Women's Association (CWA) which is in varying degrees of strength and decline throughout rural Western Australia, still

has a branch in Northcliffe, while the Pemberton Branch (30 kms away, pop. 1800 approximately) folded many years ago.

Several reasons were postulated by the women in the focus group as to why women play such a strong role at the community level. The history of settlement and development, and consequently the community's historic response to change, is proving to be an important factor when examining how communities adapt to change. In Northcliffe's case, its history is full of hardship and resourcefulness, necessary for survival, and this seems to have enabled a strong women's culture to develop over time. In the words of the women:

I think coming from the group settlement where there was a lot of hardship especially for the women and a lot of them that survived, they were very resourceful and very strong. And then we had the back to the land movement or the hippies, sorry new settlers, who chose to go back to that sort of hardship, to experience it. It was like a catharsis, like trying to get right back and then coming up to a place where you felt comfortable. And a lot of those women didn't survive either.

Only the really strong survive and somehow this culture of people who come in, has developed, I don't know where it started, I'm only guessing. Like in the Kimberley it's the male thing, in Northcliffe, somehow the female thing is here.

I think that certain cultures build up and they inculcate more, so we are probably lucky here with women.

The women who have gone before them have provided inspiration for newcomers as they have arrived. The women in the discussion group believe that these 'role models' have played an important part in maintaining the strong women's culture that exists in the district.

I was awestruck when I came here, they just did everything. (Comment from an older woman who has lived in Northcliffe for 30 years, and is now a role model herself for many of the younger women in the district.)

We have had such great role models of the older women here, very strong women.

I think you have got some strong women role models and you might come into a town like this with no intention of becoming involved in community issues, but because you are surrounded by these strong women you tend to live up to the aspirations.

Hardship has been a common theme for most people in Northcliffe and this has led to a community where everyone is considered to be on an equal footing. This is unlike most rural communities, where one's hierarchical status and standing in the community can restrict or enhance the role that is played.

There is not a set standard of behaviour that most towns have. In Northcliffe you are not able to put on a show, most people here don't have any money. All those other things that put barriers up for people like am I dressed good enough, is my figure good enough, around Northcliffe somehow it doesn't seem to matter.

These women know that they can control the basics of life such as providing food, water and warmth, "*you are responsible for it, like if you don't chop the wood then there won't be warmth, none of this instant stuff*". From this has come a belief that it gives them the power to realise that they can do anything. This is very apparent when you see this community's ability to fight to access or maintain their services and facilities. The community is able to mobilise against perceived threats and it is usually the women in the district who are the planners and organisers. A recent win for Northcliffe was to keep their district high school from closing.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude this paper with a poem published in *Voices from the Bush: Stories and Poems from the Warren District*. This poem was written by Claudette Mountjoy, a long term resident of Northcliffe, and a well known story teller and yarn spinner. I think this comment from Claudette says it all:

With the bush poets and yarn spinners, as a women storyteller, I've got to fight those blokes, they don't want to give you a go.

The poem is called *The Crone* and is reproduced here with the kind permission of the author.

The Crone
by Claudette Mountjoy

*The wise woman,
The crone
Who dares stop her.
She's fighting for the trees.*

*She flies over the forest on her broom stick,
Sees the destruction.
No longer tied to bleeding womb,
The wise woman,
The Crone.
Who dares stop her.
She's fighting for the trees.*

*The greedy machine is hungry for its tea,
Hungry for our trees.
The forests are all going to feed the few
The government we choose is on the side of the few
Big money talks and many listen.
The ordinary people "what can we do"?"
Enters the Crone,
The wise woman,
Who dares stop her.
She's fighting for the trees.*

*The Crone sits in government offices and is impressed
With the coffee making machine.
She asks "why do your pencils come from South Africa:
Are you using recycled paper"?"*

*The minister tells his secretary,
"Get rid of that mad old woman,
She's been there for a week."
The secretary comes back wringing her hands.
"She refuses to go, wants to talk about woodchipping."*

*The wise woman,
The crone.
Who dares stop her,
She's fighting for the trees.*

*The crone has gone through childhood and kept her wonder.
Been a teenager and maintained her bravado.
The crone has been lover, mother and wife.
Given birth to aspects of herself and acknowledged them.
Entered the primeval swamp of menopause and resurrected herself.
The crone carries all these aspects on her mantle with humility.*

*The wise woman,
The crone.
Who dares stop her.
She's fighting for the trees.
She's fighting for her life.*

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RECOGNISING AND ACHIEVING WOMEN'S FULL POTENTIAL IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING HIGHER EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT: THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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In Australia there has been a substantial increase in the proportion of females attending and completing courses at all levels of higher education. The proportion of female academic staff has also increased in Australian universities. It is noteworthy, however, that females are under-represented at both senior academic and higher degree research levels. This is particularly true for the pre-1987 universities (Burton, 1997). Many universities are aware of the inequalities inherent in the system and are taking steps to address them. One example is more consistent and transparent procedures for selection and promotion include clear statements of performance criteria. For most levels, research is a key criterion. Raising the level of women's participation and productivity in research, therefore, is an important and necessary step for them to achieve their full potential.

This paper examines strategies implemented at the University of Queensland to promote female participation in research, and explores outcomes as well as some of the tensions that exist in the culture of a research-intensive institution. These institutional strategies are also examined in the context of the changing national and international research environment. We explore whether current strategies have had the intended impact and conclude with suggestions about how women might work more effectively to improve their power base.

Introduction: Setting the context

The arguments used to support the importance of research in increasing women's potential should be seen in the context of a research-intensive university, and are not intended as a criticism of the value of teaching per se. However, we would wish to stress the importance of the nexus between teaching and research in any university environment, and support the relationship between research, teaching and scholarship as described by Lord Dearing (1997):

Research is committed to finding out things that are not at present known whereas scholarship is concerned with the lecturer being able to keep up with the leading edge of knowledge of his or her subject.... looking at it critically and creatively but not trying to establish new knowledge. It is the foundation of research but also the foundation of excellence in teaching.... it is a continuum."

It should be noted that this paper takes a broad view and does not focus on any particular discipline, although it is recognised that specific fields may have additional issues to address.

In the DEETYA Higher Education Time Series Publications *Students* (1998, p. 16, p. 20) and *Staff* (1997, p. 2, p. 14), statistical data indicate that the proportion of female students has increased significantly, and since 1987, has outnumbered males overall (Table 1). However, this contrasts with the staff data, where the proportion of female academic staff has increased across the system as a whole, but remains well below 50% of the total (Table 2).

**Table 1: Total Students in Australian Higher Education Institutions, 1982-97:
Percentage by Gender and by Course Level**

Year	PhD		Research Masters		Coursework Masters		Bachelor degree		Total	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1982	26.1	73.9	34.0	66.0	31.1	68.9	44.3	55.7	45.9	54.1
1983	27.0	73.0	34.3	65.7	31.7	68.3	44.7	55.3	46.3	53.7
1984	28.0	72.0	35.2	64.8	32.8	67.2	45.2	54.8	46.6	53.4
1985	29.1	70.9	35.9	64.1	34.3	65.7	46.0	54.0	47.6	52.4
1986	29.6	70.4	36.8	63.2	35.3	64.7	47.1	52.9	48.8	51.2
1987	30.7	69.3	36.2	63.8	38.6	61.4	48.2	51.8	50.1	49.9
1988	32.1	67.9	37.2	62.8	39.9	60.1	49.0	51.0	51.1	48.9
1989	33.7	66.3	39.0	61.0	40.2	59.8	49.9	50.1	52.1	47.9
1990	34.8	65.2	40.0	60.0	41.7	58.3	51.1	48.9	52.7	47.3
1991	36.0	64.0	41.3	58.7	43.6	56.4	52.3	47.7	53.3	46.7
1992	37.6	62.4	42.3	57.7	44.2	55.8	54.0	46.0	53.4	46.6
1993	38.0	62.0	43.3	56.7	44.8	55.2	54.6	45.4	53.4	46.6
1994	38.7	61.3	44.0	56.0	46.3	53.7	54.7	45.3	53.5	46.5
1995	39.8	60.2	46.2	53.8	47.8	52.2	54.8	45.2	53.9	46.1
1996	41.2	58.8	47.2	52.8	48.6	51.4	55.2	44.8	54.3	45.7
1997	43.0	57.0	48.6	51.4	49.9	50.1	55.3	44.7	54.4	45.6

From Table 2, it can be seen that between 1988 and 1997, the proportion of female staff at the senior lecturer level rose by 10% to just over 25%. At the other levels, changes were marginal. Males continued to outnumber females in the senior ranks.

The small proportion of females in senior ranks is disappointing, particularly if viewed in the context of affirmative action programs and other equity initiatives over the period. Despite females outnumbering males in overall enrolments since 1987, the flow-on effect has not occurred at higher degree research level. Similarly, women's under-representation in the higher-echelons of academic employment and their comparative lack of career advancement run counter to claims of male disadvantage (Birrell *et al.*, 1995), and challenge assumptions that higher numbers of women at lower levels will automatically translate to greater equality at higher levels.

**Table 2: Total Academic Staff in Australian Higher Education Institutions, 1988-97:
Percentage by Gender and by Level**

Year	Above Senior Lecturer		Senior Lecturer		Lecturer		Below Lecturer		Total (%)	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1988	13.2	86.8	14.1	85.9	32.7	67.3	50.0	50.0	27.3	72.7
1989	07.9	92.1	14.4	85.6	34.3	65.7	51.0	49.0	27.8	72.2
1990	09.1	90.9	16.2	83.8	37.6	62.4	51.2	48.8	30.1	69.9
1991	09.8	90.2	17.8	82.2	38.5	61.5	51.2	48.8	30.8	69.2
1992	10.1	89.9	19.1	80.9	39.9	60.1	51.3	48.7	31.9	68.1
1993	10.7	89.3	20.5	79.5	40.3	59.7	52.0	48.0	32.6	67.4
1994	11.6	88.4	22.0	78.0	40.3	59.7	51.6	48.4	32.8	67.2
1995	12.2	87.8	23.2	76.8	40.6	59.4	51.9	48.1	33.5	66.5
1996	13.0	87.0	24.3	75.7	41.6	58.4	51.6	48.4	34.1	65.9
1997	14.0	86.0	25.3	74.7	40.8	59.2	50.4	49.6	33.3	66.7

At the University of Queensland the situation at the higher levels is mixed. For the period 1993-1998, the proportion of female staff employed at all levels below Professor increased. Although the proportion of females in the combined Reader and Professorial levels increased, the proportion of females at professorial level alone actually decreased (but note that numbers at professorial level are very small – 12 females and 138 males in 1998) – Table 3.

For some time the issue of an appropriate gender balance at the University of Queensland has been of concern. Attempts to address the situation have included more consistent and transparent procedures for selection, tenure and promotion, with clear statements of performance criteria and better departmental strategies to attract better candidates.

In the revised promotion process, there is an opportunity for staff to nominate weights which reflect their different strengths in teaching, research and management/service, with a minimum commitment to teaching and research of 30%, and a minimum to management/service of 20%. For appointment or promotion above senior lecturer, a higher percentage of *demonstrated* research excellence is generally expected and is made clear in the guidelines. This emphasis was stressed in our discussions with a number of senior academic staff involved in the promotion and selection processes.

**Table 3: Total Academic Staff at The University of Queensland, 1988-98:
Percentage by Gender and by Level**

Year	Above Senior Lecturer		Senior Lecturer		Lecturer		Below Lecturer		Total (%)	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
1988	05.0	95.0	09.1	90.9	26.3	73.7	40.4	59.6	22.5	77.5
1989	06.2	93.8	11.1	88.9	28.3	73.7	40.3	59.7	23.7	76.3
1990	06.8	93.2	11.3	88.7	31.1	71.7	42.5	57.5	24.1	75.9
1991	07.4	92.6	12.4	87.6	31.9	68.9	40.2	59.8	25.6	74.4
1992	08.0	92.0	13.4	86.6	35.4	68.1	40.8	59.2	26.5	73.5
1993	09.8	90.2	13.0	87.0	38.1	64.6	44.1	55.9	27.9	72.1
1994	09.8	90.2	14.4	85.6	37.6	61.9	48.9	51.1	29.1	70.9
1995	09.8	90.2	17.5	82.5	39.5	62.4	49.9	50.1	30.4	69.6
1996	09.5	90.5	20.3	79.7	40.7	59.3	48.4	51.6	30.4	69.6
1997	10.8	89.2	19.1	80.9	42.2	57.8	51.9	48.1	27.3	72.7
1998	12.4	87.6	19.8	80.2	43.8	56.2	55.5	44.5	28.7	71.3

With respect to strategies at the unit level, the University regularly monitors performance on promotion and enhancement of equity as part of its terms of reference for departmental and centre reviews. Departments are encouraged to investigate whether female staff members are carrying heavier teaching and marking loads and to address the problem, if this is the case. In addition, departments are expected to assist and encourage female staff to improve their research outputs. The clear message here is that, without research, women's career prospects at the University will suffer (Senate Report, 1996). The recognition that heavy teaching and marking loads may be an impediment to research is borne out by a UK study which indicated a strong correlation between research performance and rank but a negative correlation between time spent on teaching and rank (Wolff, 1993, p. 46).

To understand further why the University of Queensland clearly states the importance of research in its selection, tenure and promotion procedures for academic staff, it is necessary to explore the environment in which universities operate.

Research in higher education

In the Unified National System universities compete for their share of funding, and although the Dawkins' 'revolution' was not intended to make them all look and act the same, the introduction of the Research Quantum has formalised the importance of research performance in an institution's overall profile. This is not to say that research is the only measure of success, but it is an important one nevertheless, and one which can be used to attract not only Government funds, but also industry and other funds. The international reputation of an institution is largely dependent on its research profile.

This is true not only in Australia, but also in the UK, where Government 'tuition' fees per student do not vary between institutions, but each university can attract additional funding according to the quality of their research as measured by the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). As a consequence, the biggest and most prestigious universities go to vast lengths to ensure high RAE ratings,

... knowing that a good result not only brings in money directly, but makes it easier to lure more cash from industry, charities and other funders. With teaching quality, success does not mean more money, while failure is expensive as universities have to change procedures or face the option of closing courses (Ince, 1998, p. 10).

Worldwide, research is recognised as essential in helping to “answer important questions and solve important problems” (Aitken, 1998). Institutions also see research as a means of broadening their funding base. It is therefore reasonable that performance in research should form an integral part of the criteria for selection, tenure and promotion, particularly at a research-intensive university. If women want to improve their chances of promotion to senior ranks, then they *must* raise their performance in research.

The next section deals with a number of specific strategies that the University of Queensland has implemented to complement departmental approaches to increase women’s research performance and productivity.

Strategies at the University of Queensland

Qualifications, research performance, leadership skills and international reputation are recognised as key factors that may assist staff in their ability to meet promotion criteria. Strategies are therefore intended to:

- help staff complete research higher degrees;
- encourage re-entry into research;
- increase research output and hence women’s confidence to apply for promotion;
- provide networking and mentoring opportunities with colleagues; and
- win grants.

Short PhD Fellowships for Women Staff

The Short PhD Fellowships acknowledge the fact that women often face more demanding work and/or family responsibilities than males. The scheme, initiated by the Senate Standing Committee on the Status of Women, was designed to provide release from teaching and/or administrative duties to staff who are in the later stages of PhD study at the University of Queensland, to enable finalisation of the thesis.

Twelve Fellowships have been awarded since 1994. Nine of these Fellows now have their PhDs and two are expected to submit before the end of 1998. Two of the recipients have been promoted, including one who has not submitted her PhD but who has developed an international research reputation and demonstrated leadership ability.

The University of Queensland Postdoctoral Re-entry Fellowships for Women

These Fellowships are designed to enable women to resume their research career after a break of at least twelve months in their full-time academic positions, through being interrupted, delayed or otherwise constrained by family or other responsibilities.

A review of recipients from 1991 to 1996 indicates that, following completion of their fellowships, all have been successfully employed in full or part-time research work, some in ‘sought-after’, highly competitive positions.

Promoting women – a program to support academic careers

Senior staff at the University of Queensland have suggested that women often lack confidence in their ability and, as a result, are more reluctant to apply for promotion than their male counterparts (Gallois, pers.com. 1998; Golding, pers.com. 1998). In recognition of this situation, the Senate Standing Committee on the Status of Women designed this program to assist women who might be expected to

apply for promotion in the near future to raise their research profile or to demonstrate their leadership potential.

The awards are important in that they enable women to be released from teaching and administrative duties to complete research or to undertake a special project. The fellowships are part of an affirmative action strategy to:

- increase the percentage of women at Lecturer level and above; and
- facilitate the career progression of women academics.

The program is new; two awards were made in 1997 and seven in 1998. However, initial indications suggest the program has great potential; two participants applied for promotion in the 1999 round, and all others have indicated they will apply in the 2000 round.

Women and leadership mentor program

One issue that has been repeatedly stressed in discussing strategies to promote women in research and benefits/incentives to pursuing an academic career is the absence of senior female staff – of role models. The ability of these senior staff actively to mentor more junior academics and postdoctoral fellows and postgraduate students is most important.

The Women and Leadership Mentor Program is an initiative of the Office of Gender Equity designed to assist women in overcoming obstacles to career progression. There are over 60 participants in the program at present. Outcomes are difficult to quantify, but general feedback is very positive. Commenting on the Program, one senior female staff member remarked:

I found the mentor scheme personally useful both as a mentor and a mentee. The input from a more senior woman was absolutely invaluable in my own promotion to Associate Professor (Gottlieb, pers.com.1998).

More recently, a sister program, “Academic Women in Leadership”, has been developed to complement the mentor program with the emphasis on building leadership skills.

Grant workshops

In recognition of the growing importance of the need to attract external funding for research, the University conducts a variety of workshops to assist with the process of writing grant applications. The success of these and other initiatives for women is demonstrated in increased numbers of applications, but more particularly through greatly increased success rates, particularly in national competitive grants in the past four years. In 1997, 228 women chief investigators were awarded grants, compared with 132 in 1994. At the University of Queensland, the percentage of women chief investigators rose from 16% in 1994 to 23.5% in 1997.

These strategies are ones designed primarily to assist women but, overall, the University of Queensland actively seeks to create and sustain a supportive research environment for all staff. In general, the aim is to assist staff develop a more strategic approach to career planning. The importance of this is recognised in a new initiative which provides up to \$10,000 to each new staff member to assist them to develop an effective research strategy immediately they commence work at the University.

Is this enough?

We have argued the importance of research in universities worldwide and its importance in promotion to senior ranks. We contend that, in order for women to raise their power base, they need to be strategic in their approach to career planning, and we have described some of the relevant strategies at the University of Queensland. While the outcomes of these initiatives are positive and women are doing relatively well in the research arena, this has still not translated to positions in the upper-echelons of the power structure.

So, what is the impediment? Is there a glass ceiling? Should women aim to break through it or create an alternative work culture more conducive to women's values and lifestyles? While this may be a solution in the business world (Wilkinson, 1996), we would suggest it is unrealistic in the modern university context, where the major reward system is based on performance in research. Therefore, it is not very useful to encourage women to rail against the importance of research in favour of teaching, if they want to improve their power base. A female senior academic at the University of Queensland believes that "women who don't do well in research will always be at the bottom end of the ladder" (Gallois, pers.com.1998). This does not mean that the male dominated culture in universities should go unchallenged, but that research *per se* is valuable.

It is imperative that women focus on research now rather than later. Nationally, there is far more focus on 'the research system', which incorporates innovation and knowledge production and transmission. Resources are likely to be directed to Australian teams of critical mass capable of establishing linkages and knowledge relationships with key international players (Johnston, 1998, p. 20). This reinforces the need for researchers to form effective alliances with colleagues, nationally and internationally. Women must ensure they are part of this process and aim to work with "stars" in their field.

Networking is clearly important. While the University of Queensland's mentor scheme is extremely valuable, we stress that it is also necessary to seek successful male colleagues as mentors, for potential research collaboration and general career development. Specific evidence for this includes studies that have found women to be disadvantaged because they lack the right 'political connections', despite their scientific excellence (Wolff, 1993, p. 46). Also, it has been suggested that successful mentoring relationships for academics in universities were 'overwhelmingly' founded in shared research interests. This study found that mentoring was considered important by over 90% of faculty, was most important during early career stages, and that relationships with several individuals were necessary (Perna, Lerner and Yura, 1995).

Such relationships enable recognition to be achieved beyond the local level by extending the individual's profile to their peers, both national and international. Peer review is extensively used in assessing one's research performance and it is naïve to suggest that a reviewer will always put aside knowledge of the person or their work in favour of an unknown (Wenneras, and Wold, 1997). While this line of argument supports suggestions of bias in the peer review system, the bias, if it exists, is not one of gender *per se* but we contend one of being a part of 'the network' – which is male dominant at present. This view is supported by Gilbert, Williams and Lundberg (1994).

There is a range of strategies that women need to be aware of and be prepared to pursue if they are to reach the top. They include research, but efficient planning and networking are also important. Implicit in this is development of leadership and management skills, seen to be valid indicators of 'service' in promotion criteria. This ignores gender representation across disciplines, an issue which deserves further detailed investigation in its own right.

Conclusion

It is difficult for women to attain equal status with their male counterparts in a university setting. Greater representation of females in senior academic positions will not be achieved by strategies/policies alone, although clearly support by institutions will assist the process in the long term. The pressure for change must continue. What is needed is for women to understand the new directions of higher education, to be proactive and strategic in setting their goals and driving the direction of their careers.

As part of our preparation for this paper, we talked with a number of senior female and male academic staff. From these discussions, we present below a summary of strategies they identified as a means by which females can further their own careers:

- Be strategic. Plan and review one's career every 5-10 years.
- 'Self-internationalise'. This means working collaboratively with colleagues overseas, undertaking Special Studies Programs, attending (and especially presenting) papers at

conferences, be aware of one's limitations in terms of inability to travel, but exploit technology to the full to create and preserve vibrant linkages. Bring colleagues here, where necessary/appropriate.

- Develop a research strategy and remain focussed within this framework; aim to teach and supervise within one's areas of research interest.
- Synergise efforts in teaching and research wherever possible/practicable, so this dovetails and complements other efforts.
- Do not try to please everyone now; learn to say 'NO' to inappropriate tasks (and/or work immensely long hours). Be selective but over-commit rather than under-commit. Avoid being on *all* committees until established.
- Network. Be proactive in seeking mentors (male and/or female), especially as research collaborators. Aim to work with the *best* (in real or virtual environments). Seek regular advice/feedback on progress.
- Commit *time* to the research process.
- Review plans and progress regularly.

We finish by commenting that this is not an issue that universities can afford to ignore. The strength and depth of the intellectual capital among any organisation's staff is increasingly recognised as a key, if not the only, means of sustaining competitive advantage. Management of the knowledge and its generation will similarly become critical. Diversity is increasingly seen as an important catalyst in the innovation process. Australian universities, if they are to compete globally, cannot ignore or stifle a significant portion of their workforce. Women also have to be proactive and ensure that they are in a position to seize the opportunity, to press universities to raise, recognise and reward the talents of *all* employees. In this way women will increase their power base.

We would like to be optimistic and see this as the development of a partnership with institutional "push" and individual "pull" to create a better model for the future.

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LEADERSHIP OF OLDER WOMEN WORKERS: STRATEGIES TO PREVENT THE TRIPLE JEOPARDY OF AGEISM, SEXISM AND INVISIBILITY⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

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Older women at work face a double jeopardy, the cumulative effects of ageism and sexism (Onyx,1998; Itzin & Phillipson,1995). But this double jeopardy threatens to become a triple jeopardy with older women workers being an invisible, marginal sector in the workforce, silently doing the jobs others do not want to do, for longer periods of time and for less money.

We know very little about the experiences of older women in the work-place (Hansson, DeKoekkoek, Neece and Patterson, 1997) even though they are increasing their involvement in the workplace relative to men. This is because women have not been the focus of basic and applied research. The influence of older women workers and their impact on the labour market therefore needs urgent research attention and is made more imperative by the increasing life expectancy of women. Influences on the decision by older women workers to remain in the labour force include the structure of employment opportunities for women, women's different pattern of access to superannuation, different approaches to retirement and financial planning, care-giving roles and family dependencies, and the different approach by women to career and education transition. (McGregor, Pajo & Dewe,1999).

This paper explores who will speak for older women workers; women themselves, trade unions, policy agencies, lobby groups or new constellations of women? How should older women workers take a "public voice" so they influence government directions and socio-economic policy? What messages need to be heard so that the contribution of older women at work is acknowledged and equally valued? In particular the paper discusses the position of older women working in politics at national and local levels. This paper suggests that leadership will be critical to prevent older women workers suffering from the cumulative effects of triple jeopardy.

Introduction

The notion of double jeopardy for older women at work is currently being debated by researchers. For example Onyx (1998) states that the neglect of the position of the older female worker should be addressed because evidence is mounting that older women workers experience a double jeopardy of discrimination. The consequences of this double jeopardy of ageism and sexism appear to be cumulative in their effect (Itzin & Phillipson, 1995). But we also know very little about the experiences of the older women in the work-place (Hansson, DeKoekkoek, Neece & Patterson, 1997) even though they are increasing their involvement in the workplace relative to men. Older women at work have not been the focus of basic and/or applied research and there is now an urgent need to plug the gap of knowledge about the challenges older female workers face. Influences on the decision by older women workers to remain in the labour force include the structure of employment opportunities for women, women's different pattern of access to superannuation, and different approaches to retirement and financial planning, care-giving roles and family dependencies, and the different approach by women to career and education transition (McGregor, Pajo & Dewe, 1999).

This paper raises the issue of a third threat to older women workers that of invisibility. If older women workers are a largely unseen, marginal sector in the workforce silently doing the jobs others do not want to do, for longer periods of time because of their increased life expectancy and lesser financial security, and for less money, they will suffer a triple jeopardy. This triple jeopardy is that of ageism, sexism and invisibility. Again these three are likely to have a cumulative effect.

This paper explores who will speak for older women workers; women themselves, trade unions, policy agencies, lobby groups or new constellations of women and examines in particular women at work in politics. How should older women workers take a "public voice" so they influence government directions and socio-economic policy? What messages need to be heard so that the contribution of older women at work is acknowledged and equally valued? This paper suggests that leadership will be critical to prevent older women workers suffering from the cumulative effects of triple jeopardy. Finally a number of explicit strategies are suggested for older women at work generally and in politics in particular.

Profile of older women workers in New Zealand

Many features of women's labour force participation in New Zealand are common to those experienced in similar developed countries such as Australia, United States and Great Britain. For example in modern times women have entered the labour force in increasing numbers and there is a gender-based labour market with women far more likely to be found in clerical and service related occupations than men. The occupations where women are predominantly clustered are characterised by low pay. Even when women are represented in the top earning occupations there is a gender pay gap between these women and men at the same level. The gender pay gap is matched by a gender wealth gap. In both Australia and New Zealand, average women's wealth amounts to only 85% of average men's wealth (Women's Economic Status, 1999 - "Equal Worth" - Final Report). Labour force participation and associated superannuation accumulation are likely to be key influences in wealth differences. The disparity in wealth between the sexes will be a significant determinant in how long women stay at work before retiring. Table 1 sets out the top six occupations of women and gives the percentage of females in each of those occupations.

Table 1: Gender Distribution in Top Six Occupations of Women¹

Occupation Minor Group	Rank	Percent Female
Shop Assistant	1	66.3
Clerk (General)	2	84.0
Secretary-Typist	3	97.5
General Nurse	4	95.0
Cleaner	5	74.8
Public Primary Teacher	6	83.7

¹ Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1996

Table 2 clearly shows that women are under-represented in the top six highest earning occupations. The disparity in representation becomes even more pronounced when only those in the highest income bracket for those occupations are considered. The gendered basis of the labour market and income differentials between men and women in similar occupations are likely to impact on the decision to remain in the workforce, particularly as women have been traditionally less able to save for retirement. Patrickson and Hartmann (1996) have shown in the Australian context where age retirement barriers have also been lifted that Australian women similarly are planning not to retire in order to improve their retirement income.

Table 2: Gender Distribution in the Top Six Highest Earning Occupations¹

Occupation Minor Group	Rank	Percent Female	
		All Income Brackets	Top Income Bracket \$50,000+
General Manager and/or Managing Director	1	21.2	11.4
Administration, Accounting and/or Personnel	2	43.6	19.4
Sales Manager	3	26.6	15.5
Dairy Farmer	4	34.8	33.0
Accountant	5	38.8	20.0
Barrister, Solicitor and/or Lawyer	6	29.0	17.3

¹ Source: New Zealand Census of Population and Dwellings, 1996

The separate, gender-based labour market in New Zealand and the gender pay gap have policy implications for the ageing of the workforce. Women are likely to have to, and want to, work longer in particular occupations which are currently “female-typed”, such as shop assistants, clerks, typists, nurses, cleaners and teachers, the top six occupations of women.

The most marked differences between men and women in labour force participation occurs in the 25-34 year age bracket, and from the age of 60 onwards. The former are child bearing ages although the participation rates by sex have become more similar in the last ten years. The gender disparity among those over 60 is changing and appears to be indexed to the availability of state-provided pensions on the grounds of age. Participation in the labour force by those aged 55 or older has generally increased since 1986. The increase was most pronounced for women aged between 55 and 59 years. Their participation rate rose from 45 per cent in 1991 to 56.4 per cent in 1996 (Future Focus, 1999). Between 1986 and 1996, women aged 60 and over experienced the fastest growth in labour force participation of all women in New Zealand (New Zealand Now-Women, 1999). This rise in participation is probably an outcome of the government’s decision to raise the age of eligibility for superannuation to 65 years from 60 years. Women are now more likely than in the past to remain in the labour force to a later age and the decision to exit the work force is closely tied to their level of financial independence and support.

While there are similarities between the position of older women at work in New Zealand and other countries there are some differences, too, born of our smallness and the rapid nature of economic deregulation in New Zealand. For example, the speed of deregulation in New Zealand saw employment decline by nearly 100,000 between 1986 and 1991, but women accounted for only 3,753 (3.8%) of this loss (New Zealand Now- Women, 1999). Callister (1998) suggests there was very strong employment growth between 1991 and 1996 but because of strong population growth there were still slightly less jobs per head in 1996 than 1986.

Ironically, because women were located in the service sector, business and financial services and community areas they were less affected by the economic restructuring and downturn that characterised the late 1980s and early 1990s. Women’s employment circumstances meant, for example, that they were less represented in middle management, an area of considerable employment loss, as companies flattened hierarchical structures (McGregor, Thomson & Dewe, 1994). Women’s more marginal status as part-time workers meant they were often not the ones affected by full time job loss with the number employed full time dropping 4.5 percent between 1986 and 1991, compared with a decline of 12.7 percent among men (New Zealand Now-Women, 1999). Many other factors such as technology, changing consumer demand and government policy impact on labour demand of course but there is increasing evidence in industrialised countries of a shift towards occupations requiring higher levels of “skill” (Reich, 1992).

Leadership issues and age

There has been very little scrutiny of what leadership structures, processes and qualities older workers must exhibit and exploit to combat ageism. The issue is likely to gain attention, though, as older people become demographically significant as a potential political lobby force and as socio-economic policy intersects with age issues such as sustainability ratios (the proportion of people working to the number of those not working), health care, social services, employment and so on. For older women workers, though, the question of who speaks for them, how their voice is heard in the workplace and outside is a critical challenge. This paper looks at issues of representation, legitimation and profile and uses older women in politics as one perspective from which to look at the concept of triple jeopardy of older female workers.

Political context

In general there is no defined political representation in New Zealand for older people. There is no dedicated ministry, no specific Cabinet voice and no explicit political structure which constitutes a lobby for age. Perhaps the nearest recognition in terms of policy agencies is the Senior Citizens Unit within the Social Policy Agency of the Department for Social Welfare. Informally, of course a number of groupings such as Grey Power, Age Concern, and the Mature Employment Support Association among others, influence policy, politicians and publicise issues of concern.

The weakness of the political structures dedicated to older people is mirrored by the statutory provisions that relate to age, particularly age and employment, which can generally be defined as defensive. The Human Rights Act 1993 added age to the prohibited grounds of discrimination making it illegal to deny a job, refuse promotion or dismiss someone on the grounds of age (between 16 years and the entitlement age for national superannuation). The upper age boundary was removed this year. Government employees have been effectively exempt from protection under the Act until January 2000 and now an amendment to the legislation has increased the exemption until January 1, 2001. Government policy is that compulsory retirement ages in employment contracts should not be enforced, but nonetheless statutory expression symbolises the weak political position of older people in general in New Zealand society.

Electoral system and female representation

The comparatively new electoral system of proportional representation offers advantages for better organised, and more effective politicising by both women and older people. As more women enter politics and make national and local political representation a career choice, they will have to confront the issues of ageism, sexism and marginalisation that goes with these two other "isms". Older voters are regarded in popular commentary to be critical to the balance of power in close electoral contests where smaller parties can dictate the terms of coalition partnerships, but there is little specific research that identifies the extent of the influence of age in contemporary New Zealand politics.

It is clear that proportional representation in New Zealand as in other countries has seen increased numbers of women enter politics. In 1996 women's representation in the National Party's caucus rose to a record level with 8, comprising 18.2 % of National's MPs including the first Maori woman MP, Georgina Te Heu Heu, later to become the Minister of Women's Affairs. The smaller parties exceeded this representation, with three of these (New Zealand First, the Alliance and ACT) having 14 women MPs or 36.8% (Levine & Roberts, 1997). In fact the Alliance had a majority of women in the caucus after the 1996 general election.

New Zealand is now ranked sixth in the world in terms of female representation in Parliament with 29.2% compared with Australia's 15.5% women (Alexander, 1997). All indications are of a new breed of career woman, the long term female politician, which will lead to a growing number of older women in Parliament. While it is true, as Still and Timms (1997) suggest, that the careers of older women *per se* have not attracted attention the careers of older women in politics has received even less research interest to date.

Feminisation is not confined to national politics and has occurred, too, at the local government level. Drage (1999) states that in the 1998 Local Government elections in New Zealand 29% of city, district and regional councillors were women. The proportion of women elected to community boards increased to 35 %, a 2% increase on the 1995 figures. The number of women mayors also increased with 19 (26%) elected, an increase of 4 since the 1995 elections. Overall female representation went to 31% continuing the pattern established over the last two decades of a 2 to 3 % increase each election.

More women now work in local and national government as elected representatives. Does this mean, however, that as they age, they will provide leadership as high profile role models for other older workers? Will they be taken seriously, influence societal attitudes and drive policy platforms on behalf of older women? Two nationally known older female politicians have recently publicly talked of their difficulties as older political women providing some support for the view that even elite older females face systemic barriers at work.

Older women in politics

Older women in politics face a particular challenge even in a country where female political representation is increasing and two of the major political parties are led by women aged 47 and 49 respectively. One national politician over 50 plus, Dianne Yates, a Labour list Member of Parliament, says she believes she is regarded as “on the way out, not on the way up” because of her age. As an older woman in the House she suffers patronising attitudes from male colleagues in terms of parliamentary processes and sexist attitudes from the news media. She offers anecdotal examples to support both contentions (Personal interview, 1999). After attendance at an accountancy function to discuss political responses to superannuation at which she was the only female representing major political parties she was told by a younger male participant that she “did very well”. The obvious and public display of surprise at her competence despite being an older woman, was not lost on her and she says such patronising attitudes also exist within her own political party.

Ms Yates said the news media take no notice of her as an older female politician who is “presumably less photogenic and less newsworthy because I’m not part of the newer breed of baby-boomer, brat-pack politician”. When she does attract publicity it is in the context of feature stories about older women in Parliament accused by the news media of having “paint stripper voices” while similarly aged men who are equally as vocal, but not as sensible, are regarded as “powerful”. Di Yates believes that women in politics aged between 40 and 65 years face a particular dilemma, that of gaining respect as middle aged to older political representatives. “Either we make a conscious effort to look younger and therefore more attractive or we move quickly to crone status and start greying our hair and being taken seriously for our wisdom. There appears to be little in between point.”

Ms Yates sees the issue of older female politicians as caught up in societal attitudes. But she sees cross-party caucusing by women in politics on particular points of principle as one effective strategy by which older women in politics can make their voices heard. This would require effective female networking regardless of party affiliation. In the past when this has been co-ordinated by the Minister of Women’s Affairs, symbolising the top women’s representative, female cross party caucusing has been successful, she says.

The second older female politician, former Hamilton mayor, Margaret Evans, spoke out on her retirement after nine years at the top of a leading New Zealand local body. She spoke of the “growing ugly bug in politics”-the physical abuse women can be subjected to while in office, anonymous phone calls, attempts at character assassination, and suggests that this is one reason why quality women do not put themselves forward (Evans, 1999).

The status of older female politicians needs to be put into the context of work in general. At one level despite the difficulties older women working in Parliament and local bodies face they are elite women, paid comparatively well for their endeavours. Larger numbers of older working women face life in the margins of unskilled, poorly paid jobs buffeted by labour market volatility and the question of how these older women at work organise themselves is problematic.

Older women workers and trade unions

Older women workers have not necessarily been well served by the de-regulation of the labour market with the introduction of the Employment Contracts Act, 1991. On the one hand de-regulation provided more flexible work patterns with increasing part time, short term contracts and self employment options. On the other, de-regulation saw a swift dis-location in the employment relationship between employers and employees away from collectivity to individualism. The de-regulation of the labour market saw at least one predominantly female union representing clerical workers cease operation altogether. A recent survey of trade union membership (Crawford, Harbridge & Hince, 1997) shows that between May 1991 and December 1997 trade union membership fell from 603,118 members to 327,800, a loss of 275,318 members. Trade union density, a measure of the numbers of union members as a proportion of the total employed workforce, fell from 41.5% to 19.2% over the same period (Crawford et al, 1997). While this data is not disaggregated on the grounds of age and gender there is some evidence that contingent workers, such as part-time female workers in unskilled occupations are less likely to be unionised. The casualisation of work means groups such as older women workers are more vulnerable to the swings of labour market demand, to negative employers attitudes where these exist and societal stereotyping. The vulnerability of older women workers suggests an urgent need for research, debate and commentary about the policy implications and desired leadership strategies. The following four strategies are offered in the spirit of stimulating such debate.

Leadership strategies for older women workers

1. Networking

The deregulation of the labour market and the process of de-industrialisation, which in New Zealand has been swifter than other OECD countries, has meant that older forms or organised labour have fallen apart or are in the process of reconfiguration. Unless trade unionism rises again older women workers are increasingly isolated in terms of workplace organisation and bargaining. Clearly one strategy to help minimise workplace isolation and marginalisation in the workplace will be women's networking. A recent example of the power of women's socialisation and energy in the workplace where there was a community of interest, focus and some leadership has been the astonishing success of the self-employed women's network in New Zealand, WISE-Women into Self Employment, which connected 12,000 self-employed women. Technology such as the Internet provides new opportunity for electronic socialisation and networking for older professional women wishing to share experiences and overcome isolation in the workplace. Technologically driven networking, though, has less application where older women workers are casualised, in unskilled jobs and where there is limited access to work-based technology such as email and the Internet. In the political arena, networking such as cross party caucusing by women whereby all women in Parliament meet outside the reach of the party whips, has appeal for older women who have common interests and wish to talk together to politicise them.

2. Older women as role models

Media sexism has been well chronicled but as the population gets older so too will the demographics of consumerism. The advertising industry, that assiduous driver of material consumption, will have to search for older role models and abandon its youth obsession in the next twenty years as the percentage of 65 years and older moves into 20% of total population (Statistics New Zealand, 1999). Older women workers will be both the target audience and role models for older people as they stay longer in the workforce. They will be the target of advertising because many will still be earning; because female longevity and the fact that older women are likely to retain control of their household budgets. The choice of older women as spokeswomen by the media and their articulation of attitudes and principles will say much about how society values older women in society. The media will need to be monitored by women's groups and the age lobby to ensure that older women do not suffer triple jeopardy of invisibility in terms of advertising depiction and media representation.

3. Converting community leadership skills

By almost every index, social and economic, women are disproportionately responsible for unpaid work. In 1996 the types of unpaid work undertaken by women included caring for children, household work, teaching and community fundraising. In all these categories women had higher participation rates and nearly matched male involvement in unpaid administration and policy work as well (New Zealand Now-Women). This unpaid work is characterised by skill development in a number of soft-skill areas that are currently featuring as essential in the management education literature. Skills such as communication, negotiation, inter-personal skills, budgeting, co-operative management, consensus formation are now regarded as more than life skills but essential to modern business and the smooth running of the public and community sectors. Women, however, have tended to underestimate the level to which these skills that they possess, usually in abundance, are cross-creditable to paid employment. This under-valuing stems from lack of confidence and lower self esteem and again reflects the lack of profile achieved for women's unpaid community work. This work is increasing and not decreasing as governments deliberately shed responsibility for social services in response to *laissez faire* economic policies. There is a clear need for training programmes for older women workers that explicitly address the concept of cross-crediting skills from unpaid to paid work.

4. Taking a public voice

The issue of women and profile is a vexed one but with increasing sophistication in media management, lobbying and policy development within the political process older women cannot afford to be on the sideline. They must seek opportunities to enter public debate and equip themselves to confidently take a public voice. This means a proactive view on developing verbal communication and listening skills and understanding the appropriate forms of communication for particular audiences. For women who want to be career politicians they will need to pick their targets and be persuasive in terms of public opinion and media appeal. Older women at work generally will need to utilise business and professional forums so that their interests are not marginalised. The taking of a public voice includes understanding and utilising the power of representation of women by women at all levels and developing the requisite lobbying and negotiation skills. Taking a public voice may be the hardest of the challenges older women workers will face. It will mean confronting a female inner devil, that of self promotion. When older women at work acknowledge the legitimacy of their profile, though, they will have challenged the third of the three jeopardies –sexism, ageism, and invisibility.

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SHARING RURAL WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON THEIR SMALL BUSINESS SUCCESS⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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During 1998, a collaborative research team from the Faculty of Business at Edith Cowan University conducted a study of small and medium enterprises in the wheatbelt of Western Australia to gain an insight into what makes a regional business successful. Successful businesses were identified by the Wheatbelt Development Commission, a number of which were owned or co-owned by women.

This paper focuses on these successful businesswomen, discussing their business stories, their frustrations and their triumphs. The paper aims to identify common factors that assist as well as hinder rural small business development. In addition, it identifies the contributions that some businesswomen make to their communities in the Western Australian Wheatbelt and those women's perspectives on success in regional communities. This paper contributes to providing a greater appreciation of the unique work achieved by businesswomen to regional development. The women in this study did not appear to consider their work extraordinary but the challenges they face and the successes they enjoy have wide social and regional ramifications.

Background to the study

Rural Australia and 'the bush' have been central to the invention of the national identity. The image of 'the bush' had a certain romance that the suburban reality did not engender, so although Australia has always been highly urbanised, the rural idyll has been a persistent influence for all Australians. However, it has been documented (ABS 2.43, 1961; ABS 2.89.5, 1971; ABS 2405.0, 1981; ABS 2730.5, 1991; ABS 2015.5, 1996) that there is a depopulation trend in rural regions causing a tenuous economic situation for many farmers and the stultification of some communities in the Western Australian wheatbelt (Haslam McKenzie, 1998). The future has looked somewhat bleak for many rural communities in terms of sustainability and growth, given the agricultural downturn and the traditional reliance of rural towns on agriculture as the primary industry. The Federal and State governments have pursued an economic rationalist policy (Sorensen, 1994), causing many services to be either withdrawn or centralised to larger regional centres. This has resulted in some towns to decline while others have increased in population and therefore business opportunities. The media regularly focuses on marginal returns for farmers, the shrinking population in some communities and limited diversity in rural regions.

The researchers for this paper have worked with the Wheatbelt Development Commission, a State government body located in the Western Australian Wheatbelt, whose purpose it is to promote the balanced economic and social development of the region. The Wheatbelt Development Commission has been concerned that the persistent negative images of a depressed rural economy and locale would hinder future business development in the region.

Research has shown that some towns in regional Australia have developed small businesses not necessarily related to farming and have experienced growth or at least remained static in terms of growth (Tonts & Jones, 1996; Tonts, 1996). These findings support research undertaken in the mid-West of the United States of America in the early 1990s (O'Brien, Hassinger, Brown, & Pinkerton, 1991). That research showed that the presence of women in community and business leadership positions is associated with community viability. In 1997, the Rural Women's Unit at the Federal

Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry commissioned *The Missed Opportunities Report*, part of the National Action Plan for Women in Agriculture and Resource Management. The Rural Women's Unit has worked hard through the to show senior policy makers that rural women are not, as Margaret Alston (1997) describes, 'the other'. The report highlighted the considerable contribution Australian rural women make to their industries and communities and their potential to offer diversity and vigour to a depressed economic and social environment.

Aims of this paper

This paper aims to identify common factors that assist as well as hinder rural small business development. In addition, it identifies the contributions that some businesswomen make to their communities in the Western Australian Wheatbelt and those women's perspective on success in regional communities. Women bring to rural businesses a perspective that is meaningful but not easily measured and therefore not always appreciated in terms of community viability.

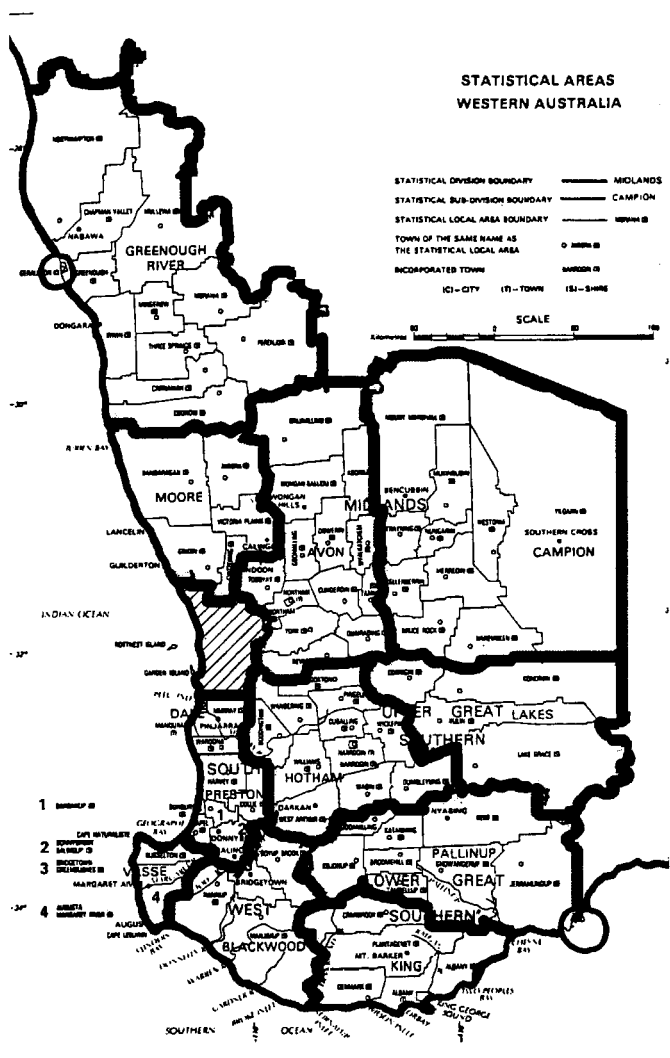
It also addresses the importance of the small and medium enterprises to the viability and sustainability of rural communities particularly in the central Wheatbelt. It should be noted that viability and survival are not synonymous. The term viable reflects a concern with identifying the extent to which rural communities continue to function as trade and service centres. As identified by O'Brien et. al. (1991), many rural places survive as places of residence even after they lose their viability as business and service centres. While social capital may be depleted there remains a strong 'sense of place' and commitment to the environment. To this end, the issues of social capital and sense of place were also explored.

Method

As part of ongoing research highlighting the elements of success in business in rural areas, a collaborative research team from the Faculty of Business and Public Management at Edith Cowan University conducted a study of small and medium enterprises in the wheatbelt of Western Australia in 1998. A case study approach using qualitative methods was adopted for this project. The purpose of the study was to gain an insight into the elements that make a regional business successful, and the perceptions of successful business owners in the regions about their locality and business. The Wheatbelt Development Commission identified a number of businesses as being successful small businesses, whose goal it was to continue in business at that location. These businesses had been in operation longer than five years and were deemed successful by the Wheatbelt Development Commission because they were financially viable and achieved the goals of their proprietors.

A number of the businesses (five) were owned or co-owned by women. The businesses were an engineering service, a livestock breeder, a commercial potter, an aquaculturalist and a craft co-operative manager/owner. The Wheatbelt Development Commission also suggested that the community development officer in one of the shires be interviewed for her ability to work with the community organizations and businesses in the town, some of which had unique characteristics which have the potential to divide rather than enhance the town's prospects. The six women were located in a number of different Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) statistical divisions as shown on Map 1. The livestock breeder, aquaculturalist and the potter are located in Moore, the engineering service and the craft co-operative manager/owner are both located in Hotham and the community development officer is located in Avon.

Map 1. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) statistical divisions



(Map adapted from ABS cat. 2015.5, 1996).

The women interviewed in this study owned or co-owned their businesses and their time commitment ranged from part-time owner/employee to a business manager with eight employees. The approach used in data collection was to conduct 1-1/2 hour in-depth interviews with each owner. The interviews were recorded then transcribed. At least two of the authors participated in all the interviews. This was found to be a productive format, allowing at least two of the researchers to participate in the interviews and all three researchers reviewed the transcripts. After each interview, the researchers held a debriefing session to crystallise concepts. As this research was of an exploratory nature, there was no initial hypothesis being tested. Respondents were initially asked to discuss their own experiences in developing their business. Further direction of the interviews was guided by Day and Wensley's (1988) competitive advantage framework (see Ryan et. al., 1998).

Background to case studies

The raison d'être for each of the businesses varied widely. The craft co-operative owner/manager developed the business idea from a recreational interest in stained glass, after moving to the town with her partner, a tradesman. After developing the idea of a gallery co-operative, she sought other artists who were not able to commit themselves to full time commercial exposure. She chose carefully and three other artisans whose work she considered to be of a high standard and to complement stained glass, were invited to exhibit and assist in the gallery. The gallery owner believes the business is

successful because the artisans involved are committed to quality and service that focuses on communication and constant feedback to the client. The gallery is located in the centre of town.

The aquaculturalist lives on a large broadacre farm with her family. This woman had a role in the running of the farm but wished to value-add on-farm. She decided to farm freshwater crustaceans (yabbies) in the farm dams. She initially crafted her own traps at minimal cost and stocked her dams from friends excess stock. Most of her produce is for the export market and she sells all that she produces. She is now looking to co-ordinate a number of local producers to fulfill market requirements but will choose her suppliers carefully, based upon her standards of a quality product and vigilant presentation.

The livestock breeder lives on a farm inherited by her husband. The farm has produced beef cattle for at least two generations, however due to poor returns there was a need to diversify. She experimented with cross breeding to enhance the gene pool and change blood lines and the feed requirements for stock. This strategy improved the returns immediately, and eventually she decided that there was potential in Western Australia to develop a stud in the introduced breed in order that other beef producers could reap similar benefits by cross breeding their herd. She has established a feedlot and turns off heavier cross-bred calves, earlier than other breeds, which need no supplements, even during the summer. The livestock breeder is committed to pursuing new export markets on behalf of her progeny clients.

The location of the manufacturing/engineering service in a town in the Hotham statistical division was a strategic decision determined partly by strict licensing rules laid down by the trade and partly because the locality was viewed as being well placed for their type of business. All of their competitors reside in the city even though much of the business is located in regional areas. This woman has a very clear view of the business goals, which focus on superior service and quality tradesmanship. Their business is committed to providing convenience and the couple has built facilities to accommodate out of town clients. This woman perceives the health of her business to be synonymous with that of her town.

The potter is married to a farmer and has a studio alongside the farm house. Like the aquaculturalist, she began her business when her youngest son went away to school. For the last ten years she has been supplying art galleries and art centres throughout Australia and has built for herself a creditable business. Apart from her creative ability, she feels she has been successful because she is a reliable supplier, maintains a consistent standard of product and provides her clients a stock control service.

The community development officer is located in one of the larger regional towns in the northern Wheatbelt. Her purpose is to help community organizations and businesses in the town develop strategies and meet their goals, to help them and their district remain viable socially and economically. However, this town is unique because the population has been divided by religious differences. About half of the population belong to the Exclusive Plymouth Brethren, a fundamental Christian organisation. The role that the community development officer has carved for herself has been one of mediator between the Exclusive Plymouth Brethren and the non-Brethren. She has liaised between the Brethren and non-Brethren communities and made each understand the other's issues. She feels there is now greater respect and compromise between the two groups and as a consequence there is an enhanced sense of community with mutual benefits.

Results and outcomes

This section discusses the main themes that emerged from the interviews. Each of the interviewees identified similar themes regarding their motivation for developing their businesses, their goals, their business principles as well as common barriers to the development of their businesses. An overarching theme was the women's 'sense of place' through their family and community.

A sense of place

Central to each of the interviewees was their sense of 'place'. Reviewing the transcripts highlighted various facets of the location factor. In view of the emphasis on sense of place expressed by the businesswomen, it is interesting that they felt that many of the barriers they faced could be attributed

to the lack of sense of place felt by the local government bureaucracy. McDowell [McDowell, 1997 #228], a feminist geographer interested in the everyday realities of gendered organisational cultures argues that one must pay attention not only to what happens, and how and why it happens, but where it happens. It is her insistence that "place makes a difference" (p.5). The literature in other disciplines such as environmental psychology, human geography and anthropology refers to sense of attachment to a locality in terms of 'place' or 'sense of place'. The following definition explains dimensions of 'place'.

Places are fusions of human and natural order and are the significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world. They are defined less by unique locations, landscape, and communities than by focusing of experiences and intentions onto particular settings. Places are not abstractions or concepts, but are directly experienced phenomena of the lived-world and hence are full with meaning, with real objects, and with ongoing activities. They are important sources of individual and communal identity, and are often profound centres of human existence to which people have deep emotional and psychological ties. (Relph, 1976: 141)

This definition refers to place as an emotional, social experience. This view also reflects the definition in terms of people's interaction with the place and each other in the area (Moore, 1997). For McDowell [McDowell, 1997 #228], the physical environment is "not only ... a container for the social practices and everyday interactions in workplaces ... but also ... an active influence on these behaviours" (p.12).

After completing the interviews, the authors were all of the opinion that the major factor evident throughout was the focus on the community and each owner's experience with the place. Their experience of place impacted on the owner's strategy or business decisions. There were numerous examples of this in the interviews. Samples of quotes follow. It should be remembered that place is multidimensional and the dimensions mentioned here are not necessarily the most important or the only dimensions revealed in relation to place. They are used here to identify the strong link between the locality and the businesses.

The craft co-operative member/manager was particularly concerned that her town and region be appreciated for all that it has to offer, and her vision is that the co-operative will enhance the town and offer some artistic diversity. In viewing 'place' as a social experience,

"I love this town and the quality of life it has to offer my family".

Craft Co-operative Manager/Member

There was also a sense of belonging to a community. In some cases this was drawn from being a 'local'.

"We're here mainly because my husband's born and bred here...and we've been away so we could see the opportunity by being a local ..."

Engineering Service

The craft co-operative member/manager is from elsewhere but identifies with her town intensely. She has brochures in the craft gallery for visitors to have which tells them about local points of interest and the various attractions in the town.

From time to time her gallery has been able to showcase other local residents work. The gallery owner believes she has a role in the town to assist others to exhibit. She considers it particularly important that younger people in the town and district see that a diverse business can survive in rural areas.

The potter also used her business to enhance the community in which she lives. The local nursing post required a substantial amount of funding for facility upgrades, part of which had to be raised in the local community.

"I suggested to the girls at the hospital that we have a Christmas Sale (at the pottery) and I give them a percentage of all the purchases. I made available all the rejects and seconds and we made a couple of thousand dollars in one morning, and it has just gone from strength to strength. We have done it a couple of years now, and our pottery sales funds certainly helped. The nursing post is now up and running."

The physical or functional dimension of Place is seen in the following statements, where the cost advantages of the country obviously impact on the productivity of the business.

"..our overheads are so much cheaper than what they'd be in Perth. We would need to produce an extra [withheld] a year to break even to where we are now if we were in Perth."

(Manufacturing/Engineering Company)

The advantages of conducting business in this town are quality of life; they're predominately agricultural support industries so they are on the door step of their clients; cheap land and lower rates than the city. ...It is a safe for your business, it is not going to get broken into.

(The community development officer)

In terms of business strategies, there was a need to work together with the community.

"We don't want to be in competition to the local businesses because we rely on them,... Often we could do the whole job but we would be taking away from other businesses [in town], and anyway we want to be specialists in our own trade. ...if a customer comes in and doesn't want to go somewhere else to have the tyres done or something, we can bring the [other trades] people here. They don't lose the job, and that way there is less of it [business] going to Perth, because the customer is satisfied with the service."

(Manufacturing/Engineering Company)

All of the businesswomen interviewed acknowledged their role in promoting and sustaining the community. All except the aquaculturalist, whose business was the smallest and was based on value added farm production, contributed to local clubs and community activities through donations.

"..The other things we sort of do is sponsoring of local sporting groups ... – young football club, netball and donate for quiz nights and you always get hit for donations. Its just part of it."

(Manufacturing/Engineering Company)

The business women were concerned for the continuity of youth in their region. Research (Haslam McKenzie, 1998a) has shown that there are limited employment or social opportunities for young people, but girls in particular. The livestock breeder, the craft co-operative owner/manager and the manufacturing/engineering proprietor consciously made themselves available as mentees for local high school students and facilitated work experience placements in their businesses.

"I go up to the high school and talk about our business, the trade, our vision and what skills are required. We always make ourselves available for work experience. Those kids are the future of this town and I want my daughter to have work opportunities in this town when she is old enough. You must give to get back".

(Manufacturing/Engineering Company)

The potter has taught pottery at a local adult education centre and has curated local exhibitions to encourage potential talent and showcase local artists.

Each of the women interviewed had developed an identity of themselves that was enhanced by their identity within the community. This symbiotic relationship between the women and their environment fosters a sense of vigour in community life. Woolcock (Woolcock, 1998) argues that integration, i.e. intra-community ties and linkage (extra-community networks) are two forms of social capital both of which constitute economic development processes and community development.

Social capital

Lawrence (2000, p. 10) characterises social capital as consisting of productive networks, values, levels of trust, shared vision of purpose and commitment to action, all of which are a vital key to economic vitality and social prosperity. Woolcock (1998) claims that social and economic behaviour is best explained through embedded relations. Implicit in this embeddedness perspective is the idea that community members are expected to contribute to the group while also receiving benefits. This is in contrast to the rational choice view that social capital is principally a resource individuals use for their own self-interested ends (Flora, 1998). The women interviewed for this project fit the embeddedness perspective. Each had an acute sense of community and industry responsibility and viewed their businesses as having a responsibility to their social and economic environment. It was felt that living in small regional communities exerted a greater sense of corporate responsibility and co-operation, as cited by the manufacturing/engineering service, relating delivery service co-operation between local businesses.

If any business is going back and forth they'll ring people like us or if you've got something to deliver you will ring one of the businesses and say "have you got anyone or thing going down?" and we use that a lot.

Q. Do you share the costs?

A. They don't charge because it's sort of give-and-take. Everyone delivers for everybody but no one really charges because it all comes out in the wash.

Each business woman interviewed acknowledged the importance a successful business makes to their community. The women related the benefits to the community in terms of diversity, the maintenance of social infrastructure, (such as the nursing post, and work experience opportunities) and a general sense of optimism that is transferred to the community. International studies have shown (Besser, 1998) there is a link (Flora, 1998) between social capital and subsequent economic development. This was confirmed by the potter.

There is a lass trying to start up a preserves and Christmas cake business. I made pots for her mustard, in my colors, and she sold them. I am really encouraging her to go on with that. You never know what is going to come around the corner for putting in a day's work for someone else. You get the reward in the thanks you get and also probably later on. You don't know what you are going to get but you'll get it back.

And the aquaculturalist....

I am visualizing next year to set up my depot, having a workshop in September for local people to start getting them in and the Fisheries Department and [exporter] will come up and help run the workshop just to get the local interest.

Environmental issues are of particular importance to the aquaculturalist whose business is compromised by saline dams. Since developing her business, she has become more knowledgeable about optimum stock holdings in the paddocks serviced by the crustacean dams, erosion and water conservation banks. If the dams become saline due to overstocking or they become over-polluted by animal by-products, the aquaculturalist will lose her crustaceans. She has become an advocate for percipient land and water conservation practices. This has long term benefits for the land generally and water courses down stream.

The gallery owner uses the craft co-operative to promote her sense of environmental responsibility. The co-operative chose for its business logo, an endangered local species and every item displayed in the gallery has a label incorporating it, and its endangered status. The gallery owner is very concerned that unless public awareness of the endearing attributes of this animal and its precarious future is heightened, this unique animal will be lost to her community and her children's generation. She is particularly pleased when clients comment and ask about the logo and she now openly asks for donations to assist in the maintenance of the specie's native environment.

Difficulties and frustrations for the regional business women.

The women provided insights into some of the difficulties and frustrations experienced in setting up business in regional Western Australia. These were not always due to gender difference. Usually, they were general concerns to be addressed by small regional businesses.

Transport

Only the stock breeder did not cite transport services as a source of frustration for the business. The potter claimed that packaging and sending her wares safely were extremely expensive. Being based in a rural environment, she did not have the advantage of competitive courier services and could not provide her clients with a swift delivery service. Australia Post has a daily service which, if missed on the day, could mean an extra day in transit. The aquaculturalist cited similar difficulties. She had also had some trouble ensuring her live produce was picked up at the time arranged, which potentially threatened the entire shipment.

The manufacturing/engineering service was also frustrated at times not being able to provide optimum service to their clients because of limited transport service to the town. Because their business is that of a specialist, particular parts often have to be ordered from the city and there can be frustrating lag times.

The community development officer claimed that freight can be very expensive to regional towns, making food and manufacturing components expensive in comparison to city prices. She reported that businesses try to co-operate with each other.

The 'regional factor'

A number of the business women complained of an entrenched suspicion of local products and talent. The potter had difficulty selling her products to local businesses, even though she has an artistic reputation in the city and tourist centres throughout Australia. She believes it is due to a well-established 'regional inferiority complex'.

The hardest thing for me in this business is to convince the local people. That has been so hard, it is amazing, and my studio sales from here have been, overall negligible.

The potter has found that those local businesses that do stock her work, don't promote it, as a consequence there is low turnover.

The manufacturing/engineering service reported similar reticence when they opened for business and had to work hard to overcome the suspicion of regional inferiority.

They (local clients) have this mentality that only the good people are in Perth and the crap live out of Perth. So you are competing against 50% of the market that think if they are going to freight their engine here they may as well freight it to Perth. So then you gradually build your name up and let them realise that we are here, we are cheaper than Perth, we do offer a 24hour service.

Research undertaken in the Western Australian Central Wheatbelt in 1997-8 (Haslam McKenzie, 1998a) reported a similar phenomena. Even though many of the research participants in that project were having difficulty sustaining their enterprise and even their communities, there were others who

admitted to being financially secure and happy to live where they live in the regions. Nonetheless, they all tended to focus on the negative aspects of their industry and undermined their locality until they were actually asked to list its advantages.

Bureaucracy

Another frustration encountered by several of the businesses was a lack of support or understanding of regional business issues by local government employees and agencies. The manufacturing/engineering service cited a litany of bureaucratic bungles that retarded the commencement of their business and were expensive.

The Council made us pour the slab twice, because of a change of staff. They all have different rules and ideas on how you fulfill them ...at our expense. This block has been levelled three times. It's those sorts of battles that we've had because you get a change in staff, and everybody reads the books differently. "Ah no, that reads this way" and nobody will make the final decision because they are all afraid of being sued.

The craft co-operative manager/owner was also impeded in her plans for the gallery. Local government seemed pre-occupied with red tape and did not appear to want to encourage a new business in the town. She found this very disheartening. It was considered by some of the respondents that the local government problems existed because the transient government staff did not have the same 'connectedness' to the town and lacked drive to see it develop. They felt that some local government employees viewed a regional posting as something to be endured.

Discussion

Each of the women interviewed had strong purpose for developing their business, which was not necessarily based on financial rewards. Both the potter and the aquaculturalist developed their businesses after their children had gone to school and they had time to spare. Two women developed their natural talent into a business venture, (the stained glass artist and the potter), while two other women value added to their existing farm businesses. The engineering businesswoman was an equal partner with her husband in an extremely male dominated field.

In all cases, the women fulfilled a number of roles in being businesswomen; mothers, wives, farm workers, mechanics, industry innovators and marketers, which supports work undertaken by Danes (1998).

Research into the multiple work roles of women has indicated a difference between farm and non-farm women in how each related to their mix of work and household roles, particularly as farm women have to negotiate their work roles within the context of a unique rural environment (Danes, 1998, p.418).

In this context, farm women who own small businesses negotiate their small business goals and objectives in terms of their family, social, farm and personal leisure requirements. When these requirements are met, success is achieved (see Ryan and Haslam McKenzie, 2000). In addition to these multiple roles, many of the women interviewed took on community work through charity work, community committees, civic leadership, offering work experience and sharing work opportunities. All of this is characteristic of rural life and builds the social capital of a place and community.

Community identity was important to each of the businesswomen and often overrode some of the barriers encountered. For example, difficulties associated with transport costs and services were surmounted by the community working together and offering to help each other. Each of the respondents was concerned that their product be of a high standard, with particular attention paid to quality of service. They perceived their product was representative of their community and therefore a source of pride and social responsibility, not only for themselves but also for the community. Several respondents viewed quality as a strategy for long term benefits. One woman in particular regarded quality production of goods and services as a source of community pride and a means of

integrating the community. Quality production was viewed as a way of attracting other likeminded businesses and providing future opportunities in the town for others, including her family. She maintained that a positive public image would generate business advantage. Besser found similar outcomes in the Mid West of the United States, claiming "commitment to the community and providing support for the community can be considered strategies for success" (Besser, 1999, p. 27).

These women showed sound business acumen. Their businesses were chosen because they had been in operation for at least five years and had been financially viable during that time. In addition to the financial success of their business, each of the women exhibited a concern for some aspect of the future and how their business could develop and assist in sustaining their community, family, other businesses and young people for the future. Each felt that they and their business was embedded into their community and was inextricably tied to their locality or 'place'. The emotional and psychological ties to their 'place' through the business was evident, particularly during the interview process.

Conclusion

This study built on previous research on the role of women in regional areas, in particular the National Plan for Women in Agriculture and Resource Management and the Women and Small Business in Australia Report. The research contributes insight on several important issues. First, the findings provide information helpful in determining characteristics of successful small business women in regional areas and how they overcome the numerous barriers they face. Second, the study contributes an important finding relating to the emphasis on 'sense of place' articulated by these women. Third, the study offers a framework for understanding the role of women in this context through the concept of social capital. Future research on the success stories in regional business development will contribute not only to an important area of business management theory but, as is clear from the present study, to a greater appreciation of the role and contribution of business women to regional development.

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RURAL WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE: AN OUTCOME REPORT FROM A CENTENNIAL OF WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE AWARD, 1998⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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For the last five years in particular, there has been concern at Federal Government level, that there are not enough rural women actively pursuing formal positions of leadership in an industry which now, unashamedly admits, could not function nor meet the challenges being meted to it without women's participation.

There has been considerable debate why there are not more rural women in farm organisations. As a project for a *Centenary of Women's Suffrage 1998 Award*, women's participation in Western Australian agricultural peak industry organisations was investigated to ascertain whether these organisations overtly or covertly, hinder women's participation. This paper will present findings from a simple investigation of agricultural organisations' voting rights, their articles of association and the gender break-up of the leadership positions in their organisations.

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. Most academics in the area of rural social research have been determined that agricultural women's contribution be recognised and valued.

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. 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 practises and rights in agricultural peak industry organisations in Western Australia to ascertain whether there are rules, practices or traditions that prevent women from participating.

A brief history of women's suffrage in Western Australia

Western Australian women achieved suffrage in 1899, the second colony after South Australia to give women the vote, and the third group of women after New Zealand gave their women the vote earlier in that decade.

The vote was not given to Western Australian women because the men of the colony thought it the right and equitable thing to do. Instead, the 'landed gentry', the farmers and grazing families of the colony were unhappy about the decision to federate, fearing their power bases would be eroded by urban interests in Perth and Fremantle. An urban overhaul of their power was one threat but an even greater threat to those with established Swan River Colony business interests were the power brokers in Melbourne and Sydney. The 'landed gentry' feared that a federal government located on the eastern seaboard would not understand or care about Western Australia's needs and problems. Free trade between the colonies, an integral part of the federal constitution would expose Western Australia's infant industries, most of which were owned or part-owned by the established colonists who had been in the colony for several decades, to harsh competition (De Garis, 1981). The embattled old farming and grazing families were worried that the diggers on the flourishing Kalgoolie

goldfields, most of whom were 't'othersiders' would tip the vote towards a federation. Feelings ran high and for some time there was the threat of Western Australia breaking away from the rest of Australia with the boundary west of Kalgoorlie and seceding. The secessionists were keen to extend voting rights to women to shore up support against the federationists, particularly as there were few women on the goldfields. Needless to say, the secessionists were shocked and disappointed that their wives and sisters did not vote the way they expected them to, and Western Australia became a foundation state of Australia.

Women's suffrage was seen as a triumph for groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union who had been campaigning since 1893 for the women's vote. The women's movement of the time had a vision for an improved Australian society which would be based on social equity (Grimshaw, 1994). The Women's Christian Temperance Union were concerned that while policies and laws were made by men, many of whom they believed, were debauched and misguided by the influence of drink, the propriety of the colony could not be guaranteed. However, if women had the power to influence public policy through suffrage, then the future of the colony and eventually the state, could be secured.

Agricultural women's contribution in the 1990's.

One hundred years on and women's suffrage is taken for granted but a careful analysis of those organisations and institutions which do not automatically give a vote to each constituent shows that equal gender representation is unusual. Various sectors within the Federal Government are concerned that not enough women are represented on corporate and commodity boards. It is increasingly being recognised at some senior levels that women contribute a different view on issues and don't share the same values and attitudes as men. Furthermore, women are more active in industry and the public sector than they were twenty five years ago, and to not be represented is denying decision and policy makers a representative view of their constituents. 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 participating.

The Rural Women's Unit at the then Federal Department of Primary Industries and Energy has worked hard to show senior policy makers that rural women are not, as Margaret Alston describes, 'the other' through the commissioning of *The Missed Opportunities Report* in 1997. This 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)¹ data, they constitute 32% of agricultural workers;
- are at least 40% of all farm partners;
- 70 000 Australian farm women define themselves as farmers or farm managers;
- 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.

¹ 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.

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 and Lambert, 1998) estimated the current and potential contribution of women in agriculture. In 1995-96, 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 and Lambert (p. 2), the real farm income was just over \$28 billion. They calculated that women contribute 48% 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 and far from marginal.

Studies of rural women and leadership 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) that 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. Helen Board (1998) who headed up the Rural Women's Unit within the Federal Department of Primary Industry and Energy, (now transferred to the Department of Transport and Regional Services, Regional Rural Women's Unit), 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 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.² In the course of this research project and another I am undertaking on behalf of the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation (RIRDC), a research and development corporation of the Federal Department of Primary Industries and Energy, many male interviewees emphatically stated that their farming enterprise could not continue without the involvement of their female partners. With a little prompting, they conceded that their industries would be crippled without the active involvement of women. 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, local, state and federal government. In 1994, the then Federal Minister for Primary Industries 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% of women participate in government and industry boards and authorities. (These statistics have improved slightly since this time). Associate Professor Margaret Alston at the Centre for Rural Social Research Charles Sturt University has a large ARC grant to examine the constraints which prevent women achieving leadership roles in agriculture

² See K. Dempsey, (1992) *A Man's Town: Inequality Between Women and Men in Rural Australia*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne,; M. Alston, (1995) *Women on the Land: The Hidden Heart of Australia*, University of New South Wales Press, Sydney,; and J.P. Sher & K. Rowe Sher, 1994, 'Beyond the conventional wisdom: Rural development as if Australia's rural people mattered', *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, Vol. 10, # 1, University of Maine, Spring, M.A. Franklin, L.M. Short & E.K. Teather (Eds) (1994) *Country Women at the Crossroads*, University of New England Press.

industries In West Australia, it is calculated that only 1.7% of women participates in formal rural decision making roles.

An examination of agricultural peak industry organisations in Western Australia

In order to gain some insight into the way agricultural peak industry organisations function in Western Australia, as many of these organisations as possible were contacted and asked a number of questions:

- How does a producer become a member of your organisation?
- How does a producer have a vote in your organisation?
- How can a member of your organisation represent the organisation at a higher level?
- What is the gender split in your organisation?

Actually finding out who, where and what the organisations are was more difficult than anticipated. Inquiries 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 their constituent organisation groups. The research team then had to use personal contacts and industry newspapers to get contact details of agricultural organisations. To supplement those contacts, attending the Royal Agricultural Show and asking for information at the various livestock stands also helped.

An added dimension of the research was which organisations were willing to speak with the research team and which would not. A number (nine) of 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 polite 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.

Western Australian Fruit Growers Association supplied a comprehensive list of organisations. These ranged in size from large organisations such as the Perth Market Authority which markets a significant proportion of horticultural produce to the domestic market in Western Australia, to small industry interest groups such as the Carrot Association based in Wanneroo. In total, sixty eight organisations were contacted.

The smaller 'interest' group organisations

Many of the 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 other 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.

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".

Medium – large industry organisations

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. For example, the Strawberry Growers Association decreed that "any berry fruit farm or farms whether it be controlled by an individual grower, partnership or Company engaged in berry fruit production, shall, depending on the number of plants grown have the right to one or two nominated representatives eligible for full membership. Growers with less than 10 000 plants may have one representative only. Growers with over 10 000 plants may have one or two representatives".

Into this group fall a number of grower co-operatives, for example, the Gascoyne River Co-operative Limited and the Broome Grower's Association. 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 there are several instances where the second generation of an extended family enterprise will take out a separate shareholding in order that they can secure their own vote. When the Gascoyne River Co-operative Limited was asked whether it might offer some diversity and variation in decision making to give married couples two votes, the response was, "Its not a problem. We have some really strong women in our industry, many run the plantations, and if they wanted it, they would get a vote".

Most of these 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 from either of the nominated office bearers who were usually male, (79% of office bearers were male) invariably either their wife or 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. Boss/husband can't do it because he is out and about, in the sheds, or paddocks."

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."

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 of those 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.

There was an interesting response when both the Grain Pool and Co-operative Bulk Handling were interviewed. Neither had ever had a woman director and the neither interviewee could foresee 'a woman putting herself up' for election. Interestingly, since that interview in mid 1998, a woman farmer from Bindi Bindi has stood for selection to the board of Co-operative Bulk Handling. Despite the Australian Wheat Board overtly celebrating the leadership of several women on their board and the senior roles of several other women marketing the commodity around the world, neither of these two important grain authorities in this State were concerned that women were not active players in their organisations. Co-operative Bulk Handling registration for membership is by delivery of a certain amount of grain, and shares are distributed to each grower. A registered grower may have one vote, irrespective of the number of growers in the enterprise. Similarly, Grace (1997, p. 47) noted in her research that producer organisations attach a single vote to each farm enterprise. While it may be true that when the farm is in joint names, any person who is partner may exercise the vote on behalf of

the farm, but 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 executive officer of a horticultural grower's association however was very 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 quite 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.

Large agricultural peak industry organisations

In Western Australia, there are two large peak industry organisations, the Western Australian Farmers Federation (WAFF) and the Progressive Growers Association (PGA), previously known as the Pastoralists and Graziers Association. 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 affiliate members from a range of diverse agricultural industries such as poultry farmers and shearing contractors. The PGA 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 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. 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.

Both organisations are dedicated to lobbying government but because they vigorously oppose each other, ministers, government departments and statutory authorities are able to play one group against the other, and direct policy with some disregard of the two peak agricultural industry organisations because there is not solidarity. Both bodies are constituent organisations of several of the same national organisations. For example, both groups are members of the National Farmers' Federation, (NFF).

Voting entitlements at PGA are dependent upon subscription. There are six membership options. Larger producers willing to pay a \$2 000 membership are entitled to 10 votes, while the smaller producer at the other end of the scale will pay \$400 but will still be entitled to two votes. The medium – large farm enterprise may choose to pay \$800, \$1200 or \$1 600 for four, six or eight votes respectively. 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 the primary production. An example would be a farm adviser, stock and station agent or an interested academic.

The WAFF membership scale is considerably flatter; a large scale farm enterprise is entitled to three memberships at a cost of \$855, an average farm enterprise may have two votes for \$573 while a small

scale farm enterprise may purchase one membership and therefore one vote for \$342. Interestingly, an 'associate member' of WAFF is defined as someone 'not part of a farm operation (i.e. off-farm family members / allied businesses)'. 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.

Elix and Lambert's (1998) research has confirmed that women dominate in the off-farm income statistics even though they may still actively participate in on-farm activities. Furthermore 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.

The WAFF membership rules for associate members differentiate off-farm family members. It is the decision of the individual farm enterprises how the active farmers define themselves and their on-farm contribution, but given the research, it would appear unlikely in most cases that women who have off-farm work will also identify their on-farm contribution as being of equal value to others in the enterprise. Furthermore, tradition and the status quo continue to dictate the decision making practises of most farm enterprises, so it is highly unlikely that while the WAFF voting rules remain as they are, that there is likely to be any change in the numbers of women achieving policy making status. The scales are tipped firmly in the direction of men

The structure of the peak agricultural industry organisations

WAFF structure has four levels, the highest being the General Executive which acts in a similar way to a Board of Directors. The structure of WAFF itself and who has rights to which level of decision making is extremely complex. Employees of the organisation had difficulty explaining it and some were not sure of who had rights at which level. It would appear however that it is hierarchical and decision making flows vertically rather than horizontally.

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 now 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.

The PGA structure is considerably simpler with every member being able to nominate him or herself to any 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 subcommittees. The PGA is less bureaucratic in structure and boasts that every member has direct access to the president of the organisation on any issue.

Women in leadership roles in Western Australian agricultural peak industry organisations

As of June 1998, there are four women out of seventeen delegates who are on general council in WAFF. Three are from zones, (regional committees), and one is from a commodity council, wool. Therefore, there are no women representatives on the grains, dairy or meat councils, even though there are more women actively involved in the dairy industry in Western Australia, than any other commodity. The only other woman holding a leadership role in WAFF is a dairy farmer and she is on the ten member executive of General Council, (35 delegates, including zone presidents, a delegate from Rural Youth, commodity section delegates and the General Executive). This woman holds the Economics portfolio on the General Council, and represents WAFF on the National Farmers' Federation Economics Committee.

At the same time, a woman holds one of the four executive committee positions at the PGA, (one of the two Vice Presidents). There are 18 ordinary members of Council, two of whom are women and 37 District representatives, one from each District Committee. The District representatives on the Council are the chairpersons of the District committees and the PGA admits 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 numbers 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 PGA, (comparable to a chief executive officer) is also female.

Does this comparison of the two peak agricultural industry organisations indicate that women are more likely to participate in leadership positions if female membership in the organisation is encouraged and therefore considered legitimate? Certainly women occupying six out of 59 Executive committee positions at the PGA is not a percentage to be proud of but it is considerably better than that of WAFF which claims to have a much larger constituency base.

Discussion of the issues

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.

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 manifests strong cultural beliefs and values which support 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.

From research (Haslam McKenzie, 1997; Haslam McKenzie, 1998b) undertaken in Western Australia, 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, 1995a; Alston, 1995b) There are pockets of women who feel strongly that women should mobilise politically in order that their roles acknowledged formally. Many however, consider such activity to be

antagonistic, unwomanly and unnecessary. 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). 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 organisations have often acted as though all the significant aspects of farming are performed by males. Ghorayshi (1989) 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"(p. 587). 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.

The Missed Opportunities Report (Elix and Lambert, 1998), Grace (1997) and Haslam McKenzie, (1998b) 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'. Grace (1997) cites examples in her research of strong traditions which are male-defined and oriented. 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 in agri-political organisations. 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.

Overt competition for leadership does not sit comfortably with many women, particularly as they have limited support from either women or men. Grace (1997) 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'? (p. 47). For those women who do persist to formal leadership positions, being the 'token' woman can be uncomfortable. As noted by Salce, (1995) and Fisher and 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.

Further outcomes from this research

When this research was concluded, a public lecture was given at the Centenary of Women's Suffrage Seminar Series at the University of Western Australia, another Centenary of Women's Suffrage project undertaken by a joint universities of Western Australia Centre for Research on Women to discuss the findings. A radio interview was given outlining the main topics of interest. Regrettably, the voting rules and practices of a peak agricultural industry organisation were described as overtly discriminatory. The legal definition of the word 'overt' is intentional and direct. The researcher viewed the rules and practices of this organisation as not likely to encourage women to join or

nominate themselves for positions of power. Generally, they preserve a tradition of patriarchal decision making and encourage retired farmers to continue their voting input while younger farmers and the less traditional decision makers in the farm enterprise have marginal decision making opportunities despite the organisations claims to the contrary. Rather than describing the voting rules and practices of a peak agricultural industry organisation as overtly discriminatory, it would perhaps have been more accurate to describe them as a form of systematic discrimination.

The radio interview immediately ignited heated legal letters to the researcher and various senior staff at the University from the peak agricultural industry organisation claiming defamation. The research project and the discussion paper were at the centre of legal proceedings and were effectively silenced. The peak agricultural industry organisation communicated through their lawyers that they would use whatever funds were necessary to pursue the researcher and the university until a retraction and apology were given. The university legal advisers advised that defamation is a particularly difficult legal area to prove but nonetheless, if both parties were to defend the case, it could cost each up to \$100,000. The decision was made that the researcher had no firm evidence of intended or deliberate discrimination and it was percipient to retract 'overt discrimination'.

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 documented and realised by some, that women contribute a significant proportion of the labour and real farm income in Australia. Furthermore, the qualities increasingly being valued by successful organisations of the 1990s, documented by Sinclair (1994) are those found innate in many women. These are: 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 (p. x). It is therefore interesting that those agricultural peak industry organisations that need to be progressive in order that they continue to promote farmers (male and female, young and old) 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 constituents numbers. While women are excluded covertly, these organisations cannot take advantage of the female leadership qualities increasingly being celebrated by successful organisations worldwide.

As documented in this paper, many agricultural women do not want to be 'out front', the 'token woman' and necessarily different. It is no longer good enough to assume women do not wish to participate, or that they speak through their male partners. The onus must therefore move to the organisation's 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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WOMEN AND LEADERSHIP IN SCIENCE⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

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In order to assess the challenges women leaders in science currently face in academia, case studies of senior women in science (Associate Professor level and above) from five universities in Western Australia were conducted. The characteristics of this group of women scientists who participated in this study are discussed in the light of the attributes required to make a success of a scientific career. The study also deals with the impact of a science career on the participants' personal lives, those of their families and their relationships with other people. The barriers women in science face while making it to the top are discussed. In addition, the role of mentors, role models, networks and other support structures are explored. Strategies used by participants for balancing a scientific career with a personal life, and ways of increasing women leaders in science are also discussed.

Introduction

More women are entering the fields of science and technology today. However, the number of women in senior academic positions at university is still noticeably low. The under-representation of women in science is described as "a serious obstacle for the development of the sciences" (Loder, 1999a). Discrimination based on gender has been identified as a major factor in the lives of female scientists and exists today in Australia, although in a more subtle way (Elliott, 1997). Senior women scientists around the world are speaking out against the subtle and less overt version of the 'glass ceiling' (Finn, 1999). Despite these barriers women continue to make progress and contribute to the advancement of science.

In some universities in Australia, female undergraduate students outnumber their male counterparts in some disciplines in science, particularly the biological sciences. For example, at the University of Western Australia, total student enrolment by sex over a ten-year period (1988 – 1998) indicates that the number of women has gradually increased to almost equal males (University of Western Australia, 1998). However, at the staff level, there are few female staff in senior academic positions in these areas (University of Western Australia, 1998). This is consistent with the work of Lane (1999) who concludes that a male-dominated culture exists at universities, which prevents women achieving senior positions and equality in higher education. Furthermore a decrease in funding for research has occurred just as more women are entering scientific fields. In Australia, for example, it is still very difficult to get support for researching ideas and the opportunity to make major breakthroughs in research (Elliott, 1997).

The outcomes of interviews with ten women scientists from Western Australian universities are summarised in this paper. The women interviewed were at the level of Associate Professor and above and considered to be 'leading women scientists'. The experiences of women scientists identified in this research may be valuable in encouraging more women to pursue a career in science and to achieve their scientific goals and career aspirations.

The research approach

Case studies of leading women scientists from all five universities in Western Australia formed the basis for this study. In total, ten women at the level of Associate Professor and above were selected on the basis of their contribution to science as well as their seniority at the universities. The

participants of this study were in the age group 45 to 60. This study explored the experiences of these women in science, their needs, and factors that affect their participation at the university.

The research was conducted by interviewing each participant for approximately an hour. Each participant was asked a list of open-ended questions designed to explore the following aspects of women's leadership in science at the university:

- Attributes required to make a success of a scientific career;
- Impact of a science career on one's personal life and that of the family;
- Barriers faced in making it to the top;
- Role of mentors, role models and networks;
- Strategies for balancing a scientific career with a personal life; and
- Suggestions for increasing women leaders in science.

Results

Characteristics of leading woman scientists

The participants in this research identified several attributes that are required to become a leading woman scientist. The results indicate that several of the characteristics are similar for both men and women such as the ability to think critically, intelligence, ability to do research, capacity to generate ideas, interest in the chosen subject, strong curiosity and passion for understanding, and good communication skills. In addition, ability to lead and direct projects, success in research projects, and ability to sustain research were identified as qualities required of a leading scientist. Furthermore, determination, self-confidence, ability to focus on tasks and good organisational skills were considered as important for success in science.

Characteristics more specific to women identified from this research were:

- Women liked to interact with people and tended to be more collaborative in their approach to research;
- Women considered that the following people skills and abilities are required of leading scientist: ability to get on with people, networking skills, ability to enthuse staff and ability to inspire a team; and
- Thoroughness and persistence in seeing a project through from start to finish along with considerable amounts of patience and energy were identified.

In addition, it was interesting to note that most women interviewed had supportive partners, endeavoured to balance their career and family and placed importance on relationships. They considered the ability to juggle a number of things including work, personal relationships and family as an important attribute in achieving a successful scientific career.

Furthermore, the women scientists interviewed placed a great deal of emphasis on self-fulfillment in their careers while financial considerations were considered secondary. This finding was confirmed by the work of Nancy Hopkins, a leading developmental biologist who pointed out that even though women scientists were paid less than men of equal standing, "what is important to us is our ability to do research" (Nadis, 1999).

Barriers that women face while making it to the top

The following visible and invisible barriers which impede the advancement of women in science to senior ranks at the university were identified by the women scientists interviewed.

1. Family responsibilities

Women scientists face a number of challenges to their careers as a result of their family responsibilities. The results from this study indicate that children make a difference to the participants' scientific career and some women started their scientific career after their children reached school age. In most cases, starting their scientific career later in life was a choice they made. Other family issues identified that impacted on a woman's scientific career included, child bearing

and child rearing, child care, care for sick children, care for elderly parents, dual-career families, commuter marriages and following their spouses. These findings were consistent with the work of Sonnert and Holton (1995) who observed that 21% of the women studied indicated that family demands were an obstacle to their careers, compared with 3% of men.

2. Full-time commitment to science

Women are as serious about their careers as men and place equally high importance on their careers. However, more women are required to juggle both career and a family. The findings of this research indicate that a number of women scientists were married to scientists. The problem of finding satisfying jobs for two scientists in the same town often resulted in the women taking up less satisfying jobs. Furthermore, it was pointed out that a career in science entails making huge sacrifices particularly when women scientists worked full-time. It is almost impossible to work part-time in a scientific career and cutting back work by even 20% gives the perception to some people that women are not committed to science. This finding is consistent with the work of Rosser (1995) who found that the lifestyle associated with a scientific career is often not compatible with their way of having a marriage and family and women often leave science for this reason.

3. Lack of adequate childcare facilities

Lack of quality childcare and flexible childcare arrangements were identified as important barriers to women's advancement in a scientific career. Several women indicated that due to the lack of quality childcare facilities, their children came after the completion of a PhD degree and after securing an academic position. To some women, the comfort and security of their children were important and were a priority even over their own careers. In these cases, a decision was made to put off a full-time career till their children were of school age.

4. Stereotyping

In this study, some woman who obtained their PhD degree in the mid-1950s pointed out that male prejudice was apparent at that time and senior male staff would openly say that women should not be doing a PhD, but rather should be home doing their family duties.

Further, it was pointed out that attitudes to upbringing of children in the home act as a major barrier in the progress of girls and women in science whereas boys are encouraged and not girls to pursue a career in science. Stereotyping in this way has a detrimental effect on the way in which girls perceive their technical abilities and careers, and results in a lack of self-confidence in themselves.

5. Participation in administrative duties and lack of recognition

Most women in the higher academic ranks felt they were heavily involved in committees. This situation principally arises because of the small numbers of women in senior positions at the universities. Furthermore, a number of women felt they were being used as 'token women' for inclusion on committees, and not selected because of their expertise and skills.

Senior women in science leaders at the university observed that they participated in several time consuming tasks that gave them satisfaction but very little recognition from their male colleagues. For example, being a role model to other women involves extra tasks such as visiting schools and talking to girls. Even though this is an excellent opportunity for development of young women, male colleagues in the department do not see such tasks as important and do not appreciate the time and effort that goes into such activities.

6. Personal

The desire to do all tasks allocated and the inability to say 'no' is a personal problem identified by several women. As a result of working in a demanding career and endeavouring to take on and complete a number of tasks, women scientists pointed out that exhaustion was a common problem. In addition, women indicated that they felt uncomfortable about 'putting their hands up' for promotions or other major acknowledgements. This could be due to a lack of self-confidence or a damaged self-esteem. Lane (1999) also concludes that a deeply ingrained problem is the lack of self-confidence in young women aspiring for a career in science.

7. Male dominant culture

The areas of engineering, chemistry, physics and mathematics are still predominantly male dominated. Women are still a minority in these areas and several women indicated that they felt quite lonely, neglected and unsupported. Women working in these areas have found the attitudes of senior male academics in these areas to be quite intimidating. Furthermore, women felt quite exposed, open to ridicule and fault finding by their male counterparts. In some areas, women felt they were not taken seriously even though they might have been at the level of the head of the department.

8. Competitive nature of science

The competitive nature of science often leaves women bereft of energy, and sometimes takes away their enthusiasm and commitment to science. It was pointed out that the extreme competition over a period of time could interfere with their work and personal life. Some participants indicated that the consequences of such competition are sometimes not worth the price one pays for staying in science.

Mentors, role models and networks

Mentors, role models and networks play an important part in shaping the career paths of women in science.

Mentors

At the undergraduate level, women lecturers and honours supervisors were mentors to a number of women who participated in this study. Later as PhD students, the heads of departments and supervisors were often mentors to the participants of this research. Several women scientists indicated that they continued to have mentors even at the later stages of their careers as women valued having someone experienced to talk to or to sound off ideas in an informal way. The Leadership Development for Women programs initiated in universities were identified as a good source of obtaining mentors. Likewise shared mentoring where women mentored each other informally was identified as a good mentoring process for senior women. The best mentors, however, were acquired informally and were found to be most effective particularly when the personalities matched well. Furthermore, some women indicated that they did not have any female mentors, as there are so few women scientists who could act as mentors to them.

Mentoring programs designed to inform, promote and support women scientists are perceived as important for promoting and supporting women scientists in academia. According to Loder (1999b) mentoring is known to increase assertiveness and networking skills in those being mentored as well as increases confidence in themselves.

Role models

Today, the successes of women in science continues to inspire other women aspiring for positions in science. In this study, role models were identified as mainly their peers for some women. For others, women who were scientific achievers around the country were looked upon as role models. The qualities that women admired in other women were the ability to speak confidently, being outspoken and the ability to successfully balance both family and a scientific career. Often these women admired certain aspects of the people they worked with, but not the full person, particularly if the role model was a man.

Networks

Networks were identified as useful for collaboration with other scientists and an important means of contributing to science. Being on networks keeps women well informed on what is happening in different parts of the campus. This is particularly important for scientists in Western Australia who are isolated geographically and involvement in networks leads to access to people and information. However, in some areas of science such as engineering and mathematics networks were found to be male dominated mainly because there are so few women scientists in these areas. In addition, weekend or evening social functions aimed at networking are often out of reach of women who have family responsibilities. As a result, women miss out on networking opportunities where important information is passed around over a drink.

Impact of a scientific career on one's family and personal life

When asked what impact a scientific career had on their personal lives and that of their family, the women scientists indicated that as a result of a demanding career they had less time for their children, families and sometimes less time to enjoy life. They often took work home and worked on weekends resulting in a lack of time for themselves. One woman scientist compared academia to a 'bottomless pit' saying, "there are several tasks to be done at the university, including research, teaching and administration and one could put in any amount of effort into any of these areas".

A number of the women indicated that they had supportive partners who were also scientists and understood the need for their partners who wished to pursue a scientific career. With their support they have been able to successfully combine a scientific career with a personal life. For some the quality of the relationships formed with their partners and their families were not of the highest because they could not put in the time and effort required to effectively maintain such relationships.

Furthermore, in some cases all members of the family were happy that their mother pursued a scientific career. The positive impact of a mother's scientific career on children included:

- Increased awareness of children to scientific issues from an early age;
- Children got to know the research their mothers were involved with and were also aware of their work commitments; and
- Children often got an opportunity to accompany their mother on sabbaticals and conferences.

On the other hand, the children of some women scientists have indicated that they do not wish to pursue a career in science upon seeing the amount of time and effort their mothers divert towards their careers and the resultant sacrifices and hardships that they have had to endure.

Several women scientists regretted the cost they paid in pursuing a scientific career. Some of the regrets expressed were deferring having children or marriage until PhDs were completed or a tenured job was secured and divorce resulting from a lack of time for developing relationships. Women pointed out that their self-esteem centred around their work. This finding was echoed in the research conducted by Shepherd (1993) who pointed out that for a lot of women who have dedicated their lives exclusively to science, their sense of identity and self-esteem comes from the value of their work.

What is the best thing about your work?

The majority of the women identified that training and educating students was the most satisfying part of their work. They valued the interaction with both undergraduate and postgraduate students whom they found to be interesting and kept them 'alive, young and on their toes'.

Some women indicated that research was the next best aspect of their work as it was exciting and the thrill of making discoveries and opening up new areas of research was challenging and rewarding. Contributing to knowledge by solving problems and making a difference to their discipline area and to the community were identified as important and fulfilling in their careers.

Developmental work that involves structuring new degrees or programs was also identified as exciting aspects of their work. Collaboration with other scientists in the area was also considered to be one of the greatest pleasures of their work. Many of the women interviewed found that for successful collaboration to take place the partners who contribute need to be able to get along well with each other and work together.

Would you do it again if given the opportunity?

When asked if they would choose to be a scientist if given the opportunity again, the majority of the women indicated that they would. They indicated that they have consciously chosen to become a scientist and it did not occur by accident. A few women interviewed were certain that they would not pursue a scientific career if they had the opportunity all over again. Others were unsure about whether or not they would like to be a scientist if given the opportunity again. Instead they indicated that they would choose a profession that gave them more satisfaction and opportunity to work with people.

Ways of increasing numbers of women leaders in science

The following suggestions were provided by the women scientists interviewed in response to a direct question asking for suggestions/strategies to improve the number of women in science.

- Change negative attitudes towards girls pursuing a career in science at home, the primary and secondary school levels;
- Provide women doing honours in the department with role models and mentors;
- Establish effective mentoring systems for women staff;
- Establish women-only scholarships to encourage women to study science;
- Provide opportunities for junior women for representation on committee;
- Restructure courses and degrees to make them more attractive to women;
- Support and promote flexible working options;
- Publicise the achievements and successes of women scientists;
- Provide training for women in leadership skills to prepare them for senior positions;
- Increase networking opportunities for women; and
- Provide re-training for women who wish to return to their scientific career after a break in their career due to family responsibilities.

The women identified that these processes would be slow, but necessary to see changes to the number of women making it to the top in science at the university and to resolve this gender inequity.

Strategies for balancing work and family commitments

The following strategies were used by the women scientists interviewed to balance their work and family commitments:

- Working from home when children were young along with flexible working arrangements enabled them to care for sick children or family;
- Taking children on fieldwork, which appealed to the children, particularly camping and the outdoors;
- Prioritising tasks and being very organised at both work and at home;
- Utilising paid help to do the routine domestic so as to free up time for the family;
- Making use of good childcare facilities and after school care facilities;
- Not taking home work for the weekends;
- Balancing time between work with personal relationships;
- Remembering that success is not achieved by the amount of work one does, but rather how it is done;
- Giving priority to health and fitness;
- Having a supportive partner who appreciates your career aspirations;
- Remembering that you cannot do everything but do what you can well;
- Learning to say 'no' to extra tasks that do not give you direct benefits;
- Taking regular holidays with family;
- Taking stock of yourself regularly; and
- Being flexible and ready to take up opportunities as they arise.

Conclusions

From this study, it is evident that women scientists place a great deal of importance on self-fulfillment in a career. Financial considerations are often secondary to their interest in science and its advancement. They also consider family and relationships as important and struggle to balance work and family commitments. Therefore, universities should have in place work and family policies to assist women in balancing their career and family responsibilities. This would benefit women, men, and the university as well as science. In addition, selection and recruitment procedures at the universities should take into account women's talents and family commitments. By recognising and harnessing women's talent, universities will be able to attract and retain the best women in science.

Without appropriate strategies in place often women silently and desperately try to hold on to both worlds of science and family with unhappy consequences to themselves, their families and their work. However, if equity issues and policies are implemented properly, the contributions that women leaders in science can make to the university, to science and the world will be enormous.

The women in science who have made it to the top have struggled up the ladder against many odds. However, they have made outstanding contributions to science and education. They are proud of their achievements and talents and know they are making a difference to science and leadership.

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THE COMMUNITY MOTHERS PROGRAM – EMPOWERING COMMUNITY-BASED LEADERSHIP⁽²⁰⁰⁰⁾

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This paper reports back upon an innovative adaptation in Bentley, WA of a program developed in the UK.

Second wave feminism identified the isolation of many mothers, and lack of social recognition and support, as one of the key issues of the women's movement. Although this was often addressed in terms of securing better access to child care and nursery facilities, there was also recognition of the needs of home-based mothers to have their contribution valued. Further, where the mother is not articulated with a workplace, and where she lacks the support of an extended family, the isolation is arguably more acute.

This project aimed to recruit 'experienced' mothers in the Bentley community and train, support and empower them to partner new mothers who might be lacking access to extended family and other social support networks. Typically the program involved regular visits over the first twelve months of the mothering experience, and also included a primary-caregiving father.

Introduction

The Home Based Parent Support Project (hereafter the Community Mothers Program, CMP) is a Bentley, WA-based communication program which empowers new and second-time-but-stressed parents to take control over their family life and the health and development of their children. It concentrates primarily upon new parents in their first year of parenting. Volunteer 'Community Mothers' work in partnership with Community Child Health Nurses in supporting skill development and empowering parents in the families involved. The CMP is open to all families in the catchment area: there is no implication that a family using these services is a 'struggling' family. During the pilot phase of the CMP, seven CMP Community Child Health Nurses and 26 Community Mother volunteers visited a total of two hundred and twenty seven families, usually for 6 months – one year. Seventy-five percent of participating families were first time parents, while 25% had more than one child and were experiencing some parenting difficulties.

The program was modelled upon the Bristol Child Development Program that involved 31,000 families in the UK and Ireland and which had been extensively validated there after its introduction in the mid-1980s. However, this research (funded by the bodies and organisations credited at the end of the paper) monitored the transferability of the general program to the Australian situation and found that many of the benefits observed in the UK context were also delivered to Australian participants.

CMP is based on an empowerment philosophy which encourages reflective practice in parenting and which uses clear 'cartoons' – visual depictions of parenting situations – to communicate health messages/issues relating to babies, children, nutrition, family-life and child rearing practices. Community Child Health (CCH) nurses received seven specific training sessions over a twelve-month period, followed by regular group meetings. The training program has expanded following the successful completion of the pilot project, and operates out of the Professional and Continuation Education section of Curtin University's School of Nursing. A program trainer accompanied the CMP CCH nurses on a home visit and the overall rigour of the project (and the reliability of its close connection with the UK original) was further enhanced by four training visits by UK-based personnel

in 1995—97. These ‘external auditors’ commented upon the high quality of the visiting demonstrated by the CMP CCH nurses and the Community Mothers volunteers.

Community Mothers are experienced mothers, carefully chosen and trained, who work in a volunteer capacity in partnership with the CMP CCH nurses. The aim of the program reported upon here was for each Community Mother to visit four families, each once a month, over the first year of the new baby’s life. For established families with a new baby, the intervention was planned to be shorter – 4 to 6 months. Typically these more-established families were under stress, for example with a very active older child, where the mother was experiencing a degree of post-natal depression, or where the new baby might have been colicky or particularly demanding. Community Mothers visited the participating families at home, and used clearly defined communication strategies to assist parents to focus upon their early parenting skills, knowledge and behaviour with the intended outcome of benefiting the child’s health and development, and the mother’s self esteem. The CMP CCH nurses were closely involved with the training and support of the Community Mother volunteers.

The program was designed as an early intervention scheme that could be implemented within an existing community health structure. The partnership between the participating family and the CMP CCH nurse/Community Mother volunteer also emphasised a commitment to supporting positive mental health as demonstrated in developing parental self esteem and building the new parents’ confidence in their parenting skills and knowledge. The program aimed to build social capital – locally-based, accessible knowledge, experience and resources – along with an enhanced sense of neighbourhood and community.

Research results

The effectiveness of the CMP was evaluated in terms of established measurement tools. One of these was the ‘Early Health and Development Monitor, Mother’s Self Esteem’ which investigates feelings of tiredness, headaches, feeling miserable and not wanting to go out. Program mothers were compared with a ‘control’ group. Whereas the program mothers were Bentley based, the matched controls were drawn from the Rockingham/ Kwinana Health Service, which has a similar socio-economic profile to the Bentley Health Service (ABS 1991). However, there were some differences in the socio-educational profiles of the two groups (Miller 1998, p. 2). Comparison of 181 home based parents in the CMP scheme with 50 matched controls revealed the following:

Table 1 (Lower mark indicates higher self esteem)

Mean levels of self esteem	One month	Six months	21 months
Participating group (n = 181)	9.36	7.81	7.39
Comparison group (n = 50)	7.31	7.48	9.60
Difference re: participant group	-2.05	+0.33	+2.21

The measurement tool indicated that whereas participating mothers started the program at (baby-age) one month with lower self esteem than the control group, by the time the baby’s age was 21 months, self esteem was higher.

The Self-Scoring Coppersmith Inventory was also administered at one month and 21 months and indicated an increase in self esteem for both groups. (Differences between the results obtained by the two instruments may relate to different methods of data collection and variations in sample size.) Mothers were asked to respond to statements about ‘feelings’ in terms of ‘like me’ or ‘not like me’. A higher score indicates a rise in self-esteem, and the general adult population would usually register a score of between 70 to 80.

Mean levels of self esteem	One month	21 months
Intervention group	70.12	72.50
Comparison Group	76.50	81.60

Research into breastfeeding practices compared actual outcomes with early intentions. In the general population, within the lower socio-economic group, breastfeeding rates (fully and partially) at 6 months were recorded (1993) as 40%. This was also the rate found for the control group. The (matched) intervention group had a 50% participation rate, indicating the objective of increasing breastfeeding had been achieved. Additionally, 41% of the intervention group breastfed for longer than they had planned to, compared with 33% of the comparison group. Other project outcomes included a 100% immunisation uptake.

Qualitative perceptions of the outcomes of the CMP were solicited through focus groups and through a series of one-on-one interviews. The focus group work is reported in Miller (1998, pp. 7--13). Much of the interview phase is reported here and in Green and Miller (2001).

The interview phase

Structured one-on-one individual interviews were conducted as a counterpoint to the focus groups planned as part of the formal, grant-related, evaluation process. There were individual interviews with 10 primary care givers, including one dad, on the parents' experiences of the intervention program. (More information on the fathers' perspective is provided further into the paper.)

Thumbnail descriptions

Amanda felt that she lacked experience with babies and didn't have many friends with children. The program had been suggested to her at the Child Health Clinic.

Ben was sharing parenting leave with his partner. He had taken over as primary caregiver after the first few months, but felt he lacked access to local parenting networks.

Celeste had had lots of complications with her first child's birth – involving cardiac and respiratory collapse. Following the birth of her second child she was suffering from post-natal depression.

Iman was from Pakistan, very homesick and didn't feel that she had many contact points with her local Australian community.

Ivanka moved from Russia to marry her Italian/Australian husband. Although she felt unable to talk to her in-laws, she had a circle of other Russian friends.

Katerina was a member of the Italian community. She joined CMP with her second baby and felt that it made a difference to her parenting experience and strategies.

Lucy had already been having problems with a three-month old colicky baby when she realised she was pregnant with her second child.

Ruth had a ten-year old when she became pregnant again and felt that she needed a way to establish contact with other new mothers.

Sandra was "going through a rough time" when her youngest – the third – was born. She felt that one of her kids had particularly challenging behavioural patterns, and that she needed outside support.

Therese was a particularly young mother, suffering from post-natal depression and lacking support in her family and friendship networks.

Interview structures

The interviews were designed to investigate the structure of the CMP – timing of visits, content, length of visits, and whether the program was effective in supporting the home based parent. In particular, the program wanted to know whether the 'cartoons' – at a glance teaching/discussion aids – worked in the Australian context. Since the program drew upon a sense of community (an important motivator for the Community Mother volunteers), the perception of 'community' was also important. A number of parents had been enrolled in the CMP for a second, or subsequent, child. These interviewees were able to offer some insight into how the program had changed their experience of parenting. In particular, organisers were keen to learn what the perceived (qualitative) benefits of the program were – in addition to the (quantitative) outcomes established through the evaluation of key indicators such as breastfeeding maintenance and mothers' self esteem.

As well as the areas of interest structured into the interviews, some common themes emerged. Parents had suggestions for the future development of the program, some wanted a space to talk about feelings, and a number used the interviews to discuss their partner – and his/her degree of support. A major aim of Lelia's involvement in the program was to compare the outcomes of one-on-one interviews with the focus group evaluations which had been structured into the CMP at the design stage (Green 1999).

Interview results

The structure of the program

The program was structured to provide a monthly visit of about an hour, and the visit used a structured format including the use of 'summary forms' which offered an opportunity to anticipate the baby's development over the next few weeks, and review the changes since the previous visit. In pedagogical terms, the summary forms represented an opportunity for reflexive learning, in that it made the home based parents more aware of their parenting behaviour and their expectations of the parenting process.

The visits

Many of the parents commented on the frequency and duration of the visits, usually to say that it would have been good if they could have started as fortnightly, before reducing in frequency to the established monthly pattern. Ben, for example, commented that "One hour's long enough, but given that it's our first [child] and we're having problems, I would have liked to start fortnightly." Sandra and Therese also suggested a fortnightly start, and Therese commented that the CM "only comes once a month, not like a close friend. It did get more friendly, but the barrier never went down." In the other hand Iman, new to Australia from Pakistan, had the opposite experience "she's like my friend, so she's great."

In practice, some CM's seem to have regularly stayed longer than an hour. Ruth's view was that her CM "sometimes stayed longer than an hour, but that was because we were talking about more than the community mothers Program". Therese said that she was "happy to go over an hour – up to one and a half hours. [CM] was really relaxed: 'take your time, not everything comes to you in the first 15 minutes'." For Iman, "one hour is not enough – sometimes [CM] spent one and a half to two hours with me."

Katerina, who had initially felt "worried about somebody coming to the house – fitting it in" was concerned that the program "would have been too much if the [CM] had stayed longer." This tension over the role of the house in the life of the new mother was, on occasions, palpable. Katerina commented until her first child was a year old "I never went anywhere." The home-based visits meant that the mother could be visited where (in theory) she felt most comfortable. In some cases, however, the sense of 'being visited' was experienced as a strain. As well as being a place of safety, the home is perceived as being a place where new mothers can feel their insecurities exposed; for example, if it is not 'tidy enough'. Katerina's views about this changed over the course of the program: "Then I felt I had to get over it. I changed my attitude."

The duration of the visits was flexible within general guidelines. Mothers of second (and subsequent) babies were seen as requiring less in the way of length of support – six months, as opposed to a rule of thumb of twelve months for new mothers. Ivanka, recently arrived from Russia, commented that "Twelve months is not really long enough – I still have lots of questions to ask". She also implied that the program had a cascade value: "A friend of mine has a two month old baby and keeps calling for advice." Celeste, who had problems with post-natal depression, commented "I had six months of visiting and feel that I needed the visits more than with the first baby" implicitly comparing her allocated program duration with that of a first mother. In general, positive reactions to the program were consistent with comments about more frequent visits (especially at the beginning) and a longer duration.

The summary charts

Sandra was caring for her third child as part of the CMP, and found the summary charts really exciting. These summary charts encouraged Sandra to anticipate and prepare for social and developmental changes in her baby and older children, and activities they might enjoy. "I really liked to fill in the charts. I saw changes in them [the children] that I'd never noticed I'd noticed". Michelle found the idea of goal setting, supported by the monthly charts, "important. It made a difference and gave me something to strive for". Lucy, the interviewee with the most negative response to the program, saw the forms as a pressure. She felt "I'd better get the forms filled out [mimics] 'Did you get things filled out from last time?' I felt [as if I was a] 'naughty girl! I didn't fill my form out. Panic, panic!'" Later in the interview, however, she qualified this impression with the statement: "I really found the goal setting very useful ... have a diary, set tasks and see them crossed off."

Ruth's view was that the summary chart provided ideas for the next month which meant she would "work on those areas. I knew there'd be follow up: 'have you done your homework?' ... [CM] was always very encouraging, she helped with consistency – especially with the sleeping program". Iman also liked having 'ideas for the next month, [the CM] gave lots of suggestions'. For Therese, suffering from depression, the structured chart to fill in meant that "We both knew where and how to start. I liked that, I didn't feel responsible ... the list of things to do was a good idea, something to think about and keep at the back of my mind." For Celeste, "The goals were great! Really good! Sometimes it's hard to get past what's happening now – today."

Cartoons

These were mainly visual communication, aimed at conveying 'at a glance information'. Sandra thought that "Some of the information was useful. It was good to show to my husband. He used to read them too, but it didn't really have an effect. Back then I wasn't talking to anybody, but now I can do." They were light reading," commented Therese, "I could flick through and get the gist. They gave you an idea – they were quick to read ... and covered topics you wouldn't think of covering." Iman felt that "Most were alright, but one I didn't like. It had the mother 'doing the right thing'. Every mother tries to do her best – how can a mother do the wrong thing for her child? A mother doesn't deliberately do the wrong thing!"

Community

Celeste found her CM very helpful in this respect. "She was really good at telling me what was going on in the community, for example a post natal depression workshop." At the same time, the community can seem like a threatening place: "I'm starting to feel connected [but] it involves confidence to get out in the community." Ivanka felt that she had no real community "in terms of houses nearby ... my real community is from the phone, calling friends." Lucy, although she has some critical perspectives, considered that the "idea of 'community mothers' has given me a different sense of community" and went on to say that "the meeting triggered positives." On the other hand, Sandra didn't feel a change in the sense of community "I don't feel I know what it means, 'belonging'".

For some new mothers, their 'local community' is not the community in which they live. Katerina commented "Everybody's so busy. I've been working, so don't know people in the area. I only had work friends, no one who lived around me ... I really hope the program continues. It's about time people are more accepting, less critical. We all have the same feelings, We're all mums, we feel the same, we feel insecure, we should stop hiding behind the walls." Ruth's view was that "I do feel more part of the community" while Ben was pleased that his CM "offered things that were happening in the area ... [she would] know what's happening around the neighbourhood – toy libraries, etc." Iman joined a playgroup with the support of her CM and added that the program "cares for the mother and the newborn baby – it helps me feel part of Australia". Therese echoed this when she said of CMP that "It felt as if the community had reached out to me. I felt good."

Some of the mothers were interviewed after they had attended the focus group review of the program. This had offered them a sense of instant community: (Amanda) "The meeting was great. It would be good to get together with other mums. It would have been nice to talk more about ourselves." Therese's view was also "It would have been nice to have more contact with the other mums, like at

the focus group.” She had tried attending a playgroup earlier but “Didn’t feel comfortable; all the mothers were older than me.” Lucy felt that “The [group] meetings should be built in – everybody ‘bring a plate, if you can’ and went on to suggest that this might be part of a feedback session: “you can say then if the community mother isn’t working.”

Changed patterns of parenting

Some of the parents had previously raised a newborn without the support of the CMP. These were in a position to discuss differences that the program had made to them. Sandra was on the program partly because she was already having problems with her second child when she became pregnant with her third:

I felt one of my kids was abnormal. [The CM] made me feel what I was doing was good. She really changed my relationship [with the difficult child]. She made me feel more normal ... I was going through a really angry stage. It calmed me down. I took time out for me first, then I was able to sit down more often without getting angry ... a more relaxed mum makes for a more relaxed kid.

Sandra also commented “My sister-in-law calls me ‘super-mum’ because she can see I’m coping. That’s a real compliment. It makes such a big difference.”

Compared with her first pregnancy, Lucy “took goals on board for every day. Even if it’s trivial, I feel that something’s been done.” Whereas Katerina commented:

It gave me a lot more confidence, it made me feel so normal ... The comfort and advice was good. It gave me time out to think, to calm myself down a bit. It made me more aware of things. With [the first child] I gave him blended food, with [the second] I gave her appropriate food and she had better sleep patterns ... when she had Conjunctivitis I treated it with salt water instead of rushing to PMH [Perth’s Children’s Hospital].

Celeste found that the program was particularly useful in helping her to cope with the first child’s jealousy of the new arrival ... and that the CM “gave me ideas about how to keep [first child] occupied.” Katerina’s view was that, without the program she “would have tried to do things, but might not have followed through with ideas.”

Partners

Partners varied in their support, both of the CMP and of the primary caregiver. Ivanka felt particularly alone. “My family is in Russia. I can’t ask advice from my husband’s family ... [and] my partner doesn’t share child care. He’s always busy.” Celeste felt that her husband:

used to like the cartoons, and then he stopped. There were a few on fathers that made him comment: ‘She’s [CM] picking on me again!’ He came to a partners’ night on post natal depression. He enjoyed it, it really opened things up more ... more recently he’ll apologise for verbal criticism ... [but] it’s a constant effort to get support from my husband. It makes it harder that my mum’s in Victoria – she’s a real do-er.

Therese, also suffering from post natal depression, found that the CMP was “good for [husband]. It helped him to see that everything was normal. It was all OK. He wandered around in the background ... He’d listen. I’d ask if he had anything to ask.” For Katerina, the CMP had “made my partner more aware of the pressures of parenting and how to be more supportive”, while Iman’ commented: “I read everything. Most of the program my husband read too. He was participating. He’s very supportive, cooperative.” Ben said: “[my wife] is a list person. She used to have a list of questions for the next meeting.”

Feelings and confidence

Ivanka’s experience was that, “at the start you think everything will be perfect and you feel bad when you can’t clean and cook good meals.” She was pleased that the CM encouraged her to “emphasise

the baby.” For Ben, he was “generally more gee-ed up, more enthusiastic after speaking to someone. The gee-ing up tends to wear off after a week or two ... [but] we made more of an effort.” Ruth, raising a baby in her thirties, ten years after her first, felt “I had been patronised at 20 by people who would tell me, ‘do as I say’.” She wanted another mum to talk to, on her own wavelength. There was initially “hesitant to go out. It took so much to get [baby] into a routine. I couldn’t break it ... Then I realised that visits and outings are really important. I needed the reassurance to go out, that I can stop her kicking up a fuss.”

“The thing I liked about the program,” said Sandra, “is it made me feel normal, and that made me feel good, which meant I had a good day. The kids wouldn’t be yelled at and mum [I] would be happy ... It was easier to talk to other mums. I don’t feel I’m the only one with hard-to-handle kids.” Sandra’s words were echoed by Katerina: “Other people expect ‘you should...’ Now I can feel ‘So what! ... I’m OK there’s nothing wrong with me’.” Ruth felt that “I gained confidence with [CM] coming around and reassuring me that stuff was still relevant after 11 years ... [She was] a real morale booster.” Iman saw herself as a shy person, “especially with the baby blues” but the program gave her the confidence to “relax and do what you think is best. It makes you more confident.” The refrain of ‘normalcy’ indicates that some home based parents experience parenting not only as isolating, but also as a task in which they fail to reach ‘normal’ competency. One benefit of the CMP is that these parents learned that such a perception is itself ‘normal’.

Expectation and experience

Some parents expected more ‘guidance’ from the CM. Ben: “[CM] was always like, ‘try this’, too concerned with litigation – they’re not prepared to commit themselves. Lucy, whose negative comments are covered below, was recruited into the program by her Community Child Health Nurse. She was disappointed to have a volunteer CM allocated as her visitor: “Had it been a [community child health nurse]-type person, then brilliant ... When [community child health nurse] came I felt as if I was getting a pat on the back. [CM] never boosted my morale. She needed more flexibility. I used to get lots of positives from [the community child health nurse].”

“I didn’t know what to expect”, said Ruth, “so nothing was unexpected! ... She came for about nine months. I felt I’d exhausted most things – felt she should have been more child-focussed ... The first six months I looked forward to it, and felt more confident after she left. The last two months I felt a little uneasy. I began to feel that [the CM] had too many commitments.” For Therese:

I never felt I could let go, cry, or bitch properly. I couldn’t dump. I wasn’t encouraged to open up. It would have been more useful if there was someone you could open up with. Especially the first couple of months, going through post natal depression. I was scared to dump it on that person ... I was a zombie for a couple of weeks. [Husband] didn’t know what to do with himself, my mother couldn’t help. I touched base with a social worker to find out if it was normal. It would have been nice to have more contact with the other mums.

However, there were still strong positives for Therese’s interaction with the program. “It was really important I got their whole attention ... I was reassured I was doing a good job, doing OK.”

The community mother

Because not every CM gave her parents her contact points there were occasional issues of power and disempowerment. Ruth’s comment was: “I would have liked more access to my CM, and power over when the visits were.” Trust was a big thing for Sandra: “You know she’s not going to blab it [what you tell her] to everybody else. I couldn’t talk to family and friends.” For Ruth it meant that she could talk about everything: “I wouldn’t have wanted to bother a child nurse or doctor about some things [but] I could talk to the CM about them.” Amanda would have liked more direction from her CM: “I think the CM should have come up with more advice and offered suggestions. It seemed as though she felt wary about what to do ... She didn’t say much. She was more of a nodder. She seemed to agree with everything. I’d have liked her to be more assertive.”

Negatives

Lucy spoke least positively about the program:

I was giving all this chatting, etcetera, I had 'painted smiles' – I felt I needed to be strong for her. She should be able to tell whether the smile's real or false ... She talked about herself: 'We're in the same boat' – but we weren't ... Now they're growing up I'm much more relaxed but my CM wasn't really cut out for the work ... some days I felt I was pumping her up ... I didn't want to hurt her feelings. I wouldn't want her to feel that she wasn't helping me. I found myself cancelling meetings.

Lucy felt that it was a wonderful program, but the potential wasn't realised in her case because of her CM. Lucy felt that she had "drawn the short straw" and that there was nothing she could do about it.

Suggestions

Celeste: "Guys can't cope with kids either – need help after the birth as well as [the ante-natal classes] before. Guys need to do more than just 'support'. There should be a father's group, perhaps? Just for the guys." Therese wanted to meet her CM's other mothers, but this degree of cross-family contact was not built into the program. For most of the parents, however, the issues they had suggestions about concerned frequency and duration of the program, with a preference to more access for this kind of early-parenting support.

Conclusion

This program established its viability in the pre-1998 pilot scheme and is now offered through three WA Health Services. In addition to this paper and the references cited, it has been written up in Hughes and Miller (1999). Sponsors for the pilot project and the evaluative research were: Bentley Health Service, Curtin University School of Nursing, Healthway, Royal Perth Hospital Public and Community Health, Edith Cowan University School of Communications and Multimedia.

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CONSTRAINING 'SMART' WOMEN: GENDER AND THE KNOWLEDGE CREATING COMPANY⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

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Knowledge management and knowledge creation are considered, by major writers in business and management studies, to be the basis for a revolution in business based on competition within a market driven and globalising business environment. Effective participation in knowledge management and knowledge work will provide the basis for all wealth creating activities. In theory knowledge creation is accomplished by workers regardless of factors such as gender, ethnicity, race or some disabilities. This research paper argues that in a major public sector organisation, women's participation in knowledge creation was constrained by traditional gender-based power relationships which reinforced a sexual division of labour. It raises issues about a new struggle for women to become equal participants in the knowledge-based workforce.

Introduction

Knowledge management and knowledge creation are considered, by major writers in business and management studies, to be the basis for a revolution in business within a market driven and globalising business environment (Drucker 1993; HBR 1998; Liebowitz 1999; Murrigan 1998; Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995; Weick 1995; Wilson 1996; Wikstrom et al 1994). Effective participation in knowledge management and knowledge work will provide the basis for all wealth creating activities according to Drucker (1993). This research paper argues that in a major public sector organisation, women's participation on knowledge creation was constrained by traditional gender-based power relationships which reinforced a sexual division of labour. It raises issues about a new struggle for women to become equal participants in the knowledge-based workforce.

The knowledge revolution

An incredible revolution is taking place within the world of business. All assumptions that held barely a decade ago are being overturned (Mitroff 1994).

Pre-formulated, pre-codified principles of sure-fire success that American business schools have tried to sell the world cannot survive the revolution in complexity (Hampden-Turner 1994).

... the real controlling resource and the absolutely decisive 'factor of production' is now neither capital, nor land, nor labour. It is knowledge ... the classes of post-capitalist society are knowledge workers and service workers (Drucker 1993).

This new knowledge-based organisation is a response to the dynamics of a market driven global economy based on complex technologies where knowledge is said to provide the main competitive advantage. The struggle for the control of knowledge is said to be heating up all over the world and it is predicted that the knowledge worker will be the single greatest company asset and attract higher wages and better conditions (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995). A key factor within a knowledge-based company is its capacity to mobilise the talents of 'smart' people so they can hone the organisation's competitive edge. It is important that all workers have the opportunity to develop and demonstrate such talents.

There are two identifiable approaches to a knowledge-based organisation within the mainstream business literature – information management and knowledge creation. Each approach requires specific and identifiable skills.

The first is the dominant approach and is referred to as ‘knowledge management’ although it mostly consists of an integrated approach to the capture, storage and use of information for problem solving (Beckman 1999). This model manages information through a top-down, ‘machine-like’ approach to organising with a heavy emphasis on the use of computer technology. Within the researched organisation this first version of knowledge-based practices was adopted from the late 1980s. A senior executive, who drew the model in Figure 1 on his whiteboard, explained it to the researcher. It has the senior leaders in the researched organisation, almost all of whom were male, controlling strategic decisions in response to the changes in the external environment. Within this model certain knowledge workers in the senior ranks are highly valued intellectual capital in whose heads lie the expertise necessary to manipulate the information from the structured databases. Here increasing value is placed upon highly capable people who can cope with rising job complexity. Knowledge management is carried out within low discretionary ‘problem-solving frameworks’ at lower levels and in a rule-bound environment. The interpretative and the decision-making processes are in the hands of the leaders.

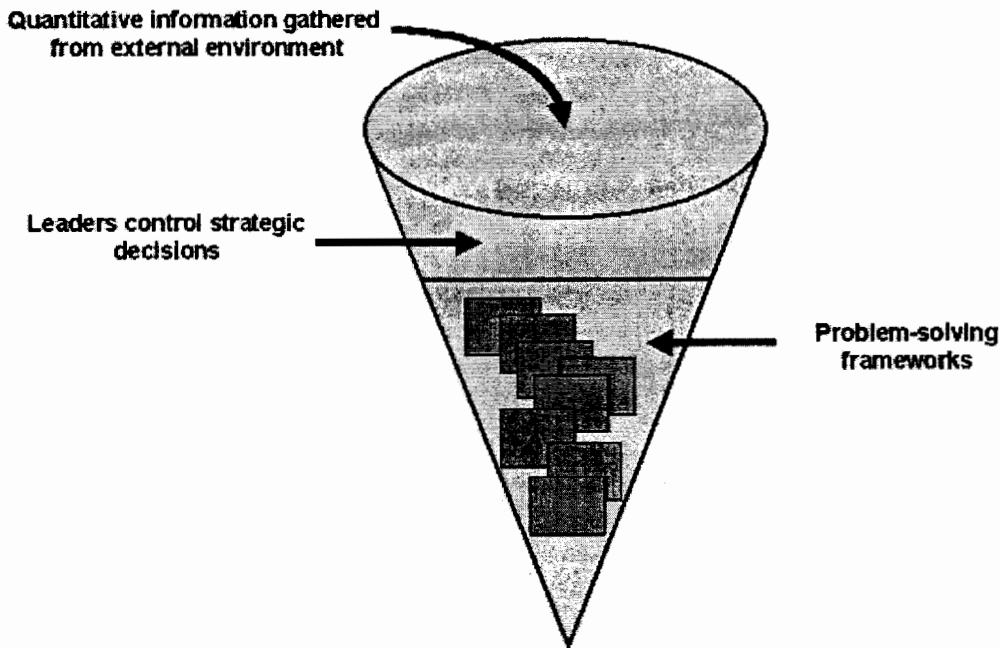
The second form for the knowledge-based company originates from the distinctive Japanese approach to ‘knowledge creation’:

Japanese companies ... have a very different understanding of knowledge. They recognise that the knowledge expressed in words and numbers represents only the tip of the iceberg. They view knowledge as being primarily “tacit” something not easily visible and expressible ... Subjective insights, intuitions and hunches fall into this category of knowledge ... tacit knowledge is deeply rooted in an individual’s action and experience, as well as the ideals, values or emotions ... (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995, p. 8).

This approach to knowledge places emphasis on the capacity of the worker to learn and innovate, to build cooperative networks, share information and opportunities as well as to think systemically. Knowledge workers in the knowledge creating company should have the ability to cross and re-cross the boundaries of expert systems and create new knowledge often from tacit or intangible sources. In some international companies employees spend 50-80% of their time creating and sharing ‘cutting edge knowledge’ (Cushman *et al.* 1999, p.12).

This second form of knowledge-based organisational development markedly shifts the traditional power relationships in organisations away from ‘top-down’ management by the leaders towards empowerment of relevant knowledge workers at any level. It is interesting that the skills required of knowledge workers in this model are, typically, held by women because of sex-role conditioning and the sexual division of labour (Chetwynd and Harnett 1978; Game and Pringle 1983). The skills are certainly apparent among the female research participants (see discussion below (Morrigan 1998)).

Figure 1: An Approach to Knowledge Management in a Large Australian Public Service Department



Source: Morrigan, P., 1998, 'The Challenge of Managing Knowledgeability: A Critical and Qualitative Study of the Learning Organisation in an Australian Public Sector Organisation', *Unpublished Ph.D thesis*, RMIT, Melbourne

From about 1992 the researched organisation had attempted to introduce this second, more democratic, approach to knowledge management through the introduction of the concept of the Learning Organisation. The Learning Organisation was proposed as a new organisational form, similar to the five-discipline model developed by Peter Senge from MIT (Senge 1992; Morrigan 1998). The research study was undertaken during the development and subsequent 'failure' of this initiative and the data from this research is drawn upon for this paper. The data shows that senior managers and executives sought to maintain their traditional control over knowledge preventing new forms of knowledge creation from emerging (Morrigan 1998) ¹

Theorising gender power and knowledge

The relationship between power and knowledge has been discussed within the critical management literature (Organization 2000, 2001). This relationship is explicit in both the information processing and the knowledge creating organisational forms. The machine-like knowledge-based company (see Figure 1) is a familiar Taylorist one where top-down control of the labour process is inevitable although not necessarily successful (McKenna 1999, Morrigan 1998). The power/knowledge relationships logically include those of gender/knowledge, where traditional executive and managerial forms of control persist and lock women out of senior positions.

Within the knowledge creating organisation the power relations are said to be different in some respects because:

¹ More recently the organisation has made a further attempt at knowledge creation with the adoption of scenario planning and systems thinking initiatives (ATO 1998)

... no one department or group of experts has the exclusive responsibility for creating new knowledge ... In fact the creation of new knowledge is the product of a dynamic interaction ... (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995, pp. 14-15)

In this model there is a managerial structure which mediates logical levels of knowledge viz.; technical, productive, conceptual, visionary (Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995). In theory the knowledge creating company condemns many of the masculinist behaviours found in traditional organisations:

- Buck passing;
- Loyalty to the boss;
- Conformance and compliance behaviour — passive resistance;
- Internal competition;
- Bureaucratic controlling behaviours;
- Power grabbing and turf battles (Beckman 1999 p.1-17)

The knowledge creating company requires:

- A multi-disciplinary understanding of knowledge.
- An non-hierarchical organisational structure which enables multi-dimensional flows of many kinds of knowledge.
- A dispersed or decentralised form of leadership.
- A capability for strategic intelligence.
- Complex interpretative and systemic thinking skills among employees.
- Self-direction or personal mastery.
- An understanding of emotions, values and ethics.

(Nonaka and Takeuchi 1995, chap.3).

The espoused theory of knowledge creation within an organisation depends on the power that 'smart' people have to mobilise their intellectual talents and share their experience, ideals, values and emotions. There is a strong assertion within the literature on knowledge creation that traditional power relations must be broken down. This is referred to in the mainstream literature as 'cultural change'; discussion of power relations is rare in the mainstream and is left to the critical and feminist writers (Organization 2000; 2001). Enterprises that operate within a masculinist 'cultural' framework that encourages and rewards competition and individual achievement are doomed to fail (Cushman *et al.* 1999).

Although organisations have undergone remarkable structural and technological change in the last decade this has not fundamentally changed the power relations, especially as they refer to the sexual division of labour. Greer's (1999, pp.119-128) arguments that women's workforce position has deteriorated in some respects are compelling. The theory of the knowledge creating company from Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), however, has no place for power relations which constrain knowledge. Whoever is in possession of the relevant 'knowledge' should be empowered, irrespective of gender, race, ethnicity and some disability. This is not to suggest that the knowledge creating company will be free of power relations rather that 'rules' will have to change (Foucault 1980, p. 131). Any change in the 'rules', both enable and constrain action (Giddens 1991; 1993). When the 'rules' are being renegotiated the power of women and other oppressed groups can increase. It is important for 'smart' women to understand when and how to enter the new game of knowledge creation within organisations and capture some of the terrain.

The research study

The research methodology for this study relies on a grounded theory approach, in the tradition of Glaser and Strauss (1967; see also Blaikie 1993; Martin and Turner 1986; Strauss 1987; Strauss and Corbin 1990; Turner 1981; 1983). This methodology seeks to 'discover' hypotheses from data gathered through theoretical sampling and in-depth interviewing, analysed using qualitative computing – QSR-NUDIST. This study set out to collect data about the Learning Organisation, the

vehicle for knowledge-creation, from a 'natural' group – the people involved in developing a Learning Organisation within the organisation (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p. 52).

The interview data indicated that that gender relations were entwined in the development of knowledge based processes of the organisation. Within the organisation the Learning Organisation was to be devised and developed by a large group of change agents — mainly female human resource (HR) specialists. The executive decision-makers were made up of senior leaders who were predominantly male. This introduced into the sample gendered 'created groups' (Glaser and Strauss 1967, p.52) and a struggle over gender, power and knowledge (see Table 1):

Table 1: The Interviewees for the Research Study

'NATURAL' INTERVIEW GROUPS	'CREATED' GENDERED GROUPS	
	MALE	FEMALE
Decision-makers	8	0
Other Executive Stakeholders	4	1
Developers of Learning Organisation Programme	6	12
Other Human Resource Specialist Stakeholders	9	20
Total Interviewees (60)	27	33

Source: Morrigan 1998

Of the 13 senior executive decision-makers only one was female. The majority of the change agents were women (32:15). The two gendered groups already had a history of antagonism:

The researched organisation was one of the last APS departments to adopt an equal opportunity programme. From early in 1988 the organisation began to recruit more women when direct discrimination was outlawed, although the organisation never adopted an affirmative action policy. The women were mainly recruited into the newly created People and Structures branch which was led by one of the few female senior executives. This branch was to oversee and implement major organisational change initiatives. The majority of the leaders and managers who were the subject of the change process were men. The latter were antagonistic to organisational change and towards the (female) messengers of change. The men openly referred to the mainly female HR specialists as '*cotton wool straitjackets*' or '*airy fairy wankers*' who reminded them daily of their troubles and showed up their inadequacies (Australian Taxation Office 1990, Morrigan 1998).

The creation of the Learning Organisation brought the two groups together again. Snapshots from the in-depth interviews collected during the knowledge creating initiative suggest that there was a distinct difference in the way that the male leaders and the female change agents understood and dealt with 'knowledge'.

The data

Anti-intellectualism among leaders

Interview responses suggest that the male leaders were dismissive of new ideas from the business and management literature as well as those presented by the, mainly female, change agents. They took an anti-intellectual approach to knowledge creation calling new ideas ‘jargon’, ‘flavour of the month’, ‘fads’, ‘too academic’, ‘bloody theory’, ‘buzz words’ (Morrigan 1998). They ridiculed people with different ideas and wanted them out of the organisation calling them, ‘loose cannons’, ‘ferals’, ‘cottonwool straitjackets’ and ‘airy fairy wankers’ (Morrigan 1998).

The male leaders insisted that knowledge was tangible and applied and would not accept intangible, tacit or conceptual forms of knowledge:

- gotta be practical.
- we are pragmatists.
- Need to take it in easy stages.
- no grand schemes.
- we don’t want intellectual solutions.
- no good getting too deep.
- (Morrigan 1998)

The executive problem of thinking

The data from the interviews suggests that the male leaders experienced a lack of ability to think systemically. There was a problem of ‘paradigmatic confusion’. Individual leaders often held two or more contradictory explicit assumptions or multiple and incommensurate ‘mental models’. Transcripts showed that leaders in the organisation expressed at least two opposing views of how the organisation should be managed during the (approximately) ninety minute interviews (Table 2):

Table 2: Analysis of Interview Transcripts from Leaders in the Organisation showing Paradigmatic Confusion

RESPONDENTS	PARADIGM 1	PARADIGM 2
A	People are our best asset	We are not in the business of employing people
B	We need structured learning packages	We need open and unstructured learning
C	People must toe the party line or leave the organisation	I will never conform again
D	None of the managers has a personality problem	Lots of the managers have inferiority complexes
E	We need decentralised control at the level of teams	We need to centralise all decision-making
F	Open and participatory decision-making is best	Leaders have to just design the changes and tell people to just do it

Source: Morrigan 1998

The leaders were not holding one mental model as Senge (1992) suggests or dealing with espoused and tacit views as Argyris (1993) indicates. Rather their thinking was confused as may be the case following at least a decade of consistent organisational change in an environment where the business

literature and organisational consultants have offered them a plethora of uncritical and contradictory advice.

The male leaders had a way of dealing with their confusion although some indicated that they 'flew by the seat of their pants' much of the time. They talked themselves out of complex thinking:

- It's no good thinking that way.
- It's a good idea but not workable.
- You could never get people to accept that.
- We just have to focus on the achievable.
- You just have to get on and do it and if the wheels fall off you start again.

(Morrigan 1998)

Female acceptance of knowledge creation

The mainly female change agents were quite different in their acceptance and enthusiasm for knowledge creation; they advocated multiple levels of learning:

- We need top-down, bottom-up, sideways learning and sharing from inside to outside.
- We need to get the knowledge out there and back again.
- Get the knowledge from the coal-face and channel it up.
- Learning is a two-way process.
- Learning happens in a relationship.
- Give out the message that learning is part of the job

(Morrigan 1998)

The interviews with the change agents suggested that they held wholistic world-views which linked a number of levels of knowledge. They understood their world as a system. They spoke of the links between their work and their home, their personal and political values, the influence of their specifically female social and biological processes on their thinking:

- We need integration of ideas.
- I try to think systemically.
- Personal values and life goals must be linked to work.
- The personal and the political are one.
- I can pick up anything and just work it out.
- It is important to go through a consensus process and live with the outcomes.
- I want to build bridges between people.
- When you come back from maternity leave you're a different person and they think you've just been changing nappies.
- Now I am going through menopause I decided to rethink my whole life ... how do I want to live?

(Morrigan 1998)

The, mainly female, Human Resource specialists developing the Learning Organisation knew that to introduce new ideas into the organisation was 'risk-taking', fraught with power relationships and was not the road to promotional success. They took on the challenge:

- We knew the dangers — we talked about the dangers.
- People in positions of power have got there and really want those jobs and have got there in a range of ways. They are not going to give it up over a principle of learning.
- So for me it's a different trail. If you're going for promotion, that's a different trail than going on to ... make a difference. Let's get this working better.

- You get a choice in life to do things or not. Right? ... Accept they'll be painful and they'll hurt but at the end of the day, you've done something. But if you choose to do nothing, don't bitch about the people who are doing things.
- I never believed that I would be killed, I never believed that I would be tortured, so you give it a go ... you accept the pain; you accept the enjoyment.

(Morrigan 1998)

Gendered approaches to self-management

A key feature of the Sengian model of the Learning Organisation is 'personal mastery' which is the first of his core disciplines. This he claims is the intuitive and spiritual foundation of the Learning Organisation (Senge 1992). Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) also argue that self-management is a key feature of the knowledge-creating company. Senge's components of 'personal mastery' include dealing with a range of emotions and personal conflict as well as actualising creativity (Senge 1992; see also Goleman 1999). This core discipline seems to combine the developments associated with the psychology of self-actualisation, the practices of motivation and mind control with the philosophy of transcendent spirituality (Senge 1992).

Key authors identify problems. Senge argues that managers have a fear of disorder and the breakdown of power relations self-management is widespread (1992). Garvin, from Harvard Business School, rejects 'personal mastery' and intuitive knowledge and says, 'if you can't measure it you can't manage it' (Garvin 1993).

Senge suggests that self-management should only be encouraged if the organisation has a shared vision to which the staff are aligned (Senge 1992). He fails to in any way address the relationship between gender, power and knowledge where personal and emotional knowledge are not part of the masculine norms.

Senge adopts the view that it is the leaders of an organisation who encourage self-management. He warns the leaders, however, that 'Taking a stand for the full development of your people is a radical departure from the traditional contract between employee and institution' (Senge 1992, p. 145). He argues that resistance comes from the workers and takes the form of cynicism and denial of the importance of personal development for enhanced productivity.

Within the researched organisation it was clear that the resistance to self-management came from the male leaders rather than the managers and their staff. The data collected within the organisation shows that they used strong language to express themselves on the subject of emotions at work. Throughout the interviews however they admitted that, 'It's the 'people issues' we do badly here (Morrigan 1998).

- They say that emotions:
- Should be put into the too hard basket.
- Are a can of worms.
- Are spew-making new ageism.
- Are dangerous and destructive.
-

(Morrigan 1998)

The leaders were also strongly resistant to personal development courses being part of the work process:

- After all we got to the top so we can't have any real personal problems.
- We are not psychologists so we do not want to get into the ins and outs of self-esteem.
- I balk at mental engineering.
- You can't work with someone who you've had a deep and meaningful with.

(Morrigan 1998)

The findings from this research that show that senior males in this organisation did not deal very well with emotions and were resistant to personal development are not startling. The same findings occur in many Australian organisations according to in the Karpin report (Industry Task Force 1995a and 1995b). But is important to reiterate these problems for two reasons. The first is that the new organisational form of the knowledge creating company, unlike more traditional organisations, is said to require proper attention to self-management. The second is to note, again, that resistance to self-management is gendered. The women in the sample for this research did embrace emotions as part of work and were often adept at personal mastery. They were much more capable of working in a knowledge creating company:

- My work is enhanced by my emotions.
- I am afraid of my own emotions but I say 'Its not going to kill you' ... it's not necessarily a fearful thing to, at the end of the day to go into difficult situations.

(Morrigan 1998).

Nearly all of the female change agents had been participants in personal development courses. They commented:

- I discovered that I am master of my own life.
- I asked myself 'What part of the journey are you on?' — in terms of moving towards an enlightenment (sic) person.
- I have always thought that one level of my Self is aware. And that it will protect me.
- I learned that this is all of me and I have only been using part of me.

(Morrigan 1998).

The environment within the organisation that denied the relevance of self-management skills or an open expression of emotion placed constraints upon the female change agents. They took steps to block or hide their intuitive knowledge through explicit self-censorship and group conformance to masculine norms. In the interviews they discussed the disempowering effects of working in this way:

- This organisation, like lots of others, is caught up in some sort of quest for an economic 'Holy Grail'. I don't think that my work and my values can alter this. I'm really sad. I feel very helpless because I want different things for the world.
- I do not see it as a safe environment for women.
- I feel really lonely about [my work] ... I guess I am only doing the footwork for the men.
- I play myself down. I make myself weak. When necessary I'll sell my soul.

(Morrigan 1998)

Conclusion

This paper has suggested that if there is a revolution in business because of the need to develop knowledge creating organisational forms then women have to be aware of this change. The espoused talents for people working in knowledge creating companies are more noticeable among women workers because of our sex-role socialisation and the sexual division of labour. There is, however, a relationship between gender power and knowledge where certain groups have the power to say that masculine norms count as knowledge.

In theory the knowledge creating company cannot emerge as a masculinist form which encourages competition and individual ownership of knowledge. Neither can it theoretically survive where there

is anti-intellectualism, confusion in thinking, denial of emotional knowledge and a resistance to personal change and self-management.

In practice women are going to have to fight to mobilise their talents and for their place within this new organisational form. Especially since this kind of organisation will provide the main wealth-creating activities. Ideally the issues need to be debated within the literature on gender and organisations as well as in women's professional and political associations.

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HOW SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN SHACK RESIDENTS TRY TO INFLUENCE CHANGE AND ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENTS IN THEIR LIVES⁽²⁰⁰⁰⁾

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Like most progressive governments, the South African government's policies envisage that women will play a more powerful role in the transformation of public life and in small business development. However, most South African women are very poor and struggle to gain access to basic facilities. As little is understood about the struggles of women for inclusion and recognition in public life and business, this paper examines the different ways in which two women who live in an urban shack settlement try to transform their social and economic circumstances by attempting to organize basic services and establish micro-businesses.

Introduction

Although South Africa has been categorized as a middle-income country with a per capita Gross Domestic Product (GDP) estimated at \$3,215 (www.state.gov/www/background_notes/southafrica_0004_bgn.html 2000), measurements of income inequality (including a Gini coefficient measure of 0.58) suggest that it remains one of the most unequal countries in the world. This is compounded by poor results on other measures of human development, such as life expectancy, infant mortality, adult illiteracy and income. Most South African households experience either outright poverty or an ongoing vulnerability to being poor (May, 1998). Given that poor households are characterized by the lack of a steady income (either because of unemployment or insecure, low-paying jobs) and a lack of access to basic services such as piped water, sanitation and electricity, this paper is based on case studies of two poor, black, female shack residents' attempts to tackle the questions of income and services in their lives. Urban shack settlements constitute an important locus for understanding the lives of women who transit between rural and urban homes, transferring their tiny savings from insecure and poorly paying urban jobs as domestic workers to rural families who often have no other source of income. Although domestic workers comprise the largest category of workers in South Africa, with unemployment at 40% (www.state.gov/www/background_notes/southafrica_0004_bgn.html 2000) and no trade unions, they have little leverage.

Both women live in the shack settlement of Impolweni, which has been in existence for more than a decade and comprises 58 households and approximately 250 residents, many of them refugees from the civil war in other parts of KwaZulu-Natal in the early 1990s. More recent residents have come to Durban to try to escape the equally intractable problems of rural unemployment and poverty. Located some 15 kilometres from the city center, Impolweni is one of some 371 shack settlements that serve as home to more than half of Durban's population of 2 520 000 (Wilkins and Hofmeyr, 1994, p. 107; http://www.local.gov.za/DCD/dcdlibrary/dma/dma_prelim.html).

Durban is the port city of the province of KwaZulu-Natal, which has the largest population of all the provinces, the second largest economy, is fourth in terms of its economic growth rate, and contributes only 15 per cent of South Africa's GDP. Owing to its large population and high unemployment rate, KwaZulu-Natal has a low per capita Gross Geographic Product, which is only 71 per cent of the national average. When its share of 21 per cent of the total population is weighed up against its contribution to the total GDP (15 per cent), this produces a per capita income so low that it ranks seventh in the country (Maasdorp 1996). Besides these problems KwaZulu-Natal also has the highest

HIV/AIDS rate in South Africa. All these challenges increase the burdens of responsibility and care that generally fall to women, who comprise 92% of the principal care-givers in South African households (National Household Survey, 1995, p. 14).

Women comprise between 54%-72% of the heads of households of shack settlements (Files and Harroun 1999). While *The Constitution of South Africa* (1996) and the *White Paper on Local Government* (1998) anticipate that women will play a significant role in the transformation of public life, the burden of inadequate infrastructure falls upon women (Bond 1997, p.12). It is for such reasons that gender activists question whether local government is accessible to most people (Van Donk, 2000, p. 4-12). Given their gender roles, women may be considered as the primary consumers of municipal services (Van Donk, 2000, p.4). This suggests that the impact of local government is felt most immediately in the lives of women. Yet few women actually participate in local government. (Gender Advocacy Programme, 2000).

The focus of the paper will be on the efforts of two women to effect changes in their personal lives and in the welfare of their community. A triangulation of the qualitative observational research methods of narrative inquiry, short-term observation and ethnomethodology was used to gain an in-depth understanding of the lives of the two women. There were interviews with the women and other Impolweni residents; attention to their narratives to understand how they engage with change, reason, make decisions and communicate; as well as close observation of their daily lives. Community-based knowledge and information gained from secondary texts were incorporated into the process assessing the research and writing the case studies.

Securing service delivery

The two women, Mbali and Carolina (their names have been changed), are in their late-twenties. Carolina comes from the rural district of Ixopo where she attended primary school for a couple of years. She has spent more than a decade as a domestic worker in various cities. Her partner John has worked as a security guard. They have two young daughters and have lived at Impolweni since 1998. Mbali is from Mpumalanga township. Wanting to live closer to town, she came to Impolweni with her young daughter in 1996. After renting for a while she bought a two-room shack in 1997. Although she has several years of high school education she has struggled to find steady employment. She takes on casual domestic work on one or two days a week to support her efforts to become self-employed.

Mbali joined the Impolweni governing committee in 1999 and was only the second woman to do so. She was concerned that there was no prospect of piped water even though the settlement is situated just below the city's reservoir. Although the Umgeni river flows nearby, there is the danger of bilharzias and other parasites. As a result, women were spending an hour each day collecting water from neighbourhood taps. When she failed to persuade the Impolweni governing committee to act to secure water services, Mbali mobilised another group of eleven residents to meet with the local councillor and the mayor to request a standpipe. The community was required to pay a deposit of R200 (US\$30) but the governing committee refused, stating: 'No, we are waiting for so long, we won't pay. Who told you to work on this?' Mbali's response was: 'Nobody told us. We are not trying to overtake you but to help.' But the governing committee would not co-operate and the action committee had a tough challenge:

Some people said we should just drop it. But the water committee borrowed R200 and paid the deposit. We trusted that residents would pay once the water arrived. Three days after we paid we got the standpipe. Then everyone, about 75 people, just came to my house and paid (Interview 3.7.2000).

Mbali's leadership in securing water delivery was based on her assessment that it was necessary to challenge residents to demand municipal services and the local authority to deliver on its mandate. After more than a decade of struggle by a range of residents (Narismulu, 2000a, p.25) it is not surprising that it was a woman who played the most decisive role in securing water in September 1999. Given that the collection of water falls within the ambit of women's duties, it served women's

strategic interests (Chant, 1996, p. xiii) to secure the service. Mbali's intervention was timely, given the subsequent outbreak of cholera in the region. This episode indicates the struggles women have working in male-dominated civic structures and gaining acceptance for their contributions.

Women's challenges are not restricted to struggles within patriarchal primary groups. Some of the municipal officials still operate within the authoritarian and patriarchal framework that characterized the apartheid administration. When Mbali became acquainted with the mayor she judged that, as an elected officer, he would be more amenable to investigating how Impolweni residents could obtain land tenure. Raising the commitment of the government's 1994 *White Paper on Housing* to provide access to land tenure, housing, water, sanitation, waste disposal and electricity, she also enquired about the government's undertaking to expand housing credit to the poor. Although the mayor cautioned that it could take between two to four years to secure housing, Mbali extracted a promise that he would act (Interview 3.7.2000). Mbali's grasp of the responsibility of the municipality to enact these aspects of national policy is combined with a sophisticated understanding of the need for organised citizens to act as pressure groups to secure the implementation of new policies despite bureaucratic inertia. It is with such combinations of insight, resolve and tactics that women across the country are beginning to overcome the fetters of tradition, apartheid and poverty to advance the social and economic development of their communities.

Alternatives in the absence of services

The absence of sanitation compounds the health risks faced by the community and increases the burden of care already carried by women (Chant, 1996), which reduces their capacity to contribute to their own and their community's development. As local governments have done very little about sanitation, shack residents are left to their own resources. There are three pit latrines at Impolweni, built recently through private initiatives. Other residents use the bush, which increases health risks of the entire community.

Although the mayor told Mbali that toilets would take a month to install once he had established who owns the land (Interview 3.7.2000), she had few expectations that this would occur. In August 2000 she approached a tractor driver working at a neighbouring site to dig holes for pit latrines. When the first hole was dug a householder complained that it was too close to his house (which Mbali disputes). The hole was refilled and the plan was abandoned. Frustrated that her attempt had failed, Mbali told the resident 'Tell me if you don't want me to help you, because I look stupid when I call people to dig holes for nothing' (Interview 1.10.2000). Understood against the success of the water initiative, this incident suggests that women activists need to secure the support of at least some members of the community to help advance their causes, at least until women are accepted as civic leaders.

Involvement in small businesses

Mbali's efforts to secure the standpipe resulted in her getting the job of managing it. She charges 25 cents for 25 litres of water and makes between R15-R30 (US\$2-\$4) a day. This is well below subsistence level, and some of the money has to be paid to the municipality. Nevertheless, Mbali has been encouraged by her venture into a survivalist enterprise and has plans to run a private telephone service. In the meantime, like most women in shack settlements, she relies on domestic work.

A few women engage in business. Most of them do not have funds to outlay on goods so they sell eggs, chickens, soap, sweets and alcohol. The work experiences of Carolina and John drove them to set up the second *spaza* (an informal store) at the settlement in a bid to escape the trap of poverty while being in employment:

When we came to Impolweni things were tough. We stayed in a small house and worked hard but had little money. My wages as a domestic worker were only R200 a month and I was working every day. John's security guard job was dangerous and the hours were tough. He often had to work twelve hours overtime. I worried every day until he came home. We decided that we must work for ourselves. In July I found a job paying R300 a month. We spent R150 on food

and saved the other R150. In September 1999 John left his job. In November, after saving money for four months I left my job to work with John in our own business. Leaving the job was hard but the savings helped (Interview with Carolina, 16.10.2000).

They began by selling cool drinks. Despite their initial successes, Carolina was filled with anxiety: 'Starting our own business was hard. I was worrying too much about what to do.... I couldn't sleep thinking about how to improve everything'.

The government would classify their *spaza* shop as a micro-enterprise because it lacks formality in terms of registration for tax purposes (the turnover is considerably less than the VAT registration limit of R150 000 per year) and is not subject to legislation governing labour, business premises and accounting procedures (Womensnet, 2000). However, despite their lack of formal education they learned to work with words and figures, read invoices, use a calculator and keep accounts. These are significant achievements, particularly against competition from formal businesses in the area. They work sixteen-hour days to make ends meet. Paying cash for all their purchases is difficult but there is no possibility of obtaining loans from the banks. Left to their own resources, saving is an important strategy of survivalist entrepreneurs. The government presently gives very little support to small, medium and micro-enterprises (2.9% of Department of Trade and Industry funding), which needs to be raised and better targeted to include the most impoverished segments of the informal sector (May, 1998).

Water, electricity and buildings are central to the development of most enterprises. Carolina identifies the absence of electricity as a significant problem. They have a generator and a freezer but no longer use them because of the escalating cost of fuel. They no longer sell items like meat and milk and in summer they lose money on food that perishes in the heat and humidity.

Like most residents Carolina thinks that the standpipe is located too far away, more than 40 metres down the road and 80 metres from the shop: 'It is difficult to run our shop without water nearby.' That hinders their attempts to improve the shop: 'This shack room is too small. We want to buy cement to make blocks. But the water is too far away'. The distance of the standpipe has already been a problem: 'It is difficult to get water in an emergency. This was a problem when the shacks burned down [in August]'. The Public Works Ministry needs to work with municipalities to run programmes to develop the assets of the poor by delivering services and infrastructure and providing income and skills training (May, 1998).

Conclusion: The challenges of recognition and empowerment

While the new government's policy documents support the role of women as catalysts for change, little has changed for the majority of women at the level of local government. In their attempts to engage in public life and enterprise women experience a range of challenges and contradictions.

In their business venture Carolina has been disappointed at stereotyped judgements: 'It is easier for John to run the shop. For me it is hard. I sometimes think that people do not feel that I am good'. The quality of their relationship has helped Carolina cope, in contrast to most income-generating schemes, which reinforce the oppression experienced in the home (Mies, cited by Cornwell, 2000). But there are other problems. While the store initially generated a viable income for their family, when additional money was needed for their daughter's school fees a year later it was Carolina who was obliged to return to being a domestic worker. While Carolina still hopes that their business will grow, their struggles indicate the difficulties of progressing beyond survivalist enterprises and the extent to which women remain constrained by patriarchal constructions of child care responsibilities.

Mbali's role, which has involved a great deal of social activism, has generated even more personal and social conflict. Although willing to contribute enormous energy and time to the community her achievements have not been recognized:

It is not easy being a leader. People swear you and fight with you. But you have to be calm. It is not easy but you must slowly [gradually] show people how to do

what is needed. A leader must always be soft with the people and hard [on] the issues (Interview 1.10.2000).

Mbali's experiences suggest that during times of transition patriarchy may tolerate the actions women take to secure goods and services, but that women have to build social networks to support them if they are to continue to be effective in structures dominated by patriarchal interests (Narismulu, 2000b, p.8).

The contradictions in Mbali's subject position seem to have generated a crisis. Recently Mbali spoke of the impact of the irresolution of the shack committee on her activism: 'I have dropped everything [all the issues she wanted to pursue], because I am fed up with it.' She expressed concern that her efforts and sacrifices have been in vain: 'It is no good being active. You lose time for a lot of things that you need to do for yourself' (Interview 1.10.2000). This bears out May's observation that time "is an important cost associated with many of the livelihood plans constructed by the poor" (1998).

While Carolina is unhappy about the sacrifice of her interests and opportunities in the business venture, Mbali is so unhappy that she is considering leaving Impolweni. This will be a loss for she has been the most effective member of the governing committee and the most adept at engaging the remote and preoccupied municipality. In her activism she has answered the numerous calls in the White Paper on Local Government for the empowerment of the 'excluded and marginalised' (1998, p.16) so that they can become 'active and equal participants in the community processes and the transformation of the settlements where they live' (1998, p.34). However, her attempts to bring about change and economic progress at Impolweni have led her to conclude that she can only improve her situation by leaving. This is a challenge faced by many shack settlements grappling with the impact of modernity and structural adjustments. Either they have to grow to accommodate the rise of women leaders or risk losing them. Pioneering women activists and poor communities require intensive support from local government, which needs to give effect to its constitutional mandate to govern, provide services, promote social and economic development and affirm the role of poor people and women in those interventions. A dedicated mechanism for co-ordinating poverty-related policies is necessary for infrastructural development and poverty alleviation. As South Africa has one of the poorest human resource development indices in the world providing access to training and education at various levels is necessary. The Department of Labour's Skills Development Strategy for Economic Growth programme needs to be extended to provide basic literacy and entrepreneurial skills, and training in non-traditional occupations for vulnerable groups overcome barriers to entry into formal employment (May, 1998). Local governments need to develop partnerships and negotiation forums with shack residents to ensure that their needs are addressed in line with the requirements of the constitution and the other redress policies.' And, as Mbali recognizes, marginalized groups need to engage and develop the power of social networks to articulate their interests.

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COMMUNICATION CHANNELS IN ORGANISATIONS ARE NOT ALWAYS DESIGNED FOR WOMEN: A CASE STUDY⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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This paper focuses on the use of the Grid Management model as designed by Blake and Mouton (1964) and critiques its effectiveness in an organisation where women were managers. The case study focuses on a multi-national pharmaceutical company examining women managers' feelings and experiences in working with the Grid Management model. This paper provides insights into the experiences various women managers have encountered using the Grid Model and the problems they faced because of the inadequacies of the system. It highlights the different communication styles of men and women, and presents a case for the Grid Management model currently benefiting male, more than female communication styles.

Introduction

In organisations throughout Australia many women are compelled to work under a variety of management techniques and models that may not necessarily be benefiting their career advancement. Central to the effectiveness of any of these management models and a smooth running organisation, is clear communication. Gender differences in communication styles have been identified as having a major impact on the working environment. Conlin (1989) believed that changing an organisation's culture was not enough and that organisations should get men and women to understand how the differences in styles can impact on business decisions. As the communication process is an important component of teamwork, Buchholz, Roth and Hess (1987) and Halterman, Dutkiewicz and Halterman (1991) believed gender differences were a critical issue in the workplace.

This paper presents a case study where the *Grid Management* model was introduced to a large multinational company in order to increase team work, productivity and communication channels throughout the organisation. In this instance, it would appear that the model they selected was more suited to male communicators than their female counterparts.

Purpose of this study

Whilst there are many benefits of deploying the *Grid Management* system, this study examines the use of the *Grid* as an effective management tool in an organisation, where like most organisations, communication differences exist, and in particular these differences are gender based.

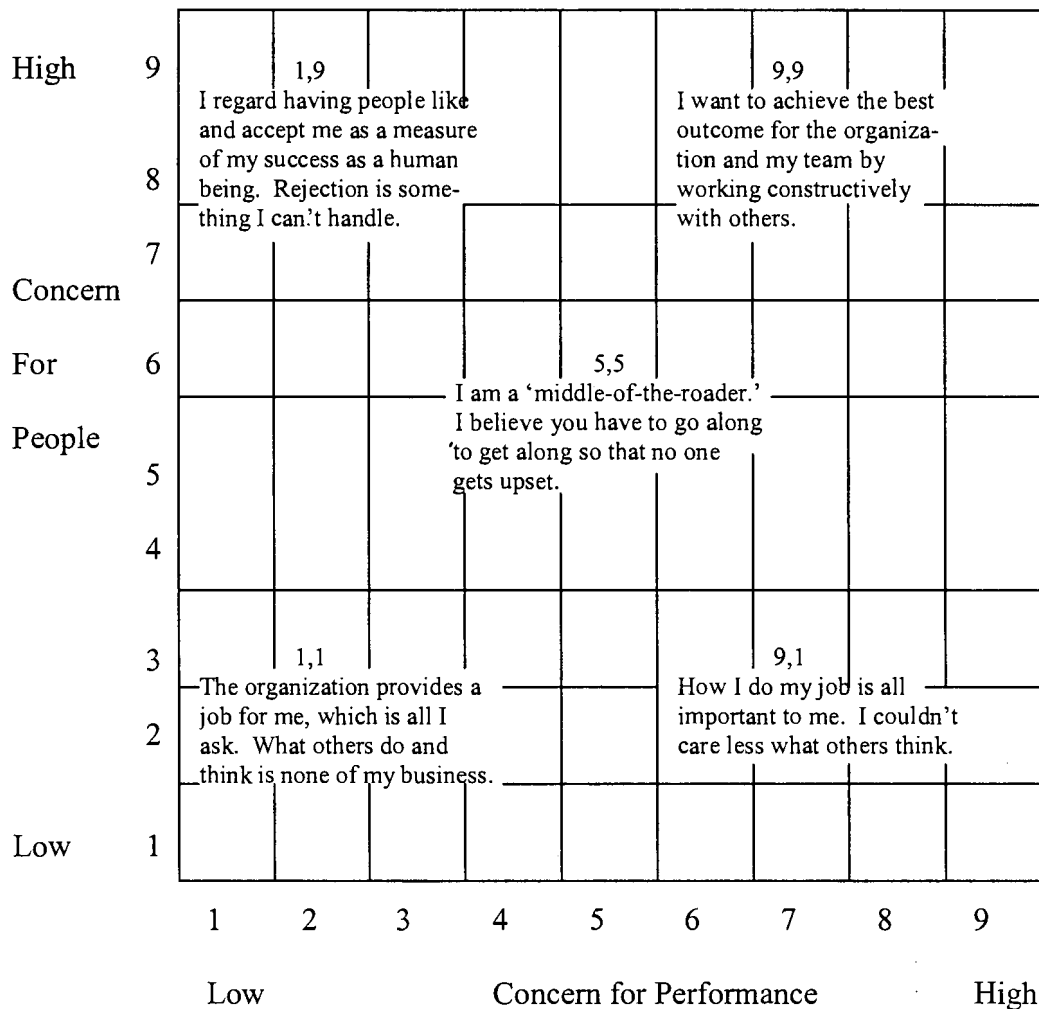
This case study investigated women in management positions and their experiences of working under the *Grid* system. In particular, it focused on whether the *Grid* model took into consideration the differences in the communication style of men and women, and if these differences had an impact on the implementation of the model.

The grid

The *Management Grid* was designed by Blake and Mouton in 1964 to improve communication channels by promoting participation, involvement and a commitment to teamwork in organisations. The *Grid* is based on two continua, one being concern for productivity and the other, concern for people (Figure 1). Ideally, managers should work towards a 9:9 management style, which combines high concern for performance with high concern for people.

The *Management Grid* identifies five management styles: 1:9 (relationships are more important than the task); 9:1 (task is more important than people); 1:1 (minimum effort to get the job done); 5:5 (middle of the road) and 9:9.

Figure 1: The Management Grid as designed by Blake and Mouton (1964, p12)



While five management styles are identified, and Blake and Mouton (1987) conceded that different styles were appropriate in certain circumstances, the 9:9 style was considered optimal and what individuals should strive to achieve.

According to Blake and Mouton (1987; 1997), the two main aims of the *Management Grid* are to make managers personally effective, and to develop cohesive and productive teams. Central to this philosophy is the need for individuals to provide candid feedback, (termed 'critique') of both a positive and negative nature, based on facts alone. Emotion should not be involved.

The *Grid* has been accepted by many organisations as a means of developing an effective culture to foster teamwork and improve organisational communication channels. According to Lester (1991), organisations as diverse as English county cricket clubs and multinational enterprises have successfully utilised this philosophy to achieve synergies within vastly different groups.

The *Grid* however, makes no mention of differences in individuals' communication styles (particularly relating to gender differences) or of the high level of communication skills required to successfully embrace Blake and Mouton's philosophy. Therefore, when introducing a new

management system like this to any organisation the need for effective communication is paramount. One of the main barriers to achieving this goal is that people do communicate differently.

Communication differences

Communication differences may be the result of personality (Briggs-Myers and Myers, 1980), behaviour/social styles (Merrill and Reid, 1981; Mok, 1982; Alessandra, Wexler and Barrera, 1987), gender and/or culture.

It is now generally accepted that men and women communicate differently. Though it is still unclear whether this is the result of biological and genetic makeup (Kimara 1985, 1986; 1987; 1993) or through learned socialisation practices which are carried into the workplace (Gilligan, 1982; Henning and Jardin, 1997; Johnson and Arneson, 1991; Lay 1994; Tannen 1990; 1995), or a mixture of the two.

Other gender-related communication research (Bem, 1981; Cook, 1985; Jordon and Surrey, 1986) suggested three styles—masculine, feminine and androgynous—which may not necessarily relate to the specific gender of a person, but rather the way in which they communicate.

For the purpose of this case study, communication differences will specifically relate to gender differences. Research by Franzwa and Lockhart (1998) indicated many of the gender differences in communication related to the work on personality types and/or social or behavioural models. For example, the male communication style tended to mirror sensing and thinking modes (logical, detached, analytical, and objective) while the female style reflected the intuition and feeling modes (subjective, empathetic, motivated by personal concern, and intuitive).

Gender communication styles affect the length of the response, the number and kind of questions asked, the topics raised and the degree of interruption. Men spend more time talking than listening (Conlin, 1989). According to Kramer (1978), their speech is more dominating, authoritarian, aggressive, frank and attention seeking (loud, demanding, boastful, long, and forceful). Men are more competitive and fact orientated (Tannen, 1990). They interrupt more, develop their own jargon using sports and military metaphors, take up more space (Conlin, 1989; Tannen, 1994; 1995), use more mild profanity (Conlin, 1989), use power strategies to influence others (Borisoff and Merrill, 1987; Kenton, 1989), and appear more confident (Kenton, 1989). Men are more direct and communicate in a manner where the status of the individual is considered to have high importance (Franzwa and Lockhart, 1998).

In contrast, studies have suggested that women communicate by building rapport and establishing links of equality. Generally women are friendly, gentle, enthusiastic (Kramer, 1978), interdependent, noncompetitive, emotionally expressive, cooperative, empathic and interpersonally orientated. Women act more strongly to the rapport dynamic, speaking in a way to save face and buffer statements that could be seen as putting others down (Franzwa and Lockhart, 1998; Kenton, 1989; Tannen, 1994; 1995). Women smile more readily, use more tag questions (eg. It's a nice day...isn't it?) and qualifiers (eg. I think...) in their statements (Conlin, 1989; Tannen, 1994; 1995). Women tend to take up less space, and do not initiate conversation as readily as men (Conlin, 1989; Tannen, 1994; 1995). Fischer and Narus (1983) found women able to achieve intimacy more quickly because they invited self-disclosure. However, in self-disclosure women tended to hide their strengths, whereas men used self-disclosure to hide their weaknesses (Hacker, 1981).

Research by Conlin, (1989), Kenton, (1989) and Tannen (1990; 1994; 1995) found many of women's unconscious communication characteristics were often interpreted by men as a form of submission. Men tended to interrupt women more readily, but refrained from criticising their 'weaker' colleagues. Women regarded male interruptions and dominance as abuse, which often made women feel alienated. Many regarded the interruptions as personal attacks, which caused them to hold back or stop contributing to discussions, and in extreme cases, stopped them listening. Conlin (1989) and Kenton (1989) believed that smiling—rather than being a form of submission was a search for acceptance—and the qualifiers used in their sentences were a form of politeness rather than deference.

In conflict situations, women were more likely to interpret the conflict as personal and had difficulty in expressing themselves (Johnson and Arneson, 1991). Borisoff and Merrill (1987) believed that women demonstrated empathy to others, listened more effectively, and ensured their conflict resolution strategies maintained relationships.

Johnson and Arneson (1991, citing Putnam, 1979:3) stated that many women experienced role conflict in situations that stereotyped management as male behaviour. If they used their feminine style they were rejected as managers, but if they used the masculine style they were condemned as being unfeminine. Mathison (1986) and Moore (1986) found women tended to evaluate assertive women more negatively than their male colleagues. Women also expected female managers to be more competent. Kenton's (1989) research discovered that even when men and women were equally experienced and competent, men were regarded as having more expertise because of higher expectations for women. However, women tended to rank higher on goodwill and fairness due to their focus on and concern for the receiver.

Tannen (1995) suggested women tended to be more indirect in their communication and had a natural tendency to soften feedback by giving positive feedback first. Under the *Grid* philosophy this could be misconstrued as not following the 9:9 management style—where 'critique' should deal only with facts, and not necessarily find something positive to say when delivering feedback to the recipient.

This means that for women to master the 9:9 approach, they must discard their gender specific communication habits and take a more androgynous approach, adopting many of the communication characteristics associated with their male counterparts. Allowances for differences in communication style, specifically gender differences, have not been incorporated in the Blake and Mouton's *Grid Management* model. How this may impact on an organisation using the model is explored in the following case study. Please note that the organisation's name has been disguised and will be known as 'Drug Corp Australia'.

'Drug Corp Australia'

The CEO of 'Drug Corp Australia' introduced the *Grid Management* philosophy in 1993 to create a more cohesive and productive culture within the organisation.

To introduce the *Grid* effectively, Blake and Mouton (1987) recommended a six-phase program: an initial training seminar, followed by team development, inter-group development, organisational goal setting, goal attainment and finally stabilisation. These organisational development programs were seen as six overlapping phases that, if taken sequentially, would take three to five years. However, they could be compressed into a shorter time period if required by the participating company. 'Drug Corp Australia' opted for the compressed version.

The *Grid* philosophy was launched in a three-day training seminar for all staff, starting with the executives and working through the company until all employees had undergone the program.

The program introduced the philosophy of 9:9 leadership and the benefits of this management style. The aim of this training was to open the eyes of managers and employees to the consequences of their own behaviour through observing the behaviour of others (Lester, 1991).

Like other *Grid* programs, individuals involved with this course were expected to do 10–20 hours of pre-seminar work. They had to read a book on the concepts of *Grid*, and then complete a questionnaire to assess themselves and their management style and values. Individuals were placed in teams and required to work together to achieve the answers to a series of questions. The emphasis was on achieving group synergy.

The philosophy of using candour and critique was included throughout the program, but reached its climax when the other team members discussed, at length in an open session, each individual's progress in their team. The purpose of this 'soul baring' exercise was to allow individuals to understand how other group members viewed them and their behaviour.

Once the three-day seminar was completed, employees were expected to practise their newfound skills and work towards the 9:9 model. The *Grid* philosophy became an integral component of the organisation's culture and was incorporated into the performance management profile of all employees within and across all divisions. The CEO was the driving force behind its adoption.

Methodology

This paper examines the use of *Grid Management* on women within 'Drug Corp Australia' over a three-year period prior to the company merging with another large multi-national pharmaceutical company. In-depth interviews of seven women managers in the Specialist Division were conducted by telephone. This group of women were selected because they were all from the one division within the organisation. The rationale behind this was to eliminate any organisational cultural differences that may exist between divisions, as these could influence how women reacted to the *Grid* model.

The women were selected from the sales and marketing field representing all states of Australia. All these managers had worked under the *Grid* system for at least two years. The participants consisted of four state managers, two product managers and one marketing director.

In-depth interviews of 1 – 1.5 hours were conducted with each respondent. The questions were based on the principles of the *Grid* and respondents were required to discuss their experiences working under this model, and their subsequent perceptions of its application within the organisation. Key issues were reconfirmed with participants to ensure their views were correctly documented.

Whilst the researchers acknowledge that telephone interviews do have potential to distort the data, because of the geographical location of the participants it was not feasible or affordable to interview them face to face. Hence telephone was chosen as the most cost effective and timely medium to conduct the interviews. Every effort was made to ensure that participants' responses were recorded accurately, and as they intended.

The interviews were analysed for recurring and underlying themes that emerged from the data. The researchers compared notes and together determined and agreed on the interpretation of the findings.

Findings

Not always realistic

The majority (six) of the women interviewed thought that achieving the 9:9 management style was not always realistic or appropriate. For example, one manager reported that there were times when it was necessary to revert to a more authoritarian style (9:1) because of time constraints and/or lack of employee experience.

To run a busy sales office and manage a state effectively means that some decisions need to be made quickly, and whilst it would be great to use the more consultative approach of 9:9, you sometimes can't wait for everyone to give you their opinion, and if you did you'd never get anything done.

Giving feedback (critique)

All managers thought the *Grid* was helpful in giving negative feedback, because members of the organisation had been trained in the benefits of 'critique' and understood that it was a tool that offered help and assistance, rather than criticism of an individual.

However, several problems in giving feedback were identified. One manager believed her team were unable to use the 'critique' tool as intended by Blake and Mouton.

Personality differences, conflict and a competitive environment never really gave the ideals of Grid a chance ... critique became a war of words and a weapon that was wielded to gain the upper hand ... when you gave critique people

misinterpreted it and because of the environment distorted it. It was impossible to just address the facts with all the undercurrents that were going on ...

Similarly two other managers believed feedback was not always used appropriately as several employees did not fully understand the difference between critique and criticism. These managers also felt *Grid* offered an easy opportunity for people to mask a personal attack behind the guise of providing 'critique' of an individual's ideas.

Five participants perceived that women were regarded as being too 'soft' on their subordinates. They felt that women managers tended to speak in a conciliatory manner and give positive feedback before giving negative critique and reprimands. This feedback was at times misinterpreted by their male subordinates. For example, while one woman manager thought she was being fair and task-focused, her male subordinates considered her directives too soft because she did not speak in an authoritative manner. She believed that many of the males working under her felt unsure of the boundaries and consequently overstepped the mark, despite the female manager believing she had clearly communicated where those boundaries were.

In addition another respondent reported that when she changed to a more direct style and '*laid it on the line*', her male subordinates '*could not handle it*', and felt hard done by. Feedback to her from subordinates indicated that they found her more direct critique was harder to take than the same feedback given by a male manager. Subordinates did not seem comfortable with a more masculine approach to providing feedback from someone whose communication style was known to be more consultative.

Candor

Four of the interviewed participants felt men were better prepared to receive direct, candid 'critique' whereas women were more likely to take critique personally, which adversely affected their work performance and work flow.

Five managers commented on the need to establish an environment of trust before participants were ready to receive candid critique. In contrast, one respondent believed that an inverse relationship existed and that by providing candid critique an environment of trust would be created.

Sharing blame

Interestingly, the impact of negative feedback extended beyond the individual in the case where the sales team was mainly female, whereas the opposite was true for a sales team with a male majority. For example, when one sales manager took negative feedback personally, the other female sales managers regarded the negative feedback as a personal attack on them as well. In contrast, when such feedback was given to a male manager at the same level, his colleagues left him isolated and solely accountable.

Organisational conflict

Contrary to expectations the *Grid's* advocacy of open and candid communication in order to enhance participation and organisational efficiencies, in this instance was not working. The communication became closed and guarded, and an 'us against them' attitude between team members and departments pervaded the company. Whilst the women interviewed indicated that organisational conflict existed prior to the implementation of the *Grid*, the model did not improve or help rectify the deteriorating situation.

There was always some type of organisational conflict going on, but when the whole company had been supposedly trained in the methods of *Grid* it seemed to do little to help build bridges in an environment of distrust and smouldering aggression created by a pending merger.

Taking credit

All the women interviewed complained that many of their ideas were often adopted by their male counterparts, who also took credit for these ideas. As one manager perceived it:

They often jump into a discussion and pick up the idea and take ownership of it. It then very quickly becomes 'I' instead of 'we' and before long, they have the idea credited to them. Yes, they are very good at doing that.'

All the women interviewed felt the female employees of 'Drug Corp Australia' were less boastful than the men, and often down played their achievements and ideas. Male employees tended to claim ownership of a sound idea and use it for corporate leverage to improve their status. It would appear that this behaviour is contrary to the the Grid's philosophy of supporting the team effort.

Contributing ideas

Under the *Grid* model, 9:9 people are expected to express their convictions and reservations in a logical and convincing manner. By 'telling it how it is' their values, opinions and beliefs would be respected. The women interviewed perceived that many of the employees at Drug Corp Australia, particularly the women, did not have this skill and could not confidently express their opinions in this way. They believed that many women found the risk of doing so was too high and failure could result in loss of face, loss of credibility or even business suicide. Participants also felt women tended to be less direct, ask more questions, use *we* instead of *I*, and not always remove emotion. Whilst *Grid* ideally aims to create an open, supportive environment in the workplace, this did not happen and the more direct male communication pattern appeared to dominate.

For example, it was perceived by a majority of respondents (5) that those women with a more direct and masculine communication style seemed to embrace the *Grid* system more readily than those women with a more indirect feminine communication style. Those with the more masculine style could convey their ideas and opinions concisely and confidently at meetings, gain credit for their ideas, defend their opinions and withstand a verbal attack or challenge from others. Alternatively, those with the more feminine style felt intimidated, contributed less and were considered lower in status. This dynamic seems to be contrary to the goals of *Grid* which seeks to encourage everyone to listen effectively and contribute information before decisions are made.

Adapting communication styles

The respondents experience from this study suggests that women tended to modify their speech according to who they were talking to, and adapt different techniques for different personalities and situations. These female managers believed the real key to successful management was being in tune with the person they were talking to—with women they could be more emotional, whilst with men, more analytical. These women considered the *Grid* to be a predominantly analytical model which suited men better than the women.

In a sales environment women tend to do business by building relationships and by being intuitive and emotional in their communication with their customers. In a specialist pharmaceutical field this was the very key to their success.

Limitations

While this study has several limitations, it does provide a beginning for further research.

The study was qualitative in nature, the sample very small (seven participants) and the study only concentrated on one division (sales and marketing) within one organisation. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalised to the other divisions within 'Drug Corp Australia', or any other organisation using *Grid Management*.

The case study itself was retrospective as 'Drug Corp Australia' merged with another large multinational pharmaceutical company in 1996. As such, participants' memories may have distorted their true feelings about working under the *Management Grid*. Small inadequacies/benefits of the model may have been forgotten or overlooked, and the final impression may have been distorted by how successful the individual was within the organisation.

The women managers' impressions of *Grid* may also be influenced by the management style of their own managers. Whether they reported to a male or female manager may have influenced their impression of *Grid* because of the communication differences highlighted in this case study.

The study only looked at the managers' perspective. More information could be gained by speaking to each manager's peers and subordinates.

Men were not included in this study. A study of both genders would give a better perspective of whether the Grid is gender free, better suited to the male communication style, female style, or an androgynous style.

Conclusions and implications

Of the women interviewed, they all felt that there were some good reasons behind implementing the *Grid* model; particularly as a tool for managing conflict, imparting negative feedback and for just stepping back and evaluating the situation. It can benefit women by encouraging workers to listen effectively and discuss their feeling about certain issues.

The aim of *Grid* was to achieve synergies between groups and in so doing increase productivity (Iles & Johnston, 1989). Findings suggest that the 9.9 model was not always realistic and possible to achieve, and that a consultative approach is not always conducive to achieving deadlines.

Giving and receiving critique is a powerful tool when used appropriately. However, it must be monitored and systems put in place to ensure it is not abused and used to make personal attacks on individuals.

It would appear from the experiences of participants within this study that less direct communicators risk having their ideas claimed by others because they did not express them as confidently as their colleagues. This is specifically related to communication differences between the genders.

Furthermore, the majority of respondents perceived that women who had a more direct and masculine approach to communication seemed to more readily embrace the *Grid* system than women with a more indirect method of communication.

The *Grid* works as a blueprint for managers to follow, which does force participants to adapt a certain communication style. All the managers interviewed believed that to manage everyone with the same style is unrealistic and unachievable, and communication should be modified to suit different personalities and situations.

The experiences of those women interviewed raise some interesting questions about using such a management system. The *Grid* and its philosophy appear at face value to be relatively gender free as it claims to best suit an androgenous communication style. While it embraces both female (concern for people) and masculine (concern for performance) characteristics, in reality, its implementation in the work force does not. The model was judged by the study's respondents to be better suited to the masculine communication style because of the emphasis placed on direct, candid critique and presenting ideas in an equally direct, concise and emotionless manner. This seemed to overshadow the feminine elements of concern for people and the building of a trusting relationship within teams and within the organisation.

The authors feel that the fault may not be in the *Management Grid* itself, but in how it is introduced into an organisation. During training sessions more emphasis could be placed on understanding different communication styles, particularly gender differences. If employees are to adopt a true 9:9 style, more emphasis has to be placed on concern for people. Currently, with greater emphasis on performance, the contribution by women is being disadvantaged or overlooked.

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LEADING FROM THE INSIDE-LEADING FROM THE OUTSIDE: WOMEN'S VOICE FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE TO INTEGRATE GENDER INTO AGRICULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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This paper shares some of our experiences as women from culturally diverse backgrounds integrating gender into agriculture and development in curriculum development, research priorities, and grass roots action. Despite the global importance of women in agriculture this area is regarded as “non traditional” for the employment of professional women. Our experiences highlight the dilemmas and double binds facing professional women in agriculture, and their strengths. We are both insiders and outsiders. The paper highlights the struggle and successful strategies.

Introduction

Women are integral to agriculture, including food production and storage, in developed and developing countries, providing more than 50% of agricultural labour globally. However, agriculture is still regarded as a non-traditional career for women. Despite the rhetoric, gender concerns have not been prominent in practice.

The last three decades have seen a growing recognition of the role played by institutions in sustaining gender inequalities in development. Miller & Razavi (1998) described women in these organisations as “missionaries” pursuing transformative change, but “mandarins” dealing with the constraints imposed by working in bureaucracies. Tinker (1989) and Kabeer (1994) described scholars, advocates, and practitioners, working with agencies to integrate women into development, as ‘social actors’ in development.

This paper shares the leadership experiences over 25 years, of three women from different cultural and organisational backgrounds who are seeking to integrate gender into agriculture and rural development: Frances, an academic at an Australian university, Thelma, the gender specialist at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in the Philippines, an organisation severely criticised for its role in the green revolution and its impact on women, and Rahmi, director of the only non-government organisation (NGO) on Lombok (Indonesia), which specifically worked with poor, rural women. Our lives intersected when Thelma and Rahmi completed their PhD's while working with Frances. We are ‘insiders’ as members of organisations, but ‘outsiders’ in that gender concerns are not the dominant interest of our organisations, and there are few professional women in agriculture.

To lead is defined as “to direct the course of by going ahead or along with, to guide, to direct by influence to a course of action or thought, to mark the way for” (Webster Dictionary). Leadership should not be confused with status, position or title. There are few real life illustrations of how women's concerns are actually being integrated (Castillo, 1995). The role of universities in perpetuating gender blindness in agriculture and development has received little attention, although they educate future professionals, and academics are frequently development consultants.

We have ‘exposed’ our experiences because improving the lives of poor rural women is a passionate, moral and ethical concern, requiring a deep commitment to goals and values. Academics and researchers, however, are traditionally trained to be objective, to write without passionate argument (Brett, 1998). However, we have shared our struggles to provide insight, since we begin to understand something only after we have begun to change it, when we really ‘see’ it (Miller, 1986), and in the spirit described by hooks (1994) who is grateful to those “who dare to create theory from

the location of pain and struggle, who courageously expose wounds to give us their experience to teach and guide, as a means to chart new theoretical journeys”.

Beginnings

For Frances and Rahmi their activism was directly attributable to their family backgrounds, and oppressive societal expectations, whereas for Thelma it was her confrontation with the realities of a woman's life, and external pressure on IRRI to address gender concerns.

Frances

My mother had to leave school at the age of 12. She felt her lack of education deeply. When my father was unable to work his very sense of identity as a man was undermined because he could not provide for his family, and my mother's employment opportunities were limited. They were determined that I would be educated.

In 1974, only two years after the first women students were permitted to enrol in agriculture, I was appointed, with a PhD in microbiology, to an Agricultural College, not realising that some colleagues were “uneasy” about my higher qualifications. As the only woman I just “got on with my job”, but my views often differed from my male colleagues'. Women can succeed in non traditional areas, but this is often at the expense of their soul (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1994).

Thelma

Outside requests in 1981 initiated the International Agricultural Research Centres (IARC) interest in the importance of women in agriculture. I was assigned as an agricultural economics research assistant at IRRI to develop a methodology integrating women's concerns into ongoing farming systems research. IRRI scientists were only interested in increasing crop productivity. Nutrition was not an issue for them until a woman doctor criticised IRRI for being “blind to reality” as many children of rice farming families were suffering from malnutrition.

I was not trained in nutrition, food adequacy and consumption, but in conducting surveys. Most income data were obtained from the “head” of the households, the husband, but most of the labour was provided by women as their husbands were working in the city. Women were more knowledgeable about labour, input costs, food consumption and adequacy, health and nutrition, income and debts, than were their husbands. Men were more interested in crop yields, women in eating quality, taste, and storageability. Despite this, I followed the conventional methods of obtaining and aggregating information from the husband, which made women's contribution invisible, implying they were “mere housewives,” not farmers.

I was the detached observer, only interested in collecting data, and not in “women's issues”. On one occasion I questioned a mother about how much and what they ate, unmindful of the male toddler who was almost blind and weak. I realised later that the child was malnourished and hungry. I immediately brought him to the town clinic to be weighed by the nurses, who, instead of helping, reprimanded the mother for neglecting her son. I promised myself that I would never again be detached from the people I interview, but would learn more about their real problems and if possible, do something.

I did not know what technologies to give to women squatting in the mud pulling rice seedlings. My male supervisor said that the only help possible was to teach

them how to make baskets, which challenged me to help them improve their farming systems.

Rahmi

I come from a humble background. My father had to retire early. My mother's difficulties bringing up nine children with limited economic resources put a 'seed of spirit' in my heart to transform women's lives. I am committed to working with women and grass roots organisations. Completing my PhD meant I had to leave my seven month old daughter. This was very hard for me, but my husband said I should be successful for our daughter, and for our family. Maybe she will know that women can move beyond the domestic sphere.

Bringing about change/transformation

Frances, as the only woman academic in agriculture, sought to bring about change through a range of strategies including: curriculum development to explicitly include gender; raising the awareness of academics; advocacy and policy development for women and other minority groups; and through research, including supervision of research students. In IRRI, Thelma sought to incorporate gender into the research agenda. As a NGO practitioner, Rahmi directly improved the lives of women, and lobbied for systemic change. A "snapshot" of these experiences is provided.

Frances

Although the faculty espoused a systems approach this was only a partial view as women were not included. In 1983 my appointment to the first Equal Opportunity Advisory Committee legitimised my interest in women in agriculture. Equal Opportunity (EO) legislation gave valuable legitimacy, and institutional impetus, to address gender concerns, especially when EO was a high priority. However, gender as an issue, and my expertise, were marginalised. This has been exacerbated by current entrepreneurialism in which course availability is determined by student numbers, irrespective of other considerations. Integrating gender is still seen as an optional extra, requiring no special expertise.

Some Masters students did not enrol in courses on gender because it was not seen as legitimate by their employers. However many others, including men from developing countries, found it transformed their understanding, and was directly relevant to their professional and personal development. However, some (male) lecturers 'reminded' students that gender was peripheral to their main area of interest. Ostensibly to increase student numbers, I was told to change the subject's name to "Gender and the Environment", but then told "gender isn't a critical issue in the environment". Academics stated they could supervise research students interested in gender because "they had a whole bookshelf of books on gender", or changed the thesis topic from 'women' to 'people' in livestock production. Tragically, one female student did not complete her thesis when she was diverted from her passion of working with women from her village to "institutional and indigenous knowledge systems".

As an advocate I was seen as the "conscience" of committees, but issues were personalised, undermining me, rather than addressing structural issues. Some academics 'addressed' gender issues by including a woman in projects, irrespective of her expertise, choosing women they felt 'comfortable' with.

I sought support from senior management but was told "if you can't stand the heat then you shouldn't be in the kitchen", and, "you must remember, you are

competing against people for whom the University is their whole life". I am "too forthright, too idealistic, my principles are too important, I am too supportive of students," and yet "you don't sell yourself enough", "you don't care enough for students". I was criticised for both doing too much, and yet not enough. Male colleagues laughed when I told them I was pregnant, and a memorandum stated that I should have planned my pregnancy better to fit into the semester teaching program

In 1991, 17 years after I was appointed, I was the only tenured female out of 40 in Agriculture, and yet was asked to transfer to another area, because of my flexibility. Academics also said I was "too supportive of students", particularly women and minority groups. The fact that there were now no tenured academics in agriculture did not appear to be an important consideration, although 30% of undergraduate students were women.

Thelma

My hypothesis, that an increase in rice production and in total family income does not necessarily lead to improved family welfare, was contrary to that of economists. I tested this by desegregating data to differentiate gender, and included off-farm income thereby demonstrating women's contribution.

I visited the village frequently in my quest to identify problems and improvements, inviting scientists to accompany me. We introduced new rice varieties which increased women's income, a rice dehuller which reduced women's and drudgery, and other technologies. I was guided and inspired by Dr Swaminathan then Director General, who believed that women should not be mere objects, but subjects, and that the greatest challenge lies in motivating scientists to undertake a process of listening and learning through collaboration with poor women (Swaminathan, 1985).

An important challenge was changing the mindsets and ways of thinking of agricultural scientists. We used an experiential workshop for scientists to learn how to build rapport with farmers, how not to show authority, and asked farmers to show us their expertise such as making cow dung cakes. We went to the field and transplanted rice, The village crowd were highly amused as many of us almost fell in the muddy fields.

Equipped with a new way of thinking, innovative methods for data collection, and a personal mission to make poor women the direct beneficiaries of rice research, I began research in India. We conducted interviews in the kitchens to prevent husbands intruding. Every visit to Eastern India was a learning experience for me. I tried to be "one of the women" as much as possible by wearing Indian dress and the "bindi", the red mark on the forehead, to indicate that I am married. I was invited to attend Indian festivals and ceremonies.

Initially scientists were resistant and sceptical about the value and relevance of including women in research and development, thinking this would reduce their role as wives and mothers, that research on women in rice farming systems was a fad, a product of the women's liberation movement and the ideology of western feminists. The word "women" still runs the risk of being seen as special interest or marginal. Some scientists still require convincing that the recognition of women's roles will help scientists improve their work. Gender analysis is still not integrated into ongoing research by many IRRI scientists.

Rahmi

On Lombok women rarely hold leadership positions as this is associated with the male domain, and is strongly influenced by religious values. In addition, few men, or women, have university degrees. The reaction of both men and women to women leaders is contradictory, on the one hand, surprise and appreciation, but on the other, doubt: "let's see to what extent women's leadership will go", "she is only a woman". Women's leadership is judged more harshly than for men, and is closely monitored in their public, and private life. She is either "too strict" or "too weak". If she is very strong her staff say "her husband must be under her domination", whereas forceful behaviour is seen as normal for men. If there is any problem, her leadership is blamed: "See! It's because she is a woman!". An Indonesian woman leader therefore, has to show that she can lead, and that women's leadership is as good, in fact, better, than men's. Otherwise women's leadership will continue to be underestimated.

On Lombok only 5% of cooperatives have women members, and none are solely for women. I led a cross-sectoral team working with women to establish a women's cooperative, but I have encountered oppression and barriers at many levels: with women with whom I am working; societal power structures; the interaction of the public and private spheres; and with overseas funding agencies.

The village Headman pressured my husband to influence me, but my husband responded that it was my business. NGO's in Jakarta focus on issues such as women's independence, but the priorities in rural areas are women's livelihood and health, where women's rights must include their economic and social conditions. We also need to work with men, so that they support, rather than undermine, women's activities, and consequently for women's and men's development.

Some international organisations do not understand the daily life of the people and that NGO staff themselves need an adequate salary. They have unrealistic expectations about the time frame required for developing sustainable projects to empower women; and sometimes have very different priorities from local concerns, so that we have to fit into their priorities when our real concern is the economic condition of the poor. In addition, the Indonesian government is highly suspicious of NGO's.

I am proud to be called a leader, but it is also a challenge. Achieving justice between men and women may not be possible in this generation, but we may reach the first step, that women will teach their daughters that a girl can go beyond the domestic sphere.

Outcomes

For Frances positive outcomes include her own learning, and her student's success, creating a "ripple" effect. One male Masters student used his research for the legal defence of a female victim of domestic violence. A reviewer of Rahmi's thesis said that if academe can find a space for this type of research it will rewrite history and knowledge. The real mark of Rahmi's success is, however, the continued improvement of life for village women. The village women's cooperative is surviving, despite political and economic turmoil in Indonesia

Institutional recognition integrating gender into agriculture and development, has not been achieved adequately within the university, although progress has been achieved in IRRI, where the year 2000 strategy explicitly included gender and IRRI is taking the lead for the IARC's. Thelma received the

1997 Chairman's Award for Outstanding Local Scientist for success in integrating gender concerns into research and development. IRRI's success and leadership is attributed to the Director General's support policy advocates and outside support ensuring gender issues are written into mainstream policy implementation being assisted by international legitimisation; gender analysis shown to make a difference; collaboration with scientists including joint publications and staff commitment.

Making sense of our experiences

Our experiences demonstrate the 'double binds,' rooted in history, which constrain women's power and place (Jamieson, 1995). Underlying the binds are "specific constructs: the no choice/choice, the self fulfilling prophecy, the no-win situation, the unrealisable expectation, and the double standard. Each circumscribes choice ... " The binds are not discrete, but each is prismatic and magnifies the otherthe vestiges of ancient prejudice die hard" (Jamieson, 1995). Binds include the following:

- Women can exercise their wombs or their brains but not both.
- Women who speak out are immodest and will be shamed, while women who are silent will be ignored or dismissed.
- Women are subordinate whether they claim be different from men or the same.
- Women considered feminine will be judged incompetent, and women who are competent, unfeminine. Women have to "reconcile contradictory expectations" to succeed.
- Women will be scrutinised differently and for longer than men.

Our experiences working with each other, and within our organisations illustrate the importance of new models of leadership which acknowledge the importance of creating webs and consensus (Matusak, 1997), by modelling integrity, empowering others, and being wise (Hagberg, 1994).

However, we are still working in the warrior system in which the 'female' values of responsibility, connection, and inclusion have been devalued (Helgessen, 1995; Miller, 1986). The "warrior" system, celebrating the lone hero, the rugged individual (but not if they are female) was particularly prominent in Frances' experience. This is not surprising as Australian agriculture is associated with images of "the bush" and the masculine hero. However, as universities are critical sites of knowledge production and legitimisation, also providing advice to developing countries, continuing gender blindness is disturbing .

Kanter (1977) argues that the behaviour of men and women in organisations depends more on the nature of the organisation than on intrinsic differences in the behaviour of men and women as a group. External pressure through lobbying or legislation is therefore a critical impetus for organisations to incorporate gender concerns.

Effectively integrating gender into organisations requires external support (alliances, lobbying, and legislation), and internal support from senior management, and was demonstrated most clearly in IRRI, where Thelma, encouraged by the Director General , demonstrated the value of collaboration at all levels. As demonstrated by Frances' experience, it is difficult, if not impossible, for individual women on the "outside" but within organisations to achieve gender integration, since organisations acknowledge and reward those with goals in line with those of the organisation (Kanter, 1977). The system is resistant to change, not because women are invisible, but because the system is blind to the inequities (Kabeer, 1994), and a lack of political will (Kettle, 1996).

Our stories are different and yet similar. There are no easy answers, but rather it is an unfolding process of lived experience and for theory to emerge from efforts to make sense of, and analyse, these concrete, everyday experiences (hooks, 1994). Effectively integrating gender requires addressing this lived experience from multiple standpoints.

Our experiences are consistent with Van Nostrand's (1993, p114) description: "both leaders and peers may discourage a woman by not giving her enough to do, by criticising her because she is doing too much, or because she is doing it the wrong ways ... by men refusing to network with, listen to, and learn from women" . Microinequities which single out a person, or make assumptions about

someone's capabilities are particularly dangerous because it is only later that the recipient recognises the full impact of the sexism. "We should not forget the political benefit males receive when they degrade, resist, and try to contain females".

Van Nostrand (1993) also notes that the critical juxtaposition of gender, power, collusion and leadership is a contemporary issue with essential and poignant significance. She argues that all are leaders; we can spot injustice, and we can mentor each other. This takes awareness, authenticity, commitment, and action. Gender-responsible leaders, are made, not born.

Our commitment to integrating gender concerns, particularly of poor women has been because of our belief that a rich life is fundamentally one of serving others, of trying to leave the world a little better than we found it. But this commitment to a life of service goes against the grain in our society, so we must also talk about the strategies that will enable us to sustain this sensibility, this commitment (hooks, 1994).

Our experiences add to knowledge, but do not provide definitive answers, They pose the questions and the dilemmas faced in transformative change. However, "a more inclusive view of the history of women shows them surmounting, sometimes one by one, a series of double binds whose roots are deeply embedded in the past ... If women do not disable themselves with the rhetoric of disempowerment and victimisation they will enter the twenty first century able to stand, speak, dance, and redefine the world as the need arises" (Jamieson, 1995)

Leadership for transformative change requires being true to oneself, which is the very essence of finding one's voice (Helgessen, 1990). "We not only want a piece of the pie, but to choose the flavour, and know how to make it ourselves" (Bhatt, cited in Rose, 1992. p14). It requires outside and inside alliances to create systemic change, openness and flexibility, resilience, patience, attention to detail, and persistence, and most importantly sustaining commitment and passion, and 'passionate objectivity.'

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EMBRACING LEADERSHIP DIVERSITY: AN UNTAPPED RESOURCE IN RURAL COMMUNITIES⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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In this paper an alternative style of leadership is explored as an effective strategy in engaging women in the strengthening and development of rural communities. The research demonstrates that this approach increases community participation, provides a range of leadership role models and promotes the notion that everyone has a positive contribution to make.

Currently in Australia, major economic and social changes are taking place. There is considerable 'out-migration' from many rural communities. At the same time, there has been a reduction in the funding of infrastructure investment to sustain the long term development of the rural sector. These factors have caused significant personal strain for rural families and communities and many rural people are experiencing an increasing sense of powerlessness and detachment from decision makers. Yet there has been little informed examination of the intra-community structures, processes and resources.

This paper utilises two case studies to highlight an inclusive approach. It examines what can occur when people are given opportunities to develop and share their innate talents, skills, experience and wisdom. The result of this process has enabled women to contribute to their families, businesses, communities and industries in new and life-changing ways.

The first case study resulted from a National Rural Health Project which used 'story' as a means of identifying and promoting the potential contribution of rural women. The characteristics of the indigenous model of eldership were examined and adapted. The results included women publishing their stories, the establishment of an annual celebration of the contribution of women to the community, and the implementation of leadership training (incorporating aspects of both eldership and leadership).

The second case study highlights the process, learnings and outcomes of the current National Dairy Women's Leadership Project which is aimed at developing the leadership capacity within the dairy industry. It has already produced significant personal and industry change. Results of this project demonstrate the effectiveness of leadership training for women in particular rural sectors and the paper will enable readers to gain an understanding of the processes and design of these projects.

Introduction

"Rural people reaching their potential" is a vision which requires diversity in leadership.

However, in most rural areas a patriarchal system still predominates and men remain the "accepted" leaders and key decision-makers. This has demonstrably reduced (if not negated) the opportunity for many people, particularly women, to reach their full potential. Patriarchy is defined as, "the manifestation and institutionalisation of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension is male dominance over women in society in general" (Lerner, 1986, p. 239). In rural Australia patriarchy has prevented the development of many wise leaders and elders.

In addition to patriarchy, the existing milieu of economic rationalism has acted as though people and the economy are separate entities with no inter-relationship. This has become the dominant factor in policy-making at government and corporate levels and has had many negative consequences for rural communities. The impact on the social fabric of rural society is becoming evident with the closure of services, facilities and organisations at a community level. Facilities which once provided the 'hub' for community activity, are no longer perceived as being economically viable. An outcome of this is that rural people spend much time travelling in order to access services and facilities outside the community. This decreases communication, networks and community spirit, and increases stress and financial hardship.

There is an unfortunate synergy between the proponents of economic rationalism and the patriarchal system of rural communities. Dealing with these powers and persuasions will require a different leadership, one which can inspire and emerge from a base of humility, integrity and community.

This reality of rural despair is reflected in the growing numbers of people experiencing isolation and a sense of disenfranchisement. This is particularly true for women, youth, people from a non-English speaking background and Aboriginal citizens. All of these groups have identified a growing sense of disconnection and a sense of powerlessness over the decisions which impact on their daily lives.

Rural communities have yet to acknowledge the full extent of the available intra-community resources, choosing to exclude people because they are new arrivals, or because they act, look or think differently. Such people are perceived as threats to the status quo, rather than as potential contributors. Even though the emerging diversity has the potential to result in a vibrant, responsible and progressive community; the threat of change often results in reactionary and hostile responses.

The result is that rural people appear as either accepting of the status quo or apathetic. This in turn is perceived as a mandate for the existing leaders within our patriarchal society to continue with tradition, 'the way it has always been done'. One aspect of this tradition is communicating in a particular style, that of 'argument'. Tannen describes the argument culture as "one which is getting in the way of problem solving" and adds that, "our spirits are corroded by living in an atmosphere of unrelenting contention" (Tannen, 1998, p.3). The use of debate is a significant feature of the argument culture – Jaworski defines debate as "to beat down" whereas, dialogue is defined as "meaning flowing through" (Jaworski, 1998, p. 110). These definitions provide powerful images and clarify the choice when adopting a particular style of communication. The decision is critical for those in a position of leadership.

The concept of servant leadership reinforces the need for dialogue and cooperative problem solving, as ideally, leaders become part of a team, contributing to the collective goal. The servant leader, according to McGee-Cooper, "asks to be coached and given honest feedback as well as offering the same to those served. Making it safe for teammates to be honest and being accountable to change, grow, communicate, and resolve differences in a spirit of mutual respect", is the foundation of this new paradigm. (McGee-Cooper, 1998, pp.78-79).

This style of leadership embraces such characteristics as listening, reflecting, integrity, willingness to learn and the ability to place the collective needs ahead of those of the individual. Servant leadership emphasises that everyone has a contribution to make. Part of this process is tapping into the strengths of each individual, which in turn increases involvement and promotes reciprocity, with participants being both 'role model' and 'student'.

Embracing diversity and building a sense of connectedness can make the difference. A key technique which enables people to make these connections whilst valuing diversity is the sharing of 'story.' 'Story' is a powerful tool to highlight the skills, knowledge, networks and wisdom within a group and commence the process of creating a team.

Research would suggest that there are three factors involved when rural communities create an environment of social and economic progress, together with opportunities for personal growth. They are: to take the initiative to plan for the future; to encourage participation; and to embrace contributions from all residents.

Case study 1

The aim of the Rural Health Project was to evaluate the social impact of the rural crisis on individuals, organisations and communities and then act on the findings. The project was conducted in three states across Australia from 1991 to 1995.

Through the extensive consultation with rural people and community workers, the project consultants gathered evidence to suggest that women were increasingly involved in their rural enterprises. This resulted from their physical contribution on farms and in businesses, in an attempt to reduce labor costs. The women's emotional contribution also increased significantly, by accepting, in many cases, total responsibility for the family's well-being. Furthermore, the data suggested that women were taking more responsibility in the management of the enterprise, including negotiating with banks, meeting with accountants and accessing information in 'the system' to identify additional sources of support. Women, therefore became a major focus of the Rural Health project. Their individual need to be supported was acknowledged, and the value of sharing stories of initiative and determination in resourcing their families and communities was recognised.

In addition to the community consultation and mapping of issues at the local level, it became evident that there was a need to explore alternative models of leadership. To this end the project was resourced by a series of interviews with indigenous women elders from both Australia and Canada. This experience made a significant impact on the thinking, attitudes and understanding of the project consultant, in terms of what actually constitutes leadership. The most important characteristic to arise from the interviews with 'wise women elders' was their ability to embrace their talents, develop them further, reflect on life's challenges and use this to work for the collective good. (For a detailed statement of the characteristics of 'Wise Women Elders' see the appendix).

A small rural community in North East Victoria was chosen for this 'women specific' project, in order to respond to the demands and challenges women were facing with minimal support. This community was similar to many other rural communities, with males appointed to the majority of public leadership positions based on tradition rather than by matching the skills, knowledge and wisdom to the position. Appointment to leadership in this manner fails to acknowledge that in a time of change and adversity all human resources need to be harnessed if individuals and communities are to be sustained. Furthermore, it fails to recognise the importance of appropriately matching a person and their skills to a particular role. Hence, it became clear that in this community like many others, minimal time had been invested in identifying the untapped resources within the community and applying them to the presenting issues and required action.

It was in this context that a group of women from this small Victoria community, with a population of 2000, were invited to come together in August 1995 to consider:

- The role of 'wise women' in their lives,
- Issues facing rural women, and
- Action that could be taken to respond to these issues.

The eight women were aged between twenty and sixty, and were of very diverse backgrounds, in terms of education and occupation. The group included farmers, homemakers, community workers, a teacher, and a business woman. This diversity was important in gaining insight into the range of experiences and issues which existed for women throughout the community.

These women, like many interviewed subsequently, were self-effacing in terms of their worth and contribution, but they shared their personal stories as a way of connecting with each other, some of whom didn't know each other. As the first woman shared her story in great depth and with considerable emotion, this gave other women 'permission' to be more self-disclosing than they otherwise may have been.

The women delighted in hearing each other's stories, not only gaining an increased understanding of each other but also learning of the depth of experience in the other women's lives for the first time.

Having shared their stories they then shared their concerns, owning the issues for themselves, rather than speaking on behalf of others.

The three issues identified at this first meeting were:

1. Isolation, not only physical and geographic but also emotional, due to the daily demands of family and business life and the lack of personal support.
2. The lack of acknowledgment of women's contribution in the community.
3. The lack of documentation of women's history within the community.

Some of the women had clearly considered these issues prior to this meeting but had not had the appropriate forum, energy or shared vision to act on their concerns. The following strategies were identified as a way of responding to the needs:

- To establish a group to provide support, inspiration and outreach to women in the community.
- To hold a forum to celebrate the contribution of women to the community.
- To document the stories of women, to ensure their history was not lost to the community.

A book of stories, highlighting the diversity, talent and wisdom within the community was published by the women. A second book has since been published. Many women embraced the opportunity to take time to reflect on their life after reading the first book. They wanted to share their own picture of their life, rather than the one created for them by the community based on their roles as mother, wife, volunteer and paid worker. The storytelling process enabled 'ordinary' women (who were in fact, quite extraordinary) to have their achievements acknowledged, affirmed and acclaimed by all community members. The book is a powerful symbol of the untapped resources within all rural communities.

A "Celebration of Women" was planned for International Women's Day. One hundred and ten women attended and it was truly a celebration. Several women shared their story at the gathering before the book of stories, entitled "Heart and Soul" was launched. A picnic was chosen for its inclusive and informal nature, and it created the perfect environment. An annual celebration now occurs with the sharing of women's stories being a highlight.

A further development is the training programs that draw on the knowledge from both indigenous cultures and those of western communities. These enhance the roles of women as nurturers, change agents, leaders and elders. The human resource potential within rural communities continues to go unrecognised and therefore, underutilised. The challenge is to create processes which both embrace and celebrate diversity.

Case study 2

The second case study involves the work undertaken across Australia with women in the Dairy Industry in order to enhance the sustainability and profitability of the industry in an international context. In the process of achieving this goal women are provided with support and skills to 'claim their story' and confidently create the next chapters of their life with a sense of their own purpose.

The developmental work of this project was extensive and involved many hours of discussion with the Research and Development Corporation which funded the project so that all women, (rather than the obvious women who would fit the traditional leadership mould) could participate and become involved in leading the industry. Following this inclusive model is congruent with Spender's statement that, "to be representative, and inclusive, to take account of all the possibilities, is a more appropriate model for decision makers ... For the chances of being able to make good decisions for the whole community (industry) must be considerably reduced if only one group – gender, class or race – is party to the decision" (Spender, 1996, p. 9).

The aim of the project is to create an environment, and the supporting strategies within the dairy industry, which will improve the sustainability, profitability and well-being of industry members by more fully utilising the people resources. Specifically the project aims to:

- Create opportunities for women to develop the full range of skills necessary to increase their confidence, establish networks, increase their overall understanding of the industry and take on leadership roles.
- Develop the capacity of women as facilitators of change and development,
- Increase the participation of women in industry decision making processes.
- The following assumptions have been borne out during the project:
- Women want to be more actively involved,
- Gender specific groups are important for developing confidence, introducing role models, building trust and creating a secure learning environment,
- Experiential learning increases the likelihood of long term change,
- Increasing the capacity of the women will have positive effects on the industry as a whole.

The initial stage of the project focussed on identifying the barriers to women's involvement in the decision making processes of the industry. These included: a lack of confidence, lack of female role models, the time, cost and distance to attend meetings, lack of child care and a lack of entry points into a traditional male dominated system. In response to the consultation process, the project team facilitated the establishment of networks to reduce the sense of isolation which was experienced by the women. Work was then carried out to emphasise the value of an inclusive approach, in order to share the work load and achieve a profitable and sustainable industry. The process for achieving the project objectives and responding to the findings has been the development and implementation of a leadership training program in all dairy regions of Australia. One of the significant factors contributing to the success of the training program is the diversity of participants involved in terms of: age, previous profession, length of time in the industry and geographic location.

At this stage, three hundred dairy women have completed the three day leadership training program. Included in the program are sessions on personal awareness and development, organisational change and development and industry planning, priorities and opportunities for involvement. The participants identify a project at the completion of the program which will ensure they utilise the skills developed and make a contribution back to the industry. The participant's project is implemented during the subsequent six months, followed by a session to reflect on the learnings, barriers, challenges and achievements that have occurred. There is reason to hope that the self-organising system being developed will include the necessary momentum for both the program to continue, and many of the women to reach their potential.

The outcomes identified to date include:

- Specific projects undertaken which are enhancing family, community and industry.
- A strengthened network of women in the dairy industry.
- Increased skill bank for the industry .
- Increased awareness of the industry structure and decision making processes,
- Increased confidence and involvement.

A further positive outcome is that personal development programs are now being explored for men and mixed gender groups within the dairy industry. Furthermore, other commodity groups are planning to implement personal development programs for their producers. This would indicate that there may be a paradigm shift in terms of rural industries recognising the importance of personal development in the context of change, rather than only advancing technical skills.

As women are supported to embrace and develop their talents, integrate their learnings and contribute to the industry the process of change will strengthen the industry.

Conclusions

Rural Australia is experiencing a time of major change in a political environment which has diminished people's sense of ownership and control over their future. However, it is only when people at a community level take responsibility for planning and implementing their preferred future that change will occur – change which facilitates social and economic progress together with the personal development of individuals.

The two case studies outlined in this paper demonstrate strategies in quite different contexts for increasing the confidence, participation and leadership of women throughout rural Australia.

Acknowledging that all people have a contribution to make, and provide support for them to reach their potential is the first step in the change process. People need to gain information, networks and an understanding of the system in order to equip themselves to bring about change. However, it is each person claiming their unique strengths and identifying their niche in contributing to the collective good which will see the rebirth of community and the values that it can represent.

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Appendix

Characteristics of 'Wise Women Elders'.

Wise Women are people who as individuals:

Are positive. This was the most commonly used adjective by the women interviewed to describe both themselves or the 'wise women' in their lives. "A positive attitude is one of the characteristics of an elder" stated Longboat, the Mohawk Elder and Healer.

Are reflective, and learn from their life experience. The women demonstrated their ability to reflect and learn from their experiences. Allan stated, "my life threatening illness and the loss of my parents while I was still a small child caused great pain, suffering and introspection, however they have enabled me to share my story and methods of coping with others in crisis".

Listen, really listen. This is a significant characteristic, since in the process the speaker is valued and the listener is able to gain insights and knowledge to apply to their own life. "*She is wise and, she listens*" was how an Aboriginal elder was described.

Act with honesty and integrity. Honesty was a highly valued trait which was colourfully highlighted by Hollister, as she told stories about her family's inability to be honest with her in relation to both the death of her pet dog, and then as a ten year old, the sudden death of her mother. In hindsight, the realisation that children can cope better with even the most stressful news, than the sense of betrayal when the truth is kept from them, particularly when the situation directly affects them.

And in their community they:

Have a vision for the future. The women elders believed that they had a contribution to make in terms of creating a better place for this generation and those to follow. Longboat, spoke of working toward her vision of a "self-sustaining community".

Are compassionate but will challenge the status quo and make hard decisions when necessary. All of the women interviewed demonstrated compassion for others but when the longer term or collective interests of the community were at stake, then decisions were made which reflect the greater good.

Focus on solutions not problems. Women elders do not walk away from the problems but having acknowledged the problem, they identify solutions. Longboat identified the need for her community to return to their traditional ways – "the health part of our tradition was sort of falling by the wayside, together with the socialisation". So she went back to college to complement the learnings obtained from her 'wise women elders', in order to reintroduce and provide traditional healing methods to her community.

Acknowledge the value of, and promote interdependence. One of the impressive characteristics of 'wise women elders' is that they have come to know that they don't have to do 'everything'. The women in this study were clear of their own strengths and would seek out others who could complement their skills and knowledge.

Know their purpose in life and contribute accordingly. Through acknowledgment of their skills, life experience and reflection, the women in this project had identified where they could make the greatest impact.

LEADERSHIP OF THE THIRD AGE: WOMEN REMAINING VISIBLE⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

Run the Millennium Mile Harness your passions to challenge the myths

Lynne Schickert

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Recognition of the benefits of maturity and experience has been a major theme this year [1999] as the “grey brigade” celebrates The International Year of the Older Person. Government and community funding has provided activities to promote health and well-being and to utilise the experiences of our more mature citizens, many of whom still work full-time whilst managing family commitments and other community interests.

The business community is now aware of the spending power being generated by the over 50s, a considerable proportion of whom are early retirees, with leisure, banking and housing packages designed for this specific market.

Gone are the days when grandmothers sat knitting in front of the kitchen fire. Today’s grandmothers are found at all levels of government and in the wider business community or are at the forefront addressing the educational needs of society.

Balancing full-time employment and part-time studies together with the role of President of the Western Australia division of the Institute of Professional Secretaries & Administrators (Australia) has been a major challenge over recent years. Competitive race-walking with the WA Veterans Athletics Association maintains my health and fitness and enables me to enjoy a busy lifestyle.

Using my own workplace and community-based experiences as a case study, I will explore how the skills and knowledge of today’s mature women in the workforce can be harnessed to educate and mentor the younger generation and how our energy and passion can be utilised to ensure that a more holistic approach and sense of balance is promoted to other members of society.

Introduction — recruited for the team

Women in Leadership Conferences represent a wealth of stories as women exchange experiences. This interaction is fundamental to the way women learn from each other and provides a bonding element that is rich, colourful and interestingly varied.

In this, the International Year of the Older Person, we look at challenging the myths of ageing and, in particular, the stereotyping of mature women as “grey grandmothers who are not graduates”. When the call for papers for this conference came out I had just finished a diploma in office management and this year’s theme touched a chord with me, so here I am today to share with you my experiences in how I have shaped my life to challenge these myths and how I promote the skills and knowledge of mature women so that we stay visible as we move into the new millennium.

Team statistics — we’re growing grey

It is well documented that as a population we are “growing grey”. As the twenty-first century begins, Australia will experience one of the greatest demographic shifts as the population changes from youth to mature adults. By 2021, nearly one in four Western Australians will be aged 60 years or over and

women will form the majority of the seniors population with an anticipated life expectancy of 85 years (*Planning News*, 1999, p. 1 & 4; source: ABS 1996 Census data).

The effect on our society will be powerful and will influence family life, the demand and delivery of Government services, the structure of the labour market and decision making in the financial sectors. It will lead to many new market opportunities for the public and private sectors as seniors today have more disposable income. With early retirement options they also have more leisure time than did the parents of my generation.

It is heartening to see a number of positive actions being undertaken by the Western Australian State Government in response to this change in demographics. Two major initiatives which focus on positive ageing and the physical, mental and spiritual health and well-being of seniors to ensure optimum quality of life in later years are:

- a seniors policy, 'Time on Our Side'; and
- a Positive Ageing Centre.

(Office of Seniors Interests, 1998, pp. 1 – 4)

These initiatives highlight the importance being placed on the well-being of our State's ageing 'baby boomer' population.

This is a marked contrast to some of the more prevailing social attitudes towards the aged with images and assumptions portraying them as the least capable, the least healthy and the least interesting in society.

Performance impacts — myths, stereotypes and societal perceptions

As one of the cohort fast approaching the age to qualify as a 'senior' I would like to explore what growing older means to women. It's not only the greying hair and the reflection the mirror provide us, but it predominantly comes from the responses of other people towards us and how society views getting older. Stereotypes abound such as

- Older people are a burden.
- Old people don't contribute to society.
- Age equals vulnerable, frail, dependent.
- Grey equals grandmother, not graduate.
- The empty nest syndrome.

(Anike & Ariel, 1987, pp. 22 – 51)

The view that older people are a burden, that they don't contribute to society is a matter for debate. Facts show that one in eight seniors is still in the labour force, one in four is involved in voluntary and community work and the majority of seniors under 70 report having no physical disabilities.

Language has played an important part in maintaining stereotypes. A radio talk-back program highlighting the actions of a landlord who evicted a tenant to increase the property rent for the Olympics mentioned that the tenant was a "grandmother". This became emotive reporting and immediately presented us with a mental picture of someone frail, vulnerable and unable to challenge this process. The fact that she was a grandmother is irrelevant to the more important issue of social justice.

In her address to the Tenth Annual Nursing Issues Congress in 1998, Dr Lowitja O'Donoghue spoke out on the language problem, saying "we need only look at the racks of birthday cards in a news agency to see how language promotes societal preoccupation with adding another birthday – consistent jokes and themes about 'being past it', 'mutton dressed as lamb', 'being over the hill', or 'getting drunk to avoid facing up to the extra candle on the cake'". Whilst some may view these images as humorous, others find them offensive and discriminatory.

Recruitment practices also foster a subtle form of age discrimination. Notwithstanding equal opportunity legislation, many older workers find it difficult to gain employment. As highlighted in a

1999 *West Australian* newspaper advertisement for superannuation funds management, “if you’re over the hill at 50, why is the average age of the world’s leaders 62?” Golda Meir became prime minister of Israel when she was 71, and Indira Gandhi was 63 when returned to power a second time in India in 1980. Here in Australia, compulsory superannuation contributions by an employer can cease at age 70 — another form of age discrimination.

I hope that my experiences and my attitude will provide a counter-stereotype to some of these societal perceptions on ageing. I see that I am now at a stage in my life where I have the experience, the time and the energy to participate in the process of changing societal attitudes by acting as a positive role model. You don’t have to be “old” — it is all to do with attitude. You can

- still enjoy pop music
- wear bright colours to lift your spirits
- have a night out with “the girls”
- write poetry
- trek the Himalayas or Cradle Mountain in Tasmania if that inspires you.

It is *your choice* how you live your life and *attitude* plays a big part in helping you to cope with the ageing process. As Sara Henderson says, “all the strength you need to achieve anything is within you” (Henderson, 1996).

In the starting blocks – early influences ignite the fuse

My story is similar to that of many women in the 1960s, where the option of remaining in the workforce after marriage was not a choice available to us. My husband was transferred to Burnie in Tasmania and his company’s policy at that time was “district managers’ wives did not work”. There I was, newly married, a long way from family support and with limited opportunities for self-fulfilment. I took up tennis, used my talents for sewing to earn a little extra income and took a part-time job at the local paper mill to keep myself busy. My daughters finally took care of the spare time problem and a move to Melbourne necessitated making a new circle of friends. I continued the traditional path by playing tennis and squash and continued to earn my pocket money making sets of Barbie doll clothes for the friends of my daughters. During this time I kept my organisational skills honed by taking on the role of President of the local Calisthenics Club and kept myself fit as a team member in the Seniors group. Seniors at this stage meant anyone over 16 years old. When my husband and I reached 35 we joined the Veterans Athletics Association and set the groundwork for what is now a major lifestyle choice. We then went on to establish and manage a local Veterans Athletics venue for a number of years.

In the mid 70s, as my younger daughter started school and I was offered the opportunity of paid employment outside the home — part-time secretarial administration duties during the school term at the local college of advanced education. Like all mothers re-entering the workforce I was full of anxiety as to whether my skills were still relevant and how this would affect the family.

Needless to say we all survived with me being a working mother and my return to the workforce set me on the pathway to challenging the stereotypes which even today surround secretaries and personal assistants: “that it is just a job, not a career” or “it’s only typing and filing”, or “how to get on without really trying — the blonde bimbo sitting on the manager’s knee”. My determination to raise the status of the secretarial role led me to joining the Institute of Professional Secretaries and Administrators when my family relocated back to Western Australia in the late 1980s and my career was enhanced when I received the Institute’s award for Secretary of the Year in 1991. My involvement with the Institute includes a three year term of office as State President and currently I utilise my extensive network of contacts in my role of sponsorship officer for the committee of management.

I am proud of what I have achieved with my career, having come from an era where higher education for women was not the norm as “girls only get married” and the sorts of positions that women are now holding in the workplace were never dreamed possible at that time. The teaching career that I feel would have suited me has come about in another way. It has been reshaped by my career experiences

and I now educate others by speaking at conferences, workshops and in-house training programs. This is the third conference at which I have spoken this year.

Gaining momentum — harnessing my passions to challenge the myths

Continuing education, or life long learning, has been fundamental to my career. My determination to continue my education saw me doing Higher Schools Certificate (HSC) studies at the same time as my daughters. During the past ten years I have attended as many conferences and workshops as the budget can afford and for the past three years I have been studying a diploma in office management at Deakin University which I completed in July. These studies were done through external mode which as you all know, require a juggling act to balance time commitments.

I now use my experiences with both managing to study and work full time to mentor younger members of the Institute as they enquire about career pathways and professional development.

This love of learning and my willingness to move outside my comfort zone has been a cornerstone for my career opportunities. My organisational skills have enabled me to balance my career with my family commitments and at the same time, to make lifestyle choices which include taking time out occasionally to smell the roses, or as any of my veterans athletic club friends will tell you, to take time out to look at the wildflowers in Kings Park as we compete in our cross country events.

Age is relative to where you are at any given time. For me “old age” is always 15 years ahead. As veteran athletes, our members compete in 5 year age groups. Turning 60 is a milestone to which I look forward as I will be the new kid on the block with a chance of competing well in my age group.

Life can be very exciting if you look for opportunities which provide positive outcomes. The current Government policies now being initiated should provide a more enlightened climate for mature women and assist in their remaining visible in the community. In researching the literature on ageing and women, I was dismayed at how negative much of it was a decade ago. There was the perception that women in their fifties come into a decade of loss: the loss of child-bearing function; loss of children as they leave home; loss of paid work if they are made redundant; loss through death of close relationships including partners; a loss of physical attractiveness and health; and a realisation of lost opportunities and limited future options available. Unfortunately this has been the case for many women, including my own mother, but I see that choices for women in their fifties are now much greater than for previous generations and this has lessened somewhat this perception of loss.

For me, the last ten years has been one of great opportunity and personal fulfilment, certainly not a period of loss, and I think that my choice of career has been a corner-stone to my achievements. My involvement with the Institute of Professional Secretaries and Administrators has extended my networks and provided considerable challenges and I have achieved considerable personal and professional growth during this period. Dare I say that it was great to have my daughters leave home so that I had more time to enjoy and explore my own interests which included further studies. The empty nest syndrome has, therefore, not been a major issue for me and “Mum’s taxi service” has gone out of business.

The last ten years has also seen a change in my husband’s employment in that he took himself out of the corporate rat race and now works part-time. With me at work all day he has become the Director of Domestic Duties on the home front. It has been a fascinating journey through this role-reversal and it has helped our partnership remain strong and committed through a period when many marriages flounder as interests diversify and wane.

Enhance the team — using role models

Mature women play an important role in the community by providing images of vitality, of professionalism through their career structures and through their commitment to learning and growth. I hope my experiences will stand as examples to others, both in respect to my career and to my lifestyle choices.

With regard to my career, it is my contention that secretaries and administrators or, as we call ourselves, “office professionals”, will meet the challenges of age well — we are at the forefront of technological change with the computerisation of industry; we very often “teach” or train staff; we are good negotiators with a diverse range of clients; and because of the very nature of our roles, we are flexible and adaptable to change.

Throughout my own career development I have used the achievements of other women as a guide to my own aspirations. One has only to look at the challenges overcome by women leaders such as Christine Wheeler, the youngest Supreme Court Judge in Western Australia, or lawyer Julie Bishop, now a Federal Senator, or Dr Rosanna Capolingua-Host, President of the Australian Medical Association to be inspired by their stories. I use such examples as I mentor and advise on career development pathways.

As another model for positive ageing, my involvement with the WA Veterans Athletics Club is a lifestyle choice which benefits me both physically and socially. I specialise in race walking which is very good for the hip line and for me, this interest is my “play time”, I find it helps balance the professional challenges in my life and gives me a very supportive group of friends both locally and around Australia. This year my husband Bob and I competed nationally in Canberra at Easter and in Gateshead in northern England in August at the World Veterans Athletics Championships. Some of the competitors there were definitely seniors at aged 90+.

My three year old grandson David thinks running is wonderful. When he comes to visit and we go to the park, we have to run home. Along the way he tells the neighbours that he is “running like Bob Schickert”. As positive role models, perhaps Bob and I will encourage him to participate in some form of sport as he grows older.

So it is clear that positive, active seniors provide a positive role model for younger people. After all, today’s seniors are their future selves for the next generation.

My lifestyle sounds very busy and yes, it is. But it is also very rewarding and I enjoy the challenges. I have a positive attitude to life and am passionate about encouraging others to move outside their boundaries and enrich own their lives.

Retirement options – will these slow down our run?

The current trend for early retirement in the mid 50s is one area where we, as women in the paid workforce, may wish to challenge current expectations. Our life expectancy is increasing, we spend fewer of our years rearing children and many of us are reaching our 50s fitter and healthier. If we retire at 55, we can expect another 30 years of living ahead of us. What are we going to do with this huge amount of time? Sit at home watching television? I certainly won’t be!

The Australian Financial Review (19 October 1999, p. 7) has added its voice to current perceptions that Australian workers should be encouraged to delay retirement and that the pension system could be reformed to allow for part-time work. It is seen that the economic advantages would be considerable and it would allow the skills and expertise of our mature workforce to be utilised by employers, particularly as consultants and trainers. I plan to work for as long as I can because I find the workplace stimulating and exciting. The option of part-time work at a later stage is one that I would certainly welcome, but not just yet.

The recent promotion of Seniors Week has again highlighted the achievements of many of our elder citizens in their retirement years and I would like to mention two rather special people in my circle of contacts. Until recently I caught the bus to work with a neighbour who worked as a personal secretary to a very busy lawyer in the Perth CBD. Imagine my surprise when I found out Peggy was nearly 75 years old, still working full time and keeping her creative side alive by singing each week at the Tivoli Show.

Another example of positive ageing is Nora, who on retirement, accepted the challenge of producing her own CD. She had a lifelong passion for singing and later in life took lessons which led to this

wonderful achievement. Much to her delight, her contribution to promoting the quality of life for seniors was recognised earlier in the year by the media.

Whether we wish to remain in the workplace, whether we want to leave it early, or whether we want to play the traditional grandmother role is a matter of choice. We now have the freedom to exercise these choices in how we live our lives.

How we run our race – making choices

Life is all about making choices and how we see ourselves. I have chosen to pattern my lifestyle in one way. Through other commitments, cultural expectations or circumstances you may choose a different one.

Our lives are made up of major milestones such as graduation, career development, marriage, childbirth and not necessarily in this order. The perception of age may diminish our choices and consign us to models which are not always where we want to be. Take the risk of stepping outside your consigned role. Take up whatever is your fancy: start a new business; take on volunteer work; go jogging, dancing or canoeing; learn a craft such as pottery or, as I did last year, learn how to throw the javelin, the discus and the shot put. Have the courage to experience and try new ventures.

What you get out of life is only a matter of what you put in. You can sit at home with your feet up watching a video or you can go bungee jumping. It all depends on what **you** are interested in and what **you** want to do! It is **your** choice.

In having choices, it is how you make these choices that will shape your ageing process.

Mature women can ensure a positive ageing process by bringing their skills and experience to boards and committees, to the paid workforce and to voluntary work. Women are now looking to their futures as something more than stand-by baby-sitters and manufacturers of crocheted coat hangers and pot-holders. They are seeking not only physical activity, but also mental stimulation and emotional satisfaction. Like me, they are confronting their ageing and are challenging the present models. Like me, they are examining ways to reach out to make their future lives different from those of their mothers.

It is evident therefore that changes in societal attitudes and practices are required to raise the status of older women and the current Government initiatives will go some way to remedy this.

Support networks also assist women to positively evaluate their lives, and that is why we are gathered here today – to affirm our support for each other as we move through the milestones in our lives.

Conclusion — ensuring we win

As mature women, our challenge then is to be flag bearers in the new millennium — to run the millennium mile as we break down the current perceptions of ageing. According to our own experiences, our interests and our passions, we can demonstrate our commitment to a better set of choices for women as they age. We need to set our goals, meet the challenges and make decisions that diminish the stereotypes and myths as we move not into “old age” but into “*the versatile age*”.

The Versatile Age

*The old rocking chair is empty today
For Grandma is no longer in it.
She's off in her car to her office or shop
And buzzes around every minute.
No one shoves Grandma back on the shelf
She's versatile, forceful, dynamic.
That's not a pie in the oven, my dear,
Her baking today is ceramic.
You won't see her trundling off early to bed,
From her place in a warm chimney nook,
Her typewriter clickety clacks through the night,
For Grandma is writing a book,
She's never seen taking a backward look,
To show her years steadily advancing.
She won't tend the babies for you any more,
For Grandma has taken up dancing.
She isn't content with crumbs of old thoughts,
With meagre and second hand knowledge.
Don't bring your mending for Grandma to do,
For Grandma has gone back to college!*

L. Loyd Robinson – Leicester

My thanks go to Lynn Barton of the School of Natural Sciences at Edith Cowan University for providing us with a light hearted look at our model for Grandmothers of today.

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“IF YOU’VE GOT IT, FLAUNT IT!” IS VISIBILITY THROUGH IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT THE KEY TO UNLOCKING NEGATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN MANAGERS’ COMMITMENT? ⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

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Gender differences in the way individuals express their commitment and impress their managers of their commitment may provide a partial explanation of why women managers are still seen as less committed than their male peers. Previous research has shown little evidence of difference in levels of male and female commitment, yet the myth – if it is a myth – remains. This paper reports from a qualitative study into meanings of commitment, and the commitment assessment process, through an exploration of views of 37 matched male and female managers in the UK and Sweden. Findings indicate the importance of visibility of commitment at work to managers who are the gatekeepers to senior level positions. Half of the interviewees acknowledged that they sought to influence their manager of their commitment. Interestingly, males and females used different impression management strategies to achieve this. Subjective assessment of commitment by male managers, and gendered use of impression management strategies may be another barrier for women to overcome – or are there particular impression management of commitment strategies which could be learned by women to both individual and organisational advantage?

Introduction

There are still reports that women managers are perceived to be less committed than men, despite no evidence of females’ lesser commitment in the research literature (Aven, Parker and McEvoy, 1993; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Singh & Vinnicombe (2000) indicate that women and men have differences in the composition of their commitment at work, and identify the importance of visibility to managers of the desired kind of commitment. This paper reports the use of different impression management strategies by male and female managers to ensure that their commitment is recognised.

Seeking to impress one’s manager regarding one’s commitment may seem unnatural to many women, as well as unnecessary, but managers are busy people, and competitors may be making sure that their extra efforts to deliver the manager’s goals are being noticed and rewarded.

The construct of work commitment

Commitment is a multi-faceted construct which has been the subject of much research over the past thirty years, almost all using quantitative measures. The field is US-dominated, with predominantly male samples. Some researchers (Reichers, 1985; Randall, Fedor and Longenecker, 1990) criticised the conceptualisation of commitment for not taking into account what employees mean by “commitment”. Commitment is usually conceptualised with two components; affective commitment, comprising identification with an organisation and a willingness to put in effort on its behalf. The second part is continuance commitment, the desire or need to stay in an organisation (Mowday, Steers and Porter, 1979). However, this study is concerned with the way in which managers use the term “committed”, which is a holistic term, closer to the “work commitment” model of Morrow (1993). Morrow’s view is that commitment is best represented in order of permeability as a concentric layered concept, with an inner core of work ethic, followed by career commitment, continuance and affective organisational commitment, with the outer layer of job involvement.

Meanings and visibility of commitment

Singh & Vinnicombe (2000) found that meanings of commitment in a sample of matched male/female manager pairs were very active behaviours – the manifestations of commitment, rather than the inner state of being committed, according to managers. The most common meanings were task delivery, putting yourself out, involvement, and quality. Overall, male meanings were more similar to top manager's meanings than were females meanings. Top managers' meanings also included being proactive/using initiative, being ready for challenge, being creative/innovative, and being business aware. More women overall gave meanings oriented towards the organisation, particularly good citizenship behaviours, which would be less visible to managers, whilst more men overall gave meanings benefiting themselves as well as the organisation, which were very active and highly visible. Both men and women saw enjoying work and getting a work/life balance as part of their meanings of commitment. Five types of commitment meanings were identified: Virtuous, Volunteer, Virtuoso, Vanguard and Gender-Shared.

Constructing committed identities through Impression Management (IM)

Impression management and self-monitoring

The commitment signalling and interpretation process is open to influence by the employee to present a more favourable image to the manager of their commitment. Kilduff & Day (1994, p.1048) stated that "evidence suggests that the skilful management of impressions can enhance an individual's chances of career success in organizations". This message is repeated in the national press. Advice to aspiring managers in a leading British newspaper (*The Sunday Times* 1999) is to play the corporate games, "make sure you understand how decisions work within the organisation or client firms, and make sure you know where power really lies"; and "practice speaking up to ensure visibility among managers".

High self-monitors are those with motivation to influence the presentation of themselves to others, scanning the environment to pick up signals of how they are perceived. They have a better understanding of what behaviour is required to present themselves more positively as competent and committed (Fandt & Ferris, 1990). Several kinds of non-verbal behaviour can contribute to enhancement of one's image at work. This self-presentation might be the clothes which people wear in order to be taken seriously and to demonstrate commitment to their particular work environment. It might be the body language, and the transient facial expressions of an employee, for example, on being asked to undertake a task. However, a more effective way may be to deliver exceptional performance.

Rosenfeld, Giacalone and Riordan (1995) stressed the importance for managers of understanding the cues received from subordinates and vice versa. Used well, impression management can lead to desired behaviours and conformity to norms, through example-setting, modelling of positive behaviours and good organisational citizenship.

Self-promotion and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB)

Prosocial organisational behaviours are considered eminently desirable for organisations, because "they reflect a humane concern for conditions of work, a sensitivity and consideration for individual welfare, and a more profound dedication to organization objectives than can be stipulated in any job description" (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986, p.721). Such behaviours are later called organisational citizenship behaviours (Organ (1988, 1990), and are important as evidence in the field of commitment assessment.

Leary & Kowalski (1990) commented that the use of IM techniques did not necessarily mean that an individual was not as committed as it might seem. Users might have genuinely high levels of commitment as well as being motivated to demonstrate high levels of OCB. Bolino (1999) explored the role of IM motivation in the context of OCBs, considering whether those who display good citizenship were really motivated by altruism, disposition to be helpful, or by image enhancement through undertaking extra role activities, not explicitly recognised or rewarded, and falling outside job definitions. Bolino suggested that IM and OCB behaviours on the surface were identical, only the

underlying motivation might be different. Figure 1 maps out the concept linkages including Bolino's argument.

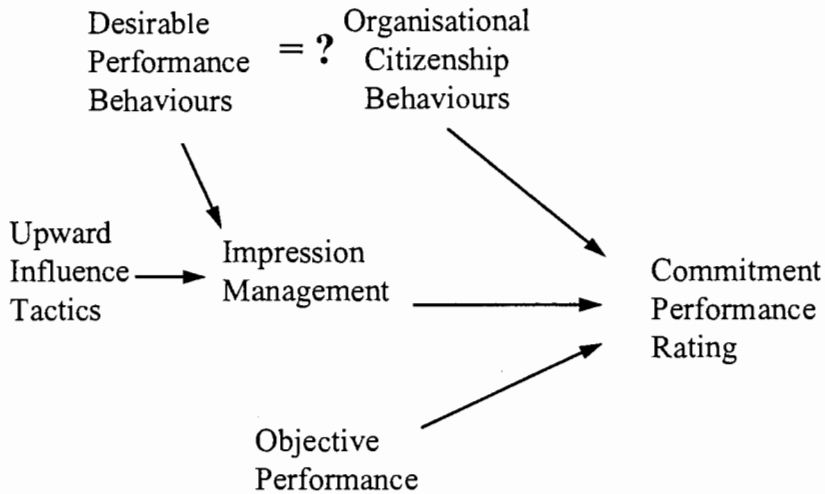


Figure 1: Impression management, commitment assessment and organisational citizenship behaviours

For example, volunteering for challenges provides opportunity for visibility of competence and knowledge to others in the organisation, and could be seen as self-promotion or good citizenship. Bolino's case is convincing, and is supported by Perlow (1998, p.354) who said that:

whether one is motivated by genuine commitment to the organisation or by one's own self-interest, one's behaviour will convey commitment to the organisation. ... More likely, they are rational actors with instrumental orientations who recognise that perceived "selfless" commitment to the organisation leads to personal success.

Bolino suggested that where an actor's citizenship behaviour coincided with the preferences of the target, there was likely to be enhanced image achievement. Bolino felt that impression management motives might motivate OCBs, but those who were trying to be seen to be committed might well be really committed to their companies.

This review of the impression management and OCB literature indicates that there may be a link between perceptions that women's commitment is lower than that of men, and the way in which their commitment is communicated to the manager, if men and women have different IM strategies and inclination to use such tactics.

Methodology

This paper reports part of a wider study into the reasons underlying unsubstantiated reports that women managers are less committed than men. A case study approach was chosen for this exploratory project (Yin, 1994). Eisenhardt (1989) provided a useful route map for the case studies.

Interviews were held with 37 engineering managers, including 16 male/female matched pairs at top, middle and junior levels of management. Negative perceptions of females' commitment are often related to work/family responsibilities. Hence, the sample was selected from leading British and Swedish engineering companies, as examples of male-dominated organisations with contrasting levels of family-friendly support policies by government and organisations. Singh & Vinnicombe (1999) report national differences in the responses regarding the meanings given by the British and Swedish managers. However, for the purposes of this paper, the two country design is not a key factor, as the family-friendly work environment dimension has only a small impact on the use of impression management to signal commitment.

Following introductions from senior contacts, face to face semi-structured interviews were held on company premises. In Sweden, interviews were conducted in English, but with explanations given in Swedish where necessary, following a pilot study to ascertain which language would be best to use. This paper reports managers' descriptions of the role of the manager in the commitment signalling process. The qualitative data were analysed using QSR Nudist 4, and a hierarchical categorisation system was used to organise the emerging findings and set them in context with the literature (Miles & Huberman, 1994). An audit trail was kept so that the emergent conceptual framework could be reported.

Research findings

The Manager's perceived duty to pick up signals of commitment

The managers were asked what they thought the manager's role to be in the commitment assessment process. Almost all said that it was the manager's duty to pick up the signals of commitment from their staff and teams. There was virtually no gender difference in this belief.

You have to look for it. You as a manager, one of your roles is motivating your staff, and people come in all different shapes, sizes and colours. And if somebody who is not a great publicist is committing themselves to something, I think it's for the manager to notice, because that person isn't going to come and scream at you that they have done all this. But if you don't recognise their efforts, then you're actually wasting a whole pool of resource, which you could be developing.
(British female director)

A third of interviewees reported that managers did not always find it easy to see commitment, a frequent explanation being that often they were too busy to notice. A female middle manager commented that the recent flatter structure in her company was a potential problem as there were so many direct reports. A British manager saw the company hierarchy as a potential difficulty for some of his colleagues, as getting noticed above one's line manager level could be a problem. Two female senior technologists felt that the managers were sometimes not doing their duty, because of lack of interest or involvement in their junior colleagues' work.

The evidence indicates that it is the norm for the manager to be expected to notice the commitment of their staff. The manager's role is important because they reinforce the norms by their own behaviour, and they act as gate-keepers to more junior staff in terms of career opportunities and other rewards for high commitment. These managers say they recognise that sometimes managers are too busy to notice the commitment of subordinates. They report that this leads to the use of influencing strategies by ambitious engineers to ensure the manager does pick up the signals of their high commitment.

Managing the signals to the manager

Individuals are active agents, seeking to influence outcomes by managing the impressions and information they want to signal (Dulebohn & Ferris, 1999; Ilgen & Feldman, 1983). The desire for a two way process by making a good impression and getting tangible outputs was clearly indicated by some managers in this study too. A British male director said: "I'd like him to notice. I want him to feel I am committed to the tasks and the job I've got." Many of the engineering managers said that

they would actively manage the signals which they sent. This group included more than half of the women engineering managers.

“I think your manager should pick it up, but I think you have to demonstrate it for him to pick it up. I don't think you should just expect him to read your mind. It's a two way process.... You've got to put the effort in as well.” (British female senior technologist)

Sometimes you have to show it, because he is not always aware of how much commitment you put into your work, and I think that is something that everybody tries to do, if they get the chance. They say, look what I have done here, and look what I have done there. (Swedish male project leader)

This overt demonstration of commitment was something which did not come naturally to some of the male engineers. They had learned to do it, or were advised that this was the way forward. “I have realised that I have to show it [big laugh]. It is not in my nature actually, but I have learnt that I have to tell what I am doing.” This Swedish male middle manager said he had learnt this at around age 30, but that he had not naturally wanted to show off his commitment. Another Swedish top manager said he had to sell himself:

My experience with this company has been more like you have to go and tell them, I've done this well, I've done that well, and say Look here. But I'm not that kind of person.

About a quarter of the women, and only a tenth of the men said that they didn't need to tell their manager how committed they were, and they would not do so specifically. They thought that the quality of their work would demonstrate their commitment without the need to actively draw it to the attention of the manager. A female British director said (about demonstrating commitment deliberately): “That is something that I would never even dream of doing, although I recognise that others do, and it is a game.” However, a Swedish senior male manager acknowledged that managers might miss the commitment of those who did not visibly demonstrate it.

There are often certain people that try to show that they are committed. And certain people, they are not afraid of telling how good they are. But there are other people, who are maybe even more committed, that don't do that, and they don't get the appraisal that they should have.

Two Swedish female engineers said that they felt commitment was judged more on enthusiasm, presentation and ambition than on performance. This ties in with the findings of Heisler & Gemmill (1978 p.1048) that promotions “were based on social presentability, visibility, organizational demeanor and political skill, as well as on competent job performance”. This link of ambition to commitment was also mentioned by a senior British manager, who indicated that in his company, high commitment linked with ambition was something to be proud of and flaunted.

It's one of those attributes, unlike toadying, that's a good attribute and something to be proud of, and flaunt it. (British male senior manager)

There were concerns about misinterpretation of signals, and a Swedish woman engineer felt that women's actions were perceived differently to men's actions. Her comments were somewhat borne out by a male director's comments.

If there are two or three women sitting together, they are not discussing work, they are gossiping. But if it is three men, it is, well, they are talking work – even if they are gossiping.

If the women use all social talk during work talking of their children or their diseases and so on, they get interpreted in a way that they are not so committed. That is the way it is.

More women (53%) than their male colleagues (39%) talked about having actively demonstrated their commitment to their managers. Interestingly, three-quarters of the Swedish women said they had done so, in contrast to only a third of the British women and men, and to 40% of the Swedish men. Yet most of the Swedish women engineers felt that men talked more to their managers than women would do, telling them how committed they were, and what they had done.

Strategies to enhance signals of commitment

Like the male managers quoted above, who said they recognised earlier in their career the importance of ensuring that their manager understood how committed they were, some of the Swedish women had developed strategies after noticing how male engineers were acting to influence their managers.

Maybe men are more likely to show them their results. You have got to show them, show even more how committed and good you are. As a woman, you have to do that, I think. Be very clear in that.

I saw it in my first year. The men were talking with the manager all the time. They would run to him and show the paper or something, but I didn't have this need. I didn't have anything to show. I was doing my job and it was going well, so I didn't have any questions. Then I realised that as I wasn't talking with him, he didn't know what I was doing really. Because it was only in meetings I showed my results. But anyway, it is very important to talk with the chief, because you feel that he knows because you have these results out of your work, but he doesn't know every time.

The latter quote was from a young, very ambitious female engineer, who contrived involvement from her manager by asking him questions, so that in the end, he had to notice her commitment.

Actually you don't go to the manager and say, Look, I did this. You go to him with a question, and then he says, what do you think about it. So you always go with a question. ... I try to talk with them, I try to ask them questions, and have this contact, establish contact all the time.

Getting commitment noticed is a key part of getting the right kind of developmental assignments. Ragins, Townsend and Mattis (1998), researching US Fortune 1000 women directors, found that women said that they had to tell their managers explicitly that they wanted challenging assignments, otherwise it would be assumed that they were not interested. Ragins *et al.* said that this represented a double hurdle for the women: first, they had to recognise that this was important, and second, they had to convince their managers that they wanted challenge and could do it. The women in this commitment study made similar comments.

I think you have to be a little bit better than your male peers. And you mustn't be afraid of telling what you can do, and what you want to do. And you mustn't be afraid of getting a lot of doubts from the men before they know what you can do, because I think you have to prove yourself. (Swedish female middle manager)

According to some managers in the sample, men were also more likely to stay late to impress their managers, something which was harder for those with childcare responsibilities to manage.

There is an element of people checking to see whether the boss's car has gone before they're leaving. If not, they'll hang on for ten minutes and wait till he goes, so he thinks they're keen. ... Like the guy who leaves at 4 o'clock on the days when the boss isn't here, and 7 o'clock on the days when he is. (British male middle manager)

Seven women said that their male peers pushed for more career development than the women, and that this might give the impression of higher commitment.

There is a big percentage [of men] that do a lot more knocking on the door, saying look, I'm ready for this. When are you going to promote me? Rather than just believing that doing a good job will be seen, and will be rewarded and recognised. (British female middle manager)

They take advantage of the system, and sometimes some of those guys get quite a bit of recognition, without them really producing so much, because they can manage themselves, and sell themselves. (Swedish female middle manager)

"They talk more, and they talk louder. And it is not expected from a woman to do it in the same way, so when I talk with my manager, he is surprised that I think in the way that I do. So yes, men have another way of speaking about their careers." (Swedish female senior technologist)

According to one of the younger men, women were also less likely to stand up and say what they think, which could result in them not being noticed, and hence perceived to be less committed. Women managers reported that men were more likely to talk about the work of their teams as if it were their own work that mattered, rather than the contribution which the team had made. This is an example of the "acclaiming" behaviour mentioned by Cauldwell & O'Reilly (1982).

When you see those same individuals performing for their seniors, they come across as extremely committed, and they will do that through apparent knowledge of the subject area, and through the use of words, often "I've been doing this, and I've been leading that", and giving a good impression. ... I can see a distinct difference between the males and females. (British female middle manager)

My first manager here took a lot of the good work that people did in his department, and always presented it as his. ... And that taught me something at least. (Swedish female middle manager)

Several senior engineers had experience of subordinates trying to impress them, and six managers felt that people could fake commitment in the short term, but nine said it was not possible in the longer-term. But others felt that faking commitment was more a case of over-emphasising performance.

Discussion

Half of the managers in the sample had used some level of influence tactics to demonstrate their high commitment when they felt that their manager was not noticing sufficiently. This indicates that they were "high self-monitors", attentive to situational cues, and keen to influence the impression that others had of them. But a quarter of the women, and a tenth of the men felt that their commitment would shine through quality work, and they would not try to influence their managers by the use of any impression management strategies. Marshall (1984, p.157) said that in contrast to men, women managers "seemed to rely on their managers' perceptiveness and good faith in recognising and developing talent", and these responses provide evidence of that attitude. This "non-influencing" group could be classified as low self-monitors. In the career tournament, low self-monitors are more likely to be eliminated in the first round, and never catch up with their high self-monitor cohort peers, as they lack the "highly committed" label given by a sponsor which leads to enhanced visibility and more developmental challenges (Vinnicombe, Singh and Sturges, 1999; Ohlott, Ruderman and McCauley, 1994).

A summary of the strategies mentioned by respondents is given in Table 1, put into context with the categories of upward influence used in Tepper (1995) to explore upwards maintenance tactics in supervisory mentoring relationships.

Table 1: Strategies for Influencing Manager of Commitment

Tepper's Category	Tepper's Definition	Female Engineers' Strategies	Male Strategies according to females	Male Engineers' Strategies
Personal	Interaction based on personal rather than task content	Establish contact with your seniors.		
Direct	Negotiation of terms, direct mention of perceived injustices	Tell your manager you want something for your career, don't just wait for it to happen.	Knock on the door and ask when your promotion is coming. Take advantage of the system, manage yourself, sell yourself. Talk loudly about your work	Show manager by saying, Look what I have done here, every time you meet him. Show initiative
Regulative	Strategic regulation of interaction with boss	If your work is going so well that you don't need to involve your manager, go and ask him questions, just to keep him interested.	Talk about your team's work as if it was solely your work	Stay till after the boss has gone
Contractual	Conformity to formal role requirements			Deliver the manager's goals
Extra-contractual	Willingness to exceed organisational and supervisory expectations	Be better than the males Do a lot of overtime Show very clearly how more committed you are than others. Show flexibility		Show the manager the results and the reports. Volunteer for additional tasks, esp off-site with manager
Additional – Self-Influencing strategy	Not fitting Tepper's categories	Be prepared for doubts from males		Believe your work is important

As in many other studies (Alban-Metcalf & West, 1991), these women believed they had to be better than the men to get their commitment noticed. The strategies reported by the males could be seen as more related to impressing their managers about the delivery of the work goals (of the manager and their own) and indicating that they were good organisational citizens. In contrast, some of the females' strategies were referring to the development of a stronger relationship with the manager. This gender difference in the tactics used may be related to the higher sense of connection with others which women are said to feel (Gilligan, 1982), or communion versus agency (Marshall, 1984).

This group were using assertive ingratiation techniques. According to Wayne & Ferris (1990), supervisors are favourably influenced by ingratiation by subordinates, who may then be inclined to give more feedback and set higher performance goals than average, eventually leading to better "real" performance by the individual. So these interviewees' strategies for persuading managers of their high commitment may well be effective. It is not just enhanced performance which results from successful impression management, but also enhanced reputation. This, in turn, may lead to increased effectiveness as a manager, because of that reputation. Gowler & Legge (1989, p. 447) comment that "the 'successful' manager is the one who manages the good opinions of others". They note that managers may have the right ideas and skills, but unless their reputation, ie others' perceptions of their abilities, is valued, purchased and used by those in power, their management capital is worthless for their career. Pfeffer (1989) also comments that people have to fit in with a group but at the same time, they must differentiate themselves to show that they are distinct enough for the organisation to push them forwards. In other words, potential leaders should scan the environment as high self-

monitors within their organisation's promotion framework. Thacker & Wayne (1995, p.749) reported that "influence tactics played a significant role in affecting assessments of promotability". So many in this sample of engineering managers say that they are demonstrating their commitment actively, and there is other research evidence (referenced above) that this is likely to have a positive impact on their careers.

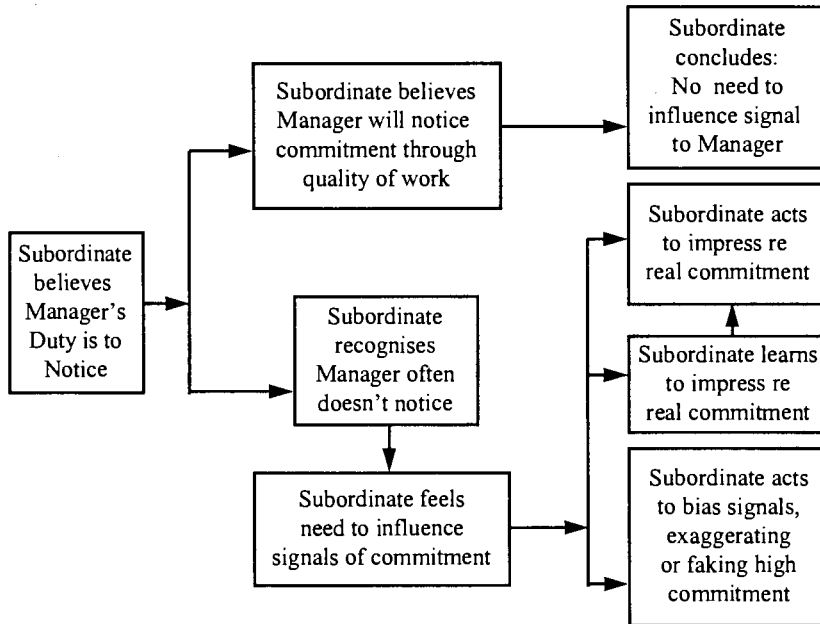


Figure 2: The consequences of subordinates' beliefs about the role of the manager in the assessment of commitment

Figure 2 maps out the responses discussed above, showing the consequences of the individual's perception of the manager's role in the assessment of commitment.

Implications and conclusion

Bartol (1999) suggests that gender and impression management may be a fruitful area for research. This paper has provided some empirical evidence of the use by successful engineering managers of influence tactics to enhance assessment of commitment. Bolino (1999, p.82) comments that "researchers have yet to look at the positive images likely to accrue to individuals who engage in citizenship behaviours", and he goes on to comment on the similarity, if not identity, of an act of citizenship and an act of impression management. This is particularly so for demonstrating commitment. The fact that almost half of these engineering managers talked of using influence tactics indicates that the evidence of the real level of commitment may often not be easily accessible to the manager, and is often perceived to be inaccessible. What is interesting is that the use of impression management strategies is not seen as negative by many of these managers, but as something which actually does show commitment, and as it enhances performance, when the right strategies are delivered, commitment is something to flaunt if you've got it!

Limitations of the study

Whilst the number of interviewees is small, only 37 managers from two different countries, the sample consisted of the most senior females in these world-class companies, and their matched male peers, so their responses are significant. The findings provide evidence which may be relevant beyond women managers in engineering companies in the UK and Sweden, possibly to women in other workplaces with a large number of professionals but few women in senior management.

Implications for women

Women may benefit from considering how they function in their organisation with regard to commitment, as high self-monitors do. It may be helpful for women to try to understand how commitment is signalled and recognised by busy managers in their particular organisation. This study suggests that it is considered normal by some ambitious males to show – sometimes very deliberately – that they are highly committed. In particular, males state that they are showing that they are delivering the **managers'** goals. It is up to women whether they want to go out of their way to demonstrate commitment in a more visible way. But they should recognise that such actions are seen as part of the learning process by males, who have to overcome any reluctance to flaunt their commitment. Indeed, some males are so proud of being committed that they see this as something to shout about. To women who have been brought up to be modest and to share praise, it is another barrier to cross (Rudman, 1998). Many of the successful women in this study have crossed that hurdle, using impression management strategies to demonstrate their commitment – but some of them are using what may be less effective career-enhancing strategies than their male colleagues, the females building better relationships whilst the males are delivering the managers' goals.

Implications for managers

Managers should recognise that women who may be just as committed, competent and ambitious as men often do not feel as comfortable in using impression management tactics to enhance the visibility of their commitment. They may wait to be noticed, quietly putting themselves out, volunteering and acting as good organisational citizens, whilst others push themselves forward. Although this study indicates that women's commitment seems to be more organisationally focused than that of men when broken down into component parts, it may be less visible. In a busy work environment, the manager may need to make efforts to ensure that such commitment is recognised and rewarded, tapping this potential managerial resource for the organisation, through developing and releasing the leadership potential of such committed women.

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BULLYING OF SENIOR MANAGERS: AN ETHNOGRAPHY⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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Bullying in the workplace is largely misunderstood and under-researched with most of the literature and research on bullying centred on schoolyard bullying (Rayner & Hoel, 1977). There is no accepted definition of workplace bullying, although there is a wide range of behaviours identified by its victims. A commonly held view of the victim is of a socially inept person being targeted by an aggressive, knowing individual.

The aim of this study was to clarify the concept using a qualitative method. Eleven middle and senior managers volunteered to describe their experience of a bullying situation or situations. The interviews were open-ended, taped, and most respondents spoke for upwards of 45 minutes.

The bullying in this study can be categorised into overt, where, for example, stand-over tactics were used and the respondent had no difficulty in recognising it, and covert which was subtle and the respondent often did not recognise what was happening because it comprised a series of small incidents over a period of time. While this distinction is simple, it has implications for remedies.

Noteworthy was the finding that many did not realise that they were being bullied. Considering the adverse impact that the bullying had on them, their failure to recognise it is remarkable. The cause seems to result from the intersection of a professional's expectations of fair treatment and the complexities of subtle psychological abuse.

Introduction

In recent years workplace bullying has become a major organisational issue in a number of countries. In the United Kingdom for example one in four people report that they were bullied in the last five years with nearly 40 % of bullying persisting for over two years (Rayner and Cooper, 1997). In Australia Thomson (1998) reported that of 350 people who reported being bullied at work, 20 % resigned because of it and 75 % took sick leave. She believed that there was not a workplace in Australia where it did not exist. Crawford (1997) believes that bullying is endemic in our lives and work.

Hoel, Rayner and Cooper (1999) and Rayner and Hoel (1997) provide comprehensive reviews of the literature. Much of the study of workplace bullying is anecdotal and to be found on the internet or in magazine articles. Another source is awareness publicity from trade unions.

The definition of bullying is problematic. Rayner and Cooper (1997) skirted around it in one survey by asking respondents what was their worst working situation. Cooper and Hoel (2000), in a major study of 5,300, respondents presented the respondents with a definition of bullying 'emphasising the negative, long term and persistent nature of such behaviour'. They found that 'personal derogation' most closely related to the experience of bullying. Bassman (1992) refers to the routine interaction between subordinates and boss where '... abusive incidents may seem like minor incidents. The context of a pattern of incidents, occurring over a period of time, characterises a manager's abuse of an employee' (p.7). This definition reflected the experience of our respondents.

The type of behaviours or minor incidents generally included as exemplifying bullying (Table 1) taken in isolation could be attributed to rudeness, oversensitivity on behalf of the recipient or simply

the cut and thrust of organisational life at senior levels rather than being indicative of more major aggression.

Table 1. Bullying behaviours identified in the literature

Regular humiliation including insults and sarcasm.	Physical or social isolation – being ‘sent to coventry’ or ganged up on.
Being repeatedly told off or criticised in front of colleagues.	Being the subject of unsubstantiated allegations about poor work performance, either face to face or to others.
Physical changes in the workplace e.g. being shifted to another venue without consultation.	Threats.
Persistent criticism of work, often alternating with praise.	Verbal abuse.
Being excluded from workplace activities e.g. meetings which you would normally expect to attend.	Over-supervision.
Being denied opportunities for natural justice.	Being set unrealistic targets for work performance.
Application of regulations designed to give procedural fairness but conducted so as to preclude it such as ‘kangaroo courts’.	‘Flame’ mail.
Avoiding requests for clarification of irregular or unfair behaviour.	Intimidation e.g. abuse.
Forcing resignation.	Having phone calls terminated by the bully ringing off.
Application of ‘the rules’ in a punitive way.	Manipulation.
Undermining.	Being treated with contempt and belittled.
Assignment to unpleasant jobs or being denied opportunities e.g. training, more frequently than peers.	Public humiliation.
Over-ruling of authority.	Constant change of duties without notice and subsequent criticism for not meeting the targets, deadlines, etc.
Withholding needed information.	Being lied to.
Spreading malicious rumours.	Taking credit for another’s work but never the blame if something goes wrong.

Ref: Ashforth, (1994); Beasley and Rayner,(1997); Giles (1998; Lockhart (1997); Rayner (1997); Rayner and Hoel (1997); Working Women’s Centre, North Adelaide (1997) .

Rayner and Hoel (1997) group bullying behaviours into the following categories: threat to professional status; threat to personal standing; isolation; overwork; and destabilisation. They suggest that ‘we need to abandon the term ‘bullying’ and work to a more complex taxonomy’ (p.192). The apparent prevalence of bullying in work life taken together with the incredulity and lack of recognition of some of our respondents about what was happening to them suggests that the construct is far from clear.

Aim of the research

The aim of the research was to elucidate behaviours experienced by people, who thought that they had been bullied, using qualitative research. Most studies on bullying have used written questionnaires to

capture data from a large sample. This approach does not uncover any subtleties and it also uses the constructs and language of the researchers rather than the experience of the respondents, which may be obtained through in-depth, open-ended interviews. It was hoped that these would reveal different aspects of bullying in the terms of the respondents.

Particular interest was shown both by the reviewers of this paper and the audience at the conference presentation in the coping strategies used by the respondents. Qualitative research lends itself to analysis of a 'blow by blow' response and a brief outline is included at the end of the study but there is clearly room for far more analysis. While respondents were resourceful, most concluded that it was a no win situation.

Method

Ethnography describes a culture in its own terms, culture being 'the knowledge people use to generate and interpret social behaviour' (Spradley and McCurdy, 1972, 8). Its aim is to obtain participant perspectives. As one of the problems with bullying is an inability to describe it satisfactorily, using ethnography is one means of clarification. A successful ethnography is said to teach others how to behave appropriately in the particular setting and this indeed was on the minds of the researchers. What constituted bullying to the respondents. How did they interpret it? What did they do?

People who were known to either of the authors were asked if they would be interviewed for a study on bullying. They were all employed in white-collar organisations, primarily the public service, at managerial level, were over 40 years of age, and with a degree or other professional qualification. There were eleven respondents, nine women and two men. Gender and names have been changed in this report to preserve confidentiality. Interviews were tape-recorded. Respondents were asked a 'grand tour question' which was: 'You have volunteered to be interviewed about an experience of being bullied, can you tell me about it?' This enabled a preliminary survey of the meaning system of the informant. Other prompt questions asked about the responses of bystanders, whether respondents had put the incident behind them and what their advice would be to others. The interview was open-ended and lasted until the respondent had no more to say. This ranged from one to two hours. Respondents in some cases also added further thoughts when they had time to think it over or after they had read the written transcripts.

The interviews were read and coding categories developed to deal with the large number of incidents which varied considerably in content. Sentences and paragraphs were assigned to them. The analysis of the eleven, very rich interviews was by no means exhaustive and it could be reinspected for turning points for example and 'experiments' which they conducted to get a response from the bully and learn from the situation.

The narratives

To provide a guide to context we present brief narratives of what occurred to some of our informants. The narratives for the most part were very rich. These summaries do not capture their texture or observations leading to a temptation to think that the situations were transparent. In the case of covert bullying, clarity was only gained with hindsight.

Narrative 1

Chris led a successful product launch which was reported on the front page of a national newspaper together with the announcement from the CEO that if the product was a failure, Chris would be looking for a new job. Chris thought about it afterwards and realised that the action 'put me in my place and very publicly and I put a question mark over it'. Chris compared this to being 'sung' as in Aboriginal practice; once this had happened it was clear that the CEO had withdrawn support and Chris was now 'out of favour'. 'The tribal was important; your position in the tribe, in the informal tribe was what counted'.

Narrative 2

Les said that it 'was professional rape' which had resulted in loss of a job three times in a row in a number of different organisations over a twelve year period. The first time Les went on holidays and returned to a change of office location and restructuring out of the previous position into another. The second time Les won a major national contract. When she supported the contractors in resolution of a complaint, she was moved to a different geographic location. The third time she again won a major national contract and was harassed out of her position. Each position was a new one and as soon as it was successful it was taken over by a man. Les characterised this as bullying because there was no rationale or logic to what happened. 'It was like Alice in Wonderland. Managers who lost contracts they should have won were promoted and I was demoted for winning contracts where there was no chance of winning'.

Narrative 3

One of Lee's staff suffered a sudden major illness at a time when the staff member was under scrutiny for performance issues. Lee was accused by the CEO, but not to his face, of having induced it through an over-bearing managerial style. Lee's staff advised him that they had been interrogated by the CEO with leading questions implying that the incident was Lee's fault.

Narrative 4

Lyn's superior accused her of disloyalty and asked her to leave her employment. The superior had verified the discussion on which the accusation depended with a colleague, who was presumed to have heard it, before discussing it with Lyn. Upon reflection Lyn realised that the superior had misheard the discussion over a noisy dining table and misunderstood a key phrase. This was the second time the superior had 'heavied' Lyn and blamed her for a lack of corporate spirit. Lyn was taken aback the first time because the choice was between compliance and escalation of the issues with potential union involvement. To an extent this was preparation for the second incident.

Narrative 5

Bobby, an expert in marketing and public relations, had his advice on the publicity design of a national project overridden in an abrasive way by a superior who was new to the field and the result was amateurish in a highly professional environment and disadvantaged a major sponsor. Bobby had tried to work around this superior to gain a professional result and had come up with a solution which would save time and money and give a good result. The superior repeatedly cut him off in telephone discussions and announced that it was bad luck because they were doing it his way. The waste of time, poor result, lack of teamwork was very stressful.

Narrative 6

Di had a strong intimation from a superior that if she didn't implicate another manager for supposed breaches of the rules – breaches which in other circumstances would have been written off as trivial – her job would be in question. After declining to do so, she was frequently asked for reports within unreasonable time frames, her advice was requested and overruled and when mistakes occurred she was blamed even though she had advised against the course of action taken. She was twice transferred to another position on the same salary and heard at third hand that she was going to be sacked for another alleged breach of procedure. Her superior was also approached with the same proposal to implicate the same manager and this superior was also transferred to two different positions because of failure to do so, amongst other things.

Narrative 7

Jaq, in a job as a change agent, was attacked personally and undermined for bringing about the changes the position was designed to accomplish. Her commitment to the changes enabled her to put a brave face on it, assisted by others who were similarly committed. There were attempts to denigrate her by overly familiar behaviour. When she failed to resign, the position was substantially upgraded and she was advised not to apply for it. A review was instigated and since then people have said that it was trumped up. Subsequently she became persona non grata and had difficulty in retaining employment.

Narrative 8

Pat was an expert in his field and held a senior position with a fair degree of autonomy. There was no clear statement of duties and his superior said that none would be forthcoming. Pat was criticised for overstepping his role when he used initiative in developing and organising projects. The manager continually over-rode his decisions, publicly questioned whether he had the power to make them, and alternated between criticism and praise of his work. The manager refused to discuss the matters despite Pat's attempts to do so.

Narrative 9

Jo was caught up in downsizing and restructuring. She was removed from the duties she was employed to do without explanation and told that her work had been criticised by many people. She was given no opportunity to defend herself against the criticism and when she asked the manager for specifics about it none was forthcoming. The manager made publicly derogatory remarks to her about her professional expertise.

Narrative 10

Jane did not think that she had been bullied because she thought that she was not the type. She thought that people who were bullied probably lacked the skills or the temperament to handle it. In her own case she referred to an oppressive organisational environment and an 'uncomfortable' organisation. This was the result of organisational uncertainty as it 'lurched from one scenario to the next'. It was a style of management which 'pervades male dominated organisations'. She also thought that heavy handedness was a better term than bullying.

Narrative 11

Frank was charged by his superior with developing an anti-bullying policy for the school. After conducting a workshop together with the school psychologist, he asked for volunteers for a committee. The group developed their own definition with the assistance of a world expert on it. This caused the superior to question his judgement (as definitions should come from authorities and not be tampered with) even though she had been involved in the discussions. This was but one instance in an on-going series.

Results

Overt and covert bullying

Nearly half the respondents contrasted 'generic' and overt bullying with a more subtle kind that was covert, malicious and directed at undermining. Overt bullying was not necessarily malicious. 'It's just their way of getting the first punch in terms of the relationship so in their minds setting the relationship up so you know where you stand.'

Chris went on to say;

'He felt superior and he would quickly let you know he was the superior person. Life would be a lot less complicated in the future if you fitted in. I actually liked the guy. But he was quite brutal to some other people. He would go to great lengths to explain my mistakes to everybody. I think that's bullying. The difference is that it wasn't personal. He would have done it to anyone in my role.'

This is consistent with Jane who implied that bullying was overt and relatively easy to deal with by competent senior people. 'At the level I was working you don't have too much of that [personal bullying] because most people stand up for themselves. People allow themselves to be bullied or don't know how to handle a bully. I used avoidance strategies.'

The distinction between overt and 'undermining' that is, covert, malicious activity is clear below where the one incident involves both and the person being intimidated is later undermined.

'It was put to me that if I was directed by X (who they wanted out of the system) to follow the process that I had followed he would be at fault not me. The clear

implication was that they were going to bust heads over it and that if it were my responsibility it would be mine that was busted. A bit later on the MD stated to many people, not directly to me I might add, that I had breached the policy [about another procedure] he had me on toast, he was going after me and he was going to sack me.' (Di)

Overt bullying was seen to have a clear function by interviewees who experienced it, in that it;

- signalled to people in the organisation who was superior or a piece of intellectual 'territory' which was important to the bully;
- inspired fear in the rest of the organisation; 'Bullies flex their muscles; I think they assert their power and most people back down; most people want an easy life, they don't want conflict in their lives or in their jobs'; and
- was used to gain material advantage such as having someone work longer hours than were contracted.

Covert bullying is harder to tease out. Informants could not believe what was happening for a number of reasons. First there was an underlying expectation that their expertise and selves would be respected and their work life coherent. Second, the bullying incidents were, taken separately, trivial and still within the scope of organisational 'manners'.

'Harassment tends to be of small things so that when the harrassee complains it sounds trivial. They come to me [as a grievance officer] to ask questions to check on reality. "Look I know this thing's trivial but Fred always parks in my parking spot".' (Lee)

'Because when you look at each of the individual incidents they were so petty.'

Third, there was no category into which it naturally fitted. Five respondents specifically referred to the lack of a context for the behaviour, disbelief about what was happening or incredulity.

'I guess because there is not a context in which you can necessarily fit it in. It's hard to know when you have been bullied'. (Chris)

'At the time I wasn't thinking of it in terms of being bullied, it was just that we seemed to have different approaches to the work we were doing but over the weeks and months it was occurring I was actually doing some investigation into the bullying of children and we realised – because I wasn't the only one that was being bullied – that the behaviour of this person was exactly what the research was saying to us about kids.' (Frank)

Behaviours which are sequential or patterned such as described by Mann (1996) were hard to decipher but covert bullying is the story of innocuous instances which add up to abuse.

'X and I were talking about bullying and I had just been reeling off a list of all the behaviours of bullying and one of them was a form of torture and we said that's exactly what it is. We could regularly see that she was trying to get you off balance and isolated from other people.' (Les)

Field's (1999) typology of the bully relies not on one or two behaviours but an ensemble of behaviours, some of which are individually benign such as praise. The alternation of praise and blame (see Crawford, 1997) was referred to by three respondents. It induces co-dependence so that the target is within the control of the bully (Mann, 1996).

'If she couldn't get me on one point she would say it was a different reason why I was being carpeted so you just never knew where you stood. Some days she'd say "look I'm really pleased with the way you worked last week".' (Frank)

An unorthodox description of power is 'the right to define reality' (Rowe, 1994, p. 28.). Verification either alone or with others – 'the reality check' – is important. The bully and the target are fighting the definitional war over what the target thought was settled territory, for example wanting to get a good performance from each staff member through means of a clear statement of duties.

- 'He criticised me as Chair for overstepping my role and a person present said "well if we had clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the Chair then he can make sure he doesn't overstep them". He responded "that's a good idea but I am not going to do it".' (Pat)

The agreement with what is good management but failure to act on it occurred in Frank's case where the superior '...said that she thought it was a good idea but she wasn't going to do that she was just going to wait and see what I did and then tell me whether it was right or not. She then told me that I wasn't doing my job properly but she hadn't made it clear what it was and was taking me to task for what was outside the field anyway'. It is hard to argue with this.

Respondents regarded their work performance as reasonable or superior and did not expect denigration. In the interviews the irrelevance of work performance was notable. Failure to produce and discuss job descriptions and the subsequent use of this to generate 'performance problems' was an excuse to persist in interference. Despite this about half of the informants said that their results had been outstanding and could produce evidence to support this claim. 'There is no rationale and no logic. Incompetence is rewarded.' (Les)

Imperceptibility in covert bullying

The inability to recognise bullying is remarkable when it is likened to torture. It is as if the bully flies in under most of the radar of social interaction so that the target does not or cannot respond, responds inappropriately, or does not recognise the severity of the threat. (Perhaps this is the underlying meaning of the stereotypical bullying target; an inept person in heavy lensed glasses.) It is irrational.

'People don't want to recognise what is happening. So you are isolated. You need touchstones to say "what is my reality?" You go through all this analysis [of the situation]. You are doing it very much in isolation. I have little conversations. I put myself into the stand and talk to myself. What would a judge and jury say under this circumstance. Trying to be totally objective.'

The function of imperceptibility, that is practices that are below some level of notice and action, could be to gradually redefine the 'rules'. The practice is unnoticed by others or passed over as inconsequential or just plain strange, and unlikely to be argued with by the target initially as too petty to bother about until there is a marked problem. The informants pointed to a number of gambits that were used to do this.

Redescription takes familiar concepts, which are the building blocks of our social life, and says that the thing described wasn't one of these after all. Any success of redescription is due to its effrontery in repudiating concepts that go to the heart of our existence as social beings.

'They all said how committed I was but in the context this was negative and tied in with us not being objective, being too close and how our lives weren't in balance. Everything that I valued was dragged out and trampled.' (Jo)

Hospitality becomes entrapment for a member of staff who can then be reproached for naiveté in thinking that it was hospitality in the first place.

'My superior in an expansive mood asked me out for lunch at a waterside restaurant drawing attention to the nice place and the happy festive atmosphere. I said that I had to get the report done as she had asked me to do and would afternoon tea be convenient. She turned up and then without further ado proceeded to go through an adverse performance appraisal.' (Lyn)

Evasion can include denial of natural justice through refusal to communicate with the person being bullied, or discouragement of their attempt to seek it by fobbing them off, discussing the matter with others but not the target, or bamboozling them. Discussion with others serves to enforce the desired world view.

‘I did on a number of occasions try and talk to her about how I was feeling but it was almost like she knew what you wanted to talk about so she would try and find ways of avoiding it.’ (Jaq)

‘I found that enormously stressful for other people to be asked leading questions about my behaviour and asked if I had contributed to her illness’. ‘Did you have an opportunity to state the case to him?’ ‘Never.’ (Lee)

The bully may instruct that there be no discussion of their dictates in public or rely on the shame and uncertainty associated with ‘being sung’ to keep targets quiet. Work colleagues may be subtly asked not to speak to the target or association in the workplace may signify guilt. ‘The hardest thing for me to accept was that when I was being bullied no one wanted to know me. It’s like you’ve got leprosy...’. (Les)

Another gambit is escalation or pushing the person being bullied to the point where finally they have to react back, for example being dismissive of their professional contribution in areas where they have been employed for their professional expertise.

‘I think you have to make the decision that you are going to draw the battle lines and stand up and put your job on the line so that’s why I would count it as bullying as such because basically they are saying “I will push you to the point where you then have to take it a step further.” So it’s strange and the person is quite weak’. (Bobby)

‘Code words’ make the target the aggressor. As with words such as ‘activist’ for example, reported code used in this context included ‘you are resisting change’, ‘you are showing no corporate loyalty’, ‘you are not sharing the vision’, ‘you are not working as part of the executive team’, and ‘marketing is uncooperative’ – marketing being code for the person under scrutiny. If there is an attempt to clarify the issue, then the attempt seems touchy, wilful or stupid and the bully can categorise it in this way and launch a further attack or ignore it as being trivial.

The ethics of the person being bullied may be used against them insofar as they are unlikely to retaliate in like kind by lying, blaming others, carrying tales, or deceit; ‘you have to be very crooked to be able to cope with that stuff and it’s too big a cost to pay’. (Les). Half the respondents referred to their experience in this context.

Reality is not the prerogative of two people and for this reason the bystanders are important and informants were asked about their response. Some bystanders assisted in denigration through participation in the kangaroo courts, ‘following orders’, shunning the target and acceptance of innuendo as being good currency. As in being sung, the victim is led to the belief that they are going to die and then they do; the rumours and speculation cause those in the organisation to enact the desired situation and power is shifted.

The target may also have doubts but against this backdrop it is hard not to.

‘I guess you are always worrying about with bullying how much of what they do is right. How much of it are you the actual instigator. Are you really the victim here or are you the one who is causing the problem?’ (Les)

Coping strategies

There is an almost complete absence of studies which look at the complexity of bullying aimed at identifying the strategies for coping with being the target. While this research initially did not deal

directly with this topic, there was much interest expressed in passing on what the managers did to diffuse the bullying.

Initially attempts were made to clarify incidents by speaking directly of the concern but this did not work with respondents realising that they were not going to get a civil, rational, or indeed any answer. 'Her way of dealing with it was to pretend that I didn't exist.' (Pat)

Others attempted to use third parties such as mediators or other members of staff to 'get through'. However this did not work either. 'I went to Y and said that I wanted a conciliator and he said, "well frankly, I'm offended" and was quite cross at that.' (Jaq)

Intervention by a union representative in one case caused escalation. Another went to his superior and asked if he would intervene with the bullying CEO but was fobbed off.

Some used memoranda to elucidate a response (none was forthcoming) and one suggested copying it to a third party which would, however, inevitably put the respondent into a confrontational role. Respondents took notes, kept correspondence and one used tape recordings. An interesting piece of research would be to determine at what stage in the process these various actions were taken. The efficacy of reacting earlier and telling other people rather than trying to deal with it personally, as suggested by a number, could then be tested.

Respondents were senior enough in the organisation to feel that grievance processes were unlikely to be unbiased because of their eminence or the involvement of the Chief Executive Officer in the problem. This may also point to a preponderantly hostile environment where bullying is condoned in the organisation or simply that it is hardly recognised as a phenomenon. Respondents also felt that they would not be believed and that the events would be characterised as a 'personality clash'. Two respondents joined forces for a complaint against serial bullying to overcome this perception and gain greater credibility.

Taking the complaint into the wider sphere through legal action is difficult because there is no recourse in Australia unless the bullying is related to conduct which is prohibited by anti-discrimination legislation (Scutt, 2000). Results such as stress and constructive dismissal may be actionable but only if the victim suffers some 'damage', for example psychiatric injury (Yeatman, 1998).

A number of respondents had support networks either inside the organisation or outside it and some sought counsel and support from targets, familiar with the behaviour, either within the organisation or outside it in order to validate their interpretation of the situation.

Evasive strategies such as absenteeism, sick leave and resignation or transfer were used as a last resort. One respondent was advised to 'give them an alternative' and negotiated an advantageous deal elsewhere aided by a grant from the organisation where the bullying was occurring.

Nearly all the informants when asked what they would do differently said that they would leave earlier. Most said that there was a history of it; others had been 'got rid of' in the same way in what was '...a long standing, complicated and complex issue'. Next time they would look at the employer more closely before taking the job, find out why the previous incumbent left and be careful who they worked for. 'Work for people you aspire to be; if you think you are being interviewed by someone who is inferior to you, don't take the job'. One entertained the possibility of saying 'yes' and going along with what she perceived as an unethical situation but could not bring herself to do it. Another said that she would have got an independent mediator.

All who had been bullied said that the impact was profound and two quoted counsellors who said that the bullying was the worst that they had heard. Most experienced great anger, anxiety and stress. Most had experienced detriment in terms of career progression. One informant said that not a day goes by when he does not muse on some aspect of it and the repeated attempts to hamstring his career. One said that had the person who caused the injury not been sacked, it still would have been an issue ten years later but she felt that her career had not been harmed by it. The indifference, malice or betrayal by workmates of some of the people interviewed left them suspicious of others and deciding to be less open, co-operative and forthcoming in the future to employers and work mates. Most would

advise anyone in the same situation to leave as soon as possible because it was a no win situation, and that by definition, bullying was an unfair fight.

Conclusion

At this time the research field for bullying is a very broad one. Defining a well-recognised path, as has been done with sexual harassment, is unlikely to be simple. While there is obvious non-violent aggression, psychological abuse comprised of patterned behaviour of an innocuous or irrational kind is not easy to codify as it is apparently shallow but profoundly destructive and very resourceful in its variations. Further qualitative research could be undertaken to identify bullying patterns because at the moment there are few recognisable but it is likely that there are many of them.

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DIVERSITY... PATH FOR GENDER EQUITY IN THE WORKPLACE?⁽²⁰⁰⁰⁾

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The new emphasis on diversity and harnessing the benefits of difference reflects the growing recognition that innovative capacity can give a competitive edge in the global marketplace. Strategic plans increasingly focus on the integration of diversity to foster creative excellence. This integration is a complex process requiring the capacity to respond to multiple realities in a reflexive manner. This research examined one organisation implementing empowerment and diversity programmes. Fifty in-depth interviews were conducted with employees selected by a quasi-randomised stratified sampling procedure. Employees discussed how the language of diversity and empowerment had been interpreted within their organisation and identified some structural and ideological blocks that can work against the achievement of integrated diversity and gender equity. The research identified that diversity programmes must acknowledge current power differentials and actively address embedded gender attitudes so that women are not disadvantaged by diversity initiatives.

Introduction: The rationale behind diversity programmes

If you sit in any corporate boardroom around the globe today there is a good chance you will hear discussion about diversity. Diversity programmes have been touted to increase profitability (Kuczynski, 1999), organizational performance (Dolan & Giles-Brown, 1999; Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999), innovative capacity (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) and to improve corporate culture (Roosevelt Thomas Jr, 1999). In addition to their competitive advantages, there are now, in many industrialised nations, legal imperatives compelling the implementation of diversity programmes. Diversity programmes are based on the recognition of inequities in the workplace and the understanding that formal policies and procedures are often required to redefine cultural norms, especially if they have been longstanding. Many diversity policies aim to integrate difference and break down rigid conformity to a singular dominant viewpoint. Workplace cultures based on the dominance of one group develop a type of vision that has been recognised as inadequate for competitive response in today's global marketplace (Morgan, 1994; Schon, 1994).

As part of the drive to develop multi-dimensional perspective and vision in organisations diversity programmes seek to include people who have traditionally been marginalised within organisations on the basis of difference and/or excluded from decision-making. This is often achieved by legislating the inclusion of minority groups, including females, into the organisation and into decision making or managerial positions.

Method

This paper reflects on the data collected from one organisation that implemented empowerment and diversity programmes. The organisation is hierarchical, employs over 1300 employees in Western Australia and has employee ranking based on a nine-tiered pay structure. Decision making capacity is linked to position within the organisation and strongly concentrated at the two top organisational strata. Traditionally, lower levels of the organisation had been almost totally excluded from decision-making processes. The diversity programmes aimed to decentralise authority and decision making, give employees at lower levels more autonomy and enable the integration of their feedback into strategic planning. As an average of 78% of employees in the lower four levels of the organisation were female, the organisation's strategies were largely targeted at gender inclusion. There were also

strategies to include more females in the top four levels, to address the gender imbalance in management. The organisation had never had females at the top or executive level.

The Diversity Programme involved:

1. Organisational Restructuring based on a multi-skilling initiative to give employees in lower levels of the organisation more autonomy in their roles.
2. Regionalisation and decentralisation of decision making from the corporate Headquarters to include more levels in decision making processes.
3. Provision of management opportunities in the regions for women.
4. Increased information access through weekly information meetings and web based employee interaction.
5. Structured cooperative consultancies between organisational levels.

The programme was designed to be implemented over a 5 year period with major structural changes to occur in the first 12 months. The intent was that these diversity initiatives would increase equity and participation for staff who had traditionally had little input into organisational planning. This research was conducted 4 years after the programme had begun.

Fifty interviews were conducted with employees at all levels of the organisation. While this number represents only 4% of the employee population the interviews were in-depth and comprehensive, typically taking from one and a half to two hours. Further, the thematic analysis showed saturation of theme at about thirty interviews, suggesting that this was an adequate sample number. Interviewees were selected by a quasi-randomised stratified sampling procedure so that a representative sample of employees was spoken to at each of the nine levels of the organisation, including the CEO. In total twenty three females were interviewed and twenty seven males. During these interviews employees described their historical positioning within the organisation; the levels of inclusion they had experienced and how their role capacity within the organisation was affected by the new programmes. In addition, three focus groups were conducted with representatives from a cross section of the organisation.

In addition to the thematic analysis, the interviews were analysed to examine how the language of diversity and empowerment had been interpreted within their organisation and compare that with respondent's experience of that interpretation. Core themes were identified by their representation in 60% or more of the interviews and/or their identification as core by the focus groups. Two other psychologists, both qualified at the Masters level, took a random sampling of the interview transcriptions to check the thematic and discourse analysis for reliability and validity.

Using the findings of this research it is possible to examine gender as one form of difference and to see how this diversity programmes impacted on gender equity. Gender difference has traditionally been used as an identification marker for exclusion from positions of power and leadership, especially in patriarchal organisations. Feminists have long documented the effects of gender difference being used identify a person, regardless of capability, as "other than." "Other than" leadership and management material, "other than" appropriate for positions of influence and power (Caplan, 1985; Chan & Smith, 2000; Chodorow, 1996; Collins, 1991; Everingham, 1996; Faludi, 1991; Fine & Addleston, 1996; Gilligan, 1982; Goodrich, 1991; Huygens, 1995; Winter, 1988). Ideally, diversity programmes would reduce the negative discrimination attached to gender as well as allowing more female participation in decision making processes. Core analysis included consideration of the questions: "How is the maker of difference-by-gender functioning with the organisation now?" and "What changes have occurred in attitudes, resource power and participation by gender?"

Primary findings and discussion

The primary finding, with this organisational implementation of diversity programmes, was that *the language* of diversity and empowerment was being used within the organisation but little change had occurred in distribution of referential, decision making or reward power. Female respondents saw the

change programmes operating more for political correctness than to provide real shifts in power distribution and expressed frustration with the language of diversity and equity which now was used to blocked their complaints about workload. Male respondents supported the female perception by using phrases such as “token tarts” to describe women who had made it out of the first three levels of the nine tiered pay structure. A common theme from male interviewees was the opinion the women who had been newly placed in managerial roles were incapable of good leadership and were a “nuisance” in the role. From this finding it appeared that core male prejudice and ingrained sexist attitudes had been reinforced rather than reversed by the programme.

Limits of legislated inclusion

To explore employee perception that gender inclusion was “token” the employee data was obtained for Head Office, which employs over two thirds of the organisational staff. This data, post programme implementation, still showed an over-representation at women at the lower levels of the organisation, especially Level One, with few women in the top three levels of the organisation.

Table One: Female Employees as a Percentage of the Total Pay Ranking:

Level One	73%
Level Two	56%
Level Three	37%
Level Four	24%
Level Five	26%
Level Six	20%
Level Seven	14%
Level Eight	6%
Level Nine & Exec	0%

This concept of token inclusion was also explored by women interviewed at Level Five and above. They discussed work practices that made it hard for them to be efficient in their positions and thus kept them as “token” management. An active system was described which ensured that women who made it into the higher positions required by diversity programmes did not stay long or move into higher levels of the organisation. This system was described as a “hunt” with senior women as the “prey” as described by one female manager:

This organisation takes great pride in killing their senior women off. [31]

Males described this as proof that women weren’t really suited for management positions:

Look, they get really aggro and make enemies for themselves. The rest of us just get on with the job and don’t get so emotional. You can’t manage that way!

Women described how this culling process was done strategically through “legitimate” workplace practices rather than overt oppression. Much of the inequity in workload distribution was described by women as informal and while it impeded their effectiveness, it was not addressed under policy and procedures:

Any ...work that is unallocated tends to fall on your shoulders....There is a lot of gender stuff here at __. You have to accept it. If I talk about it I will end up I tears. I could tell you about some brutal, ugly scenes I have been through because I was a woman. You have to learn to enjoy it or take it to grievance. And that is

not safe. I have been told, "If you take it to grievance I will go for you on the grounds of under performance. [46].

Women who had made it past level five talked about being restricted in access to information vital for them to perform well:

Management don't want to tell you anything. They think if they give you information you will be equal to them and they are afraid of that. It is a man's world here. There is really strong domination and domination is everything. [31]

Unfair workload and exclusion, were often, ironically, enforced on the basis of recognition of *difference*. The concept of "difference" introduced by the diversity initiative to encourage inclusion was being used give women additional tasks. Two examples are given below:

If there is a conference to organise the managers will say, "Oh, you know about catering and cooking, you organise it." You can either quit or put up.

The support staff in the organisation have been cut and there are two senior female staff. There is an enormous expectation from all of the males in the office that we will do our own typing and filing ourselves because we are women. Never mind that this is tremendously inefficient at \$62,000 per annum. The Administrative support is very poor. I have trained for specialist work and I am stuck doing typing and filing which is unrelated to my core expertise. [46]

Males perceived this as "whinging" and further cited the women's complaints as a core disadvantage of having to work with women at a managerial level. Structural impediments were attributed to personal, characterological defect rather than to the situation.

Identification of difference

The concept of "multi-skilling" to give more autonomy at lower levels had been used to downsize the lower levels with the loss of substantial numbers of female employees. Those who remained spoke of "multi-skilling" as "getting us to do two jobs for the price of one." The identification of skills which women could contribute to the organisation, a standard part of difference programmes, had resulted in the devaluing of those skills and the exploitation of professional expertise on the basis of gender. One woman took on a huge evaluation project that required complex assessment skills but was parcelled off to her on the basis of "being a sheila."

He asked me to come in and run the communications side of it because it had been a problem before in the agency so I could have a new approach to it. So I quite happily accepted that, knowing full well that there were elements in the organisation thinking, Well that's a nice touchy, feely job, give that to the sheila.

The result of this was that the end product, which involved months of her time as a skilled professional was attributed to her gender, rather than to her time, effort and expertise. Male respondents often spoke of female skills in a derogatory manner such as "the gift of the gab" and complained about the women's need to have their work "noticed."

So whatever I said they'd attribute it to my gender rather than my management style and I think its not about sisterhood. That bothers me. Treat me as an individual, not part of a group, and this is the way that I approach it. [32]

Many female employees perceived themselves in a no-win situation as "difference" had been used to identify, devalue and exploit complex skills rather than allow for authentic inclusion and the increase of female power. In particular, the linking of interpersonal ability with femaleness had resulted in the devaluation of it as a skill and an over-simplification of how it could be professionally developed. The assumption was, that as a "female" skill it could be quickly and easily developed within the organisation and required less resources and preparation than technical skills. The identification of difference was insufficient for the understanding of the complexity involved in acquiring skills held

by groups deemed to be “different” from the dominant group. Difference in this case became conceptualised as “eccentric” and deficient:

But I do find myself having to very firmly stand my ground and I’ve come to the conclusion that in some cases it is a pure embarrassment in that they think I must be clever because I got the job and I’m doing good things, so maybe I’m performing well but, shit, what’s she talking about. [Laughter] You know, that sort of thing, so she’s okay, we like [her], she’s one of the boys, so they’re almost forgiving you for being **eccentric**, you know what I mean? [Laughter].....they talk about it a lot and they say that this is what they are [Interpersonal skills] but they haven’t got the foggiest idea what they’re talking about, not the foggiest, and I’m thinking, what am I doing sitting here, they don’t want my skills and they don’t reward you, why do you stay?...But they don’t see that I have any refined skills, they in fact would see me deficient.”

The identification of difference, based on gender, while supposedly for the purposes of inclusion, was thus actually strengthening capacity for exclusion.

Identified structural and ideological blocks to diversity and gender equity

It is not guaranteed that the identification and recognition of difference in the workplace will advantage women. In fact some who want to dispute oppression by gender cite the percentages of women in the workforce as proof that we have already achieved equity and integrated difference. The core issue is how the identification of difference is used in diversity programmes. The use of gender difference as an *identification marker for exclusion* did not shift with this programme, despite the initiatives. This case demonstrated that identifying ideas as different can actually increase exclusion unless structural and ideological blocks to gender equity are specifically addressed. Some of these blocks were identified in the research and are discussed under the broader umbrella of entrenched attitude:

Entrenched attitudes and unconscious privilege

1. Block One: Inadequate Understanding and Definition of Complex Skills.

There is inadequate understanding of the complexity of skills such as inclusion, responsiveness and reflexivity. Male respondents who talked about these as female skills had confusion around how the skills operate, the level of interpersonal skills they integrate and the level of expertise they require in order to be effectively administered.

2. Block Two: Devaluing Complex Skills Linked to Femaleness.

Once a group of skills are identified as traditionally female (“a sheila’s job”), there was a tendency, by both male and female interviewees, to minimise their value and assume they were simple. The complex skill of inclusive leadership was seen as requiring less skill than top-down, exclusive, authoritarian leadership and administration. The result of this devaluing of complex skill is that the organisation was still not clearly identifying and prioritising these traditionally female skills in the JDF for executive positions. By default this excludes certain types of leadership styles from the executive.

3. Block Three: Inadequate Funding Allocated for the Implementation of Diversity Programmes and Gender Equity.

Not enough time and money was devoted to identifying, hiring and developing these skills within the organisation...partly because of one and two above – inadequate definition of skills involved and unrealistic evaluation of the time and investment required for their development. Inadequate investment lowered the probability that the diversity programme would succeed.

4. Block Four: Inadequate Recognition of Female Leadership and Skills.

Clear identification is needed of the complex skills that organisations would like to utilise, acquire or integrate. Once this identification is made the questions need to be asked: What is fair compensation for these? How can exploitation be prevented, given the existence of current power inequities?

5. Block Five: Inadequate Understanding of the Effects of Power Inequity.

Many respondents commented that they would not engage with diversity programmes because they saw them as just another way for management to increase the workload of subordinates. Employees described the following difficulties in regards to the leadership implementing diversity programmes:

A. Capacity for Exploitation.

The general perception by managers that traditional female strengths, such as reflexivity or responsiveness, are less complex skills than traditional male skills increased the likelihood that female skills will be exploited. This research finding supports those of Kipnis (1972) who found that attaining power works to create a cognitive filter; a cognitive distortion if you will, whereby power holders attribute more of the work to themselves and see those who hold lesser power as being less skilled. Kipnis labelled the effects on the power holder's sense of self of controlling others as the "metamorphic effects of power." Creating power equity or increasing clarity around the effects of use and abuse of power is essential where programmes are being implemented to increase equity.

B. Social Distance Between Various Levels of the Organisation.

Respondents described separate worlds functioning between different strata of an organisation. The social distancing in inequitable power relations has been found to prevent the development of emotional links and to create a sense that the scope of justice does not extend beyond one's own bounded moral community (Opatow, 1990). This bounded sense of moral community has also been found to prevent the power holder from experiencing discomfort when instructing subjects, especially if the power holder must instruct subjects to perform unpalatable tasks (Kipnis, 1972; Kipnis, 1974). Respondents felt that this bounded moral sense which distanced power holders from the realities of working in a low power position increased the likelihood that identifying their "skills of difference" would lead to more work and exploitation.

C. Dominance Preventing Real Diversity.

Respondents felt that there was not adequate understanding by management of what real diversity and integration meant, and many expressed doubts that this understanding could be attained. Again, this can be partially attributed to the effects of hierarchy. Those in the top strata of a hierarchical system often only need to maintain consciousness of one reality because the existence of a dominant reality gives the power to exclude other realities. Further, the nature of bureaucracy acts as a filter to the information flow to the top levels. Morgan (1994) argues that the fragmentation of thinking which can occur in highly bureaucratized cultures works against understanding of process and effective integration. Inclusion, therefore, would require setting in place structures to ensure constant feedback from other strata was translated, considered and integrated. This would require time, effort and the skills of responsiveness. This would require the allocation of sufficient resources to enable true integration (Pfeffer & Veiga, 1999).

Implications of the findings and recommendations for women

Firstly, this research demonstrates the importance of women recognising their gender acquired skill and the market value of those to organisations. Studies in social exchange have found that those with lower power appeal to norms of equity and fairness to try to obtain what they desire, but that higher power parties rarely enter into negotiation unless the lower power group can withdraw assets and/or has other options available (Thibault & Faucheux, 1965). Women need to be aware of the assets that female gender brings to the workplace and to be confident of their value in equity negotiations so that they ask the right price for complex skills.

Given current gender inequities, women who want to empower themselves within the workplace are still advantaged by identifying their skills from the position of sameness first rather than difference.

The capacity to include, collaborate and respond to multiple realities are firstly skills of excellence and need to be identified as such.

Secondly, it is imperative that women develop awareness of the power dynamics within the workplace, how they operate, and stay aware of the risk of exploitation, a risk which is related to how power is used rather than just to power inequity. A true integration of difference is based on mutual respect and the identification of value in the symbolised *other* and cannot occur without safeguards in place for the traditionally exploited or marginalised *other*. It is important to stay aware that without policies and procedures which support “diversity” and act to protect traditionally disempowered groups the capacity for exploitation, using gender difference as justification still exists.

The integration of diversity is a complex process requiring the capacity to respond to multiple realities in a reflexive manner. The skill level required for successful integration is considerable. Schon (1994) described the performance of complex skills in a responsive and appropriate way as *professional artistry* (Schon, 1994) because of the complex series of sequences which transcend the sequential, automatised version of behaviours traditionally required in the workplace. He suggested that processes such as the capacity for reflection-in-action are essential for the success of programmes of empowerment or diversity but require considerable practice to develop. Successful implementation of diversity policies will require the continual development of collaborative process and reciprocal feedback mechanisms. In turn this will require staff training and the development of organisational structures and policies which support such mechanisms.

Effective diversity programme implementation firstly requires the capacity to recognise two co-existing realities of human experience: Sameness – that we share much in common including needs for voice, autonomy and respect, *and* Difference – that there are multiple lived experiences. Secondly, it requires the capacity to sustain ambiguity long enough to integrate these two seemingly contradictory concepts of sameness and difference so that processes can be developed that allow strengths to be integrated regardless of difference. The identification of difference alone does not guarantee inclusion. Once difference is identified then *active empowerment* of traditionally marginalised groups is required so that true inclusion and integration of diversity can occur.

Further, with diversity implementation it is important that gender, ethnicity and race are not be placed into a melting pot that considers all “difference” to be equal without considering current inequities in power. True diversity must begin with full acknowledgment of current power bases and how these are related to systemic processes. Otherwise, “diversity programmes” serve simply to *highlight* the “difference” that has traditionally served to exclude groups from positions of power and as a further rationalisation for inequity. A primary way of evaluating this is served by the queries posed by Chan and Smith (2000):

“To what extent is difference viewed as heresy rather than as a potential resource? To what extent is uniqueness seen as a constraint rather than as a valuable asset?” (p. 48).

The complexity of inclusion requires the capacities to recognise multiple realities as valid, to respectfully explore the understandings that arise as a result of various lived experiences and the hard work of integrating these understandings into a responsive organisational culture. Diversity programmes are making some important inroads into the first step of this process and the challenge for the future is to continue the development of the professional artistry required for authentic and effective integration of diversity.

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WHY TALK ABOUT DIVERSITY? ⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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The postmodern awakening that 'everyone is different' has been coupled with the benign and clumsy term 'diversity'. Some attempts to consider ways of dealing with the difference questions have furnished somewhat simplified models using what I term the 'guided tour approach' in order to provide some answers. The language of 'diversity' facilitates a focus on the plurality of differences, a numbers game if you like, rather than the power relations that structure or position individuals and groups as different. This inattention to power results in a set of discourses purportedly about diversity and difference which only catalyses the processes of conformity. In other words, 'diversity' becomes the agent by which political differences are subsumed. By way of example, I consider the case of *Productive Diversity* and argue that its objectives are thwarted by a consumerist language of diversity. Critical self-reflection is central to issues of leadership and political representation. In failing to address the power differentials in the politics of difference, the language of 'diversity' will do nothing more than create re-entry pathways for a circular discourse which prohibits a creative politics for social justice.

Introduction

Finding a language that can articulate the complexity of social relations with sensitivity and awareness, is proving to be no easy task for social theorists and feminists alike. The theoretical terrain between 'difference' and 'diversity' is proving to be no exception. So why talk about diversity? How do we read 'diversity'? How is the term 'diversity' used? Is the language of 'diversity' an appropriate one for working with, and recognizing differences?

Postmodern attention to differences promotes a language that speaks of the superficial and the aesthetic, and is pitched within a logic of consumption and desire. Globalisation, as we know it, via the expansion of markets and the ever-intrusive 'new' technologies, follows much of this postmodern understanding of diversity, celebrating the world as a growing market-place for the exchange of goods, ideas and cultures. There has been much discussion on the uses of the Internet, for example, and how it brings people with similar interests together, constituting what some have referred to as the 'global village'. Others have been critical of such understandings of diversity, arguing that 'diversity' used in this sense is void of any conceptualization of the power relations that name and order differences. In other words, 'diversity' appears to be a less politically sensitive term than 'difference'. In this sense, appeals to 'diversity' may in fact be seduction by the superficial. Indeed, has 'diversity' begun to function as a term of compromise that allows us to take the easy way out?¹

To explore these issues I will consider some of the problems with the language of diversity and difference, with particular emphasis on the ways in which feminists have responded to this dilemma. As a means of exploring some of the practical implications, I will consider some of the ideas of 'productive diversity' as an example of how the language of diversity is used in a consumerist manner, and ask if this is an appropriate direction to take. Productive diversity is a concept that emerged out of the Australian Office of Multicultural Affairs; the central element is the "recognition that knowledge of the 'languages of commerce' is a great potential asset not previously enjoyed by English-speaking Australia" (Jupp 1996:15). This idea has been further developed into a "New,

¹ This question is posed by Ania Loomba (1998:xv) in reference to current academic perspectives of 'postcolonialism'

Australian Model for Work and Management” by Cope and Kalantzis (1997). I argue that while the some of the objectives of the productive diversity model are certainly an improvement on extant business practices, there remains the problem of how to deal with power and inequality in a world of multiple differences and oppressions. Unless we confront these inherent discrepancies, we will do nothing more than present superficial understandings of differences, understandings that are politically paralyzing and theoretically contradictory. Is there a more appropriate language that we can use as a tool, a language that does not suggest that diversity is merely something that we can add to our communities or add to our markets to make them more interesting, or to give them a competitive edge? In responding to this question I will make some tentative moves towards a shift in the language, away from what Kahn (1995) has described as the anthropological language of culture and difference which posits cultures as clearly defined, intact and bordered. In other words, I will explore the possibilities of understanding differences via a language that is open to interpretation, yet flexible enough to facilitate coalitions and increase the permeability of these borders.

Diversity and difference

Some attempts to consider ways of dealing with difference have furnished simplified models in order to provide some insights. The language of ‘diversity’ implicit in some of these efforts facilitates a focus on the plurality of differences, a numbers game if you like, rather than providing a framework for thinking about the power relations that structure or position individuals and groups as different. This follows Sandra Harding’s argument that there are two distinct difference agendas in much feminist theory. There is “difference as diversity and variety: the valuable feminist vision of understanding differences between women as richness and opportunity for cultural enhancement and understanding rather than a threat to the self of the speaker ... “Difference” is simply cultural variation” (Harding, 1990:91). There is also the “existence of differences due to the structures of domination that appears in the criticism of white Western women’s participation in and benefit from race, class and cultural exploitation” (Harding, 1990:91-2). Harding also raises the question as to whether *both* of these understandings of difference are incorporated into theorizing on difference (Harding, 1990: fn 8, 103). Ien Ang similarly identifies a “tension between difference as benign diversity and difference as conflict, disruption, dissension” (Ang, 1995:68). This is where much of the political and theoretical discrepancies lie with approaches to difference, that is in the distinctions Harding and Ang outline, and other understandings of difference employed elsewhere attempting to capture difference as mere diversity, as cultural pluralism, or the plurality of differences.

Martha Minow’s work on what she terms the “difference dilemma” highlights the need to consider difference as relational rather than conceiving it in essentialist terms (Minow, 1985; 1987; 1990). The problem of definition nevertheless remains when attempting to fix meanings to difference, particularly when essentialist understandings of difference are discarded. Homi Bhabha argues that the place of difference is never “outside or implacably oppositional”: “[i]t is a pressure, and a presence, that acts constantly , if unevenly, along the entire boundary of authorization ... [t]he contour of difference is agonistic, shifting, splitting ... ”(Bhabha, 1995:32). The fluidity of difference, as Bhabha recognizes, denies static definitions and welcomes the interplay of context and identity. In this sense difference is seen to be embraced rather than suppressed and becomes part of the contested terrain of multicultural discourse (Hall, 1992). With this understanding of difference comes the recognition that while there are common bonds between groups and individuals, we all speak from different locations, each holding different interpretations of our different contexts.

Despite attempts to challenge or “break out of binaries (and) dialectics” (Haraway, 1991: 129), the logic of identity that seeks to produce stable categories (Young, 1990:98), a logic predicated on binarist thinking, appears to maintain patterns in some feminist thought which reduce differences to self /other interpretations. Rosi Bradiotti’s *Nomadic Subjects* provides a consideration of the “intersection” of gender, race and nation, evoking the nomad as a way of considering the simultaneity of these “axes of differentiation” to tackle the question of subjectivity (Bradiotti, 1994:4). She suggests that

(t)he nomad is only passing through, s/he makes those necessarily situated connections that can help her/him to survive, but s/he never takes on fully the limits of one national, fixed identity. The nomad has no passport – or has too many of them (Bradiotti, 1994:33).

One interpretation of the nomad is that it evokes a form of colonialism under the veil of white privilege, a spectator with 'no passport'. Indeed is the 'nomad' welcome? This reading of Bradiotti approaches what I term the 'guided tour' approach of the language of 'diversity', an itinerary discourse that suggests passing through and gazing at cultures does not effect the political maps in which these cultures and their differences are drawn. This draws parallels with Susan Strickland's summation of some postmodern understandings of difference as consumerist – "privileged, affluent westerners looking around a shop in an ethnological museum where there are all these nice things to buy and have; without any consideration of what they mean ethically or politically; how and why they got there; and especially who exploited whom in the process" (Strickland, 1994: 269). To suggest that the nomad is free to wander in and out of societies or spaces without making a mark leaves unquestioned the assumptions of such methods of looking at a world of complex social relations. The nomad as employed by Bradiotti does not explore the tensions between different locations and how these locations have a bearing on language and meaning. The relation of culture to economic and political structures, as outlined by Loomba (1998:257), remains unexplored in the nomad's wanderings. This somewhat complicates her attempts to analyse the "axes of differentiation", but rather leaves unexplored the terrains of 'race' and nation. "All that counts is the going, the process, the passing", Bradiotti (1994:170) argues, yet how can we come to understand an evolving subjectivity if there is no engagement with "situated" selves?

Black and ethnic women's contributions to our understandings of difference and otherness have been crucial to feminist theories that seek to deconstruct universalising tendencies in white, Western feminism. Trinh Minh-ha offers her interpretations of the position of the other within the hierarchy of Western subjectivity.

Why not include this other within the self? ... one might still reproduce the model of opposition – but not necessarily if one opens the space to not representing, to difference, which is a notion that, when not reduced to a question of separation between entities, has the potential to undermine both hierarchy and opposition (Clifford, Dominguez and Trinh, 1987:145).

This conception of difference challenges notions of unity and the operation of binary categories. Rather difference in this sense throws ideas about hierarchy and opposition into a state of flux. In the absence of hierarchies, infinite possibilities exist for the reclaiming of meaning and identity. Trinh Minh-ha considers this point:

The moment the insider steps out from the inside she's no longer a mere insider. She necessarily looks in from the outside while also looking out from the inside. Not quite the same, not quite the other, she stands in that undetermined threshold place where she constantly drifts in and out. Undercutting that inside/outside opposition, her intervention is necessarily that of both not-quite an insider and not-quite an outsider, She is, in other words, this inappropriate other or same who moves about with always at least two gestures: that of affirming "I am like you" while persisting in her difference and that of reminding "I am different" while unsettling every definition of otherness arrived at (Trinh, 1988:76).

The fluidity of this inside/outside position coincides with Iris Young's argument that difference "names both the play of concrete events and the shifting differentiation on which signification depends ... [it] is not absolute otherness, a complete absence of relationship or shared attributes" (Young, 1990:172). These relational characteristics of difference may point to similarities between individuals or groups, but the issue remains that these similarities do not necessarily suggest conformity.

Ien Ang's understanding of a "feminist politics of difference" challenges the ways in which feminist goals and actions have been politicised; indeed she problematises 'feminism' itself. She argues that "too often the need to deal with difference is seen in the light of the greater need to save, expand, improve or enrich feminism as a political home which would ideally represent all women" (Ang, 1995:72). In this sense "(f)eminism functions as a nation which 'other' women are invited to join without disrupting the ultimate integrity of the nation" (Ang, 1995:72), which resonates with some of her criticisms of multiculturalism (Ang, 1996). Ang suggests that 'other' women serve as a corrective for white, Western feminism, despite attempts by some (white) feminists to theorize difference, particularly in terms of partial and perspectival knowledges. She points to internal tensions in some of these efforts, particularly in the work of Anna Yeatman. Although Yeatman acknowledges that "(f)eminism has had to discover its partiality in a context where its insistence on the primacy of gender oppression is incommensurable with the emphases of emancipatory movements oriented to different axes of oppression" (Yeatman, 1993:228), she maintains a language that functions to delineate difference constituted by separate components that are similarly recognizable across multiple contexts. The notion that oppressions can be "multiple" and "interlocking" (Yeatman, 1995:53 and *passim*) presupposes that oppression can be experienced in many different ways, each of which is stacked against the other as a discrete entity, an 'axis' to use Yeatman's term. Yet the context of these oppressions influences the ways in which they are experienced; hence the "axes" become less clearly defined. The assumed "seamless category of women", the "stable subject of feminism", appears somewhat threadbare through the challenges of difference offered by 'other' women such as Ang. Some attempts at multicultural feminism rather than nationalist feminism incorporate the language of difference without fully attending to the power relations implicit in that language. The 'whiteness' of this language remains unquestioned. The authority to speak and who represents whom must remain the foci of debate between women if there is to be a disruption of 'feminism' as a nation.

Prioritising gender oppression negates the impact of the context in which oppression occurs. It also suggests that gender oppression constitutes a greater form of oppression than racism, or classism, for example, and that this form of oppression can be readily identified across social, cultural and historical borders. As Cherríe Moraga warns "the danger lies in ranking the oppressions. *The danger lies in failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression*" (Moraga, 1981:29, emphasis in text). The problem with additive or mathematical modelling, or the "ampersand problem" (Spelman, 1988:115), as applied to feminist thinking about how different forms of oppression operate is that there are severe limitations as to what a model of this kind can do. 'Failing to acknowledge the specificity of the oppression' is the outcome of the inability of such language to capture the constituting effects of power in naming difference. This failure is largely due to the colonialist impulses of much of Western thought, even some Western feminist thought, envisaging Western knowledge as *the* body of knowledge to which other factors may be added for the benefit of Western knowledge. The celebration of literature such as Kate Chopin's "The Awakening" (Chopin, 1976), as a tale of (white) women's struggle against oppression, even to present day, is an example of how omissions have functioned to blind Western thought to context and oppression. Chopin's female protagonist certainly was not exemplary of all women's oppression, as references to or discussions of colour and class were absent in this story.

Ali Rattansi (1992) argues a similar case in reference to issues of cultural difference. He identifies an additive model of cultural diversity in multiculturalism, where the "focus on ethnicity as part of the discourse of complex pluralism and diversity pays scant attention to the highly complex, contextually variable and economically and politically influenced drawing and redrawing of the boundaries that take place in encounters within the minority communities and in relation to white groups" (Rattansi, 1992:39). The argument of Bhabha (1995:208) that the discourse of multiculturalism entails simultaneously "a *creation* of cultural diversity and a *containment* of cultural difference", draws significant comparisons with Rattansi's and Spelman's concerns about additive models for social theory. Failing to adequately theorize the complexities of difference promotes a degree of ambiguity which has consequences for both theory and praxis. Ien Ang argues that ambivalence is inscribed in the liberal-pluralist notion of a multicultural society at two levels – structurally and subjectively. That is, people "often do not know *how* to deal with difference, which is to say that they deal with it

ambivalently" (Ang, 1996:41-2, emphasis in text). Such ambivalence evades the politics that shape the difference/diversity debate, a point that Ang makes in criticising Jane Flax's optimistic postmodern "we" (Ang, 1995:67). This ambivalence towards addressing difference as the result of power differentials creates a circular discourse that structures difference as diversity, yet fails to consider the mechanisms by which those differences that signify diversity are distinguished. It also creates an environment ripe for consumption of differences rather than recognition of differences.

Productive diversity

Diversity management practices focus on competitive advantage through effective Human Resources management, practices which according to Dagher and D'Netto (1997) are still "low priority" issues for many organisations. Productive diversity, as part of the response to the challenges faced by organisations attempting to 'manage diversity', seeks to delve into hitherto untapped resources such as the "languages of commerce" (Jupp, 1996:15). Cope and Kalantzis have taken these concepts and developed a "new, Australian model for work and management" (Cope and Kalantzis, 1997). Their work follows the progressive development of Fordist (the machine metaphor), and Post-Fordist (the simple culture-as-sameness metaphor) organisational paradigms, culminating in the Productive Diversity model (the paradoxical metaphor of culture-in-diversity), which seeks to develop cross-cultural relationships of negotiated differences (Cope and Kalantzis, 1997). Cope and Kalantzis reject modern work practices such as quality management, competencies, corporate culture and settings standards. Instead they focus on the need for business leaders and communities to change ways of doing things, to learn languages, utilise the human resources available in their own industries and business settings, employing key terms like "flexibility", "multiplicity", "devolution", "negotiation" and "pluralism" (Cope and Kalantzis, 1997:204).

Cope and Kalantzis point out that "many of the Productive Diversity measures may be no more than cynical or pragmatic strategies to improve profits by manipulating culture and diversity" (Cope and Kalantzis, 1997:204). And yet one indeed may be cynical when the authors employ terms like 'good business sense'. While much of the work is laudable for the inroads into how the recognition of differences in the workplace can create new ways and new arenas for doing business, the model appears to be somewhat optimistic and simplistic in its approach to hegemonic structures of capital, the means of production and profit, and fulfilling organisational objectives..

In this context, the language of 'productive diversity' is one of apparent inclusion – involving workers, at all levels, from a variety of backgrounds for insights into how businesses might improve performance in different social and economic contexts. In other words, the workers' ethnicity is rewritten as a resource. (The 'natural' resources analogy is purely intentional!). At the same time, the paradox between a focus on the individual's ability to contribute to the competitive advantage of a business, set against the structural impediments that many individuals encounter both within the work environment and the broader social world remains problematic within the "strategic optimism" (Cope and Kalantzis 1997:282) of 'productive diversity'. This model of inclusion via exclusion intersects with Ien Ang's concerns about the ambivalent nature of Australian multiculturalism. She argues that the processes of othering have been transformed into an "apparently contradictory process of *inclusion by virtue of othering*" (Ang 1996:37). This suggests that, while the language of 'diversity' evades power structures that inscribe differences, this diversity can be utilised, or capitalised on for economic gain. In this sense failing to recognize the effects of power in diversity, there is the simultaneous failure to recognize exploitation. This raises the question whose diversity are we talking about? Whose interests does it serve? Carol Johnson (1996) argues that the economic becomes a meta-category that dissolves difference and constructs an overriding common interest that all social groups share. I suggest that this redrawing of difference as economic resource reduces common interest to market performance. In this sense the model of productive diversity excludes those that do not 'produce' and those that are outside spheres of influence. With current concerns about unemployment in a climate of economic rationalism, where do those who cannot participate, let alone afford to consume, fit into this model? It does not adequately reflect on the structural impediments to women's and minorities' participation in the workforce, nor does it consider the effects of increasing casualisation of the workplace resulting in job insecurity and highly competitive and sometimes

hostile work environments. Indeed it defines society as consumerist in much the same way as Strickland reads postmodernism, except with productive diversity we can now go down to the supermarket and literally consume our differences!

'Productive diversity' looks to training as one way of maximising market potential. It does not ask the question is everyone trainable. Instead it suggests the need to change training to meet the needs of different groups. New technologies are seen as enhancing flexibility, facilitating adjustments through software, arguing that "(s)oftware is just as important as hardware; aesthetics is as important as function" (Cope and Kalantzis, 1997:130-1). These shifts in approaches to workplace organisation however are not accompanied by a shift in the language of diversity. It still remains highly ambivalent about power, highly consumerist and retains its superficial gloss. 'Diversity' in this context is nothing more than variety.

Teresa Ebert suggests that despite all the rhetoric for change "the fundamental principle of production for profit remains dominant" (Ebert, 1996:135). While Cope and Kalantzis challenge the culture in which goods are produced, the regime of profit itself remains the hegemonic structure. 'Productive diversity' offers what I call a concept of *closed* diversity. By this I mean there are restrictions on the meanings of 'diversity'. Within this concept of closed diversity there are limitations placed on who may be included by this process of inclusion via othering (Ang, 1996). This understanding of diversity suggests that we can celebrate, even recognize differences, but only to the point of the value of those differences. This may range from economic, political, social or cultural value. The point here is that closed diversity revolves around how differences may be capitalised on and to what uses they may be put.

This language of diversity constructs differences as mere diversity, but does not challenge how these differences are constituted, and by whom, and how the barriers around differences are maintained. The language of 'productive diversity' is no different. It fails to adequately challenge the processes that continue to mark differences. Moreover it buys into the argument that economic empowerment will facilitate social and political empowerment.

Shifting the language

Part of the problem with the language of diversity is that it does not provide a reflexive framework with which we can conceptually and practically deal with difference. Kahn compares an anthropological language of difference – a "the language of authenticity" creating "an image of a world of discrete and bounded cultures ... – with hermeneutic languages of culture and difference that are inclusive and "represent a challenge to attempts by hegemonic groups to impose their particular vision of the universal human condition on others" (Kahn, 1995:136-7). This hermeneutic language has much in common with feminist attempts to deconstruct the universal subject and to contextualise knowledge. Yet does it provide some insights into how we can better deal with the difference/diversity debate? What can we learn from feminist understandings of difference and diversity, and what do models of diversity, such as 'productive diversity', suggest about the politics of language?

Much of this discussion of diversity has drawn attention to ways in which the aesthetic is privileged over the political. Difference, on the other hand, calls for a disruption of the existing order. Cope and Kalantzis (1997) have the kind of objectives necessary to engage in such disruptions, but rely on an inadequate framework upon which to hinge their objectives. Their language of diversity results in the type of ambivalence and modes of inclusion Ien Ang (1995; 1996) describes.

Self-reflection, on the other hand, forces one to deal with difference, to think about the constructed boundaries of differences and ask why they begin and how do they end. Jane Flax's "mode of listening" is useful here:

[o]ne must see oneself as others do . The other's view cannot be totally alien or external, since it has constituting effects. One must struggle with and against it, and the struggle becomes part of one's self. Like the effects of the unconscious,

one can never fully be aware of the other's view and the relations of power that potentiate this view and render it salient (Flax, 1995:507).

It is the (rationalist) project of 'authenticity' that obfuscates the realisation of an adequate framework to deal with the ambivalence of the language of diversity as it presupposes a restrained view of a world of difference. The language of diversity fails to problematise the potentiating effects of power, thus reducing it to ambivalence. The realisation that there are no discernible boundaries of difference beyond the naming, no passport that facilitates an arrival to or departure from difference is yet to impact upon the ways we read difference and diversity. This suggests that we need to consider coalitions rather than pluralism, that is we need to consider the relationships which differentiate interaction from addition.

Basing political coalitions on Jane Flax's 'mode of listening' suggests a move toward a concept of 'open diversity', an understanding of diversity that does not resemble the blindness to power relations of closed diversity which catalyses conformity. Rather, open diversity is about mutual interaction and the need to look beyond market forces that structure differences in ways that are commercially palatable. Difference is about richness; 'closed' diversity is about the dilution of differences. To use a culinary metaphor, additive models used to theorize the complexity of differences merely look at the list of ingredients to consume, rather than look at how flavours are altered, embellished, by the interaction of these ingredients in the finished product. The prepared dish from this list of ingredients makes a different impact on the palate from its discrete individual ingredients. The dish itself takes on a new entity as a result of the mixing of these ingredients – we cannot return them to their original form at this stage. These discrete bundles have lost the fixity of their boundaries. Their boundaries have become permeable to the effects of the mixing of differences – enriching some flavours, diluting others, the perceptions of which vary with each individual palate. Additive understandings of differences are truly inadequate to theorize about the simultaneity of differences and the variability of life. They do not account for the diffuse ways in which differences are experienced differently. Like our exotic dish, each palate will discover a different emphasis in flavour, a different richness to savour.

Let me conclude by summarising some key points. First, in the context of globalisation, there is the need to restate difference as the result of power differentials and to highlight the ambivalence, both structurally and subjectively, of diversity discourses. For effective leadership, such understandings of difference will promote the formation of coalitions rather than practices of containment through conformity.

Second, we need to broaden our understanding of multicultural to effect change at the structural level. We need to talk about difference rather than diversity so as to create a multicultural environment that does not reduce differences to consumable items and 'natural' resources, rather open the 'anthropological' borders of language to fluidity and interpretation.

Third, we need to consider the effects of reducing gender in diversity discourses to one of many 'cultures'. In the context of productive diversity, for example, the opportunities for women to engage with an overtly capitalist framework remain problematic. The nature of capital is inequitable and framing a model to work with and recognize differences within the logic of capital suggests that differences are open only to limited interpretations, and that some differences are more useful than others.

The language of diversity forecloses an agenda for change, rather it leaves the desire for change simmering just beneath the surface. If we are serious about achieving the kinds of objectives that promote social equality, static definitions of difference, often used in diversity discourses, have to be opened to the interplay of context and identity.

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DAYS OF HOPE, DAYS OF DRAMA: A NEWLY-ELECTED WOMAN MAYOR'S ACCOUNT OF HER FIRST 100 DAYS IN OFFICE⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

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Women have long been underrepresented in local politics in New Zealand, particularly at the level of top leadership which has functioned very much as an old boys' club. In the last decade, however, women have begun to gain recognition as an important minority among local government leaders and have been credited with bringing a different, more effective style to local politics. This paper discusses the difficulties for a woman who was elected as mayor after the male incumbent of 13 years decided to stand down from office.

She reflects on her experience of the first 100 days in office, in a council which had been through a turbulent time of factionalism and in-fighting before her election. She outlines the difference between the initial 'honeymoon' period when councillors' hopes and dreams were shared in a very positive way, compared with the call to battle and martial-style conflict when committee-chairing responsibilities were on the agenda in a formal meeting. Her reflections on power, leadership and models of group communication which can lead political organisations through conflict are discussed, as well as her plans for the future and her advice to other women seeking election.

As the proportion of female mayors in New Zealand is the highest among countries where relevant statistics are available, there may be value in using her advice to plan tactics for increasing women's leadership in local politics in the Australian and international context.

Introduction

In the last two decades, the number of women serving in New Zealand local government as politicians has risen substantially. Nevertheless, gaining acceptance for women as elected councillors was a slow and arduous struggle and acceptance of women as mayors has been even slower in coming. Although change has come slowly, women mayors have gradually moved from less than 5% as a proportion of all mayors in 1980 to 26 percent in 1998 (Drage, 1997; Department of Internal Affairs, 1999). Until the 1980s, the mayoral role was seen as a position that could best be filled by a man, mainly because local government functioned as a kind of male club with comfortable cronyism and very little change in the lineup of prospective politicians standing for office each election time.

However, there were outstanding women mayors in the history of New Zealand local government. Among them was Elizabeth Yates, the first female mayor elected to office in the borough of Onehunga in 1893 before women in New Zealand got the vote. However, it was not until 1957 that the next woman mayor was elected, and the proportion of women among the elected mayors remained at one percent or less until 1980 when six women mayors were voted in to office. Although local government was a male bastion even as late as the 1970s, the lack of women mayors was justified by the argument that understanding business interests and the ability to show strength in leadership were considered to be prime qualifications. Strength in the sense of toughmindedness or forcefulness and having a good business brain were seen as essentially male characteristics. To adapt Virginia Schein's (1976) phrase, 'Think Manager – Think Male', the situation in New Zealand, even when women councillors had become commonplace, was 'Think Mayor – Think Man'.

Now, at the end of the nineties, women have made inroads into local government leadership, with 19 women mayors holding office during 1998 to 2001 (26% of standing mayors). Yet some observers

still consider experience and qualities typically seen as male – for example, business acumen – as being of prime importance for a mayor, rather than other relevant expertise like social awareness or environmental knowledge. For example, the need to understand business interests was emphasised by Peter Macdonald, a principal consultant for Deloitte HR in Christchurch, when he was asked his opinion before the last election on the attributes needed to make a good mayor. He asserted, “It is fairly rare for a mayor not to come from a business background or have fundamental business skills. Christchurch for example is a substantial business.”(Barclay, 1998). This business focus has tended to strengthen the masculine bias which already existed in local government, because of its historical culture as a male preserve.

Female candidates standing for mayor, know that their male counterparts have an advantage in that males are more readily accepted as leaders. As one of 15 contenders for the mayoralty in Palmerston North City in the 1998 elections, Jill White, an experienced politician of 15 years standing, was conscious that there can be some resistance to women in a leadership role in local government. She had served on both the city council and the regional council and more recently as a backbench Labour MP in central government. In spite of being female and being known for her concern for social issues rather than pursuing business opportunities, Jill was successful in gaining the mayoralty.

The case study

The possibility of using Jill White’s experiences as the subject of an in-depth case study if she became mayor, arose when carrying out a pilot study for a larger research project. The pilot study involved interviewing the three female candidates for the mayoralty in Palmerston North City in the 1998 local government elections. The larger project sought to investigate women mayors’ perspectives of leadership by interviewing all the women mayors holding office during 1988 to 2001. Because the women mayors gaining office in 1998 would be interviewed only once during the three year term, it seemed important to set those single snapshot perspectives alongside one mayor’s experiences during the whole of the three year term as an in-depth case study. Jill White agreed that if elected she would be willing to be a case study and be interviewed periodically throughout the three years.

Jill felt that she would appreciate having a record of her experiences in the leadership role and knew that she would be too busy to keep a diary or reflect on events and issues without the structure of a research relationship. The interviews took place in the mayor’s office. An hour was set aside for each meeting. Appointments were booked with the mayor’s secretary. Each interview was tape-recorded and notes were taken as well to assist with transcribing and to have a written record in case of tape recording failure. A first interview was held as a conversation without recording the discussion to allow us to establish a research relationship. The material in this article reflects the information gathered in the second interview which was then checked with Jill White in a further meeting.

This paper presents an account of her experience in gaining acceptance in local government as a woman, of her mayoral campaign, and of her first 100 days as mayor. The issues which arose at different stages during that period when she was seeking to establish her leadership within the city and within the council are explored. Her account of becoming mayor moves through political apprenticeship, the mayoral campaign, the honeymoon period, the crisis, the aftermath and the future.

Political apprenticeship

As a woman who has served her political apprenticeship, Jill is very familiar with the importance of people’s perceptions in forming opinions and attitudes, no matter how misguided those perceptions are. For example, Jill has been a politician both as a single woman and a married woman and to her, marital status is quite irrelevant to effective political performance. Yet, in the minds of many, a single woman is difficult to deal with because she does not fit easily into social norms. Even more difficult is the woman who lives a life in or between relationships that gives her an indeterminate status somewhere between single and married. Generally speaking, a single woman in public life is supposed to live a life of propriety without any hint of liaisons or live-in lovers. Jill gave the example

of an elderly gentleman at a ward meeting when she was first on council in the late 1980s. He looked a little hot and bothered as he said that he would be interested to know 'what her living arrangements were'. Jill answered with a deliberate strategic pause, that she was living with two males and one was black and called Timothy ... and the other was ginger and called Tobias.

However, despite her humorous acceptance early on in her political career that, until she had proven herself, people would raise trivial issues that reflected a gender-based double standard, it seems that little has changed. Even in the recent mayoral election, she was still given some very strong messages on this subject by her supporters, who said that in her third pamphlet she must include the fact that she was married. In her view, the pressure of scrutiny on women as politicians would be much easier to bear if it were limited simply to whether they have a sex life or not. More wearing than the attention given to the private lives of political women, is the way they are constantly criticised about their clothes, appearance, hairstyle and demeanour. By comparison, male politicians' clothes sense or lack of it is very seldom mentioned. Women are trivialised when these superficial aspects of their self-presentation receive so much more attention than their goals and policies as political aspirants (Tuchman, 1978). For example, in the mayoral campaign, Jill received a lot of criticism about her voice. She was criticised for not projecting her voice and was instructed to pitch it lower. She even went to a local speech teacher for advice on voice production.

Mayoral campaign

Moreover, concerned critics told her that she was 'too nice' which is quite a disturbing commentary on the public's expectations of leaders. In the mayoral campaign, her problem of niceness was addressed with a more destructive slant in one of the classic global criticisms often made of female politicians, with a radio interviewer's comment that, 'people said she would be too weak'. The radio interviewer had prepared her for the charge of a lack of charisma, which she was happy to accept as her attitude to charisma is one of deep distrust. When 'charisma' changed to weakness though, she did feel that her credibility as a potential mayor was being challenged. Jill was surprised by the interviewer's question, because she had not experienced personal criticism at this level before in her previous political campaigns. She assumed that it was because the job of mayor has a higher profile, whereas backbench members of parliament are less exposed to media interest and public criticism. She rebutted the 'tag' of weakness, saying on air that she felt her track record spoke for her. Nevertheless, in thinking about the accusation later, she felt that there were several male politicians who did not have strong dominating personalities, yet were not accused of weakness. Weakness as a criticism seemed to link to gender. A woman might not be sufficiently 'strong' to be mayor, simply because strength was seen as a masculine quality by definition.

She went into the election campaign emphasising the assets she had to offer: political experience, commitment to the city, energy and enthusiasm, a record of community service and her willingness to listen to people and act on their behalf. Nevertheless, it was clear that the contest would be a close-fought one, with several of the 15 candidates putting considerable resources of time, energy and money into their campaigns. Also, there were some areas that gave other candidates advantages over her. Having come from a background as a public health nurse, she was seen as someone who was focussed on social issues rather than supporting business. Because she was out of the city in parliament most of the week, she was not working in the city on a daily basis and not as close to some of the current issues as other candidates. As the radio interviewer had intimated, she was also seen as too weak and too nice, particularly as the council had come through a very turbulent time of factionalism and fighting which had been highlighted in the press and had led to a feeling of disillusionment amongst the public. The next mayor needed to be able to cope with some very difficult factions in council. Yet, since a mayor along with each member of council, has only one vote on issues, apart from a possible casting vote, a mayor's powers to impose decisions on council are limited to personality and persuasion.

As the campaign drew to a close very few onlookers were prepared to make predictions, but at least two of the twelve male candidates seemed to be very much in contention for winning the election. On the night when the election results were to be announced, Jill remembers the Returning Officer

telling everyone gathered in the council chamber that the successful candidate's name would be in bold on the paper he was handing them. She looked for the name of those of her opponents she thought most likely to win and then noticed her name 'White' in bold. She had won by over two and a half thousand votes. There were congratulations from her opponents and jubilation from her supporters. She felt that the newspaper photographs of her on election night told the story, one photo with tears as she absorbed the news, and the second photo with a huge grin. The next event was the party with her supporters, planned to take place whether she won or lost as a celebration of a good campaign. As it happened, she had very little time for partying as she spent most of the evening on the phone accepting congratulations from wellwishers.

The honeymoon period

After the election a councillors' retreat was held and workshops on legislation and committee structures had been planned. There were many formal and informal opportunities for the mayor to meet with councillors and with council staff to begin planning the future. One significant event was the first council meeting with its ceremonial swearing in of the mayor and council, where Jill spoke about the need to integrate social, economic, recreational and environmental goals rather than putting them in separate compartments. She also referred to the positive directions that had come from the councillors' retreat, such as the desire, "to work as a team, to work differently, to build on our abilities and skills, acknowledging that the people of the city have said they want change." (Myers,1998).

In the weeks that followed, Jill put off deciding on the committee structure. She was determined to take the time needed to reach the best decisions on structure and committee leadership. Her guiding principle was to do what was best for the city. At the same time though, she kept discussing councillors' aspirations and ideas about how they wanted council to function and the kinds of contributions they could make. Some were critical behind the scenes about the length of time she was taking to reach decisions. They wanted appointments to be made so they could get down to business. Despite a little impatience, any negative feelings people might have had were well-masked. Everyone was being pleasant and helpful and positive and there was a lot of agreement about the general shape of the future, in particular the need for council to work as a team and for decisions to be made based on what was best for the city. Later, Jill was to look back on these early days as her honeymoon period in office, a delightful time when she was still being celebrated as the new mayor, when she did not have to make any hard decisions and when everyone seemed positive and happy to work together.

The crisis

Councillors were aware of the need to show the city that they were a united team working in the city's interests rather than fighting amongst themselves, that there was a new positive approach in the council chamber. But when the time came to make recommendations in a formal meeting about who should be committee chairpersons and deputy chairs, this became in Jill's words, 'a crunch time' when all the work of consulting went for nothing and 'everything very nearly turned to custard'. The meeting to decide on committee leaders turned out to be a baptism of fire for Jill in her mayoralty, a turning-point when the former politeness vanished abruptly and she had to face a stormy barrage of criticism. A team of councillors who had prepared their ground, destroyed her carefully considered recommendations and put their own candidates into power.

Jill had not expected her recommendations to be accepted without a murmur. She was prepared for debate, but what she did not expect was the orchestrated attack that came in opposition. Suddenly she realised that the charmed life she had been leading was, in fact, a honeymoon and like all honeymoons it had to come to an end. However, whereas many honeymoons end in a gradual process of coming to terms with the less attractive aspects of daily life, Jill's mayoral honeymoon ended in a few hours in the council chamber. Looking back, she is still totally convinced that the choices she made about committees and chairpersons were good ones and probably the best ones, but in hindsight she thinks she might have handled it differently. She had done a degree of preparation by having an informal meeting of councillors the week before.

In retrospect, she says that informal meeting may have been a little too much like the Head Prefect's pep talk. Everyone was warned that some people would be disappointed. After all, councillors had said that they wanted fewer committees. Fewer committees naturally meant fewer chairpersons. There had been agreement amongst councillors with the general rubric of making decisions on the basis of what was best for the city. However, for Jill the need to make decisions in terms of the city's best interests was a deeply-held conviction. For some councillors, cherished personal ambitions were involved. Some people with a history on council clearly felt they were owed positions of power. At the councillors' workshops, the issues underpinning the selection of chairpersons had been fully canvassed. One strongly-held view had been the egalitarian argument that chairperson's roles should be shared around. There was even talk about a rotating system so that if there were five committees and fifteen councillors; over three years each person would have a turn as a committee chair for one year. However, this suggested system of musical chairpersons, while meeting the criterion of fairness to the politicians, certainly did not necessarily meet the criterion of what was best for the city. At the fateful council meeting where decisions on chairs were on the agenda, there was orchestrated opposition to the particular chairpersons being recommended by the mayor. Jill had been warned that it would be a difficult meeting because supportive councillors had phoned her in advance to let her know that those opposed to her recommendations were lobbying and planning tactics to defeat her.

The attack came with her recommendation that a newly-elected councillor who was a respected accountant in the city, should hold both the position of Deputy Mayor and the position of Finance Committee Chair. There are unwritten rules about such positions. Traditionally, the Deputy Mayor is often the highest polling candidate and is usually an experienced councillor. These traditions are not particularly strong in Palmerston North, because the system of dividing the city into wards for election purposes makes it difficult to compare councillors' results in the polls. And the other possible point of contention, a lack of previous experience was not raised as an issue in accepting the recommendation for Deputy Mayor. The Deputy Mayor was confirmed in that position without any controversy. However, although it is not at all unusual for the Deputy Mayor to also chair a committee and although Palmerston North's Deputy Mayor in the previous council had chaired a major committee, this seemingly straightforward issue was the one that roused sharp antagonism.

Dual role too onerous

Jill, herself, strongly suspects that the dual role was seized upon as a very handy attacking point, because that was when the real ferocity of the onslaught started. She was surprised by the energy that went into arguing against her, even though as someone accustomed to the cut and thrust of Parliament, she is hardly a novice to robust and even acrimonious debate. Her opponents argued strongly that it would be impossible for a professional person, such as the accountant who was Deputy Mayor, to have time to fill a second role as chairperson of one of the four new committees, particularly as it was to be the Finance committee, which is seen as a demanding role. Naturally Jill's concern was to appoint someone with the financial expertise as well as the personal qualities required to look after a crucial aspect of the city's well-being. Jill gave her assurance twice that the issue of time had been discussed and that the Deputy Mayor would have time to fill the second position. But the attack had gathered momentum and worst of all, from Jill's perspective, people seemed to enjoy having her at a disadvantage and joining the onslaught. She was interested to note who seemed to have prepared the bullets and who was firing them. Financial rewards were not really at issue, because chairpersons were to receive only \$1000 more a year than ordinary councillors. Finally, she lost the battle and another councillor became Chair of the Finance Committee and announced to the press afterwards that the only qualification needed for the role was knowledge of the procedural rules for chairing a meeting. The meeting moved on. Agreement was reached to review committees and chairpersons after the first year, but only with a view to making changes where there seemed good reason to do so.

Jill was even voted down on her preference to accept less than the maximum salary and forced to take more, which seemed a little ridiculous, especially as she has the power to adjust the amount later at her own request. She survived the meeting by keeping calm, setting her emotions to one side and going through the agenda item by item concentrating on procedure. She came out of the meeting

feeling absolutely battered. But the next day the local newspaper wrote an editorial about the council meeting which was very supportive of Jill and that made her feel much better. She also began to receive support from the community which she found very encouraging and empowering. The council remained in the news for a few days because some of the councillors became excited about being rebuked by the media and attempted to justify themselves, keeping the issue alive.

The aftermath

As time went on, Jill's perception was that some of the councillors who most wanted to be chairs and became committee chairpersons without the mayor's recommendation, were having difficulties with committee process and with their responsibilities. She said they were realising that being the chair of a committee was not straightforward, because responsibility is involved in the position of chairperson and you have to lead the decision-making to an extent. Jill pointed out that for anyone whose style has been to challenge and oppose, a completely different approach must be learned, and internalising a different approach is far more difficult than simply learning to apply standing orders.

Jill considered that because there were problems for some chairpersons in adapting to the role, a training session on chairing skills which had already been flagged as a useful inclusion in a councillor training programme, would need to become a higher priority. She said that people chairing committees need to know about much more than how to run a meeting. They need to know what is expected of a chair in the broader sense of leadership and how to develop those abilities and build their skills in understanding agenda-setting and different ways of decision-making.

Council's image

The other aspect that came out of that contentious meeting for Jill was the grave danger that, although the councillor workshops had expressed the desire for council to be seen working as a team, media reports of the meeting and its aftermath of bickering and self-justification would make the city despair and think that the council was as divided as ever. For the sake of the city's morale and to make progress on the positive changes that needed to be made, Jill felt a strong responsibility to create one team. She knew that was what both the city and the council want and needed. Of course she recognised the temptation to say to herself, 'Right, I'll form a team of those who support me and ignore the rest. They can be the other team.'

But that mode of operating had exhausted and paralysed the council in the past and squandered enormous amounts of meeting time on point-scoring, obstruction and antagonistic exchanges. To avoid this dispiriting, energy-sapping, circular process of meta-debate, Jill wanted to keep everyone within the same team. So, she worked hard at avoiding the trap of listening more to those who supported her and tried to be scrupulously fair to the other side. But she was conscious that being fair in this way could make your supporters feel undervalued. From their perspective, she seemed to be listening more to those who opposed her and working at accommodating them. Yet, if she had had a band of supporters who were clearly favoured, that would set the existence of two teams in concrete.

She also felt that it would be unfair to consign everybody who voted against her on that day to a group of outcasts. Some councillors, in spite of having voted against her at that meeting, would not necessarily vote against her on every issue. The actual attack had been led by just a small number of councillors and centred mainly on the issue of whether the Deputy Mayor should have two jobs or not.

She wondered whether if she had listened harder at the workshop she might have heard the message that the dual role would not be supported. However, she knew that the responsibility for developing the recommendations was hers and that her job was to put forward what she thought were the best recommendations. Once she had clarified the task for herself in that way, she found it much easier to do. She was also aware that the process was carried out quite differently in the past and that if she had conformed to past practice, there would have been a lot of criticism too. Councillors had complained to her about past leadership selection processes saying, "We weren't consulted", and "We

don't want to have an 'A' team and a 'B' team like last time". One very candid councillor even said, "I was in the 'A' team last time and I definitely don't want to be in the 'B' team this time round".

Unexpected support

So Jill knew that councilors had recognized the need for change. She also knew that there was a lot resting on her decisions. But she tended to give more weight to the need to put the city first than any expectations and ambitions centering on the leadership positions. Later, she was interested to find out some of the things that had happened over the weekend, once everyone knew her decisions but before the formal council meeting, in terms of networking, plotting and planning. She will not be able to forget the intense verbal battering she received at that meeting, but she feels differently about it compared with the way she might have felt if she had not experienced the enormous wave of support afterwards. Some of her support came from quite unexpected quarters. For example, a businessman came up to her at a meeting some weeks later and introduced himself saying – "I'm in business here. I pay 'x' amount in rates. You get stuck in. Ignore that lot. Just get on with it. You're doing a good job."

Jill says that although support like that was important and reassuring, she was also aware that the aggressive meeting left her in a vulnerable position. She could not afford to have headlines saying things like, 'Mayor Jill Burnt Again', if she wanted to show real leadership, as opposed to simply occupying the role of mayor. She considered that her responsibility as mayor required her to give as much support as possible to all her chairpersons, because it was so important from both the city's and the council's point-of view that good decisions were made, in as rational and cordial a climate as possible. Both she and the council as a whole had to take a lead in making the city a positive, dynamic place with faith in its future. People in the city needed to have a sense of confidence in their council. She knew that people become depressed when they looked at the way central government politicians wasted time on bickering with each other when there were immense problems they needed to solve. She did not want them to be depressed looking at their council.

The future

In her view, there were grounds for optimism. The council had recently accomplished a major achievement in terms of its long-term financial planning strategy and the process of making that decision displayed some interesting dynamics. When the time came to vote, the councillors who had been most in favour of the radical proposal to introduce LATES (local authority trading enterprises which privatise functions such as water reticulation, but return profits to the council) looked as if they would renege on the second part of the proposal which required an increase in rates. At this stage, the group of councillors who had only agreed to LATES with extreme reluctance, but could see that a rates increase was an essential part of the whole package turned to their 'pro-LATES but anti-rates rise' colleagues and said, "If we who don't even like the idea of LATES have agreed to accept them, then surely you who support LATES can accept the increase in rates that's required to underpin their introduction".

The good-humoured logic of the argument was accepted. The waverers were persuaded and in the end, every councillor at the committee of council voted for the long-term financial planning strategy and the draft annual plan including the rates increase, apart from one councillor who abstained. Although Jill did not claim any personal responsibility for this success, having created a climate where such unanimity could be reached on a very controversial issue is a major achievement.

Having acknowledged all of the complexities of her current position, Jill was left with the reality that she could only do the best she was capable of doing. She felt fortunate that the job was so busy that it prevented her from spending time on becoming anxious, even though anxiety was part of her nature. She had quite enjoyed leaving anxiety behind as she moved on to deal with the next thing and the next thing and the next. She saw power as the ability to achieve goals through a mix of knowing what you believed and through determination. A mayor must hold on to the goal with determination, because inevitably there would be setbacks of different kinds. She had watched politicians become ensnared

in their own egos. In her view, politicians who became too obsessed with themselves found it difficult to stand back and be analytical, without mentally placing themselves in the centre of the stage and distorting their vision of the way everything interacted. They became so self-focussed, they lost their perspective.

Her personal model of leadership she described as linked to community development. In her view, a leader must listen to people's goals and aspirations and try to give them the resources they need to achieve those aspirations. Her leadership style was one of reconciliation, bringing people together and allowing everyone's voice to be heard. The most testing times she had experienced which had required her to show leadership were situations with many disparate points of view where she had to lead and guide discussions towards consensus, for example in drawing opposing views together into a policy statement. At that time, her major goal was to improve the economic base of the city and give the city a sense of confidence, to improve its self-esteem. She wanted to build the council into a cohesive force that would help the city towards a new confidence in its future.

In summary her strategy for the future was:

- To build the council into a united team
- To use supportive councillors to influence others
- To run efficient meetings without stifling discussion
- To make training for chairpersons a priority
- To improve the quality of decision-making

Her advice to other female mayors would include:

- Use every bit of free publicity you can get in your campaign
- Use your 'honeymoon' in office to prepare a personal crisis plan
- Keep council together and united
- Take the time needed to make structural decisions
- Take soundings on decisions, especially those involving people's ambitions
- Use sound, sensible councillors to influence others
- Recognise that some changes will take time, perhaps longer than a three year term
- Concentrate on doing what is best for your city or district
- Hold on to your determination, it will help you to come through a battle with your goals and integrity intact

Postscript

From a longer-term perspective, Jill's determination to hold the council together and treat everyone fairly without any bias has proven itself. Some of the councillors who were not her choice as chairpersons and had initial difficulties in the position, have begun to develop new skills and are working well in their roles. The council has faced a complicated issue with the sale of shares in a council-owned power company, which had the potential to be divisive, but councillors remained united as they worked through the process. She also says the LATE was not formed to reticulate water because of the costs involved and a lack of public support. Finally, she felt she should point out in all honesty, that when a proposal arises she disagrees with (such as a recent development proposal to turn the council building into a hotel), the community development idea of leadership 'goes out the window' and she can only express complete opposition.

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MERMAIDS AND ETHICS⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

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Organisations affect the values people use in organisational decisions. It appears more likely that people in organisations are morally heteronomous or anomous and not autonomous, due to the influences the organisations exert on them. In organisations people are more likely to fulfil roles and be subject to rules rather than be autonomous persons.

During the past three decades organisations have increasingly been emphasising, and taking steps to support, ethical behaviour. There is a gender aspect to this, involving both identity and holism. Women in masculine organisations lose some of their identity. They become part women, part organisational role-players, they become organisational mermaids. Organisational mermaids are characterised by a chasm between their personal identity and their organisational identity.

Women have been criticised for not being analytical or ruthless enough in decision making. They do not fit the manager stereotype that is conceived 'good' and thus they are assumed unqualified to manage organisations and organisational realities. Some women respond by adopting 'masculine' characteristics.

Organisational mermaids may be able to retain some of their values in certain organisational decisions, retain some of the humaneness but they also surrender some of their autonomy.

The increasing emphasis on imagination and learning in organisations will be examined. Strategies to promote the feminine qualities of sharing, caring, affection and consultation in organisations that result in increased imagination, learning and the possibility of moral autonomy, will be outlined.

Organisations should realise that women and their management can not only promote greater autonomy but ethics in the workplace, thus overcoming the moral dichotomy between personal and organisational lives and its psychological, social and moral implications. This will enable organisations to achieve the outcomes they most desire, namely learning, imagination and ethics to sustain their growth and success.

The business organisation has for many decades been privileged to a unique and sheltered existence, leading to what may be described as arrogance. Society granted special privileges and values to the business organisation which were unlike those applicable to its human members in that they excluded ethics. During this century the organisation was viewed increasingly not as the goods and services producing entity, but as the means for the benefit of its owners/shareholders; emphasising profit as the sole reason for the existence of the business organisation. In the past two decades, society's view has been altered, motivated initially by environmental and later by equity and discrimination concerns. However, most organisations retain a masculine character, a context in which neither women nor ethics are nurtured. To succeed in this context, the female gender must become mermaids.

Organisations are currently in transit between the profit orientation as the sole arbiter of success and the societal demands for morality in organisations; demands which society now enforces and which affect the organisations' profit. What we are seeing now is a change in the perception of the

organisation. The organisation is now perceived as an entity that is more than an accumulation of resources for economic benefit. The organisation today is a member of society with values, identity, brain, culture, memory and knowledge. The corporate lexicon has changed to reflect this altered status of the organisation and addresses organisations in anthropological terms such as social and moral responsibility, integrity, reason and learning.

This change in the way we perceive and treat organisations together with the excellence movement of the early 1980's has resulted in the emphasis placed by academic disciplines such as philosophy, psychology, sociology and organisation studies, on morality in organisations and morality of individuals in organisations. Feminine gender characteristics are synonymous with this movement.

Individual and organisational morality

The individual may conceivably exhibit three possible positions in the sphere of morality: moral autonomy, moral heteronomy and moral anomy. Moral autonomy is perceived as the capacity individuals possess to own their moral values and apply them in decision making with ethical implications. Moral heteronomy is the usage of moral law that originates from an external source, and is used by individuals in making decisions with ethical implications. Moral anomy is the absence of moral law in decision making. Moral anomous decisions are made in the absence of ethical considerations.

People as persons in making decisions with ethical implications can be morally autonomous, heteronomous or anomous. People in organisations remain human but they surrender some of their autonomy. Organisations provide the resources, tasks, goals, motives, knowledge, values, objectives etc whilst the person contributes brain, muscles, eyes, voice etc. (Ahrne, 1994, p. 29). Actions in organisations remain the actions of the individual but the requirements are different. The requirements of the assumption of roles in organisations impose an obligation on the person fulfilling the role to serve a special function, to further specific interests of specific groups. "Public offices limit their occupants to certain considerations and free them from others, such as the good to humankind" (Nagel, 1978, p. 80). The considerations that are paramount in organisations remain economic and in many organisations the economic imperative defines good and value. Nagel claims that morality is complicated at every level, but "its impersonal aspects are more prominent in the assessment of institutions than in the assessment of individual action, and that as a result, the design of institutions may include roles whose occupants must determine what to do by principles different from those that govern private individuals" (p. 82). The effect organisations have on the individuals' moral autonomy has been alluded to by business ethicists (Badaracco, 1995; Werhane, 1989; Lozano, 1996) in the absence of empirical research.

The acceptance of special obligations, the obligations of roles, diminishes the right of the individual in the role to consider personal interests and general interests that are not related to the organisation or the specific role (Nagel, 1979, p. 89). This was precisely the aim of bureaucracies, namely to make the individual both malleable and dispensable, thus constructing the organisation not of people but of roles and positions that the organisation controls since it is able to create and define them (Clinard & Yeager, 1980, p. 64).

Jackall (1988) explains that the imperatives of the work place facilitate the abdication of personal responsibility and autonomy and claims that the reality of organisational life makes corporate managers unable to see most issues that confront them as moral concerns even when problems are posed in moral terms by others. This may be explained by the 'zone of indifference', identified by Barnard (1938), who characterises the phenomenon as irresponsible, since people in organisations do not effect their morality in their conduct. The employment relationship grants a certain degree of control to employers over the behaviour of their employees, resulting in the relinquishment of some of the employees' autonomy (Radin & Werhane, 1996). Individuals in organisations relinquish some of their autonomy but they remain and are held responsible for their morality. Organisational ethical decision making models (Trevino, 1986; Jones, 1991) propose that ethical conduct is influenced by the context, the environment, the decision makers' characteristics and the ethical issue. Organisational ethical decisions are decisions made by people in organisations and these people are

held responsible for their decisions even though they are not granted the autonomy to decide as persons but as role fillers. The responsibility for immoral or amoral decisions, in or by organisations, should thus not necessarily be assigned on any individual member(s) (McKenna, 1999, p. 153). The “tools of management” – the measurement and reward systems, the organisational culture and the examples of peers and bosses (Badaracco, 1992, p. 71) “exert enormous, cumulative pressures on employees and managers”; and the organisational culture and climate can as easily induce unethical behaviour as ethical behaviour (Badaracco, 1995).

Organisations are now considered moral entities and as such subject to society’s moral order and not “the sole and final arbiter of behaviour” (Golembiewski, 1965, p. 73). The organisational values can be consistent or inconsistent with the external moral order. Society now increases its demands for consistency and moral accountability for organisations. The acceptance of the formal organisation as the final and sole arbiter of behaviour turns a person into a caricature (Golembiewski, 1992, p. 98).

The model for ethical decision making in organisations presented in Figure 1 (Tsahuridu & McKenna, in print), extends Golembiewski’s model of morality in organisations to include the prospect of rejection of the organisational values by the individual in the organisation, as well as the moral autonomous, moral heteronomous and moral anomalous decision possibilities.

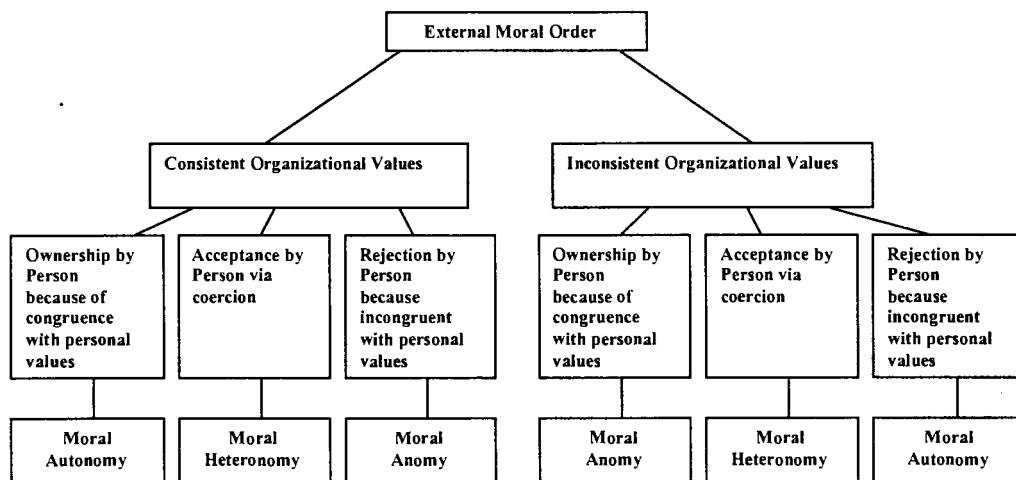


Figure 1: Moral order, moral values and individual decisions

An autonomous moral decision would be based on personal criteria, on the individual’s will or the individual’s perception of the ‘good’ to society. It can not be based on external values. The autonomous moral decision is motivated by the self and it is the self legislated law that it adheres to. Its explanation is thus not possible by any parameter other than the self. A heteronomous moral decision can be made by applying external principles and values. Its explanation is thus possible by the expected or perceived ends or external rules.

The anomalous decision is a decision made in the absence of moral reasoning. An anomalous moral decision is a decision made under uncertainty where the decision maker is unable to recognise the moral issue so the judgement does not involve the use of moral reasoning. It is made under conditions of moral lawlessness. The decision maker in the organisational context is indifferent about the ethicality of the decision.

The organisation’s affect on the Individual

Organisations affect the values people use in organisational decisions. Individuals in organisations may be affected by them because organisations have values (Kabanoff, Walderssee, & Cohen., 1995; Liedtka, 1989) culture (Dahler-Larsen, 1994; O’Reilly, 1989; Schein, 1997) and identity (Gioia &

Thomas, 1996). O'Reilly (1989) sees organisational culture as a social control system, and as such, it gives the impression of great autonomy to individuals acting in organisations, when paradoxically they conform with unwritten 'codes of behaviour' much more than with formal control systems.

Culture is in part a moral system because not only does it define the values of those who accept it, it also contains assumptions about the nature of the world as well as assists individuals in the construction of their identities (Watson, 1994, p. 21). Reidenbach and Robin (1991) assign to organisational culture the organisation's moral development which in turn helps define that culture. Culture may provide the explanation for the claim made by many theorists (Metzger, 1987; Wong & Beckman, 1992) that people often act differently in the organisational context than in their purely individual context and do not apply their personal values in the former. Wong and Beckman, (1992) comment that the difficulty of application of personal moral principles to business decisions renders personal values unconsidered in business decision making and "generally, people in business are not ethically insensitive on a personal level but many of them experience difficulty in reconciling their personal values and business demands" (p.173). More importantly, individual personality is unimportant in organisational criminal behaviour, as it results from role fulfilling rather than individual pathology (Schrager and Short, 1978 cited in Clinard & Yeager, 1980, p. 64).

Smith and Carroll (1984, p. 98) call it moral cowardice, the 'they made me do it' situation, when individuals in organisations assign their moral responsibilities to the organisation. The assignment of the personal morality to the organisation is something the organisational hierarchy demands. Personal morality is replaced with loyalty to the organisation and commitment to the organisational goals, resulting in the altered perception of ethical dilemmata in organisations and making the organisation the final arbiter of behaviour.

Roles effect the behaviour of individuals who fulfil them but they do not have only a restrictive outcome but also a liberating effect (Nagel, 1978, p. 76). They provide a moral insulation, the abdication of moral responsibility because the person who fulfils the role, is doing his/her job. The erroneous reasons for the liberation of the person who fulfils the role, according to Nagel are:

- the depersonalisation of the role (the fact that it is shielded from personal interests) which leads to the depersonalisation of one's official capacity as well, thus reinforcing the separation between private and public morality;
- the additional power conferred on the individual which must be used for the benefit of the organisation;
- the division of labour both in execution and in decision which results in ethical division of labour, thus in ethical specialisation, leading to the establishment of many roles whose terms of reference are primarily consequentialist.

Actions in organisations remain the actions of the individual but the requirements are different. The organisational culture through its content and influence, may be a factor that limits the moral autonomy of individuals within the organisation, thus increasing the possibility of the other two positions, moral heteronomy and moral anomy. Culture according to Berger (1973, cited in Watson, 1994, p. 22) is a human and social construction which creates nomos and order, out of chaos. The organisational culture can thus be seen to provide the ethical nomos to the individual in the organisation, fulfilling the organisational role.

It thus appears more likely that people in organisations are morally heteronomous or anomous and not autonomous, due to the influences the organisations exert on them. In organisations people are more likely to fulfil roles and be subject to rules rather than be autonomous persons, however it is possible to enable organisational members to exercise moral autonomy in organisations if organisations have cultures consistent with the external moral order and the individuals' moral values.

As an individual acts less as a person and more as an occupant of a role, or less as an occupant of a role and more as the subject of rules, "decisions become less an act of individual conscience and more a function of organisation structure" (Nesteruk, 1991, p. 89). This, according to Nesteruk, may result in the individuals distancing themselves from their organisational decisions and moral evaluation of

decisions, or they may maintain a self perception of moral agency, even when there is no genuine ethical choice. In both cases there is a loss of individual responsibility. In bureaucratic and autocratic organisations individuals will be more likely to be the subjects of rules thus rendering decisions organisational rather than personal and detaching personal morality from organisational decisions.

In a study of ethical decision making (Weber, 1990), managers were not found to reason at the highest possible level they were able to and their moral reasoning has actually been found to be different between business and non business dilemmata. Managers reasoned at a lower lever of Kohlberg's moral development framework (Colby & Kohlberg, 1987) for business dilemmata than for a non business dilemma.

Gender and identity

During the past three decades organisations have increasingly been emphasising, and taking steps to support, ethical behaviour. There is a gender aspect to this, involving both identity and holism. Gecas, Thomas and Weigert (1973, cited in Ely, 1995, p. 590) define identity as "the location of an individual in social space". Ashforth and Mael (1989) outline two components of identity: a personal component encompassing idiosyncratic characteristics, such as bodily attributes, abilities, psychological traits and interests, and a social component encompassing salient group classifications such as sex, race, class and nationality.

Gender in organisational research has been treated mainly as "an objective property of individuals synonymous with biological sex and universal across organisational settings" (Ely, 1995, p. 590). Ely perceives gender as a social construction whose meaning, significance and consequences varies in different settings for the individual.

As an objective property, gender and its effect on management, leadership and morality has resulted in two contradictory positions (Schminke & Ambrose, 1997):

- Female managers will and should operate differently in managerial decision making, leadership and ethicality.
- There is no significant gender based differences in management styles or traits.

Several studies support the first proposition. Schminke and Ambrose (1997) for example, found that men and women use marginally different ethical frameworks in business ethics, with women more likely to use the Kantian approach. Interestingly, both women and men change their ethical frameworks and morally regress when they enter a business setting, reaffirming the impact of the organisation's values on the individual. The traditional organisation emphasises, even demands obedience, control, division of labour and thus responsibility and authority, power and intra-organisational competition. Kreie and Cronan (1998) found that men and women assess ethical issues distinctly differently. Men's judgement is influenced most often by the environmental cue of whether the action is legal, moral obligation, awareness of consequences and the actual scenario. Women consider more environmental cues, such as societal environment, legal environment, moral obligation, the scenario, as well as their personal values and belief system.

Arlow (1991) found female tertiary students to be more ethical and socially responsible than their male counterparts. White (1999) also found that Coast Guard women scored higher (4.5 points) at the Defining Issues Test (DIT), a statistically significant difference. The DIT is Rest's (1986, 1993 cited in White, 1999) instrument of moral development. Another interesting finding of this study is that the mean of the sample was lower than the average for adults (sample mean = 33.5, adult mean = 40 according to Rest). The reason for the significantly lower average is the effect of the rigid hierarchical organisational design employed by the military. "Because a rigid hierarchy restricts autonomy and autonomy is sine qua non for Kohlberg postconventional moral development, then military members will exhibit restricted moral development and lower average DIT scores" (White, 1999, p. 466).

The presence of women in the leadership and top management ranks of organisations, affecting the ethical culture and climate of the organisation is likely to result in more ethical business organisations if women bring their morality and feminine characteristics with them, that is if they remain women and do not become mermaids, part women part organisational beings. Women as organisational mermaids adopt the masculine organisational characteristics to succeed and advance in the organisation, characteristics which are unlikely to foster and promote ethics.

Gender Socialization Theory predicts that as adults, the genders will bring different ethical values to their work roles – identities, which will result in different work-related decisions (Dawson, 1995, cited in Weeks et al., 1999). Weeks et al. (1999) found that females demonstrate higher ethical judgement in numerous dilemmata, thus supporting the contention that men and women have different ethical standards. They claim that this proves that these ethical standards are actually brought into the work environment and that their findings disprove the self selection theory which holds that women who choose business careers manifest traits contrary to their gender stereotype and share the same values as men. This view, however, does not take into account the organisational influence on the individual, regardless of gender. A masculine organisational climate and culture, with a rigid and bureaucratic structure, is likely to limit autonomy and impose the organisational values, in ethical decisions. If the organisational values do not include ethical values but only economic values then people in such an organisation are likely to make morally anomous decisions, even if in their non – work life they possess and apply ethical values.

Gendered organisations

Characteristics deemed to be important for managers are usually masculine characteristics (Gregory, 1990) and a good manager is found to be masculine. This does not appear to be problematic for most men, “for there is a closeness in meaning between traits considered desirable for men and for managers” (Gregory, 1990, p. 259). Male and female subjects were found by Deal and Stevenson (1998) to have similar perceptions both of prototypical managers and of male managers whilst male subjects were more likely than female subjects to have negative views of female managers.

The current bias of masculine organisations results in a perception of gender equity as assimilation, in which both sexes conform to an existing set of masculine norms (Maier, 1997). Such masculinisation may be evidenced in organisations populated by men and mermaids (part women – part organisational beings). Masculinely assimilating according to Maier, may be functional for the individual but it is not functional for the organisation. Ferguson (1991, cited in Maier, 1997) explains that the conventional paradigm of organisation, one that is essentially bureaucratic, fits very well with the paradigm of hegemonic masculinity and indeed hegemonic masculinity may have grown out of bureaucracy.

Masculinist	Feminist
Top down authority	Democratic authority
Hierarchical division of labour	Equality and sharing labour
Leaders as commanders	Leaders as coordinators and facilitators
Hoarding of knowledge and skills	Sharing of knowledge and skills
Separation of mental and manual labour	Connection of mental and manual labour
Roles and events divided and rationalised, governed by rules	Roles and events integrated and connected, governed by relations and communication
Hierarchical division of reward	Egalitarian division of reward
Suppression of politics in favor of managerial solutions (play it safe), no room for loyal opposition	Recognition of politics and of more than one legitimate solution acknowledge opposition

Source: Ferguson 1991 cited in Maier, 1997, p. 948

Figure 2: Characteristics of masculine and feminine organisations

Feminine and masculine characteristics as outlined in Figure 2 are not inherent in sex but rather they are still more common in the female and male gender, respectively. Maier (1997) emphasises that

none of these characteristics are inherently male or female, and proposes that the terminology may indeed change as more male managers adopt feminine management style, suggesting that in time it may be called a "more effective and ethical" way of leading rather than feminine. The democratic organisation, with sharing roles and events, questioning its decision schemata and exercising imagination, not only allows responsibility and in particular moral responsibility to its members but it also allows its members to bring morality into the organisation. A democratic organisational culture may encourage members to take responsibility for their actions, whilst an authoritarian culture with its numerous rules that prescribe behaviour may replace individual discretion (Trevino, 1986).

The current paradigm according to Maier (1997) does not only disadvantage women, forcing them to adopt masculine characteristics to succeed and advance in organisations. It prevents organisations from becoming effective by preventing the characteristics that organisational theorists prescribe for effectiveness, namely learning, imagination, ethics, knowledge, communication, organic structures, democracy and autonomy.

Gender equity cannot be achieved through adoption of masculine characteristics by both sexes, which is what is currently promoted and expected (Maier, 1997). Instead questioning the current organisational world and identifying its disadvantages and dysfunctions will allow organisational members and managers of both sexes to apply characteristics that promote individual and organisational effectiveness.

Anand, Manz and Glick (1998) emphasise the management of soft knowledge as an important aspect of information management in organisations today. Soft knowledge includes tacit knowledge, judgement and intuitive and judgemental abilities. Most organisation's soft knowledge currently includes the masculine characteristics of the economic paradigm. Disrupting and recreating organisational memory to allow for intuitive, moral and imaginative knowledge to enter the organisation's memory, will enable it to be more effective and proactive in its actions. Challenging existing decision making norms by decision makers is necessary for the achievement of ethical decision making in organisations (Vidaver-Cohen, 1997). The need for the change in decision making scripts results from the change in the social and moral considerations that organisations are now required to take into account, thus enabling the reflection and congruency with the external moral order.

In the late 1980s and 1990s the business world witnessed a shift from continuous small change to discontinuous change (Kets de Vries & Balazs, 1999). Change efforts according to Kets de Vries are successful only if and when both cognitive and emotional dimensions are included in the change process. Success of change efforts depends on the attention paid to the people and their inner world, states Kets de Vries, because increased self awareness will allow men and women of the organisation to experience a greater sense of self determination, impact, competence, belonging, enjoyment and meaning.

Conclusion

The masculine managerial characteristics currently dominating the organisational arena, sustain if not promote moral anomy in business. Imagination, learning, interdependence, sharing and consultation result in knowledge creation in organisations, as well as, in the possibility of moral autonomy for members of organisations. Morality is based on the premise that a person utilises ego capacities for moral rather than egoistic ends (Hoffman 1980, cited in Shelton & Adams, 1990). Moral ends are not promoted in masculine organisations nor by organisational mermaids. Women in organisations are called to utilise their ego capacities to allow and promote ethics in organisations and organisational effectiveness.

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DOES THE MANAGER'S GENDER MATTER? ⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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The Robert Quinn's competing values framework identified eight managerial roles that managers must be able to display if they are to be effective. The eight roles are innovator, broker, producer, director, coordinator, monitor, facilitator and mentor. In the present study 509 managers, 127 of whom were females, responded to a survey exploring the extent to which they displayed each of Quinn's managerial roles. For each manager, their staff (n = 1924, females = 710), peers (n = 1874, females = 413) and boss (n = 440, females = 83) were asked to respond to the questionnaire. When the gender of the managers and that of their significant others (staff, peers and boss) was taken into account there was no significant difference reported in the extent to which the eight roles were displayed nor the effectiveness level of male and female managers. The results of this study indicate that the gender of the manager does not impact on how they are perceived by their significant others. Rather it is how effective they are as managers that determines their significant others' perceptions.

Introduction

Since the middle of last century, during and in the aftermath of World War II, women have entered the workforce in ever-greater numbers. Although they predominantly hold jobs that are lower paid and considered less prestigious than those of men (Organisation, 1997), more women are taking up management roles. And they are having an increasing impact on national economies; and the trends suggest that this impact will become greater during this century (Nations, 1998; Organisation, 1997).

In Australia, Morgan and Banks have confirmed women's growing presence and influence in the workplace by observing that the number of women in senior management positions in organisations has increased over the last few years (Owen, 1998). Women are now estimated to hold between 25 and 43 percent of management positions (Organisation, 1997). At the senior management level, although fewer than 15 percent of the positions are held by women (Nations, 1998; Owen, 1998), there are indications that their numbers will continue to increase. As a consequence, the effect of gender on organisational behaviour, and especially on managerial effectiveness, is an issue of growing interest to business organisations and academic researchers.

Do women, as a group defined by their gender, manage differently from men? Do any gender-specific behavioural traits make women managers appear to be more or less effective?

Answers to questions such as these are critical for a variety of social and economic reasons. It is a largely uncontested tenet of management theory, for example, that effective management is crucial to an organisation's success in the marketplace. A recent example highlighting the importance of management is that of a large Australian organisation, BHP. Moody's Investment Services placed the company under review for a possible downgrade. One of the main reasons for this action was the 'uncertainty over senior leadership' (Milne, 1998). In 1994, Greatorex, Holden, Iliffe and Wauchop reported that lack of management skills was a major factor in the failure of corporations. Karpin (1995) also concluded that poor management in Australian organisations has led to poor economic performance.

Given this observation and the trend in the demographics of the workplace, it is imperative that we understand how women managers are viewed by their workmates and whether there is a significant difference in the way that male and female managers manage. If women managers are perceived differently from their male counterparts because of their female-ness – for better or for worse – then

boss, peers and staff could have radically different expectations of female managers, expectations that will influence the interpersonal relationships, the dynamics, and, ultimately, the success of their organisations.

So, do women managers perform significantly differently from men? Is their gender the dominant influence on the behaviour, the attitudes and the perceptions of their peers, their staff or other boss? Or is it just one of many characteristics that contribute to the whole of their management style and success or lack of success? And are these perceptions influenced by the gender of the perceiver?

Researching the gender factor

Is there or is there not a significant difference between male and female managers and workmates' perception of them? Most previous research into the role of gender in management has focussed on the difference in the gender of the managers. Few of the earlier reports took account of the gender of the perceivers; that is, no attempt was made to determine whether male boss differed from female boss in their perceptions of the male and female managers who reported to them. Similarly, were perceptions of the manager influenced by the gender of the observer; that is did the staff and peers of the manager perceive them differently according to the gender of each?

No difference. Many researchers studying management behaviour have reported that there are *no significant differences* in the way that males and females manage (Vilkinas and Cartan, 1997; Wajcman, 1996). Billing and Alvesson (1994) in their review of the literature reported that:

.... most empirical investigations show only a few and slight differences between the sexes in their management roles. When it comes to behaviour, attitudes, etc. the similarities between men and women in management positions are more striking than the dissimilarities (p. 50).

Ferrario (1994) also reported there was no evidence to suggest that male and female managers differed in their managerial styles. In 1997 Vilkinas and Cartan corroborated this observation, writing also that boss felt that men and women were equally effective and that there were no differences in the ways they managed (Vilkinas and Cartan, 1997).

On the other hand

Other research, however, has argued that the gender of the manager *does matter* (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998; Bass, Avolio, and Atwater, 1996; Rosener, 1990; 1995; Vilkinas and Cartan, 1997). Male and female managers, for example, perceive *themselves* differently. When surveyed, female managers have indicated they are more innovative (Bass *et al.*, 1996), better at getting the job done and setting priorities than their male counterparts (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998; Bass *et al.*, 1996; Rosener, 1990; 1996). In addition, they expressed the belief that female managers are stronger team builders and developers of their staff (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998; Bass *et al.*, 1996; Rosener, 1990; 1996). Male managers were reported to be more bureaucratic than female managers (Willis and Petzall, 1993). When staff were asked to identify what roles male and female managers displayed, they also reported some differences in the way males and females manage. Staff said that female managers seemed more innovative, were better able to prioritise and synchronise activities, were more able communicators and engaged more readily in mentoring (Vilkinas and Cartan, 1997), largely confirming what the women managers themselves had said.

Explaining the discrepancy

The results of previous research investigating whether male and female managers manage differently are at odds with one another and inconclusive. Possible explanations for this discrepancy are that, firstly, as Rosenthal (1996) reported, many of the studies finding a significant result were laboratory studies. This type of research is only conducted in a short time frame and may not reflect life in an organisation over several years. Laboratory studies are also artificial in nature, making

generalisations of the findings to other situations difficult. Secondly, the gender of the significant others was not taken into account in the majority of these earlier studies. One study by Ragins (1991) which controlled for the gender of the staff reported that when the gender of the staff was taken into account in her statistical analysis there were no differences in the staff's perceptions of male and female managers. She observed that staff ratings of their manager's effectiveness were influenced more by their perception of their managerial power than by their gender.

Thus an explanation for inconclusive results may lie in the interaction of the gender of the significant others with that of the manager.

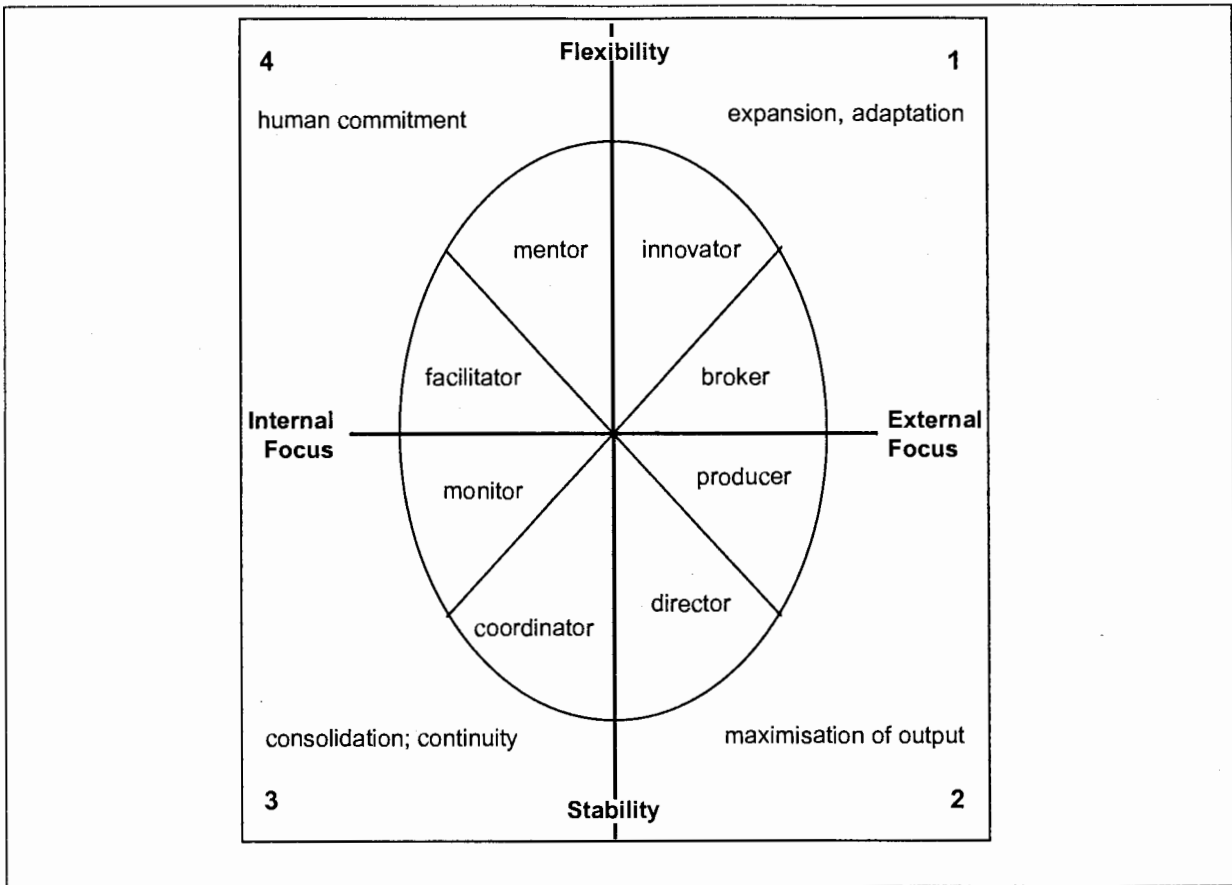
The competing values framework (CVF)

One way to assess the performance of female managers compared with males, and to determine whether it is gender or a combination of factors that dominates the perceptions of their workmates, is to gauge the perceptions of significant others – boss, peers, staff – with whom women managers work.

Robert Quinn's competing values framework (CVF) offers an instrument for such an analysis by identifying the roles that managers play. Using these roles, we can determine how women managers are perceived by their workmates and by themselves; and discover the degree to which their gender influences that perception.

Quinn developed the competing values framework to explain the various managerial roles required for personal effectiveness in complex business environments (Denison, Hooijberg, and Quinn, 1995; Hart and Quinn, 1993; Hooijberg and Quinn, 1993; O'Neill and Quinn, 1993; Quinn *et al.*, 1990.; 1996). Attempting to provide a structure that expresses the complexity of the manager's task while providing a framework for analysis of the manager's activities, Quinn postulated that there are basically two key dimensions to leadership in management. The first is a *flexibility – stability dimension* and the second is an *external – internal focus dimension*. Quinn used these two dimensions to create a four-quadrant model (comprising eight operational roles), which forms the basis of the CVF. For each quadrant there are different outcomes as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The competing values model



Quinn has argued that truly effective business managers must be able to operate comfortably in all quadrants, although vastly different (and at times paradoxical) skills and mindsets will be required. For example, Quadrant 1 demands a manager who is flexible and has an external focus. In this environment of expansion, adaptation and change, staff are motivated by a common vision, the excitement of the change and risk taking. Contrast this with Quadrant 3, where the organisation requires consolidation and continuity. Here the manager must demonstrate an internal focus and seek stability. Staff in this environment want certainty and predicability. Similarly, Quadrants 2 and 4 are clearly paradoxical (flexible/internal and external/stable respectively).

Quinn's model provides further insight by identifying eight operational roles: *innovator*, *broker*, *producer*, *director*, *coordinator*, *monitor*, *facilitator* and *mentor* (see again Figure 1). A brief description of each of these roles is provided in Table 1.

Table I. Description of the eight operational roles

Role	Description
innovator	continually searches for innovation and improvements solves problems in creative way envisions needed changes
broker	exerts upward influence acquires needed resources external focus
producer	gets the work done customer focus achievement orientation
director	provides direction clarifies priorities communicates unit's goals
coordinator	coordinates activities schedules brings sense of order to workplace
monitor	monitors progress collects information holds regular reviews
facilitator	builds teams facilitates consensus manages conflict
mentor	develops staff listens empathically treats each staff member in a caring way

Purpose of the current study

While there have been many previous studies that have investigated the similarities and differences between male and female managers, none have taken into account the gender of the manager and that of *all* of their significant others, that is, boss, peers and staff. Although Ragins (1991) controlled for the gender of her study participants, it was only for the gender of the managers and their staffs. The present study was designed to investigate whether the gender of perceivers in a variety of relationships with the manager influenced their perception of the managers' effectiveness and management style. It has considered the points of view of the people located above, beside and below the level of the manager in the organisational hierarchy.

Method

Subjects. The subjects in the study were a sample of 509 middle managers of which 127 (25 per cent) were female. Each of the managers selected a set of their staff, peers and boss (referred to as their significant others) to respond to a questionnaire. Each respondent had frequent contact and overall knowledge of the manager. The data collection process is the 360° feedback process that is commonly used in organisations (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998; Dalton, 1998; Furnham and Stringfield, 1998). This form of data collection collects responses from people 'all around' the manager through the use of a questionnaire. The total number of respondents is shown in Table II below.

Table II. Number of respondents by gender

Group	Gender		Total
	Female	Male	
manager	127	382	509
staff	710	1214	1924
peers	413	1461	1874
boss	83	359	440
Total	1333	3416	4747

Questionnaire. The questionnaire included a set of items (see Appendix A) measuring the eight roles specified by the competing values framework (Denison *et al.*, 1995). Five items were used to measure effectiveness (see Appendix B) and were from Denison *et al.* (1995).

Data analysis. For the managerial role scores, the two items associated with each role were averaged to give the score for that role. Responses from manager and boss for each role were processed in this way. Responses from all the staff of a particular manager were aggregated to produce a single score on each item for each manager. The means of these staff responses make up the measures for each manager. A similar process was used for the peer responses. Thus each manager had a score on each of the eight roles for their self and their boss' perception, and an averaged score for their staff and peers' perceptions.

For the effectiveness measure, responses from the manager were summed for the five items and divided by five to produce one score. The same process was used for the boss' responses. For the staff responses, the scores from all staff were aggregated for each item to produce a single score. The average for each of the five items was calculated, summed to give a score for the five items and then divided by five to produce one score for effectiveness from staff. A similar process was used for peer responses.

To analyse this data, a mixed-effects repeated measures MANOVA with three between-subject factors was performed:

- position (4 levels; self, staff, peers and boss)
- effectiveness (2 levels; high and low)
- gender (2 levels; male and female)
- and one within-subjects factor
- display role (8 eight levels; innovator, broker, producer, director, coordinator, monitor, facilitator and mentor).

Results

Results of the responses to the questionnaire are shown in Table III. The means and standard deviations for the extent to which each role is displayed and for effectiveness are shown.

Main effects. The mixed-effects repeated measures MANOVA showed main effects for effectiveness and display role (see Table IV). There was a non-significant result for the main effect of position and gender.

Main effect - effectiveness. The mean display role scores for each role are greater for high effectiveness managers ($X = 5.56$, $\sigma = .61$) than for low effectiveness managers ($X = 4.68$, $\sigma = .75$). These results indicate that managers who were perceived to be more effective were also perceived to display the eight roles more than were managers who were perceived to be less effective.

Main effect - display role. The significant effects for a post hoc Tukey HSD performed on the display role showed that certain roles were displayed significantly more than other roles (see Table V). Reading from the left, each of the roles was displayed significantly more than the following role or set

of roles: mentor > producer > director, facilitator > coordinator > innovator > monitor, broker. That is, mentor was the role displayed most and monitor and broker were displayed least.

Table III. Summary statistics: means and standard deviations for extent to which each role was displayed and effectiveness.

Manager	Position															
	Boss				Peer				Staff				Self			
	female		male		female		male		female		male		female		male	
	Mn	σ	Mn	σ	Mn	σ	Mn	σ	Mn	σ	Mn	σ	Mn	σ	Mn	σ
innovator	4.87	1.13	4.96	1.11	5.10	1.16	5.04	1.04	5.26	1.15	5.10	1.09	4.76	.98	5.00	.91
broker	4.69	1.11	4.72	1.19	4.87	1.24	4.88	1.14	5.13	1.23	5.00	1.19	4.67	1.11	4.60	1.09
producer	5.22	1.14	5.31	1.07	5.38	1.00	5.35	1.00	5.48	1.17	5.41	1.07	5.48	.93	5.32	.92
director	5.07	1.06	5.09	1.06	5.34	1.07	5.17	1.06	5.35	1.25	5.23	1.19	5.24	.99	5.16	.91
coordinator	5.08	1.11	5.17	1.00	5.19	1.08	5.15	1.02	5.16	1.32	5.06	1.23	5.13	.90	5.12	.91
monitor	4.90	1.12	4.89	1.08	5.07	1.10	5.06	1.10	5.09	1.31	4.98	1.21	4.35	1.14	4.52	1.17
facilitator	5.07	1.08	5.10	1.06	5.18	1.14	5.12	1.09	5.28	1.26	5.21	1.21	5.34	.92	5.28	.95
mentor	5.27	1.20	5.33	1.16	5.51	1.27	5.29	1.28	5.59	1.39	5.38	1.31	5.72	.91	5.53	.96
Effectness.	3.70	.75	3.76	.66	3.84	.72	3.80	.67	3.97	.80	3.92	.73	3.67	.50	3.67	.49

Table IV: Results of mixed-effects repeated measures MANOVA for position x gender x effectiveness x display role.

Factor	d.f	MS effect	df error	MS error	F	p
<u>Between subjects</u>						
position	3	5.54	4731	3.60	1.54	.202
gender	1	1.68	4731	3.60	47	494
effectiveness	1	3131.60	4731	3.60	69.90	00
position x gender	3	2.19	4731	3.60	61	608
position x effectiveness	3	113.96	4731	3.60	1.65	000
gender x effectiveness	1	3.29	4731	3.60	91	339
position x gender x effectiveness	3	3.93	4731	3.60	.09	351
<u>Within-Subjects</u>						
display role	7	98.01	33117	.67	45.48	000
position x display role	21	9.57	33117	.67	4.20	000
gender x display role	7	1.22	33117	.67	.82	079
effectiveness x display role	7	6.23	33117	.67	.25	000
position x gender x display role	21	.87	33117	.67	.30	162
position x effectiveness x display role	21	1.35	33117	.67	.01	004
gender x effectiveness x display role	7	.29	33117	.67	42	887
position x gender x effectiveness x display role	21	.63	33117	.67	93	550

Non-significant main effects. The lack of significance for the main effects of both gender and position indicates that male and female managers were perceived to have similar levels of effectiveness and to display each of the eight roles similarly. In addition, there was no overall significant difference in the managers' self perception and that of their significant others.

Table V. Tukey HSD for display role

	Display role means and significance							
	mentor	producer	director	facilitator	coordinator	innovator	monitor	broker
	5.43	5.36	5.20	5.18	5.12	5.00	4.86	4.82
producer	**							
director	***	***						
facilitator	***	***						
coordinator	***	***	***	**				
innovator	***	***	***	***	***			
monitor	***	***	***	***	***	***		
broker	***	***	***	***	***	***	***	

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001

Two-way interactions. Significant two-way interactions were found for the position x effectiveness, position x display role and effectiveness x display role interactions (see Table IV). There were non-significant results for the two-way interactions of gender x position, gender x display role and gender x effectiveness.

Position x effectiveness. The significant effects for the post hoc test Tukey HSD performed on position x effectiveness found that for low effectiveness managers the position order of descending means is staff > peers > boss > self. But for high effectiveness managers the descending order of means was slightly different with self > boss > peers > staff. That is, high effectiveness managers were more likely to give themselves a higher score than their significant others, but low effectiveness managers were *more likely to give themselves a score less than their significant others*.

Position x display role. The significant effects for the post hoc test Tukey HSD performed on position by display role found that the manager and their significant others perceived the roles to be displayed in a different order. The results are shown in Table VI. In the main, the manager and significant others indicated that the mentor and producer were the two roles displayed most and broker and monitor were displayed least. Their perceptions varied for male and female managers on the other four roles. These results are not central to the current paper as they do not explain the impact of gender on the perceptions of the significant others.

Effectiveness x display role. The significant effects for the post hoc test Tukey HSD performed on effectiveness by display role interaction found that for high effectiveness managers – regardless of gender – the mentor and producer roles were displayed significantly ($p < .01$) more than any of the other roles. They also displayed director, facilitator and coordinator significantly more ($p < .001$) than innovator, broker and monitor and they displayed innovator and broker significantly more ($p < .001$) than monitor. The order was slightly different for low effectiveness managers. They displayed producer and mentor significantly more ($p < .001$) than they did director, facilitator and innovator that they displayed these significantly more ($p < .001$) than monitor, coordinator and broker. The role they displayed least was broker. There were only two roles, mentor and producer on which there was agreement. These were the two roles displayed most.

Table VI. Ascending order of display role means for each position

Posn.	Display Role							
	broker	monitor	innovator	director	facilitator	coordinator	producer	mentor
Boss	broker	monitor	innovator	director	facilitator	coordinator	producer	mentor
Peer	broker	innovator	monitor	facilitator	coordinator	director	mentor	producer
Staff	monitor	broker	coordinator	innovator	facilitator	director	producer	mentor
Self	monitor	broker	innovator	coordinator	director	facilitator	producer	mentor

Non-significant two-way interactions. The two-way interactions for gender x position, gender x effectiveness, and gender x display role were not significant. That is, the gender of the manager and of the significant others did not impact on the perceptions of the significant others.

Three-way interactions. A significant three-way interaction was found for position x effectiveness x display role (see Table 4). There were non-significant results for the three-way interactions of position x gender x effectiveness, position x gender x display role, gender x effectiveness x display role.

Position x effectiveness x display role. The significant effects for a post hoc Tukey HSD performed on position x effectiveness x display role are shown in Table VII. The importance of this finding for the present study is that it is effectiveness not gender that influences staff, peers' and boss' perception of the manager.

Table VII. Ascending order of position x effectiveness level for each level of display role

Display role	Effectiveness level							
	staff-low	boss-low	peer-low	self-low	self-high	boss-high	peer-high	staff-high
innovator	staff-low	boss-low	peer-low	self-low	self-high	boss-high	peer-high	staff-high
broker	boss-low	staff-low	self-low	peer-low	self-high	boss-high	peer-high	staff-high
producer	staff-low	boss-low	peer-low	self-low	self-high	boss-high	peer-high	staff-high
director	staff-low	peer-low	boss-low	self-low	boss-high	self-high	peer-high	staff-high
coordinator	staff-low	peer-low	boss-low	self-low	self-high	boss-high	staff-high	peer-high
monitor	self-low	staff-low	boss-low	peer-low	self-high	boss-high	staff-high	peer-high
facilitator	staff-low	peer-low	boss-low	self-low	boss-high	self-high	peer-high	staff-high
mentor	staff-low	peer-low	boss-low	self-low	boss-high	self-high	peer-high	staff-high

Non-significant three-way interactions. These non-significant results indicate that the gender of the managers and that of the significant others does not interact to influence the significant others' perceptions of the roles displayed by the manager nor their perception of the manager's effectiveness.

Four-way interaction. The four-way interaction of position x gender x effectiveness x display role was not significant. For the present study, this finding also offers support for the assertion that gender does not influence how a manager is perceived.

Discussion

Gender of manager. The results indicate that male and female managers do not have a different perception of themselves as managers in terms of what they do and how effective they are. These results support the findings of (Billing and Alvesson, 1994; Ferrario, 1994). The gender of the manager also does not have a significant impact on the perceptions that the managers' significant others hold of the managers. That is, there was not a significant difference in the perceptions of a male or female manager by their boss, peers or staff irrespective of the gender of the perceiver.

Gender of significant others. When the data were analysed to determine whether the gender of the manager interacted with the gender of the significant others, the results were still non-significant. That is, it did not matter what the gender of the manager or their boss, peers or staff was when they were making an assessment the manager and the effectiveness of his or her activities. In conclusion, the present study's findings support the assertion that there are no significant differences in the management style and effectiveness of male and female managers.

These results would suggest that being seen as effective as a manager is determined by factors that are independent of the gender of the manager and the gender of their significant others. Korac-Kakabadse, Korac-Kakabadse and Myers (1998) reported that gender did not impact on the behaviour and attitudes of people in organisations, 'that gender is a non-significant factor in determining leadership perspectives and performance' (p. 382). Bhatnager and Swamy (1995) reported that male managers had a more positive attitude to female managers if they were satisfied with their interaction with them. The men's attitudes were not influenced by the frequency of interaction but by the quality of interaction.

So what factor or factors lead to there being different perceptions of men and women when they are working as managers?

Effectiveness. The results of the present study indicated that managers who are perceived to be more effective are also perceived to display the eight roles of the CFV more than their less effective counterparts. These findings are similar to those reported by Denison *et al* (1995). The management style of effective and ineffective managers is also different. The order in which they display the eight

roles in terms of which roles they display most to least is different. And finally, there is a significant interaction of effectiveness with position and display role; that is, the effectiveness of the manager is understood in different ways by each of the significant others according to their position and the display role of the manager. The extent to which managers are seen to display the eight roles also affects the perceptions of the significant others. So the level of effectiveness of a manager is a significant factor in determining how that manager is perceived.

Implications of findings. The current results have relevance to the debate about why more women are not advancing in organisations. Several researchers have argued that there are multiple factors influencing women's advancement through an organisation (Billing and Alvesson, 1994; Fagenson, 1990; Ragins and Sundstrom, 1989; Rosenthal *et al.*, 1996; Tharenou, Latimer, and Conroy, 1994). These included gender-related as well as structural opportunities, values of the organisation, and organisational, interpersonal and individual factors (such as motivation to become a manager), and attribution of success to their own ability.

The current results would seem to indicate that what female managers do and their effectiveness do not generally distinguish them from their male colleagues. Men and women are regarded as equally competent or incompetent managers when assessed objectively by their boss, peers or staff in terms of the CVF display roles; and no gender-related reason for individuals being either superior or inferior managers is offered by the findings.

Why then does there remain a general consensus among observers that women do not readily advance in management positions?

The reason for this may lie in a philosophical approach to understanding gender and leadership that has its roots in the history of male-female relationships and leadership in Western society. In Berdahl's (1996) review of six models of gender and leadership, he reported that it is only the trait model that supports management capability being linked to individual differences such as ability, task contribution and motivation to lead; traits that are independent of the gender of the individual. All of the other models such as status roles and social roles, suggest that male and female managers are different because males and females are different. It is possible that if an executive holds values that expect men and women to operate differently as managers, the actual performance of each may have little impact on the executive's evaluation and support for them in the workplace or in terms of advancement.

The influence of personal, cultural and historical attitudes, values and beliefs about gender cannot be ignored when examining women in management. Gender-related adjectives are still used to describe the behaviour of managers, just as they are to describe the behaviour of individuals. Gender is one of the traits people use to identify others-than-themselves; and it is not a neutral concept.

What needs to be established in future research is whether the common use of sexually-biased language colours general perceptions of female management and influences the way in which female managers are treated. In addition, while effective management garners no sexually-biased observations, for cultural and historical reasons do significant others look for an explanation linked to gender when trying to explain ineffective management?

In summary, what constitutes effective management will change over time. The current research illustrates that the qualities associated with effective management are not gender-related. It would seem from the present results that the male-female difference in management style debate is non-consequential. What is important is the end result: in terms of how managers are viewed by their significant others, it does not matter what gender they are so long as they are effective as managers.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire items by role

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
almost never	Very Seldom	seldom	Occasionally	Frequently	Very frequently	almost always

The Innovator Role (.66*)

1. Comes up with inventive ideas.
6. Experiments with new concepts and ideas.

The Broker Role (.72*)

2. Exerts upward influence in the organisation.
14. Influence decisions made at high levels.

The Producer Role (.79*)

10. Gets the unit to meet expected goals
12. Sees the unit delivers on stated goals.

The Director Role (.80*)

3. Makes the unit's role very clear.
13. Clarifies the unit's priorities and directions.

The Coordinator Role (.70*)

11. Anticipates workflow problems, avoids crisis.
15. Brings a sense of order into the unit.

The Monitor Role (.61*)

4. Maintains tight logistical control.
9. Compares records, reports, and so on to detect discrepancies.

The Facilitator Role (.62*)

8. Encourages participative decision making in the group.
16. Surfaces key differences among group members, then works participatively to resolve them.

The Mentor Role (.87*)

5. Treats each individual in a sensitive, caring way.
7. Shows empathy and concern in dealing with subordinates.

* Alpha coefficients are from Denison *et al.* (1995) and are shown in the parenthesis for each role

Appendix B

Effectiveness Items *

In this section we would like to know your overall assessment of yourself/the person as a manager. In answering the following questions, please circle the appropriate number.

1. Meeting of managerial performance standards:

Below most standards 1 2 3 4 5 Above most standards

2. Comparison to person's managerial peers:

Worse manager than peers 1 2 3 4 5 Better manager than peers

3. Performance as a role model

Poor role model 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent role model

4. Overall managerial success

A managerial failure 1 2 3 4 5 A managerial success

5. Overall effectiveness as a manager

Ineffective manager 1 2 3 4 5 Effective manager

These items were taken from Denison *et al.* (1995) where the alpha coefficient was .83.

A CONTEMPORARY PROFILE OF AUSTRALIAN WOMEN SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

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Academic research into women and small business was at its zenith in the 1980s and the early part of the nineties. Since then there has been little empirical research been conducted in Australia into women as owners of small businesses. This lack of research belies the fact that in Australia, 35% of all small business owners are reportedly female. Additionally, the Australian Bureau of Statistics states that approximately twice as many women start businesses compared to men.

This paper focuses on the question of what type of women are currently owners of small businesses. It will compare an historical profile of the woman small business owner with recent data collected in a Western Australian study. It will further triangulate this profile by adding the profile of men from the study. Demographic factors, reasons for starting the business in the first instance and future business intentions will also be examined.

Introduction

Broad interest into women and business ownership started towards the end of the 1970s. During the 1980s and the early part of the 1990s there were a number of researchers who were writing specifically about women and small business ownership. (The definition of a small business which is used in this article is from the Australian Bureau of Statistics ([ABS], 1998a), which is a business that employs 20 or less people in a service industry or a business that employs 100 or less in a manufacturing industry). The majority of the early research came out of North America (Brush, 1992; Hisrich and Brush, 1986; Lee-Gosselin and Grisé, 1990; Stevenson, 1986) or the UK (Allen and Truman, 1991; Birley, 1989; Carter and Cannon, 1992; Cromie, 1987; Watkins and Watkins, 1986). More recently there has been research done in European countries other than the UK, mainly Scandinavia, by authors such as Sundin and Holmqvist (1991) and in the Asia Pacific region by Deng, Hassan and Jivan (1995) and Teo (1996).

In Australia the main contributor has been Leonie Still and various co-authors (Still and Guerin, 1990 and 1991; Still and Chia, 1995; Still and Timms, 1998). There have also been several stand alone studies, such as The Hub Report, produced in Western Australia by the then Western Australian Department of Training (1988) and two studies conducted in Victoria by MacDiarmid and Thomson (1991) and Calvert, Oliver and Breen (1994). A more recent study was conducted in Queensland by Barrett (1998).

The definitive Australian work on research into women and small business was produced by a multi disciplinary group from Flinders University, South Australia, which reviewed 425 articles (Roffey et al., 1996). However since 1996 there has been little dedicated research into gender and business ownership conducted in Australia, the exceptions being Barrett (1998) and the continued work of Still. It is therefore timely to ask, what is the current profile of Australian women business owners today and further, have they changed from the stereotypical WASP personality as defined by Still and Guerin in 1990? Additional questions are whether men are different from women in aspects such as demographic characteristics, motivation for business entry and their future business intentions.

Past research has often concluded that women were different from men in some of their demographics characteristics and in their motivations and intentions. The traditional view of women's entry into self-employment was often stated as being because of negative external factors, over which women

normally had no control. These were issues such as job dissatisfaction, career dissatisfaction, liberation from subordination and discrimination, balancing family and work and redundancy (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Cromie, 1987; Marlow, 1997).

These primarily negative factors have often been referred to as 'push' factors (Hamilton, 1987; Buttner and Moore, 1997). Opposing push factors are 'pull' factors, which are aspects over which the individual does have control. Some pull factors which have been cited in the literature are, independence, personal challenge, to use existing experience and knowledge, personal development and to make lots of money (Birley and Westhead, 1994; Gatewood, Shaver and Gartner, 1995; Lawrence and Hamilton, 1997). Buttner and Moore (1997) and Still and Guerin (1990) have stated that women were more likely than men to be pushed towards self-employment.

In relation to future intentions, men were reported to be more financially orientated and more interested in growth. (Birley, 1989; Buttner and Moore, 1997; Marlow and Strange, 1994; Olsen and Currie, 1992; Sexton and Bowman-Upton, 1990). Women were reported to prefer either no growth or slow organic growth (Clayton, 1998; Lee-Gosselin and Grisé, 1990)

This paper reports some recent empirical research, which was part of a larger study into measurements of small business success. The study incorporated basic demographic questions and these were used to build up the current portrait of women business owners in a specific service industry. This portrait was compared to the Still and Guerin (1990) profile to see if there have been any demonstrable changes over the past ten years in both profile and start-up motivation.

Ownership of small businesses by women

The Australian Bureau of Statistics state that of the 1.3 million small business operators in February 1997, 35% of them were women. Further, between February 1995 and February 1997 the number of female operators increased by 9.0% compared with an increase of 2.6% by male operators over the same period (ABS, 1998a). However, as with many statistical findings, the figures need to be carefully interpreted.

Even though the figures state the total number of women business owners, ownership is not spread evenly over all industries. The majority of women are concentrated in either service types of industries or retail, with only a small proportion in manufacturing or the more traditionally masculine industries such as construction. Table 1. lists a sample of industry categories with percentages of the ownership by women. Included in 'personal and other services' are laundry and cleaning services, funeral and crematoria services, gardening, hairdressing and beauty salons and the coverall category, 'n.e.c.' (not elsewhere classified). This sub category includes services such as astrology, fortune telling, weight reducing services and prostitution (ABS, 1993). There are additional industry categories not listed, which also have low ownership by women.

Table 1. Industry Category and Ownership

Industry	% women by ownership
Construction	2%
Total manufacturing	7%
Retail	16%
Accommodation, cafes and restaurants	21%
Cultural and recreational services	26%
Personal and other services	70%

(Industry Commission, 1997)

There is also a percentage of women owners of businesses who are in partnership with their spouse in more 'blue-collar' professions, such as construction or plumbing (Barrett, 1998). Whilst these women can be classed as legitimate business owners for legal and taxation purposes, they might not be the principal decision maker or even be involved in the day to day operations of the business. Therefore

caution should be applied when these women are aggregated together with women who are full time sole operators and women in professional occupations such as accountants or lawyers, who are partners in practices and are therefore also classified as business owners.

Choice of industry for the study

Women are known to predominantly start businesses in areas in which they have some previous experience (Stevenson, 1986; Hisrich and Brush, 1986; MacDiarmid and Thomson, 1991). It is logical therefore that women gravitate towards business ownership in the service sector, as opposed to manufacturing or other more manual types of industries. The industry sector chosen for this research was Property and Business Services (ANZSIC Division L). Property and Business Services include, management consultants, accountants and bookkeepers, secretarial and employment services, the legal profession, real estate agents and various other smaller professions and trades.

This industry sector was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, the high percentage of women in this sector – approximately 30% of owners of property and business services are women (ABS, 1998b). Furthermore this industry sector is the second largest industry sector, after construction. It is also the third fastest growing sector, in terms of employment levels after health and community services and education. (ABS, 1998b).

The nature of a service business means that very little physical equipment is required, which makes it very feasible to run these types of enterprises from home. Statistically 45% of businesses operated at home are owned by women (ABS, 1998a). This is higher than the percentage of general ownership of small business by women, which, as previously stated is 35%.

As some of the subsets of Property and Business Services are 'white collar' professions, it was felt that not only would there be a reasonable representation of women in the sample, it should also be gender neutral. This is in contrast to sectors such as retail and personal services which have a high female ownership and sectors such as construction and mining which are very much male dominated.

Finally, there have been a number of previous studies which have included women in business services in their sample, such as; Barrett, 1998; Breen, Calvert and Oliver, 1995 and Still and Guerin, 1991 from Australia, and Baines and Wheelock, 1998; Buttner and Moore, 1997; Cliff, 1998; Fasci and Valdez, 1998; Ljunggren and Kolvereid, 1996; Loscocco, Robinson, Hall and Allen, 1991 and McKechnie, Ennew and Read, 1998, from the UK, Canada and the US.

Methodology

A weakness that is often cited in research into women and business ownership is that the research was purely qualitative and only included a small sample, therefore implying that it was not statistically or methodologically rigorous (Barrett, 1998; Roffey et al., 1996). Whereas this may have been true in some instances, qualitative research methodologies are used in many disciplines, not just studies looking at gender issues, and are often the preferred method in preliminary or exploratory research. This current study attempts to address some of the previous criticisms of past research, by being both qualitative and quantitative and having a reasonable sample size.

A total of forty in-depth interviews were initially conducted followed by a postal questionnaire. The sampling for the postal questionnaire was done in 2 stages. The first stage was random sampling from a business database, (Australia on Disc), using the ANZSIC codes for Property and Business Services. In order to gain sufficient women to make up a meaningful sample an additional convenience sample was used. This consisted of a combination of selecting businesses which used the name of the proprietor in the business name, and existing databases of women owned businesses. A similar method of convenience sampling was also used by Calvert et al., (1994).

The total number of usable replies was 290, of which 105 responses were from women. This amounted to a response rate of 40%, which was considered adequate given the difficulty of researching small businesses (Fischer, Reuber and Dyke, 1993; Hamilton, 1987). In addition it was higher than some of the response rates of other surveys previously mentioned.

Comparison of studies

The greatest difficulty of doing comparisons of previous studies is that all research is unique and researchers are normally looking at a specific issue, which is of primary interest to them. When the data from a specific study is used for another purpose, even of a similar vein, there are often differences (Stanger, 1990; Storey, 1994). In the case of using the Still and Guerin (1990) profile, it is acknowledged that there are several differences. These included the method of sampling, the initial purpose of the studies and some of the questions asked.

Sampling for the current study was principally random and was part of a larger study which was not specially gender focused. Sampling in the Still and Guerin (1990) study was by self-selection. The rationale for that study was a New South Wales government commissioned initiative, with the purpose of recommending initiatives to address the needs of women going into business. The questions asked therefore reflected those aims. As the questions in the current study were not direct replications of the Still and Guerin questions, the answers were therefore not directly comparable. The Still and Guerin results do not have percentages allocated to the different factors, therefore the answers recorded here in the Still and Guerin column were stated as 'the majority' or 'most', such as 'the majority of women were aged between 30 and 45 years of age'. However, even with these differences it is felt that some legitimate comparisons can be made, which are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Comparisons of the Studies

	Still and Guerin (1990)	Walker (1999)
Age	30-45	31-50 (62%)
Marital status	married	64% were married/defacto
Education	Degree or professional training	21% had a diploma 22% undergrad 43% postgraduate
Australian born + Australian parents	Yes	Not asked
Sole proprietor	Yes	47%
Solo start-up	yes	Not asked
Previous employment status	From full-time to self-employment	Not asked
Number of employees	Less than 4	80% less than 5
External premises or working from home	external	54%
Working in the business	Yes	Yes
Age of business	More than 1 year	80% more than 1 year
Motivations	Greater autonomy Independence flexibility	Use experience Personal challenge Be own boss Flexible lifestyle

Comparative results

For the first three variables in Table 2, age, marital status and education, there were no real differences between the two studies. There were also some similarities in the variables which relate to the actual business. The majority of women in the current study started up their businesses, although it is not known if they started them on their own. The women in the current study also still work in the business. In terms of employees, 80% employ less than 5 people and the businesses have been in operation for more than one year.

There were differences in the legal status of the business entity and the motivations for starting the business. Just less than half of the women in the current study were sole proprietors. The remainder, (53%) were either in a partnership, were a proprietary company or were in a family trust.

Perhaps one of the most interesting and significant differences between the findings of the two studies is in the primary motivation for initially starting the business. The most prevalent reason given in the Still and Guerin study as to why women started their business was for greater autonomy. Greater autonomy is a push factor, as it implies that the respondent was previously in a subordinate position, as does the desire for independence (Buttner and Moore, 1997; Cromie, 1987; Marlow, 1997). In relation to flexibility, this is often linked with women having to balance work and family (Green and Cohen, 1995; Loscocco, 1997).

The motivations with the highest mean scores in the current study were to use personal experience for the personal challenge and to be ones own boss. These motivations are said to be pull factors (Birley and Westhead, 1994; Gatewood et al., 1995; Lawrence and Hamilton, 1997). These differences could indicate that there have been some changes over time in motivation for some women. That is the women in the current study pursued self-employment because they wanted to, not necessarily because they feel they had limited career opportunities in their previous employment. What is also interesting is that flexibility or flexible lifestyle has not changed. This could be because the burden of domestic responsibility still predominantly falls to women, regardless of the importance of their business operations (Buttner & Moore, 1997; Lee-Gosselin & Grisé, 1990; Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk and Beutell, 1996; Still & Timms, 1998).

A contemporary profile of a woman owner of a small business

Accepting that there are an enormous number of variables which need to be taken into account when trying to give a general definition of the owner of a small business, it is very difficult to give an accurate profile of the type of person that starts their own business. As Gartner (1988, p. 21) stated, "A startling number of traits and characteristics have been attributed to the entrepreneur and a psychological profile of the entrepreneur assembled from these studies would portray someone larger than life".

There are however some consistent demographic characteristics that can be highlighted from the current study. This broad profile of women owners of small businesses in 1999, and if such generic profile is possible, is only in relation to women in the specific industry sector sampled, Property and Business Services.

This woman:

- is aged somewhere between 31 – 50
- is likely to be married or in a defacto relationship
- is highly educated, above the national average
- has children

- is in a legal partnership with a spouse or family member
- started the business herself
- employs less than 5 people
- does not consider the business a family business
- is likely to have had one or both parents in business

Whereas this current demographic profile is not very different to the Still and Guerin (1990) profile, the main difference is in motivation. The main motivations for starting the business appears to have shifted from being externally based, a push motivation, to a more internal pull focus. The possible reasons for this motivational change are discussed in the next section.

General discussion

The first simplistic reason for the shift could be that the glass ceiling no longer exists. However it is more likely that women's motivations are reflecting the general overall changes in the workplace.

During the 1980s and 1990s large organisations, both public and private have downsized and now have flatter management structures (Cooper, 1998; Hartmann, 1997; Jurik, 1998). This means less of a potential career path in a single organisation, there are no longer jobs for life (Carroll, 1994). Companies are outsourcing many operations and using contract personnel and consultants, which are often previous employees (Boyle, 1994). This employment uncertainty can make self-employment appear a viable employment option.

There were a number of younger women in the sample, 35% of the women were aged 40 or under. Young women are better educated today, as the entry to undergraduate university courses attests and with that level of education comes a certain amount of self-confidence. It is well established that women who were starting up in business 20 years ago encountered discrimination (Carter and Allen, 1997; Still and Guerin, 1991; Stranger, 1990; Watkins and Watkins, 1986). Some of these barriers, in particular overt ones such as access to finance (Riding and Swift, 1990; McKechnie et al., 1998) do appear to have receded. However that is not to say that barriers no longer exist.

Finally there are more business role models for younger women to relate to. The increasing incidence of "award events" such as the Telstra Business Woman of the Year, gives a more public profile to women's business ownership and management. The next section looks at whether there has also been a change in motivations for men.

Gender comparison

The traditional profile of male small business owners was not that different from the women's profile, other than men were more financially focused (Birley, 1989; Buttner and Moore, 1997). The gender comparisons of the study shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Gender Comparison of Present Study

	Women	Men
Age	31-50 (62%)	31-50 (61%)
Marital status	64% were married/defacto	89%
Education	21% had a diploma 22% undergrad 43% postgraduate	31% had a diploma 22% undergrad 34% postgraduate
Sole proprietor	47%	24%
Number of employees	80% less than 5	75% less than 5
External premises or working from home	54%	68%
Working in the business	Yes	Yes
Age of business	80%	90%
Motivations	Use experience (4.81) Personal challenge (4.73) Be own boss (4.64) Flexible lifestyle (4.64)	Be own boss (4.79) Use experience (4.77) Personal challenge (4.52) Flexible lifestyle (4.16)

(figures in brackets are the mean scores)

There were some demographic differences between the women and men in the sample. The ages were similar, but in relation to their marital status, nearly all of the men were married or in a defacto relationship, compared to just under two thirds of the women. The importance of marital status for owners of small businesses appears to favour married men more so than married women. Loscocco et al., (1991) found that as men are more likely to be married, they receive greater tangible and emotional support from their partners than the reverse situation for women. Married men often employ their wives on a part-time (or full-time) basis (Scase and Goffee, 1980) and sometimes in an unpaid capacity (Allen, Truman and Wolkowitz, 1992). In addition, if not in an unpaid arrangement

then often, "family members (of married individuals) can serve as a source of cheap labor" (Bates, 1995, p. 145). This source of 'cheap labour' has been cited as a reason why some people choose self-employment (Bates, 1995). This might not seem that unreasonable for newly formed businesses, given that the early days of any business are always the hardest. Unpaid labour becomes an issue when the labour is being provided unwillingly and to the detriment of the person or in an illegal situation.

There were also gender differences on educational qualifications. More of the men had diplomas or certificates than the women, 31% compared to 21% and had less postgraduate qualifications, 34% compared to 43%. What appears to be the case for this sample is that the women had higher tertiary qualifications than their male counterparts. This could be a reflection of the overall improvement of women's education but could also be industry bias, that is, the prevalence of 'professions' within the sample, which require tertiary qualifications.

There was also a difference in the legal structures of the businesses, 76% of the men were either in partnerships, proprietary companies or family trusts, as compared with 53% of women. However both groups generally employed less than five people and had been in business for more than one year. This legal status difference mirrors the larger number of women owned businesses which were sole proprietorships. If businesses are being operated by one person only, an option is to become a sole trader or proprietor, which is cheaper to set up and administer than to become a proprietary company. Given that women often start their businesses with less capital than men (Carter and Rosa, 1998), then sole proprietorship would seem to be a preferred option for them.

An interesting gender difference was in the motivations for business start-up. Much of previous literature on gender and start-up has emphasised financial aspects for men, with women being more motivated by personal affective rationale (Brush, 1992; Buttner and Moore, 1997; Marlow and Strange, 1994; Olsen and Currie, 1992; Sexton and Bowman-Upton, 1990). These four principal motivational factors for business start-up mentioned by the men in the sample were personal intrinsic factors, not financial factors. The closeness of the mean scores for the two groups showed far more similarity than difference. That is, the men in the study were not motivated to start their businesses for financial reasons but rather for personal, affective rationale. This finding appears to be different to other studies, however the industry sample could again be a significant factor.

Future intentions

Previous research into women and business ownership has often stated that women do not want to grow their businesses and are content to stay small. By contrast men are perceived as pursuing aggressive growth strategies (Baines and Wheelock, 1998; Carter, Williams and Reynolds, 1997; Rosa, Carter and Hamilton, 1996). This study asked the respondents what were their future intentions for their businesses. There were 12 different statements, with respondents allowed to choose multiple options. The results are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Future Business Intentions

	Women	Men
Expand by increasing turnover	46%	45%
Maintain the business till retirement	41%	49%
Expand by employing more staff	34%	36%
Expand by investment in technology	25%	31%
Build and sell for a profit	24%	12%
Continue at the same rate	15%	15%
Sell within 5 years	13%	7%
No particular plans	6%	9%
Become a public company	6%	3%
Maintain for children to join	4%	12%
Sell within 12 months	3%	3%
Decrease to manageable size	0%	2%

With the exception of maintaining the business until retirement, the top five options can all be considered growth strategies. As can be seen in Table 4, there is no real difference between women and men. The women in this study were equally as likely as men to want to grow their businesses. Also major growth strategies, such as becoming a public company was indicated by the same number of respondents, six women and six men. The aspect of growth will be further developed in later publications.

Conclusion

Whereas it is very difficult to build a generic profile of a woman owner of a small business, some characteristics do seem to be common to the majority of women in the sample. However these characteristics might be equally applicable to the general population of women in the workforce, especially women in management positions.

In relation to start-up motivation, the women in this sample appeared to have started their businesses for positive rationale, not simply through necessity, or because of negative motivations, which were often the reasons given in previous research. In addition the men in the sample also appeared to have started their businesses for similar reasons, with much less emphasis on financial criteria. This too is different from previous studies.

Both the women and the men in this study were interested in growing their businesses and there were no discernible gender differences in this issue. Women appear to be as ambitious as men are when it comes to future intentions for their business. It would be interesting to see if these intentions to grow actually lead to real growth. The current situation is that businesses owned by women are still proportionally smaller in size, as determined by number of employees and turnover, than similar businesses owned by men.

This study has shown that there appear to be more gender similarities than differences on the questions posed. In order to see if these findings would be applicable to other industry sectors further study is required.

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RURAL WOMEN, THE INTERNET AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT: EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL⁽¹⁹⁹⁸⁾

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The Women's Web Project is designed to address the problems facing rural Victorian Women when trying to learn about and access the Internet. By providing Internet training and access to rural and isolated women the project aims to enable women to develop not only their computer skills, but also to develop communication and social networks. The project is organised around a mentoring model, where women as mentors will be available to assist others in their learning. Mentors will be selected from a diverse range of rural community groups and will serve to reinforce the connections between these groups, and the capabilities provided by the Internet for social and community development.

What is Women's Web?

Women's Web is a project aimed at providing women in rural and isolated areas with training in the use of the Internet, as well as access to Internet services in their community. The project is funded through the Skills.net project, a project designed by the Victorian State Government to provide all Victorians with Internet access. Women's Web is designed to assist women to learn about the Internet by using a mentoring model, where local women acting as teachers and mentors assist and support others through the process of learning.

The area to be covered by the project ranges from Wodonga across Northern Victoria to Swan Hill and surrounding districts. One thousand women are to be trained in the first year in basic Internet skills, and this training will take place in local schools, Neighbourhood Houses, Adult and Community Education Centres and other community venues.

Background

A government funded project, Women's Web has many sources of influence in its development, but in essence was enabled by funding made available through Skills.net, an initiative of Multimedia Victoria.

Multimedia Victoria is responsible for overseeing the delivery of the Victorian Government's Victoria 21 multimedia strategy. Their goal is to place Victoria in the global provision of multimedia products and services, and to use the power of information and communication technology to change the way it delivers services and products to the public. By the year 2001 it is hoped that all Victorian Government information and services will be available online.

Skills.net is a \$5 million program to create a network of more than 100 community-based centres throughout regional and metropolitan Victoria. By June 30th 2001 Skills.net will directly reach more than 40,000 Victorians, giving them the skills and resources they need to understand the Internet and make it work for them. As a Skills.net project, Women's Web is able to access administrative and technical support, ideas and opportunities for further funding and networks.

The Skills.net project is funding many projects throughout rural Victoria. Recently there has been a great deal of interest directed towards issues relating to access and use of the Internet in non-metropolitan users (IPAC, 1998; CIRCIT, 1998). In the CIRCIT report "Australia's Progress towards Effective Use of Online Services," a range of issues were raised for consideration such as:

- Price and range of online services to be reasonably equivalent for non-metropolitan and metropolitan users.
- Infrastructure development, including bandwidth, local call access to ISP POP, ISP rates, etc.
- The potential for online services to meet the needs of non-metropolitan users (a way of overcoming remoteness, for example).
- The development of online applications for rural users such as telehealth, and web information services for farmers (CIRCIT, 1998).

The Information Policy Advisory Council (IPAC) published “rural®ional.au/for all, – a Report of the Working Party investigating the development of online infrastructure and services development in regional and rural Australia”, which states:

The members of the Information Policy Advisory Council (IPAC) believe that we can deploy the wonders of the Internet and the technological platforms of this ‘information age’ to transform the possibilities for rural Australia, to the benefit of all Australians. All we need is vision and determination. All we need is a sure focus on the huge opportunities there to be grasped. All we need is a realistic appreciation of the stark consequences of inaction (IPAC, pg. 1. 1997).

This report, focusing completely on the Internet in relation to rural Australia concerns in essence the creation of job opportunities, new business opportunities, regional development and a fully integrated, “location independent” Australia. The IPAC working party believes that there will be enthusiastic and widespread adoption of online services in rural communities provided that

- the infrastructure and service delivery can be put in place in a time frame and at a price that meet rural Australians’ expectations;
- relevant services and content are developed so that rural people can clearly see how online services can deliver practical outcomes for them; and
- rural communities have a strong sense that they are in control of these online service developments, and that these are not being foisted on them by big companies and big government, particularly as a means of cutting costs and further withdrawing face-to-face services (IPAC, 1997).

In rural (or non-metropolitan areas) there is a significant discrepancy regarding the use and access to computers and the Internet (Table 1).

Table 1. Percentages of Households with computer and Internet access at home in Australia. These figures represent increases in percentages since February, 1996 of 17.4% (capital cities) and 20.9% (Australia). Y = yes; N = no; DN = Don’t know.

	Capital Cities	Australia
	February 1998	February 1998
Computer	34.8%	26.1%
Internet Access in Home	15.8%	7.2%
Intentions of Household to acquire Internet access in next twelve months (households with computers and no Internet access)	Y: 24.5% N: 62.9% DN: 12.5%	Y: 21.6% N: 65.5% DN: 12.9%

Source: ABS, Household Use of Information Technology, February 1998, Tables 9, 12 & 14.

Aims of the project

The Women's Web project aims to:

- give women the training and self-confidence to use the Internet to access information relevant to their lives;
- increase the skills of women, enabling them to mentor others;
- train at least 1000 women in basic Internet skills in the first twelve months;
- supply 10,000 hours on Internet access to Women's Web members;
- identify local points of access for women and promote their use;
- provide a forum for rural women to communicate with each other through electronic mailing lists and the Women's Web web-site;
- develop further training opportunities for women to further their Internet skills if desired.

Structure

The Women's Web project is being conducted by The Centre for Continuing Education in Benalla, and is structured to be as inclusive of rural women's input as possible. (Figure 1.) The project is supported by supported by a Reference Group that includes a wide range of women's' groups and organisations such as:

- The Office of Women's Affairs – Victoria
- The Victorian Farmers Federation
- The Country Women's Association
- Australian Women in Agriculture
- Central Victorian Women in Agriculture
- Victorian Women's Council
- Women's Health Victoria
- Rural Women's Network
- Upper Murray Neighbourhood House Association
- Goulburn Ovens Murray and Loddon, Campaspe, Mallee Regional Councils of Adult, Community and Further Education
- Department of Education – Bendigo

This broad range of enthusiastic support from the rural community brings to the project a wide range of experience, ideas and issues, and enables the project to reach out to rural women via the networks developed by these organisations and groups.

Women's Web is based around a mentoring model, where women in rural areas are able to undertake training as Women's Web mentors, and then train others in their community to use the Internet. Mentoring as part of the Women's Web project is similar to coaching, where a mentor acts as a teacher and coach, as well as a support person to help you through any initial difficulties you may have. A Women's Web mentor receives training in how to train others along with computer and Internet training and the role of mentor will become the basis for further training and employment if desired.

Women will be encouraged to form a mentoring "team" with a friend or colleague, if either party is a bit hesitant on a computer. An added benefit of this is that a women's community group will have *two* trained people available to call upon for Internet assistance and tutoring. They can indeed mentor each other! I will discuss mentoring as a part of this project in more detail later.

Women who do not wish to act as mentors are able to access an Introductory Internet class that will teach the basics of the World Wide Web, email, and other forms of online communication. By encouraging groups with similar interests, mentors are able to enhance the learning experience by focusing on the non-computer interests of the group, and thus remove some of the focus on technology; something that most women involved in the project are happy with. It is felt by reference group members that the computer needs to become "invisible", that is, to focus on the computer as a

tool to enable women to do other more interesting things: "...present technology not as an end in itself, but as a vehicle for what one really likes to do" (Dumett, pg. 1. 1998)

Community based organisations are an integral part of the Women's Web project. Where possible, Internet and mentor training will take place in these organisations, and there is considerable interest from these organisations in having members trained as mentors. Community-based organisations include Adult Education Centres, Neighbourhood Houses, Schools, Community Centres, local halls and wherever there is either computer access, or a power supply and phone line for laptops.

As the Skills.net brief indicates, the project will supply 10 hours of free or low cost Internet access for all members. Points of access will be established in cooperation with community-based organisations, so that rural women can access the Internet in a comfortable and supportive environment at their leisure. Any women can become a Women's Web member. However "target" members are those without Internet access at home or who have only recently had access at home. What this means is that if you don't meet these criteria you can still join. However there will be a nominal cost involved. This is to ensure that those with no access have as few barriers as possible to access online services.

This course assumes no prior knowledge, and is designed to enable people with little or no computer experience to access and use the Internet. It covers what the Internet is, logging on, using the browser, sending email, downloading files and saving, printing and using information gather. Mentors teach this course to other members of the project. Every member of Women's Web is entitled to ten hours at little or no cost. This access can be gained by presenting a Women's Web Membership card at a local community organisation that has agreed to become a part of the project.

Women and the internet

There is an increasing amount of research and discussion regarding issues surrounding the use of the Internet by women. Our particular concern here is *rural* women's use of the Internet, so the issues involved cover several areas of concern, but also many areas with potential. The use of the Internet by women has been growing at a phenomenal rate over the past few years, increasing 149.6% between November 1996 and February 1998 (CIRCIT, 1998). In Australia in 1998, 56.6% of Internet users were male, and 43.4% female. This puts Australia ahead of all countries where data is available, including America and Canada, (58% male, 42% female; ABS, 1998).

Much of the research dealing with women and the Internet explores many of the negative aspects of using the Internet. For example, the impact of technology on work, lack of influence on the design and content, and unwillingness or inability to relate to what is seen as a "male" domain, sexual harassment and flaming. (Morahan-Martin, 1998; Dumett, 1998; Simmons, 1995). Recently however, research has turned to exploring the enormous potential that the Internet has for women. This is not to say there *aren't* barriers to women's participation, but there are a number of women investigating the Internet as a space for societal transformation, and as an important new tool for communication. I would also like you to consider at this point that there is no inherently negative relationship between women and computers. This relationship is one that is socially constructed (Mallon, 1997).

Queensland University of Technology:

Rural women and interactive communications technologies and Welink

This project was the catalyst for the Women's Web project. The overall aim of the Rural Women and ICTs project is to enhance the success of community development programs by increasing rural women's participation in policy development and planning through the use of interactive communication technologies (ICTs). This project highlighted many of the barriers facing rural and isolated women, and has established a very successful discussion group known as Welink. This group is subscribed to by women from all around Australia, particularly Queensland, but also from women around the world. Issues for discussion range from rural and agricultural issues, family and parenting, to political and social policy.

Barriers and needs

Bendigo workshop

In March this year, a group of women from around Victoria met in Bendigo to discuss the Women's Web Skills.net Project proposal. Women who were invited to participate came from a wide variety of backgrounds, and with a wide range of skills relating to the use of the Internet, and information and communication technologies.

The major problems identified at the workshop seemed to revolve around two main concerns. Firstly, Internet access was a concern. It included access to a computer, but local telephone call and quality phone line access were also major issues. Secondly, there was a fear of the unknown relating to the Internet and the social, political and economical implications it may bring.

Access to affordable quality local call access is a widespread concern around rural Australia, and is beyond the scope of a project such as Women's Web, as it is an infrastructure problem. However Women's Web is in an ideal position to highlight the issue, and to work with other groups and projects in an attempt to address this problem. The fear of the Internet is something that *can* be addressed in the Women's Web project, and it is through the educative process that these fears will be allayed.

The group agreed that it is critical for women are involved in this developmental stage of the evolution of the Internet, and that the Internet has very real potential as a medium that will become a part of many women's lives. A summary of the issues the group raised is provided in Table 2. The Women's Web project aims to address as many of these as it is able, and to assist other projects where possible to address such issues such as infrastructure.

Mentoring

The mentoring concept in relation to this project arose as a result of the Bendigo planning workshop mentioned previously. Members of many rural women's organisations were invited to discuss and brainstorm ideas for the project. In the process of discussing just how the women at this meeting learnt their computer skills, it was discovered that the vast majority learnt through a friend (often female, although not necessarily so), and not through a formal course. This style of learning proved to be flexible, informal, non-intimidating and tailor made to the needs of the learner. This informal and anecdotal piece of information became the basis for the mentoring aspect of the project, and I have since found many documents and publications that support this concept. The mentoring model has so far been the part of the project that has generated the most interest.

Generally, mentors are drawn from the networks of women's groups who belong to, or have affiliations with the reference group. So far, the group that has demonstrated the most interest has been the CWA! The Mentoring system in relation to Women's Web means that women keen to be a mentor undertake a training program made up of three accredited training programs. These are:

- Computer Survival Skills (30 nominal hours – Certificate II level)
- Introduction to the Internet (40 nominal hours – Certificate II level)
- Course in Workplace Trainer Category One – (30 nominal hours)

Table 2. Issues related to women's involvement in the evolution of the Internet. Developed by the Women's Web Bendigo Consultation Workshop.

Why should women get involved in the internet?	Barriers to involvement
<p>To coordinate local activity quickly and efficiently.</p> <p>To develop both ownership and confidence.</p> <p>To take control of small business and agri-business in a pro-active way.</p> <p>To overcome isolation and provide support through personal interaction, networks through e-mail discussion group.</p> <p>To enable sharing and exchanging of ideas and information with known and unknown people with similar interests.</p> <p>To locate information on current events</p> <p>To access services such as electronic commerce.</p> <p>To download forms and up-to-date information from government departments and other organisations.</p> <p>For research, interests, hobbies, work and study.</p> <p>As a 'one stop shop': for access to reliable knowledge, services and to gather information effectively.</p> <p>As a good introduction to computers for women and adding the social dimension.</p> <p>For recreation and fun.</p> <p>For accessing further education opportunities.</p> <p>For mothers as a tool to assist family education.</p>	<p>The cost of hardware, software, line connection, server, training, initial setup and ongoing maintenance.</p> <p>Lack of computer access</p> <p>Lack of access to a connected group</p> <p>Gender issues in the home. (Males are more risk taking and willing to explore. A lack of role models for women).</p> <p>Service provider access and quality of POP's (points of presence).</p> <p>Fear concerning the reliability of internet information.</p> <p>Poor literacy and language skills; physical disabilities.</p> <p>Internet currently marketed at young people and males, rather than women.</p> <p>Loss of face-to-face personal contact and loss of personal voice.</p> <p>Privacy and security concerns; virus invasions; junk mail.</p> <p>Time cost (achieving the skills, logging on; wasting time; domination by children; difficulty in finding information due to poor organisation of the internet).</p> <p>Ignorance about the value of the information and service possibilities.</p> <p>Lack of knowledge of computers, their upgrading and other hardware issues.</p> <p>Lack of technical and ongoing support</p>

This mentoring program will be offered in a flexible manner in six main centres – Wodonga, Wangaratta, Benalla, Shepparton, Bendigo and Swanhill. Mentoring as part of Women's Web is different in some aspects to the usual mentoring role. Instead of mentoring one-to-one as in the typical business mentoring role, Women's Web mentors will mentor *groups* of women from their local community group, club, or social circle. These groups range from local kindergarten groups to CWA groups, and writers groups. The concept is described powerfully by Jocelyne Scutt in "*Living Generously – Women Mentoring Women*":

... the goal is to build up each other. In aiming for this, we strive to provide to others the knowledge and learning we have. We strive to develop the wisdom to

seek out the learning and knowledge from those who have it, despite their not being recognised in the present world as having it ... (Scutt, 1996).

This form of mentoring is one of mutual support and sharing; it is not about the mentor being “above” or “superior” in anyway to the mentored. Who would think that a senior member of the local CWA would become a mentor for other CWA members to support their learning of the Internet and computers! I think there is considerable power in a broken stereotype such as this, and these women become empowering role models for others. Jocelyne Scutt goes on: “The mentoring of women, by women, comes often in the encouragement of groups of women by one or a number of women, collectively.” (Scutt, 1996). This sums up very nicely the idea behind mentoring as a part of Women’s Web.

So far the mentoring program has been offered in Wangaratta and Benalla, and demand has exceeded supply by at least twofold. This problem is one we are glad to have, and in the process of working out ways to overcome it, we felt that offering the training program to *pairs* of mentors would be a way of creating an environment where learners could share and help each other develop skills. Pairs of mentors from a small community organisation for example, would help to share the mentoring role, and support each other through their learning and role as mentors to others.

As mentors, women are expected to teach other women from their community group a basic introduction to the Internet course. By drawing women as mentors from existing networks, and teaching those who are also a part of these networks, a supportive and shared learning environment is created. Once women have skills that enable them to seek out information, send emails, and network electronically, women are in a position to use the internet as an empowering tool, one where new networks are created, and existing ones strengthened. This provides a real opportunity for collective decision making and sharing of information.

Women, the internet and community development

The structures of production and distribution on the Internet are seen by some to be allied with feminist communication principles (Mallon, 1997). The Internet is non-hierarchical, non-linear, decentralised, user-controlled, participatory, and according to some feminists, (Bail, 1998; Mallon, 1997) is very similar to the way women communicate. The Welink discussion group mentioned earlier is an example of this style of communication; sharing information, networking, cooperating and supporting (Daws, 1998).

Using these concepts and applying them to women’s use of the Internet, we can begin to explore the internet as a cultural space where women are able to discuss, connect with each other and create community. The nature of the Internet also enables amateur involvement; suddenly anyone (with Internet access) can be heard. The Internet can act in this context, as an alternative media outlet, and the power of being able to discuss with others issues outside of the mainstream can’t be underestimated. It enables us to form “communities”. Randy Stoecker states: “...we are not really talking about getting people “on the Internet”. We are talking about getting them into the community” (Stoecker, 1998).

The Internet gives rural women the opportunity to present their communities in ways not possible in the mainstream media; it gets information *to* people, but also *from* people. Women’s Web is designed to enhance and strengthen community development in rural areas. By using Women’s Web to build new “real-life” networks, strengthen existing ones and not trying to create a “virtual” one, the emphasis is on people, their needs, and how the Internet can be used as a tool to enhance this process, rather than as the focus of the project. The Institute for Women and technology states in their background paper that: “...when resources are given to women they are likely to be used for the betterment of the whole community.” (IWT, 1998). The reaction to the mentoring aspects of Women’s Web supports this statement – women’s interest in mentoring to help others learn has been almost overwhelming.

Conclusion

Women's Web from a government point of view, is about providing access and training so that rural women are able to get onto the Internet. By focusing on rural women, we are highlighting the differences, issues and dilemmas faced by this particular community group.

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SEEKING THE GEEK GIRLS: SECURING OUR FUTURE⁽¹⁹⁹⁹⁾

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Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE

Seeking the geek girls is not about viewing women as deficient in the areas of technology. Rather it is about seeking a new definition of technology that is inclusive of women and one which embraces women's contributions, experiences, and futures. It is the development and promotion of this new understanding of technology which holds the real potential for women's full engagement. Northern Sydney Institute has a contribution to make to this debate.

Introduction

This paper explores the practical strategies adopted in response to the low participation rate of women in Information Technology [IT] education offered by Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE, which is situated in one of the largest business districts of Australia. Practical strategies evolved after observing the already low levels of participation by women in this field dropping further over the past 5 years. Internal support and intervention strategies proved to be insufficient to deal with the trends although they promoted good graduate outcomes for the existing women students. Young women in particular are almost absent from the student profiles in our high demand Information Technology courses, despite the occupational growth, the relative 'youth' of this industry, and widely heralded skills shortage. Women appear to be present as users of technology but are not undertaking the training routes to enter the Information Technology industry to become hardware or software developers, service providers, managers, product marketers etc. This distinction is significant.

Two key approaches, developed as integrated models will be discussed:

- (i) A systemic response. Marketing alone, unless reframed, will not influence women's engagement in IT training or industry. Fostering a seamless educational experience is significant to this endeavor. A strategic alliance developed between schools and adult education is essential.
- (ii) Forming Partnerships. Northern Sydney Institute established an Information Technology Think Tank with education, business, industry representatives, all committed to working on the issues to provide opportunities for women and girls to have access to the developments in response to the skills shortage. Many creative and practical initiatives have come out of this Think Tank which will be explored.

Background

Effort in context: The Northern Sydney Institute

Information Technology has been a priority work area in Women's Strategy for some years. Under state policy, emerging industries have been a target area for initiatives for women, where they have been under represented. Practical strategies to meet policy objectives evolved in response to the under representation and in observing the already low levels of participation by women in this field, dropping further, over the past 5 years. Internal supports and intervention strategies proved to be insufficient to deal with the trends although they promoted good graduate outcomes for the existing women students.

In recent years Women's Strategy in Northern Sydney Institute has undertaken many initiatives to explore the position of women students in our courses. These include:

- (a) Assessment of course selection criteria for inherent bias in student selection for courses. (Centralised course selection for the high demand, higher award courses has coincided with the drop in participation rates by women.)
- (b) Applications review to look at the size of the applicant pool to examine proportions of women selected, again where selection was locally controlled
- (c) Support measures developed for enrolled women students to promote graduate outcomes. These included:
 - student luncheons with industry contacts to link women students with women in the industry;
 - graduate returns – Connected students with course graduates to look at the experience/rewards of the industry;
 - developing posters of women’s web sites to connect women to services/professional organizations via the Internet;
 - developing profile packages, profiles on women in various courses to promote courses and their outcomes;
 - developing student information packages to link women students to industry and professional support groups for women, including useful web lists;
 - developing a career-planning package to promote greater use of student services by women on campus e.g. for portfolio development;
- (d) Research on student populations. These included:
 - a survey of matured-aged women students to look at their course experiences and expectations;
 - a survey of high-school girls in Year 8 on a campus visit on an ‘IT Day’ to look at experiences and perceptions of IT;
 -
- (e) Promotion pathways. These included:
 - A lunch time forum run for women in Office Administration/Office Technologies courses re IT career pathways as a strategy to increase the applicant pool;
 - offering a pilot flexible delivery program to increase access (which resulted in a different student profile)
 - working along side access programs providing support to students and staff.

Statistics on gender at Northern Sydney Institute

The 1999 student profile characteristics for Northern Sydney Institute in Information Technology and related areas were as follows:

- young women were present in high numbers in the Office Technology course areas, as also were matured-aged women. Young men predominated in the Information Technology courses, with mature aged women in smaller numbers;
- in Information Technology and Telecommunications programs, young women made up only 9% of the student group in the 15 to 19 year olds (Certificate 4 and Diploma courses), and 70% of the enrolments in Office Technology courses (principally Statement of Attainment and Certificate courses). Women 25 years and over made up one third of the students for this age group in Information Technology, and 80% of the age group 25 and over in Office Technology;
- girls in Joint TAFE /Schools programs (TAFE Delivered Vocational Education and Training) in our Institute made up slightly more than 50% of the student group. The pattern where computing is involved tells a similar story to the pattern within TAFE: i.e. young women participating in courses in office related technologies rather than Information Technology career routes.

It needs to be recognised that there are many factors which operate to shape the destination of a school student taking up a joint TAFE/schools course place e.g. teacher influence in steering students, or a negotiation of a narrow band of course options for a particular group of students by the school, geographics/locality etc. The computing industry is not attracting a broad profile of students to move through the prerequisite training paths, and certainly not attracting young women.

In the 1999 statistical profile, young women school leavers are almost absent in the student profile of high award TAFE courses in Information Technology. Mature aged women are represented in small numbers, with assisted entry via an access route. In comparison young women predominate in related course areas e.g. Young women school leavers are almost absent in the student profile of current high award TAFE courses in Information Technology. Mature aged women are represented in smmancoming with in compredominate Office Technology, and mature aged women predominate in courses such as Library Services Programs and Computer User Services. The vocational outcomes for these women can be very different due to the award of study and the employment prospect.

Seeking the GEEK girls

Young women in particular have become a focus for Women's Strategy at the Northern Sydney Institute of TAFE due to the concern that young people have been carrying the brunt of the restructuring of the labour market. Spierings's contribution to the Dusseldorp Skills Forum research on young Australians, indicates that there are a small number of relatively privileged young women, but a significant minority are on a downward spiral to the fringes of the labour market and are finding it difficult to access training. These risk factors, the recent promotion of Vocational Education and Training in schools, and the exposure of girls in schools to computers, make young girls a relevant target group in relation to this growth industry.

A survey conducted on an 'IT Taster' day when 45 Year 8 girls visited our Crows Nest Campus in 1998 provided their perspectives on they viewed being a target group. One quarter of the girls indicated they would consider IT as a career, but the same proportion also indicated they felt there were barriers for women entering this field. In addition they stated they did not doubt their capacity to undertake/perform computing skills but did not want the perceptions held by others about the Information Technology industry applied to them. In their view the 'computer nerd' image was very negative and acted as a career choice disincentive.

It is currently estimated that there are 360,000 people primarily engaged in Information Technology & Telecommunications activity in Australia, this being defined as the design, development, implementation, adaptation, support, management, sales, marketing or servicing of computer-based or telecommunications systems. This does not include data entry workers, or those using diagnostic equipment or a medical technician, office workers using desktop software, bankers computer use, switchboard operators etc. At the same time, there is a recognised skill shortage in the industry.

Australian ABS figures estimate that 20% of the current workforce in the industry are women, and that 20% of Information Technology students at university are women with falling enrolments being recorded overseas in the USA and in UK. Figures for girls in schools in NSW show a 5 year drop in the participation of girls in Information Technology subjects in Years 11 and 12.

Women and information technology think tank

A partnership model

To "brainstorm" issues associated with girls' participation in IT education at Northern Sydney Institute, a Think Tank was established. The purposes of the Think Tank were:

1. To pool present initiatives and experience to gain a broader overview of the issues impacting on women and girls and their apparent reluctance to adopt IT careers;

2. To look at 'what works', and assess whether identified characteristics of success can be Generalized;
3. To examine if a more cohesive strategy can impact on current initiatives.

Under a partnership umbrella our Institute co-ordinated a wide group within the Think Tank. Representation included the NSW Department for Women, NSW Office of Information Technology and Management, the NSW Department of Education and Training (various positions), Sydney Institute of Technology, University of Technology Sydney, Females in Information Technology and Telecommunications, a private consultant/researcher, and the IT Industry Training Advisory Board.

A number of outcomes have been achieved:

1. A research proposal has been submitted to look at the cultural factors in the computing studies classroom, factors which help to create IT as a masculine area of study and a subject dominated by boys. The research will be conducted with Year 11 school students and TAFE in 2000.
2. A web site proposal has been developed for identifying best practice in IT education at all levels with a focus on women and girls;
3. Development of a marketing strategy to attract young women into IT education.

One of the issues discussed involved redefining aspects of the industry to move it away from an image which is alienating/unappealing for women.

Women from Females in Information Technology and Telecommunications [3] and our Think Tank members have put forward suggestions with names such as:

- Communication Medias
- Interactive Technologies
- Information Industries
- Information Economy Careers

It is argued that such redefinition more accurately describes the jobs experienced by those in the industry. The skills range calls upon problem solving and communication skills, team abilities, project management skills, being multi skilled etc, skills which many women have. The emphasis on these communication and 'soft skills' it is argued will increase the appeal to women and girls. These soft skills would need to be the basis of a marketing campaign.

Conclusions

We have an area that has in a very short time become defined as non-traditional for women and girls. It offers financially-lucrative careers, and has a skills shortage. Yet women and girls participation in IT education appears to be falling. Where do we as practitioners go from here?

As practitioners we are familiar with the following factors:

- Gender role socialisation lies at the heart of this issue;
- Multi-faceted approaches are required to evoke change in participation levels;
- Single sex learning environments are significant;
- Practical initiatives which introduce first hand experience break myths and build more realistic perceptions are important;
- People of influence – such as parents and educators, must have information about the risk/benefits of supporting a student on a non traditional vocational track;
- Only some girls/women will move into defined male spaces and that this definition of 'whose space it is', is significant;
- Reaching a point of critical mass of participation will help sustain a culture change;
- Long term effort in non traditional areas have in some cases resulted in women being 'pioneers' as an enduring/ permanent condition;

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- Most initiatives in this area have been add-ons, have not been institutionalised and cultural/structural change has not happened.

A number of strategies are suggested:

1. Use multi-faceted approaches to promote IT careers to girls and women;
2. Approach career-planning information in more creative ways, less linear ways;
3. Promote multiple entry points into education programs;
4. Promote skills used by women in the industry
5. Establish a "Girls Interactive Technologies Week"

All of these proposals will contribute to the full engagement of women in Information Technology.

Conclusion

This paper has attempted to highlight the issues surrounding the promotion of the fuller engagement of women in Information Technology. In order to connect women to potentially lucrative opportunities in a variable industry area, which despite it's relative youth has become defined as a male domain.

We must utilise the new tools technology provides to stimulate and maintain debate that will embrace women's contributions and experiences and to create a new understanding of technology that is inclusive of women, and one which women will want to be a part.

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