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Day, Catherine Mary (2001) *Women working for the church: a study of gender, career and organisation in Catholic education.* **PhD thesis, James Cook University.**

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CHAPTER 2

ACCOUNTING FOR GENDER: DEVELOPING THE FEMINIST

PERSPECTIVE ON ORGANISATIONS AND CAREERS

A Literature Review

In this chapter, I survey a range of literature to provide a foundation upon which to build the case that gender must be seen as decisive in organisations. Since organisations are the institutions in which a career is made possible, gender and career as aspects of the organisational context, are inextricably linked. The choice of literature has been guided by the case study research questions. In particular, this chapter provides an overview of the evolving understanding of gender within feminist research with a particular focus on organisations and careers.

Feminist research concerned with the teaching occupation over the past twenty years has led to an alternative body of work that makes gender central, usually by researching the experiences of women teachers (Acker, 1996). This is an important area of research when considering women and the teaching career because women are the majority by far in the professional ranks of teachers but are not represented proportionally in leadership positions. There is also a lingering and demeaning impression associated with teaching as 'women's work'. To assist in establishing a contextualised understanding of the case study organisation, I also surveyed literature on the teaching career in Catholic schools. Because the Catholic Church can be considered the organisational superstructure for the Catholic education organisation, I included research which views gender as an organisational issue for the Catholic Church.

The literature review supports the theoretical foundation of my thesis. This foundation is based on the view that the gendering of an organisation constitutes a significant set of conditions and constraints affecting career outlook for women. The development of a feminist research perspective on gender, career and organisation allows the researcher to identify the privileging of the male perspective and the neglect or devaluation of the feminine perspective within the organisation. Feminist research acknowledges that for women there are serious structural and cultural issues within organisations that must be confronted. Foregrounding gender as a fundamental organising principle, however, requires careful attention to the ambiguity and paradox that surrounds many women's lives and careers. The researcher must beware of leading the reader to a position that may reinforce biological determinism. It is important that feminist research does not 'blackbox' gender relations in organisations by focussing exclusively on such issues as the exclusion of women from the higher echelons of organisational life.

Feminist research has brought new understandings of women's lives. Although feminist theories take many positions that range from liberal to radical, in essence they seek "to correct both the invisibility and the distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position" (Lather, 1989, p.571). In turning the feminist lens onto organisations, it is possible to focus on the gaps and blank spaces of male-dominant culture, knowledge and behaviour. A feminist theoretical stance is important when studying the religious organisation because of the privileged position of the male perspective within the Catholic Church. In exploring what the organisation is, to and for women, the feminist project seeks, through analysing the political dimensions of felt experience, to validate that experience and to reframe its value for those who own the experience (Coleman, 1991).

Since this thesis makes a contribution to feminist theorising within an Australian

context, the work of Australian gender researchers is an important source of literature.

According to Yates (1993), feminist theory in the Australian sense has been subject to

the "colonial cringe" making it hard to be recognised as having any distinctive form or

questions, or any status comparable to overseas work (pp.181-182). Nevertheless,

Australian feminist academics continue to place gender at the heart of their research,

exploring the cultures and practices of the state and organisations. They have produced

research that points to the possibility of producing and reproducing change whilst

acknowledging their own culture boundedness in studying the gendering of

organisations (Theobold, 1993, 1996; Blackmore, 1999; Limerick & Andersen, 1999).

This research continues to be necessary in an environment that may well blame women

for not capitalising on the opportunities that have been afforded them in the workplace

in recent years. In an atmosphere where there is a growing view that women have

'made it', feminist research highlights the barriers women still face in the workplace.

Gender blindness in organisations continues to exist and, as Bagnall (2000) reminds us:

> (F)rom there it's one small step to saying that women are temperamentally unsuited
> to leadership, the cut and thrust of business, the tough jobs. Down that path lies a
> history of moral hysteria around women's professional success and mothering.
> Let's not revisit it. But at the same time, let's not keep ignoring the real pressures
> that still impinge (on women). Because they have a cost. (p.29)

Feminism and Gender Research

The literature survey indicates the need to consider different and competing

perspectives on gender. In recent years, greater scrutiny has been applied to gender

research especially the study of gender relations and power (Davis, Leijenaar &

Oldersma, 1991) and the cultural construction of femininities and masculinities

(Alvesson & Billing, 1997). This research has revealed the need for researchers to be

conscious of both gender over-sensitivity or a feminist hegemonic stance as well as gender under-sensitivity. I have attempted to take this need into account before and throughout the research process on the assumption that theoretical elaboration takes place in concert with the total research process.

Consideration of the changing theoretical terrain of gender studies contributes to the development of a gender-sensitive approach to research. Gender studies have been the domain of feminist research for two decades. Gender, as a category of analysis was initially developed to better understand the systematic subordination of women and their domination by men. Oakley and Mitchell, (1997) provide a critical overview of the "rise and demise" of gender as a category of analysis. They outline how first wave feminism focussed on the question of women's civil and legal rights, whilst second wave feminism is distinguished for taking up the challenge contained in Simone de Beauvoir's famous assertion that women are not born but made. This outline highlights the questions that led to the idea of 'gender' as a cultural product and an essential tool of modern feminist analysis. As the concept of gender began evolve, the need to find a way of separating the sexed bodies of human beings from their social fates became apparent. Gender was employed to emphasise the social and relational nature of differences between women and men in contrast to biological differences between the sexes. Sex and gender were interdependent, but clearly distinguishable.

As feminism changed, so too has the idea and use of gender (Campbell, 1992). Theorising gender in the present moment is undergoing profound change. Post-modern and post-structuralist critiques of theory and epistemology have brought about a rethinking of gender relations (Hennessy, 1993). Cross-cultural and historical studies, as well as the work of women of colour which is critical of the universalising and essentialising tendencies in the writing of white, middle-class feminists, have

illuminated the diversity and historical-cultural specificity of women's experiences and gender relations (hooks, 1989; Huggins, 1994). Class experiences also contribute to differences between women as well as to differences in relations between women and men, while the gender division of labour affects the way that class processes function. Lesbian feminists have pointed to the heterosexual assumptions embedded in the notion of gender roles. Moreover, questions about power and domination could not be adequately addressed from within a sex-role perspective (Rich, 1980). From a feminist research perspective however, it is important to garner these insights without losing sight of the social justice goals and theoretical insights, which have emerged from a range of feminist theories. The important question is not whether gender is appealed to or used as a concept in the analysis of a research study but how it is used.

Oakley and Mitchell (1997) suggest there is nothing wrong with the original usage of gender to map a domain of cultural perspectives on the natural body which would help people develop better personal and political understandings of important aspects of their own and other people's identity. They suggest, however, that "gender has collected a history of both uses and abuses, of political purposes and deviation, of slippages and confusion, and its brings this history along with it wherever it goes" (p.53).

Gender, as a category of analysis has been an important but problematic concept for feminist research. The problematic nature of the concept can be seen in the relationship between gender and power which has situated men as the enemy politically, but for many women it is not so personally. The question of women's agency is another problematic issue. It is obvious, according to Oakley and Mitchell (1997), that women cannot merely be victims of gender, or of men. But it is equally obvious that being expected to conform to a fairly straight-jacketed gender role formula of domesticity,

wifehood and motherhood, and having a variety of inducements to and penalties against this put in one's path is a powerful fact of everyday life for many women. The links between structure and agency are important considerations in any analysis of gender research.

Post-modern theoretical accounts have drawn increasing attention to the multiple forces that constitute women's identity across race, class, ethnicity, age, religion and sexual orientation (Yeatman, 1993). Yet this focus has also underscored a longstanding paradox in feminist theory and practice. What gives feminism its unique perspective is its claim to speak from women's experiences. These same experiences, however, counsel the need for attention to the differences in women's backgrounds, perceptions and priorities. There is no 'generic woman', nor any monolithic 'woman's point of view'. Feminism has increasingly become feminisms, which communicates the search for theoretical coherence and political cohesion.

Feminist theorists have only recently begun to conduct a deep analysis of gender as wholly constructed, symbolically loaded, and ideologically enforced in people's lives. Feminist researchers such as J. Acker (1992) and Lorber (1994) helped change the focus for gender research by moving to an understanding of gender as a social institution. J. Acker provides an understanding of what it means to talk about gendered institutions whilst Lorber focuses on the analyses of gender as a social structure that has its origins in the development of human culture, not in biology or procreation. Both J. Acker and Lorber share an understanding of the concept of gender, which differs from previous conceptualisations in that they do not locate it in the individual or in interpersonal relations. Although the construction and maintenance of gender are manifest in personal identities and in social interaction, these researchers see gender as an institution. It establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social

processes of everyday life, and is built into the major social organisations of society, such as the economy, the family, and politics, and is also an entity in and of itself.

Cultural feminists including Butler (1990, 1993), Haraway (1991, 1997) and Flax (1987, 1990) challenge the concept of gender categories as dual and oppositional. Their theories are rooted in French feminist critique of psychoanalytic concepts of gendered sexuality and language. But where the French feminist stance has been to valorise women's sexuality and its evocation in literature, cultural feminists claim that sexuality and gender are shifting, fluid categories. By teasing out the intertwined strands of the socially constructed body, self, desire, and symbolic representation, cultural feminists critique a feminist politics based solely on women as a subordinated status. In doing so, they present a more subversive view that undermines the solidity of a social order built on concepts of two sexes and two genders. These researchers indicate the need to probe deeply into the way the dichotomies of sex, sexuality and gender are built into the organisation and politics of all social institutions, the interactions of everyday life, and the consciousness of self we call identity. The field of feminist research has addressed the issue of gender in many different ways, sometimes creating divisions amongst feminist researchers.

Yet the factors that divide can also be the basis for enriching feminist research analysis and broadening coalitions of research perspectives. As Lorde (1992) has noted, it is not differences which separate women but a reluctance to recognise those differences and deal effectively with the distances that have resulted. The same values that underpin the feminist struggle against gender inequality demand its opposition to other forms of group-based disadvantage. The diversity of approaches in feminist research continues to expand the political agenda and qualify theoretical claims. The sameness/difference dilemma cannot be resolved; it can only be reformulated by

shifting the focus from difference to disadvantage and to the social conditions by which it is perpetuated. Ideally, feminist research sets out to change the material circumstances that contribute to inequality. Change strategies for action which feminist research may suggest must rest on feminist principles not feminine stereotypes. Although the feminist agenda incorporates values traditionally associated with women, the stakes in its realisation are ones that both sexes share.

The works of feminist historians (Brittan, 1989; Gerson & Peiss, 1985; Saunders & Evans, 1992) provide a useful foundation for gender research in the way it has done much to challenge the male-centred understanding of public life and the blockages for women in accessing power in the public domain. Such work demonstrates how women had been excluded not only from the historical record but also from all the realms of formal power, be they economic, ideological, military or political. In a full patriarchal society, the category 'man' only appeared to be universal because this gender had so thoroughly pervaded the public domain. But that category was not thereby rendered a neutral one; rather it implied domination and power in the range of sites in which men and women establish gender relations. Men have constructed and defended the boundaries of patriarchy.

In establishing a sufficiently nuanced definition to recognise the importance of historical specificity in the study of gender relations, Gerson and Peiss (1985) state that:

> Gender is not a rigid or reified analytic category imposed on human experience, but a fluid one whose meaning emerges in specific social contexts as it is created and recreated through human agency. (p.317)

Gender relations as Gerson and Peiss contend, is a study of both domination and negotiation. For while powerful men have historically exercised dominance via physical

coercion, economic exploitation, the institution of heterosexuality, repressive reproductive policies and the perpetuation of sexist ideologies, women have not been the passive victims of a mechanistic and deterministic system in which they were completely controlled. Women have demonstrated the permeability of the borderline between the so-called separate private and public spheres. Women are not totally powerless beings anymore than men are totally empowered. Men and women however, negotiate upon unequal terrain for social privileges, opportunities and resources. Because most men possess superior structural power, women's demands are more often not met. Women generally have fewer resources to bargain with.

As a foundation for addressing my own research, these differing feminist approaches suggest several points of leverage in promoting an emphasis on gender. Regardless of these differing perspectives in gender studies, three major points emerge:

1. The notion of gender as central to and relevant to understanding all social relations, institutions and processes;

2. Gender relations constitute a problem as they are characterised by patterns of domination/subordination, inequalities, oppressions and oppositions;

3. Gender relations are seen as social constructions.

A Focus on Organisation

Early feminist research generally neglected the contribution that organisational factors make to the facilitation of, and/or the creating of barriers to women's careers. These organisational factors, which have been shaped by historical, demographic and political forces, constitute the bargaining arena in which meaning is negotiated and constrained. In the case study organisation, the religious ideology of the Catholic Church also contributes to the bargaining arena.

Acker (1995), points to the interweaving of personal and organisational influences on career outlook:

> It is an oversimplified view of reality to regard teachers' careers as the unproblematic product of either individual choices or societal constraints. Currently popular post-structuralist approaches teach us to be suspicious of arguments that give any concept, career included, an essential core. My empirical data support such a view by illustrating how careers are provisional, kaleidoscopic constructions, made up of everyday events and interchanges . . . it is not sufficient to see the search solely as an individual enterprise. Meaning is negotiated in the culture of the workplace and is constrained by the patriarchal and other bargains available in the society at large. (p.120)

In her study of Australian women principals, Limerick (1995) supports this gendered understanding of the traditional career which is embedded within an organisational reality. The traditional understanding of career in Limerick's view is inappropriate for women and increasing numbers of men in a world of discontinuous change. Adopting Evett's (1987, 1990) concept of the 'accommodated career' based on the reality of women's lives, Limerick raises as a powerful factor, the changing nature of organisations and the concomitant changes in the individual's understanding of careers. New organisational realities associated with the role of information and communication technology and the impact of industry restructuring have led to a rejection by organisations of the rewarding of individuals for their total commitment to the organisation. The 'self-incorporated individual' has replaced the 'good corporate citizen' model (Limerick et al., 1998) as the more valuable human resource for an organisation. In addition, the desire by women to integrate their personal and paid working lives accounting for the pressures associated with notions of good parenting as well as the increasing need for dual-incomes in families, influences men and women in

their career decisions. Organisations are becoming increasingly aware of the advantages

of flexible career arrangements (Lewis & Lewis, 1996).

Acknowledging this changing understanding of a career is fundamental to the

research study. Issues such as career pathways, organisational policy orientations and

management strategies that govern the career context can be seen as explicit in creating

career outlook. There are also practices that have an implied response to career outlook.

These include the organisation's resourcing decisions and choices contributing to

professional development policy outcomes as well as the organisational assumptions

about teachers and teaching, the obligations to which teachers are held and the

opportunities they are afforded.

Theorising Gender and Organisations

As an essential premise for this research, gender is seen as embedded in various

organisational processes and practices.

> Gendering organisations usually means paying attention to how organisational
> structures and processes are dominated by culturally defined masculine meanings
> (where masculinity) can be defined as values, experiences and meanings that are
> culturally defined as masculine and typically feel 'natural' to, or are ascribed to
> men more than women in the particular cultural context. (Alvesson, & Billing,
> 1997, p.83)

A primary assumption for this research, therefore, is that organisations play a vital

role in constituting gender (Pringle, 1995). A further assumption is that the notion of

career outlook is affected by the particular ways different organisations emphasise

different constructions of masculinity and femininity. This theoretical stance

encourages an examination of the particular beliefs, values and norms that comprise the

organisational culture, as well as the gendered practices including the ordinary things

that people do as they participate in the daily life of an organisation. These 'ordinary

things' include the expectations and assumptions that inform such important processes as policy-making, career structures and organisational rules.

Organisational practices and processes contain deeply embedded assumptions about the gender and gendered characteristics of workers. Organisational dynamics create gendered hierarchies with men's practices being linked in a more direct way to the textual and official goals of the organisation. At its simplest level, the idea of work organisations as male institutions means that men dominate organisational positions with the power to make decisions that influence the character and outcomes of the organisation as a whole. It also means that, regardless of whether the incumbent of a position is male or female, "the present arrangements in work organisations represent the cumulative outcome of a series of bargains and compromises . . . (in which) women have not played a significant or influential part" (Burton, 1991, p.3). Burton refers to "the mobilisation of masculine bias" which is further expanded by J. Acker (1992) in her conceptualisation of the ongoing production of gender in working life. J. Acker defines the production and reproduction of gendering of organisations through the identification of interacting processes that have consequences for individual identity and the underlying logic, rules and structures of the organisation. She explains that:

> To say an organisation, or any other analytic unit, is gendered means that advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender is not an addition to ongoing processes, conceived as gender neutral. Rather it is an integral part of those processes, which cannot be properly understood without an analysis of gender. (J. Acker, 1992, p.167)

The starting point in discussing gendering in organisations is the acknowledgment of gender power relations. Work by feminists in psychology and other disciplines has shifted the focus from gender as a relatively stable difference, to gender as a complex

set of variable relations (Flax, 1987; Fine & Gordon, 1992). Burrell and Hearn (1989)
locate gender in communicative practices and discourses of power. Flax's (1990)
understanding of gender also focuses on power that "affects our theories and practices
of justice" (p.25). Gender relations in Catholic education impact on the participation
and access for women to the full range of positions in the organisation.

J. Acker (1992) describes theorising gender as a basic principle of social structure
and cultural interpretation. As such, gender is the patterning of difference and
domination through distinctions between women and men that is integral to many
societal processes. This way of theorising gender criticises and challenges existing
frameworks, arguing that women and gender roles cannot just be added to existing
theory and that theories that are silent about gender are fundamentally flawed. These
directions in theorising gender have opened the door to changed cultural thinking about
the proper roles of men and women and the manifestation of this both in the home and
in the workforce.

Organisations have been analysed from a gender-neutral stance in the past based on
the assumption that most workers in the public sphere were male and it did not matter if
they were not. Because of the gender blindness in traditional approaches to
organisational theory, considerable errors have been made in interpreting how
organisations operate. McKay (1997) outlines several ways in which gender is
embedded in organisations on a global basis. These ways include the marked sex-
segregation of labour forces, with men likely to be in powerful, well-paying, permanent
positions and women in low-status, low-paying, casual positions. Within the
organisation, regimes of homophobia and heterosexual coupledom exist that govern
organisational life. Such regimes.support the pervasive assumptions that the average
employee is a male breadwinner with a woman fulfilling the role of housewife and

mother of his children. Visible and audible expressions of gender occur in rigid sexual differences in dress and appearance and in the gendered nature of conversations, jokes, and insults. The insidious and systematic sexual harassment of women by men continues to exist despite sexual harassment awareness training and sanctions. Finally, many organisations perpetuate predominantly masculine definitions of merit, skill and performance.

As a result of institutionalised patterns such as these, organisations cannot be analysed in a gender-neutral way. Organisations are in fact contested terrains as are the specific configuration of gender relations therein. Several theorists favour a social constructivist framework to study gendering of organisations (McKay, 1997; Alvesson & Billing, 1997). Social constructionists emphasise the diverse types of masculinities and femininities and gender systems that have existed throughout history. This approach illuminates gender patterns (as well as deviations from clear patterns) such as segregated labour markets and division of labour in work organisations. The strength of this approach lies in making connections, on the one hand to the overall societal culture, and on the other hand, to the feelings, thoughts, self-understandings and values that together constitute subjectivities that characterise individuals.

Smith (1989) indicates the power of the social constructionist perspective on gender. According to Smith, to say that sex, sexuality, and gender are all socially constructed is not to minimise their social power. These categorical imperatives govern lives in the most profound and pervasive ways, through the social experiences and social practices of what Smith calls the "everyday/everynight world". Gendered people emerge not from physiology or sexual orientation but from the exigencies of the social order, mostly, from the need for a reliable division of work and the social reproduction of new members. The moral imperatives of religion and cultural representations guard

the boundary lines among genders and ensure that what is demanded, what is permitted and excluded for the people in each gender is well known and followed. "Both sex and gender are woven of multiple, asymmetrical strands of difference, charged with multifaceted dramatic narratives of domination and struggle" (Haraway, 1991, p.140). Social constructionists emphasise the influence of institutional practices that all participants in organisations 'do' in constructing and reproducing particular masculinities and femininities (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Because men dominate positions of authority and power in social institutions and organisations, women must continually "do" gender under disadvantaged conditions.

Feminist analyses of organisations have generally emphasised male organisational power. Hearn and Parkin (1992) indicate the many ways male power continues to maintain a stranglehold on organisations:

> Male power is constantly perpetuated, for example, in avoiding equal opportunities legislation; in strengthening the 'old boys' networks of schools, pubs, and clubs; in the arrangement of meetings at times when women with family commitments need to be at home. The mere fact of accepting a job outside the home does not liberate a woman or begin to make her equal with men. Rather it usually means coping with two jobs with her position in the work organisation being little different from her position in the home or any other groups in society . . . She will rarely have the energy, time, or facilities to research her position or be an activist for change. Most of the apparently generous provision for women workers by organisations is little more than tokenism and does not alter power relationships. Provision of creches and paternalistic attitudes towards women taking leave to care for sick children will not enable women to attend board meetings or union meetings at 5.00p.m. Similarly, flexi-hours, part-time work and job-sharing offer maximum time to the organisation but seldom a route to powerful organisational positions. Instead, the chance to be discriminated against may be increased, as with many part-time teachers who do not have contracts. Women seeking flexibility of hours are often those needing the time to fit in heavy child-care commitments. (p.66)

Other feminist research has examined the gendered character of social

arrangements and power relations in a range of organisations (Burton, 1991; Cockburn,

1991; Franzway, Court & Connell, 1989). The intellectual issue that links these

readings is the limits and possibilities of fully integrating women into historically male

institutions. Both the Burton (1991) study and the Franzway, Court and Connell (1989)

studies analyse the experiences of feminist women who have infiltrated government

bureaucracies with the explicit goal of creating public policies consistent with feminist

objectives.

In her examination of why Equal Employment Opportunity programs have not

succeeded in integrating women into work organisations, Burton (1991) focuses on the

identification of those aspects of social arrangements and personnel practices that

devalue women in the workplace. Through specific case material on direct and indirect

mechanisms through which male advantage is maintained in work organisations, Burton

demonstrates how gender operates "as a structuring principle within work

organisations" (Burton, 1991, p.vii). Burton's concern is with the institutional practices

that protect the vested interests of men and sustain gendered relations. She suggests that

there is a gender structuring of organisations that affects "the form and character of the

internal labour market, allocation practices, the differential treatment of men and

women in a variety of positions, and the consequences of their experiences on their

aspirations" (p.30). This research suggests that Equal Employment Opportunity policy

will not work as long as the gendered character of institutional practices and

organisational cultures remain invisible and unmodified.

Cockburn's (1991) study focuses on four British organisations with an eye to

uncovering the forms of male resistance to women's equal employment. Cockburn

chooses four very different organisations for her study of gender relations in the

workplace: a private retail firm, a department within a government bureaucracy, a local elected body, and a trade union. Each organisation expressed a commitment to integrating women that went far beyond what was required by law, but none of the organisations achieved very much. Of most significance is Cockburn's differentiation between the 'short' and the 'long' agenda in equalising the positions of women and men. Organisations, she finds, always have a short agenda, "the minimum position supported by top management" (Cockburn, 1991, p.216). The long agenda includes pay equity and sexual harassment but goes further to include transforming the gendered character of organisational practices and culture. It also includes sensitivity to the politics of difference, whether on the basis of race and ethnicity or of sexual preference. Obviously white, privileged and heterosexual women are easier to integrate than are women of other races, classes, and sexual preference.

J. Acker (1992) has established an understanding of the dangers inherent in a gender-blind perspective on organisations and has set a clear platform for research into the gendering of organisational processes and practices. First is the construction of divisions between women and men, for example in terms of the jobs they do and how they are allowed or expected to behave. Second is the construction of images and symbols which explain, express and reinforce (or, rarely, oppose) those divisions. As an example, successful organisations today tend to be described as lean, mean and aggressive. These metaphors sit well with masculine ideals and can be contrasted with feminine metaphors such as empathetic, supportive or caring. The interactions between embodied men and women constitute the third set of processes that J. Acker argues produces gendered organisations. Within these interactions, relations of dominance and subordination are enacted and/or resisted. Finally, the fourth set of processes identified by J. Acker relates to the internal mental work that individuals undertake in order to

participate in the organisation and achieve career progression. An example of this work is the performing of correct gender persona or hiding unacceptable forms of sexuality.

Much recent feminist critique of the traditional literature associated with organisational analysis has been conducted in order that organisations could be conceptualised from a feminist perspective. With few exceptions, early feminist interest in explaining gender relations in the workplace and in the labour market tended to neglect the contribution that organisational factors might make to these issues (Halford et al., 1996). Work by Kanter (1977) and Wolff (1977), however, raised vital questions about the impact of organisational structure upon female opportunity and sense of self. Kanter argued that numbers, power, and 'opportunity structure' contributes to the way that women (and men) come to view their worth within the organisation. A concentration of women in the lowest clerical or manual grades, coupled with an absence of women in management positions sends a very definite and negative message about the relative worth of females within the organisation. In regard to power, Kanter argued that not only are there fewer women in managerial positions but that those positions occupied by women often carry less discretion and decision-making powers than those occupied by male counterparts.

Disparities of power and numbers, coupled with other factors, contribute to Kanter's views which draw upon an instrumental concept of power, as something that is possessed by organisational members by virtue of hierarchical seniority. Men are dominant in the organisation and men therefore possess the power that enables them to subordinate and control others. Kanter (1977) argues that women's entrance into these positions of seniority and the establishment of a 'critical mass' of women will disrupt the male character of homosociability. Kanter presents a contingent view of gender and organisation. Her argument is that organisations are inherently gender-neutral and that

gender inequalities within organisations are not due to organisational processes themselves. Rather, they are due to other factors such as the limited application of essentially gender-neutral bureaucratic procedures or as an outcome of specific historical processes rather than an intrinsic feature of bureaucratic organisation. This position denies the impact of gender relations in structuring the organisation.

In a more critical vein, Wolff (1977) argues that "organisation theory cannot account for the differential treatment and experience of the sexes unless its traditional assumptions about the existence, rationale and functioning of organisations are crucially reassessed" (p.7). This argument is based on a view that women's position in organisations is inseparable from their position in society and this extra organisational influence is the context for organisational analysis. Wolff's views support an understanding of gender as embedded in organisations, and imply that the gendered subtext of the particular organisation needs to be unpacked. The gender subtext is constituted through a range of latent, subtle and indirect processes in the organisation that underlies gender distinction.

J. Acker (1992) provides helpful elements to rethink critical organisation theory from a feminist perspective. To gain a better understanding of the persistence of the gendered division of labour, she examines the rules and codes that prescribe work-place behaviour and the relation between work and privacy. According to J. Acker (1992), these rules and codes are based on the abstraction of the disembodied worker, an 'ideal' worker, who has neither body nor gender. The characteristics of the abstract worker (available full-time for work, highly qualified, work-oriented) are presented in the organisational texts as abstract and neutral. The social practices that are generally understood to constitute 'organisation' rest on certain gendered processes and assumptions at the heart of the gendered substructure:

The gendered substructure lies in the spatial and temporal arrangements of work, in the rules prescribing workplace behaviour, and in the relations linking work places to living places. These practices and relations, encoded in arrangements and rules, are supported by assumptions that work is separate from the rest of life and that it has the first claim on the worker. (p.255)

Understanding the gendered substructure of organisations facilitates an analysis of women's position within the workplace. The emphasis on women's reality is a response to their previous exclusion. J. Acker argues that organisational designs and established norms are far closer to men's lives and assumptions about men than to women's lives and assumptions about women. Therefore, the notion of the abstract or 'ideal' worker is an important manifestation of the functioning of the gender subtext in organisations and is not gender neutral. J. Acker's research provides a significant analytical focus when considering the perspectives of women in the case study organisation. Essentially, these women in their reflections on the organisation as a place for a career have tried to identify how they see themselves and other women represented as embodied members of the organisation. This is especially pertinent in my efforts to show how the construction of the teaching career and career pathways is related to the symbolic texts and other cultural idioms deployed within the organisation. Against the symbolic order, gender relations are continually enacted within the organisational context. My examination of these matters is designed to reveal the gendered contradictions between inequality and equal opportunities, informal and formal relations and the invisibility and visibility of gender which is already built into the design and functioning of the organisation.

Together these perspectives illuminate the dilemmas women face in trying to move beyond symbolic gestures to achieve material change within institutions actively structured to deter their efforts. The importance of making gender visible in all research

on organisations underpins my own research. In its abstraction, much current theory is inattentive to the daily practices that shape organisational policies and culture. In these instances, gendered forms of organisations including gendered power relations are treated as if they were gender neutral and universal. When gender is introduced as a concern, it is most often reduced to a numbers count, which ignores the complexities of institutional arrangements and supporting ideologies. As a result of ignoring or limiting gender in studies of organisation, privileged white male power in social institutions is maintained. Consequently, flawed research recommendations for change may result. Feminist studies of organisations rely less on economic matters in an effort to expose the richness and complexity of how actual organisational outcomes happen. On a practical note, a more complete understanding of organisational dynamics should contribute to more effective policy formulation and implementation.

Organisational Culture and Gender

An important concept, which adds the human aspect to an otherwise hard and rationalistic understanding of organisations, is organisational culture (Harlow & Hearn, 1995). Organisational cultures are not gender neutral and in some instances may be hostile to women. Gendered organisational culture is dominated by culturally defined masculine meaning. Feminine meanings are also notable, especially associated with the teaching career, but these meanings hold limited status. Nicholson (1996) elaborates the problems for women in confronting patriarchal organisational cultures. She describes the organisational environment as a "toxic context" which constrains women's experience and "although some women achieve success in traditional career terms, they pay a dearer price for this than their male equivalents" (p.72).

Culture is a controversial term (Sinclair, 1994) variously defined in the literature. In organisational theory, culture has been explored as 'the way we do things around

here' (Morgan, 1997) and as responses to human needs, integration, rules, shared

symbols and meanings, unconscious projection, text, otherness, paradox, seduction and

discourse (Harlow & Hearn, 1995). Different theories of organisational culture carry

quite different meanings in relation to gender construction. In exploring the breadth of

theoretical possibilities, Harlow and Hearn examine, amongst other possibilities, post-

modern perspectives. Within this perspective, they maintain that organisational culture

can be seen in terms of discourses which are in circulation and their effects. Because

discourse may be reproduced, changed and is open to negotiation, the object of the

researcher's attention in terms of organisational culture should be "the conditions which

make reproduction more or less likely, and the detailed responses made in actual

organizational situations by social actors" (Linstead & Grafton-Small 1992, p.349).

Reiger (1987) suggests that we can only understand the gendered culture of

Australian educational organisations today in the context of the historical development

of gender dynamics. She argues that Victorian notions of masculinity (the rational

man), womanhood (the nurturing, irrational angel) and family (the private haven from

the harsh outside world) form the basis for gender differentiation in contemporary

workplaces. Women crossing the boundary between the two worlds threaten the

comfortable division of the public, male sphere from the private, familial female sphere.

Thus, Reiger (1987) argues, the culture of all types of modern organisation assumes that

the private and public spheres remain separate:

> All of them presuppose that the work of daily life, the reproduction of the
> population, the production of food, of clothing, the keeping things running, all that
> production of daily life, can make no legitimate claims on people's performance in
> the public world. (p.57)

These assumptions, embedded in the culture of educational organisations, subtly

influence the behavioural norms of employees. Norms affecting membership,

relationships, working style and working hours will all affect the extent to which women can participate in or feel compatible in different roles. Despite over 20 years of feminist organising, systems of male domination remain powerfully in place. Patterns of male privilege and power operate to produce and maintain a division of labour where women are typically poorer than men. Similarly, in most aspects of social organisation from legislation and social policy to common-sense popular assumptions, males and females are differentiated, and, for the most part, men are privileged. As a result, in mixed sex organisations from trade unions to the majority of workplaces, as well as in family relationships, the prevailing pattern finds men asserting themselves as acting subjects in ways which women rarely can (Kaufmann, 1994).

Institutionalised barriers may be embedded in the formal structures of organisations: personnel practices, job descriptions, and organisation of tasks. Once such practices are incorporated in an organisation's structure they persist regardless of any discriminatory intent, unless they are altered. Exclusion also occurs subtly through a variety of processes that steer people away from work that has been culturally defined as inappropriate for their sex. Occupations defined as male may provide an inhospitable context for women. Within a variety of male occupations such as the military through to boardrooms of large corporations women are often excluded from informal networks (such as the golf course) and the shared alliances which result.

Women in male dominated organisations are often superficially accepted but may face exclusion not in a deliberate way. Since male domination of top positions is a structural phenomenon, the same processes that tend to strengthen the fraternity of men reinforce the exclusion of women. Family responsibilities and husbands' careers taking precedence continue to be a significant barrier for women's careers. 'Choice' in terms of women's careers is a gendered concept.

Pringle's (1988) research on secretaries provides a counterpoint to this somewhat

negative view. Pringle presents an interesting and important view that perhaps the

'structures' of organisations are less solid and permanent than may at first be apparent.

What is needed is a sense of the ebb and flow of power relations in organisations.

Power according to Pringle (1988) is not just the domination of one group by another.

Accordingly, "we all feel ourselves powerful in some contexts, powerless in others". It

is possible that Pringle underestimates the power of contextual factors that place

boundaries around change in organisations. Gagliardi (1990) argues that the implicit

primary strategy of any organisation is to maintain its cultural identity.

Men have established most educational organisations in Australia, or set them up

within frameworks which directly model longer running male-dominated organisations.

The values which form the basis of organisations' cultures are not readily challenged. In

revealing male organisational behaviours which exclude women in the masculine

culture of higher education organisations, Maddock and Parkin (1994) note that there

are several negative, exclusive, gender-based forms which constitute a 'typology of

gender cultures' in organisations consisting of the following categories: the gentlemen's

club (paternalistic); the barrack yard (a bullying hierarchy); the gender blind (which

ignores differences between women and men); the feminine pretenders (men assuming

the mantle of feminism); and, the smart macho (where profit is all that matters). Many

constructs have been invented to describe cultures; Maddock and Parkin present one

whose organising principle is gender.

Various theoretical perspectives on gendering organisations must be seen in the

light of dynamic and changing organisational cultures. This approach is helpful for my

research in that it allows for the possibility of the emergence of a new set of

organisational assumptions and values in relation to work, family and career outlook.

Without the possibility of changing the culture of the organisation, gender equity as a

policy position may be unsuccessful. A change perspective seeks to understand how

women's agency operates in the informal arena of the organisation against which the

formal is played out. (Coleman, 1991). The cultural boundedness associated with the

particular 'patriarchal bargain' (Kandiyoti, 1988) in which women find themselves as

members of the Catholic education organisation cannot, however, be under-estimated.

In considering gender at the organisational level as a critical element of career

theory, Marshall (1989) sees a feminist stance calling for a radical approach to

organisations, taking nothing for granted, looking critically at basic values and

assumptions and identifying where, however subtly, they define male as positive and

female as negative. The valuing of women is at the heart of Marshall's views on career

theory but this does not idealise women's ways and values. Her woman-centred views

do not reject men but recognise that the world men have created and perpetuated

oppresses men as well as women. Gender awareness therefore is an issue for women

and for men in organisational life. An emphasis on women rather than men and women

fills the gaps left in conventional scholarship and has the potential to place accepted

generalisations under scrutiny. "Because of the nature of gender relations, studying

women does not mean that men are literally absent, but they are not the object of

greatest interest" (Acker, 1996, p.114). This gender focus suggests a rethinking of

concepts including career and leadership.

Applying gender analysis to teachers' careers calls attention to the obvious and

subtle ways in which cultural beliefs about women and men influence the nature of

teachers' careers. Career positions within an organisation carry certain gender

symbolism (Alvesson & Billing, 1997), meaning not only that the positions are openly

viewed as women's work or men's work, but that they refer also to non-explicit

meanings, unconscious fantasies and associations. Marshall (1989) argues that

rethinking career theory by questioning the central notions of a self-asserting individual,

linear time, and objective measures of success is essential. The advent of " (n)ew

theories of career must give equal value to male and female aspects of being" (p.281).

Feminist research on organisations supports the notion that "careers are not a purely

individual experience" (Limerick, 1995, p.70). Women's career choices are constrained

by structures that are difficult to fathom in a constantly changing organisational career

environment (Acker, 1999). Other works by feminist scholars on the lives, perspectives,

and voices of teachers (Miller, 1996; Biklen, 1995; Acker, 1989), on feminist theorising

of organisations (J.Acker 1990; Burton 1991; Ianello, 1992) and on women in the

labour market (Cockburn, 1991) also contribute to this important understanding. Such

feminist research has provided a rich foundation for a critique of organisations. The

organisation is the site within which career structures and opportunities are determined

and supported by organisational processes and practices. The feminist approach to

studying career entails a deconstruction of the androcentric underpinnings of traditional

career theory. Feminist perspectives address the wider industrial and political influences

on the gendering of organisations and organisational change (Itzin & Newman, 1995).

The complexity of studying gender within organisations requires careful attention

to the different ways gender relations operate within different organisations. Hearn

(1998) suggests that one of the simplest ways to address gendered complexities is in

terms of ambiguity: that differences arise from or are understood in terms of the

presence of two or more meanings. He suggests that the more structurally based concept

of contradiction is also important, referring to its usage as systemic, structural or

societal oppositions, antagonisms, conflicts or interests. Paradox is a further concept

which brings together interpersonal interactions and oppositional structures in the form

of social process and alerts the researcher to the possibility that two things can occur

that appear to be mutually exclusive. These concepts are useful in the analysis of power

within the case study organisation and in considering a fundamental rethinking of the

nature and operation of gendered power relations. To provide an understanding of the

landscape upon which gendered power relations operate in organisations, it is important

to consider historical and theoretical developments concerned with women and their

careers.

Women and Careers

There now exists considerable debate within sociology regarding the definition of a

'career'. In this debate particular reference has been made to the way women make

sense of their working lives. The traditional concept of career arose out of the industrial,

hierarchical models of organisation that developed in the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries. The traditional idea of a career meant formal movement from one

job to another job with changing title and tasks. Alternatively, careers may consist of a

sequence of roles which are appropriate to the various stages of the organisational

career in question, and embody the notion of upward mobility (MacLean & McKenzie,

1991; Super, 1990). People on career journeys, in this sense, have the potential for both

vertical and horizontal mobility through promotion structures and through mobility of

work locations in order for them to maintain or improve career status or career

satisfaction.

The above career concept is based on a structural functionalist view of the roles

men and women are expected to fulfil in order that society functions effectively. As

such men play an instrumental role, whilst women must play an expressive, nurturing

role. Biklen (1995) draws attention to the separation of public and private spheres in

defining the features of a professional career. Structural functionalist views ignored

family life because family life was not considered intrinsic to the career. Work and family in this definition are separate issues. This idea of a career is based on the ways in which men have been able to live their lives, which in the past, has generally not included primary care-giving responsibilities.

A major feature of this view of career is total commitment. "Commitment means dedication to and identification with one's work" (Biklen, 1995, p.25). Career commitment according to Biklen refers, firstly, to the decision to undertake a career as opposed to a non-career trajectory, and secondly, to the short-term use of time for work. In practice these factors mean consciously establishing a career path with promotion in mind and giving priority to work by making oneself available for long hours. Personal and family life must therefore be tailored to the demands of work and one's career since it is work and career that must take priority over other aspects of one's personal life.

Contemporary research on careers is beginning to take account of the complex and diverse circumstances surrounding the lives of women and men in a world of discontinuous change. The traditional concept of career outlined is now being challenged by socio-cultural changes which are expressed through the daily lives of women and men. In a significant longitudinal study of Australian women's careers, Poole and Langan-Fox (1997) challenge the traditional concept of career by exploring "lives in context"; the lives of women as they were making important decisions about the direction of their early careers and life course. Referring to the "career journey", their research shows notions of career are complex and diverse. They utilise the notion of the "life career" to define more realistically the changing life course for both men and women. These researchers accept that there are multiple options, various pathways and trajectories, career networks and disconnections (for example, periods of unemployment) which are seen as legitimate journeys over the life course, and should

not be perceived as deviant patterns from linear hierarchically defined pathways. Poole

and Langan-Fox (1997), begin their development of the changing perspectives on

careers as this relates to women in particular with the following proposition:

> (W)omen's lives (especially their orientations to success and careers) are influenced
> by their historical, social, and economic agendas which shift and change over the
> life course . . . we signal the emerging theoretical realisation of the complexity of
> women's 'life career', involving as they do multiple and simultaneous co-ordination
> and transitions regarding education, work and family formation over the life course.
> (p.2)

Through such research, changing theoretical frameworks used to explain careers for

men and women are identified. These frameworks build a theory, which identifies key

processes involved in the career 'trajectories' of women as distinct from those of men.

Overall, it would appear that the common linear developmental and hierarchical

conception of 'career' in the vocational literature is not adequate to explain women's

perceptions of and experiences of their working life, and that new perspectives and

constructions of career need to be developed and tested over time. Life contexts and

constraints, including organisational constraints, must be taken into account in

considering women's' careers. They can range from 'self factors' such as abilities and

motivations, to 'new structuralist' factors such as women's concentration in secondary

labour markets, gender-based job segregation, the household division of labour and

class and patriarchal social patterns.

From an organisational and public policy perspective, career issues relate to

definitions of equity. Debates surround the term equity with the emphasis being on

treating everyone identically or alternatively, accepting differences and accommodating

them in a way that values these differences. Poole and Langan-Fox (1997) would

support the latter view of equity. There is little doubt, according to these researchers,

that Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action legislation have indeed made a difference to the macro-policy context and to the career choices and possibilities for women. Yet despite this legislation, there are deep and enduring problems built into the structures, culture and processes of many workplaces, organisations and institutions. To achieve better choices and outcomes for women in their life careers will require a powerful portfolio of strategies: legislation, removal of workplace barriers, changes in the culture and structure of organisation; and the development of women's personal and career competencies.

The research developed by Poole and Langan-Fox (1997) indicates there is a need to have policy frameworks designed to move beyond the existing framework based on privatisation, competitiveness and profitability to take account of the personal and social implication of government policies, not just the economic implications. Even though the image of the contemporary 'career woman' has changed positively over time, reaching a level of social acceptability, there are still problems in women achieving many of their goals. These problems include objective indicators of success, such as professional attainment, as well as the conflicting nature of career and family involvement. Early models of career development aimed at men failed to account for the many factors that uniquely affect women's careers, including cultural and organisational barriers to women's advancement, sex-role training, and competing work and family roles. Larwood and Rose indicate that "(w)omen's career progress has not been commensurate with our increased participation in the workforce" (1988, p.4).

For many women who have chosen to pursue a career in teaching, the old shibboleth "teaching is still a good job for a woman" remains a familiar reminder of an enduring, stereotypical understanding of the teaching career for women. In her study of women teachers and their careers, Biklen (1995) situates teaching careers as cultural

constructions. She outlines the demeaning and painfully familiar stereotypes associated

with women and the teaching career: the infantilised little person ground down by

authority; the helpless agent of a normalisation process; the guilt-ridden young mother

trying to reconcile family obligations with a generally under-valued 'career'.

Prominent in research concerning women and the teaching career is the work of

Acker (1989, 1999) who criticises previous research, stating that "existing models of

the teacher career did not do justice to the fragmented, accidental quality of careers"

(p.129). Both Acker and Biklen have done much to challenge the conventional notions

of teachers' careers as this relates to women. They argue for a gendered understanding

of the traditional concept of career in which masculine norms prevail. There is a need to

approach differently the question of careers and women to better account for the

diversity of women's lives and to move away from the idea that women need only

change themselves to be successful in a given career structure.

Recent research on the teaching career includes teachers' personal narratives which

assist in understanding their motivations and perspectives. Such a focus has created

pictures of teachers who develop strategies and take actions for reasons that make sense

in the context of their lives and interpretations of situations. (Weiler, 1988; Grant, 1989;

Evetts, 1990; Acker, 1994, 1999).

A Gender-Centred Perspective on the Teaching Career

Australian Research

In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in teacher's lives in the

Australian context from researchers who use the lens of gender to delineate the different

career experiences of men and women teachers. MacLean and McKenzie (1991) have

compiled a collection of research on the teaching occupation in Australia. MacLean

(cited in MacLean & McKenzie, 1991) defines the teaching career as "the status

passage of individuals through several work-related social roles over the length of their working lives as school teachers" (p.25).

MacLean defines the various stages one might expect in a typical teaching career. He examines the attributes of individuals which relate to their occupational and organisational careers. It is within this arena that he outlines the importance of gender as a career contingency factor, although in a very limited way. Accepting such limitations, MacLean's research does provide valuable insights into teaching career patterns, sociological views of careers and some of the career contingency factors that affect the way men and women approach a career. A study of gender, however, is an important addition to career research since even with significant changes in the way women and men engage in the paid workforce, "gender still is one of the most pervasive influences on likely work roles, occupational promotion and career patterns" (cited in MacLean & McKenzie, 1991, p.32).

The Australian Government has taken an interest in the teaching career with the commissioning of two reports by the Australian Schools' Council. The first publication, Australia's Teachers: An Agenda for the Next Decade (1990) examined ways of promoting effective teaching as a means of improving the experience and outcomes of schooling for all students. The report suggested that there was a need for a major reconsideration of what a career in teaching might be. Within this recommendation, the need to recognise the contribution of women to the profession was noted.

The second publication, Women in the Teaching Profession (Milligan, Ashenden & Quin, 1994) dealt more explicitly with the position of women in teaching from a career outlook perspective. The aim of this report was to promote the interests of women teachers and to further diminish gender inequity for workers in schools. The strong gender segregation in the school's sector workforce was highlighted along with the

devaluation of teaching as a profession which was associated with the highly feminised nature of the teaching occupation.

Both reports have influenced structural changes to Australian teacher's careers in recent years with the formulation of new career models including the Advanced Skills Teacher model and the introduction of the position of Leading Teacher, which on the surface, value commitment to the work of classroom teaching. Non-classroom leadership roles remain as elements of the hierarchical career structure more common in education organisations. Milligan et al. (1994) indicated that women in the teaching occupation have been what amounts to an under-class in career terms with sex-segregation in roles still apparent. In a study of women's under-representation in senior school positions in Western Australian schools, Bloot and Browne (1996) state that "females are not seen to hold status positions and consequently girls and other female teachers are not provided with positive female role models" which "ensures the perpetuation of the male perspective in departmental policy, syllabus and learning experiences provided for students" (p.82).

Feminist involvement in educational reforms in Australia from the 1970's saw the development of new policies concerned with improving the educational outcomes for girls and working conditions for women. As a result of this feminist intervention, at the level of public policy, school systems in Australia during the 1990's attempted to address the question of gender equity in education for both students and employees. The impact of gender equity reform has been less than feminists had anticipated (Blackmore, 1999).

Work by Ingvarson and Chadbourne (1994) takes issue with the nature of the teaching career by outlining the need for a new approach to career development for teachers. They outline three propositions, which underpin their views:

(T)he most important purpose of a school is to provide children with equal and enhanced opportunities for learning; the most important resource a school has for achieving that purpose is the knowledge and skill of its teachers; and the most important strategy for maintaining and improving that resource is a career development process of teacher evaluation and professional development. (p.12)

Whilst the first two propositions according to these researchers are widely accepted in principle, if not in practice, policy has largely ignored the third proposition. Ingvarson and Chadbourne's research has merits in terms of identifying many of the shortcomings of current career structures in Australian education systems. There is, however, an unstated assumption that these career structures affect men and women similarly and that a career development program can be accessed and utilised in similar ways by both men and women. The issue of gender in their research is unexamined.

The work by Australian researchers provided me with a foundation to take a strong organisational focus and an understanding of the continuing difficulties for women in their pursuit of a career in teaching. In framing my research, I recognised that the position of women remained problematic in terms of access to a range of career opportunities, ability to influence organisations to better accommodate the work-family challenge and to promote and value the work and skills which have been traditionally associated with women. In the midst of a changing workplace designed supposedly to bring about equality, I was confronted by the paradox that the notion of 'career woman' asserts. Women are still assumed to have primary, if not exclusive, responsibility for children and care of other family members whilst the public world of institutional power remains dominated by men. Despite legislation which has intervened in the organisational career context, establishing equal employment opportunity, merit and non-discrimination in appointment (Burton, 1991), a disembodied and masculinist understanding of career persists. In conceptualising the relationship between gender,

career and organisation, I was strongly influenced by research which addressed issues

such as the masculinist assumptions in traditional career structures (Limerick, 1995),

the impact of restructuring of educational work on women (Kenway, 1995; Blackmore,

1996) and the gendered discourse of educational leadership (Blackmore, 1999).

International Research

I was interested in considering research in the broader international arena, assessing

the extent to which gender and teacher's careers have received research attention. The

attention has been quite extensive, suggesting the significance of the issues for

researchers and the organisations such research may help shape. From the international

research field, the work of Dreeben (1970) and Lortie (1975) on teacher's careers is

quite extensive and well regarded. However, when this research is reviewed from the

perspective of women teachers, the limitations become quite notable. Lortie barely

acknowledges the most significant fact in a female teacher's identity, which in the great

majority of cases, is her femaleness. These researchers fail to acknowledge that

teaching is regarded as less than a career because it is heavily feminised. This field of

research, however, has moved considerably in recent years, extending and revamping

the conceptualisation of the teaching career by taking account of its gender

ramifications (Acker, 1989). As a concept, 'career' has different shades of meaning

associated with different research. Career may be conceptualised around distinctions

between, for example, objective and subjective careers (Evetts 1990) or personal and

structural career contingencies (Carlson & Schmuck, 1981). Such research serves to

challenge the more traditional career research which used the pattern of men's careers

as the standard by which to analyse women's careers (Schmuck & Dunlap, 1995).

These traditional conceptualisations see career ambition as something that is static

and unchanging. Furthermore, these conventional concepts of careers discriminate

against women in a number of complex ways. Grant (1989) notes "given traditional role

expectations and responsibilities, it is inappropriate to expect the majority of women to

adopt the consistently single-minded approach to career advancement that is often put

forward or attributed to career ambitious teachers" (p.41). The traditional perspective

positions women in tension with a stable, coherent phenomenon called a career that can

be described, envied, and vetted (Biklen, 1995). For many women, career ambitious or

not, the necessity to juggle family and career roles prevents them from meeting the

traditional notion of career commitment. Instead, women teachers construct

'accommodated careers' (Evetts, 1989) which accounts for their fluctuating pursuit of

career goals depending on what is occurring in their private lives.

In her thorough mining of the literature on teacher's careers Acker (1996), indicates

that much of the earlier literature on teacher's career displays an ideology of individual

choice and a corresponding neglect of constraint. Approaches to research have been

extremely one-sided placing the emphasis on the individual woman with little or no

attempt to assess the structures within which action takes place. Acker's research

suggests that researchers need to clarify the subtle balance between choice and

constraint, capturing the particularities of the organisational environment as well as the

impact of the wider social environment. Acker (1999) is careful to explain her particular

response to gender as a topic for researching teacher's lives. Reflecting upon her study

of a British group of teachers, the Hillview women, Acker warns against "too simple an

equation of femininity with caring or devotion to duty" (p.216). There is a need to pay

attention to differences amongst women including family responsibilities, generational

differences, class, racial and ethnic differences.

Whilst in one sense, a career is clearly an individual construction in which

individuals have work histories, perspectives on the past and desired future, and the

capacity to make decisions, there is at the same time a structural dimension. These structures include the political, social and economic features of a given historical era. Structures impact upon such things as pay scales, the number of teaching vacancies in a particular locale, the probability women will be appointed to senior positions and the configurations of national political and economic systems (Acker, 1999).

In reviewing the later international research, I was struck by the challenges such research has given to previous definitions of career that, in most cases, did not reflect women's experiences. New research has given emphasis to individual experiences, validating women's perspectives and voice, recognising that in direct contradiction to the victim label, some women at least have devised strategies to achieve their career goals even in the face of organisational gender blindness.

The Teaching Career in the Catholic School

The teacher's career in a Catholic school is constrained by the nature of the school system with its specific aims and purposes. Gender is embedded in the institutional arrangements through which the Catholic education organisation functions: divisions of labour, authority, patterns of emotions, and the religious symbolic order. The totality of these arrangements constitutes what Connell (1987) refers to as the organisation's 'gender regime'. The concept of gender regime was developed out of research which described the state of play in sexual politics within a school. Connell advises that the principle underlying the division of labour between paid and unpaid work, men's jobs, women's jobs, is to separate these; the principles underlying the structures of authority, control and coercion, the hierarchies of the state, the family and the school, is that of unequal integration (Connell, 1987). That is, there are two processes operating simultaneously. My surveying of the literature highlighted the question of the way the

Catholic Education organisation contributes to an unequal integration of women within the organisational career context.

In their research examining the career paths of teacher in Catholic schools, Christie and Smith (1991) indicated that sexism remained a critical issue within this organisation. These researchers responded specifically to the apparent lack of women in senior management positions in schools and Diocesan Offices as a strong indication of this position. But they also point to the general position of women in teaching and indicate that sexism in Catholic education career opportunities and outcomes remains but one section of the wider issue of the place of women in Church and society.

The following response taken from the Australian research report on the participation of women in the Catholic Church, is indicative of the position of women in the case study organisation:

> By the 1980s, with the declining numbers of women religious, lay women had become largely responsible for the maintenance of the Catholic school system in Australia. With the declining involvement of religious orders in schools and the increase in Commonwealth and State components in the funding of them, the administration of Catholic schools in the different States was centralised. In the early stages of this process, women religious played key roles in the establishment of diocesan Catholic Education Offices. Progressively in later years, lay Catholic women, but more often lay men, took over from many of these religious pioneers. Although more Catholic lay women are being appointed to key and, very occasionally, top leadership roles in these offices, women are not represented at this level proportionally to their involvement in the education ministry of the Church. (Macdonald et al., 1999, pp.23-24)

Difficulties associated with the teaching career in the case study organisation were revealed in a submission to the Senate Inquiry into the status of teachers (Senate Reference Committee on Employment, Education and Training, 1998). As an observer during the diocesan submission to the Senate Reference Committee, I identified several

concerns that teachers in the diocese had with regard to Criterion 3 of the inquiry. This

criterion invited participants to examine the expectations of teachers regarding their

careers and to identify those issues that bear most significantly upon job satisfaction,

stress and their ability to carry out their work efficiently and effectively.

The following issues were identified by the group as relevant to this criterion:

- Opportunities are limited. Schools and systems have a relatively flat structure,
  with few executive positions. Executive positions entail significant and growing
  responsibility for little corresponding financial (or status) reward.

- Pay rates are low throughout the profession. It is highly unlikely that a teacher
  will ever earn more than $45,000 per annum (in 1997 pay terms). Even those
  who attain the rank of Principal are remunerated at levels far below private
  sector levels commensurate with the levels of responsibility.

- The number of women who apply for promotion positions is disproportionately
  small.

- Young teachers leave the profession after 2 or 3 years.

The report hints at some of the structural issues affecting teachers' career efficacy

in Catholic education. It does not however, identify those issues that are unique to the

organisational career context. One issue of significance is the conceptualisation of a

career within the organisation. This is illustrated through the established career

pathways and the organisational requirements and obligations which impinge upon the

career choices that can be made by an individual in Catholic education. In analysing the

organisational response to maintaining a workforce which is both well-trained and able

to maintain the distinctiveness of Catholic education, it is clear that this is set within

ideological conflicts. Such conflict stems from the need to maintain the distinctiveness

of the Catholic school and at the same time, maintain viability as a system and perhaps even increase market share of enrolment.

Ideological influences affect how Catholic education interprets and implements what it believes is important in its approach to teachers' careers. This is occurring at a time when Catholic education continues to experience structural and theological re-orientations requiring a re-articulation of the organisation in response to the changing educational environment (Hoekstra, 1995). Teachers themselves, however, may have little understanding and therefore little considered acceptance of the organisational career. Catholic schools are located within the social, economic and political realities of the wider community. This community is connected to the global community. A global perspective has brought new demands and issues to the context of teacher's work. Changing social, economic and technological contexts are bringing a sense of deteriorating industrial age school and system organisational structures (Gaffney, 1998).

This changing scenario for schools has resulted in Catholic schools becoming increasingly diverse with teachers contributing to this diversity. Dealing with diversity is an encumbrance upon the organisation that has resulted from the changing perspectives on organisation and responses to newly emerging societal and worldviews. Diversity on the part of teachers in Catholic schools is notable in their beliefs and the practice of worship:

> Most Catholics today do not accept church teaching simply because church authorities tell them, but tend to test these teachings against the experience of their own lives . . . the movement within the church from the experience of authority to the authority of experience ensures that any narrow concept of Catholic identity will be rejected by an increasingly articulate and theologically literate Catholic laity. (Treston, 1997, p.10)

From a career perspective, women seek ways of participating in the Catholic education organisation on the basis of opportunities that are created and from their own desires to experience a sense of efficacy as a result of this participation. Participation, however, does not necessarily mean women feel free to be agentic within the organisation. Issues of power and articulacy impact differently in the positions that women occupy within the organisation. To resist or subvert the organisational career context, women must articulate and problematise men's advantage in the organisation (Cockburn, 1991), often moving from a position of silence within the organisation either enforced or adopted. Whilst some Catholic women have continued to express their disapproval of patriarchy, and sexism in the Church, this has occurred at the same moment as they have experienced new forms of resistance to the gender equity reforms in secular society reflecting both cultural and structural backlash (Blackmore, 1999, p.4).

The question of women's inarticulacy, use of language and silence has received considerable attention from feminist writers, but surprisingly little in organisational analyses. Smith (1989) has suggested that women have been historically excluded from the formation of the cultural means by which expression takes place:

> For it is men who produce for women, as well as for other members of society, the means to think and image. In the various social apparatuses concerned with the production and distribution of ideas and images, or with the training of people to participate in and respond to these forms of thought, it is men who occupy the positions of authority, men who predominate in the production of ideas and social knowledge, and men who control what enters the discourse by occupying the positions which do the work of gatekeeping and the positions from which people and their 'mental products' are evaluated. (p.267)

Spender (1980) also developed this idea in her analysis of 'man-made language', as a foundational part of the process by which subjectivity is articulated, but which follows

'rules' that are historically developed in a patriarchal society: "It appears to be part of the human condition to attempt to make existence meaningful, but we can only make sense of the world if we have rules by which to do it" (p.2). Women have not generally been significant in the making of the rules.

In my consideration of the position of women in Catholic education, the issue of articulacy concerned me, especially in relation to who makes the rules for the organisation because there are limited numbers of women in senior administrative roles. The apparent reluctance on the part of women to apply for such positions means that women are not in positions of authority in the critical mass required to change the system (Kanter, 1977). Changing workplace and familial arrangements in society and in the establishment of a career environment that acknowledges diversity within cultural pluralism is an issue yet to be fully acknowledged in Catholic education.

The literature review raised many questions concerning the hurdles women may face in the pursuit of a career in Catholic education. The most important question, however, is the extent to which the overall institutional structure and the character of the particular institutional arenas associated with Catholic education (which must include the Catholic Church), has been formed by and through gender. The organisation, therefore, requires a critical focus.

The Catholic Church as a Gendered Organisation

In a research report on the participation of women in the Catholic Church (Macdonald et al, 1999), the researchers indicated that "the Church was seen to be lagging behind the wider Australian society in recognising the changing role of women as one of the signs of the times and affirming the equality of women" (p.viii). As an organisation, the Catholic Church presents an exalted and romantic feminism in its identification of women (Leonard, 1995). It also continues by its practices to maintain

the gender-segregated vision of life as a domestic world of women and a public world of men.

The religious ideology of the Catholic Church supports an asymmetrical understanding of the roles of women relative to men stemming from the dual-nature anthropology underpinning Church teaching on women. Haraway (1991) outlines the extent of this asymmetrical relationship in terms of women's position in the paid workforce. She contends that in modern industrialised societies it is acceptable for the husband's job to take precedence over his family responsibilities and for the wife's family responsibilities to take precedence over her job. It is not acceptable for the husband who wants to advance his career to routinely diminish his regular paid work because he has family duties. Conversely, the wife who does not cover for her family duties before taking on routine or unusual job responsibilities is considered neglectful, and though she may advance in her career, the micropolitics of the workplace may eventually stigmatise her. The asymmetry lies in the normative expectation of the husband's continued prime responsibility for economic support of the family and for the wife's continued prime responsibility for family work. Just as women have to redefine what a job or career means to them in order to share the provider role equally, men have to redefine the meaning of domestic work in order to share equally in household maintenance and childcare. Domestic work needs to be seen as something valuable not demeaning.

Feminist theologian, Elaine Wainwright (1999), through her research in the area of gender and the Catholic Church, reveals how Church discourse impacts on individuals at the ideational level. This is the level of the symbolic universe which is manifest through the stories, myths, images, metaphors and language that support the social and structural aspects of society as well as shape personal and interpersonal lives. The

pervasive impact of gender at the ideational level is a result of the ways in which the

language, symbols and stories of the Catholic religious tradition change or maintain

socio-political structures.

Catholic education has, as an overriding superstructure, the clerical hierarchy,

which in the Catholic Church is all male. This structure is a visible reminder to women

of their subordinate status within the Church, particularly when compared to women in

other Christian Churches where ordination of women has been achieved. Along with

this visible reminder, the authoritarianism associated with the teaching office of the

Church refers exclusively to the teaching office of the Pope and his Bishops:

> These were understood to possess a 'different source of knowledge' from that of the
> ordinary Christian, who had no teaching authority. This source of knowledge, the
> Holy Spirit, allowed those who were privy to its assistance to discern the faith and
> communicate it in its integrity. All those who were not members of the magisterium
> were to receive the "deposit of faith" from the Pope and bishops in obedience.
> (Stevens, 1991, p.105)

As the sole agency of truth, this male clerical coterie excludes the intellectual

capacities of women from the constructions of the truths expounded by the Church.

Christian feminist scholars have continued to present the view that "God-talk does not

occur in a vacuum" (Joy, 1995). The truths espoused within the Christian religious

tradition are encapsulated in historically limited frameworks:

> Feminists feel a need to burst from such confinements, but the question that
> remains regarding God-talk is whether it is the fact of revelation itself that is being
> challenged, or simply its modes of disclosure and reception. The matter of faith is
> obviously of central concern here, but the God involved is no longer one of
> grammar, or of dogma. (Joy, 1995, p.291)

The Catholic Church makes it difficult to imagine a world of scrupulous gender

equality. Male privilege is visible in the Church from the male only clergy to the use of

women in domestic service in priests' residences. Women, however, have their own agenda for change in the Catholic Church. Whilst Church discourse has been invoked as a defence for the continued subjugation of women, feminist theologians (Trible, 1984; Fiorenza, 1983) have continued to demonstrate that a positive view of women can be mined from the traditional religious texts. Such positive views bring to bear new theological perspectives and a radical shift in the way Christianity is understood and ultimately, how women who choose to participate in the life of the Catholic Church are recognised with their differences acknowledged and celebrated.

Women who work in the Catholic education organisation are not a homogeneous group. There is no unitary 'woman' existing in a single set of patriarchal relations. Women in Catholic education cannot be confined to the descriptor 'Catholic women teachers' any more than women who work in non-religious organisations can be labelled as a common identity. Women in the Catholic education organisation may be single or married, divorced, lesbian, parent, young or ageing and of various ethnic backgrounds. A significant distinction in the Catholic organisation is that a woman may be identified as lay-women or a member of a religious order (women religious). Women who work in Catholic education, be they Catholic or non-Catholic, have been affected to greater or lesser degree by the massive shifts in consciousness and praxis which have been a feature of the last thirty years and largely as a result of the Women's Movement. The rich diversity of women's lives, however, is not well acknowledged within the organisation. In some cases it may be hidden as in the case of lesbian women or de-valued as in the case of older women.

The individual circumstances of women are important considerations for this research. At the same time, however, I hold firmly to the category 'woman' referring to women as a collective with its limitations and opportunities for creating organisational

change through the establishment of alliances (Kanter, 1994). Within the micro-structural level, my case study provides an opportunity to consider the dynamics of gender relations, examining changes in the daily life of the organisation. Such an examination acknowledges the potential for change to create both inequality and equal opportunity. Subordination and empowerment may be intertwined.

Summary

In this chapter, I have examined research literature that contributes to an understanding of gender as a theoretical construct in the study of teacher's careers. The chapter also addresses gender as a dynamic of organisations. The feminist underpinning of my research emphasises the need for organisations to be examined through the lens of gender in order that women's careers are not seen as "other than, put down, and put upon" (Kenway & Modra, 1992, p.139). The chapter has provided an understanding of the developments in feminist theorising of gender as a category of analysis. The development of gender as a category of analysis has not produced one distinct feminist perspective, rather, it has produced various theoretical positions from which the researcher must garner particular insights in coming to her own theoretical stance. The mosaic of feminist theorising has assisted me in developing a theoretical position that addresses notions of women as subjects and women's agency. My position is based on an understanding of women as participants and actors in an organisation rather than adjuncts to it. In particular, women are seen as myth managers in their continued efforts to debunk organisational myths that depict women's lives from the perspective of men only and devalues the work that women perform.

The literature review indicates the need for research on gender, career and organisation to address the structural and rational aspects of rules and policies as well as the non-rational values and belief systems which infiltrate organisational discourses.

My research considers career outlook for women as being strongly linked to the cultural and relational aspects of the organisation as well as the structural aspects. Structural change alone, therefore, will not improve career outlook for women.

Consistent with the views expounded throughout the literature survey, feminist inquiry has led me to consider how the established ways of doing and being as expressed within the organisational context which have been valued unquestioned for too long, can disadvantage women. Feminist scholarship advocates change that brings about a more gender-sensitive approach to careers and organisation with women's experiences, desires and aspirations being taken seriously rather than treated as suspicious. Women are therefore, from a theoretical perspective, seen as subjects constructed by, and subjected to, the cultural and historical discourses associated with the organisation within which they must operate.

The kinds of identities and subject positions and the forms of difference that are allowed within the framework of the given cultural, ideological or discursive formations within organisations affects women's perceptions of career outlook. This view must take account of the fact that women as actors or participants in an organisation enact intentionalized activities but the relationship of such intentionalised acts to the desired outcome is often quite oblique. "The question is how actors "enact", "resist," or "negotiate" the world as given, and in so doing "make" the world. This making may turn out to produce the same old social and cultural thing - "reproduction." Or it may turn out to produce something new, although not necessarily what the actors intended" (Ortner, 1996, p.1).

Ortner's theoretical stance comes out of a critique of post-structuralism and postmodernism from which she concludes there is a need to reclaim the subject. From a theoretical position more aligned to post-colonial and sub-altern theories, Ortner

demonstrates the need to ask in regard to my thesis, to what degree the religious and secular discourses and organisational processes successfully impose themselves on real women in real time. In addition, I must analyse the ways women resist, negotiate or appropriate some features of the organisational context in concert with a careful analysis of the cultural meanings and structural arrangements that construct and constrain women's agency. Women's agency pertains to the sense of authorisation to have one's own point of view and desires but the cultural context of the organisation may both encourage and undermine women's agency creating a sense of contradiction.

In developing a feminist theoretical position to address a Catholic religious organisation, I acknowledge that women do not significantly organise the cultural order of gender representations and practices which significantly embody a male point of view. An essential element of the feminist research project, however, is a social and political involvement, which implies an emancipatory interest. In the process of revealing the gendered nature of Catholic education organisation, there is a need to consider women's relationship to the essentially hegemonically masculinist social order of the Catholic Church which casts a long shadow over the Catholic Education organisation. This question requires a particular focus for the methodology. The following chapter explains the qualitative methodology and case study method I have chosen to conduct the research.