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CHAPTER 1

EXPLORING GENDER AND CAREER WITHIN A CATHOLIC EDUCATION ORGANISATION

What is required is a major reconsideration of what a career in teaching may be. It must take into account the fact that teachers are not all alike in their motivations and needs. It should confirm and strengthen the recognition of teaching as a profession, and not simply a job before or between other types of work. (Australian Schools' Council, 1990, p.104)

Since the late 1980's, there has been a strong focus across the Australian education scene on reviewing and revitalising the notion and structure of a career in teaching. Teachers' careers are made possible within an organisational context established by a particular education provider. In Australia, the Catholic education sector is a significant provider of education. From a career perspective, Catholic education is an integral part of the Catholic Church which is one of Australia's largest employing organisations (Macdonald, et al., 1999).

The organisational structures and processes of the Catholic education sector present an interesting model of organisation which is both unified through state and national structures and diverse when viewed at the level of the various dioceses which operate autonomously and collaboratively throughout Australia. The Catholic education sector consists of schools which are administered through diocesan offices as well as independent religious congregational schools which utilise the services of the diocesan offices to greater or lesser degrees. Given the increasing interest from governments and unions in teaching as a career, women, who are increasingly relied

upon to fill teaching positions in Catholic schools, may well ask in regard to their

careers, "What's in it for me?"

The organisational career context can create conditions conducive to or obstructive

of women's careers as a result of the gendering of organisational cultures, structures

and practices.

> Clearly, gender – "patterned socially produced, distinctions between female and
> male, feminine and masculine" (Acker, 1992:25) – is a key concept for
> understanding how people encounter encouragement, skepticism, support and
> suffering in organizational contexts. (Alvesson & Billing, 1997, p.1)

The study of gender and organisation is a neglected area of research according to

Alvesson and Billing. Locating the study of career within an exploration of gender and

organisations provides the opportunity to reveal how the organisational context is

decisive in the paid working lives of individuals based upon how the organisation

functions. The processes and practices of a particular organisation which are supported

by discourses pertinent to the philosophy and purpose of the organisation dominate and

shape gender relations.

This thesis examines the relationship between gender, career and organisation

utilising feminist principles of research design. The study establishes gender and

organisation as central to women's career possibilities and constraints. The gendered

nature of organisations may be partly masked through obscuring the embodied nature

of work (Acker, 1990). This research is located within the organisational arrangements

of a Catholic education organisation and the career context which is established within

and through the particularities of this organisation. Designed as a case study, the

research focuses upon the systemically organised Catholic education sector and does

not include congregational Catholic schools. The research is limited to a single country

diocese and the Catholic Education Commissions operating at the state and national levels which together form a set of inter-connected organisational arenas.

The case study is written at a descriptive and an interpretative level (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) in order that the structures and processes relevant to careers within Catholic education are explained and the gendered nature of the organisation is unmasked. Data for the case study includes analysis of organisational structures and processes which shape career and discourses which circulate within the organisation about women. The personal responses of thirty-two women employed in a variety of teaching positions in Catholic education also contribute to the research data. These responses were obtained from group interviews and provided an understanding of how different women view career outlook for women within Catholic education taking account of their discursive positions in the organisation. In addition to those who participated in group interviews, data was obtained from eight people who participated in individual interviews. The study is based upon the assumptions that gendering of organisational cultures, structures and practices occurs within Catholic education organisational arrangements and that career is an artefact of the organisation. Together, these assumptions support my thesis that organisational cultures which emerge out of various discourses and practices affect career outlook for women.

This introductory chapter provides the theoretical and contextual background for the thesis. The important theoretical concepts of gender, career and organisation are defined and explained in relation to the organisational arrangements of the Catholic education organisation. Until recently, problems associated with women and careers have rarely been defined as having much to do with the gender dynamics of organisations.

In theory the concept of career has been typically androcentric based on male work life patterns but presented as a gender-neutral concept (Halford, Savage & Witz, 1996). In contrast to this position, the theoretical concept of gendered organisations allows a focus on symbolic and cultural aspects of doing gender in organisations (West & Zimmerman, 1987). It also supports a more traditional feminist analysis of the subordination of women in employment practices such as recruitment and promotion processes.

Consideration of women's career needs and aspirations continues to be located within the context of policies such as equal employment opportunities and family-friendly workplaces. Organisational policies, practices and expectations, however, endorse particular gendered arrangements and understandings. The variabilities of masculinities and femininities become manifest when considering the organisational career. I would like to suggest that certain masculinities could be seen as positions which exclusively strengthen male power or, alternatively, give space for women rather than remaining as obstacles to particular developments in the organisation. Leadership and administration are examples of masculinities which continue to prevail as dominant gender signposts in organisational life and into which women must try and fit.

An important theoretical concept within this study is that organisations impact on people's lives because they are the principle mechanism by which highly differentiated societies are able to get things done beyond the goals and abilities of the individual person. Iannello (1992) emphasises the impact of organisations on people's lives: "Whether public or private, government or family, school or church, organisations have a significant influence on everything we do" (p.3).

A further important theoretical concept is the nature of careers which, is a changing concept. Adamson (1997) indicates that for the past thirty years both theoretical and practical definitions of 'career' have emphasised structure, succession and status. A career has therefore been viewed as the sequence of attempts to move onward and upward through organisational hierarchies. He presents a case for rethinking career to incorporate an understanding of the career as a vehicle for the continuous realisation of self. The implication of this changed understanding of career is the need for new relationships between people and workplace organisations.

An organisational focus moves the discussion of women's career beyond "the ideology of individual choice" (Acker, 1994, p.85), to look at the notion of career outlook which is tied to the particular organisational context. The construction of gender is enmeshed within career outlook as an organisational concept.

Career Outlook: A Definition

I have defined career outlook as the sense of possibility that is created for a woman to achieve a successful and satisfying career within given organisational arrangements. The sense of possibility is shaped by various organisational discourses and structures which help create a positive career outlook and include a well-articulated career pathway and career development options. In addition, career outlook is bound to the perceptions that women have of their likelihood of achieving career progress within the organisational career context and the desirability of particular positions along the career pathway.

Career outlook is a dynamic phenomenon which is shaped by the actions of those charged with policy development and personnel management in organisations. It is enhanced for women by those in authority in organisations who choose to move away

from standard work and career assumptions to a pluralistic view of work and careers (Raabe, 1996). A further understanding of what contributes to the construction of a positive career outlook is the degree to which particular women feel the organisation has established ways to integrate women into the organisational career context. Women's views on the accrued status and standing of their occupational roles within the particular organisation are also a strong determinant of career outlook.

Notwithstanding this general understanding of career outlook, individuals may present different understandings of career outlook within the one organisation. Those charged with managing the career context of an organisation might still hold to ideas that careers are the responsibility of an individual and have little sense of the organisational career response. For the purposes of this case study, career outlook is determined firstly by the intentional actions of the organisation to account for women's career needs. I acknowledge that, with the exception of pregnancy and other health related issues, men may also exhibit similar career needs. The second feature which this case study emphasises is the influence on career outlook of the beliefs and values that permeate the organisation and that may impact some women at various stages of their paid working lives differentially relative to men and to other women.

Whilst an organisation may promote career outlook intentionally, it may also establish career outlook in unexamined ways. The organisation creates a particular career context by adopting certain strategies formulated within the workplace policy process. Such policies may be helpful or unhelpful in establishing the terrain upon which a career-resilient workforce is encouraged.

By a career-resilient workforce, we mean a group of employees who not only are dedicated to the idea of continuous learning but also stand ready to re-invent themselves to keep pace with change; who take responsibility for their own career

management; and, last but not least, who are committed to the company's success .

. . And it means moving on when a win-win relationship is no longer possible.

(Waterman & Collard, 1994, p.88)

Organisations may limit career resilience by not paying sufficient attention to

career outlook. One aspect of career outlook that an organisation shapes is the notion

of career efficacy. This notion relates to organisational decisions concerning the type

of career path that will exist and the criteria required for accessing different career

positions. The nature of the career environment may be based upon either fiercely

competitive career ladders or a natural progression through different roles based on the

acquisition by individuals of specified skills and knowledge. The organisation may

also promote other alternative approaches to career such as a portfolio career. In

promoting a particular career outlook, organisations can be seen to privilege certain

values and attributes for workers. In recent history, organisations have promoted a

career outlook based on an ideal worker who is male, is unencumbered by the

requirements of a private life and therefore has the ability to commit himself

wholeheartedly to his career and the organisation (J. Acker, 1992). A career in teaching

remains locked within a notion of 'promotion out of a classroom' into leadership

positions which some researchers suggest are still envisioned by many teachers and

parents of students in particular, as being more effectively filled by leaders who are

male, white and autocratic (Heath, 1999).

In my use of career outlook, it is assumed that the organisation would want

workers to view career outlook as positive, thereby encouraging them to contribute

their skills and knowledge at the highest possible level. It follows therefore, that the

extent to which organisational practices and processes favour and/ or disadvantage

different groups is an important matter for an organisation to consider. Because women are now staying in teaching for longer periods of their lives and they continue to be the significant majority in the Catholic education organisation (Day, 1994), it is desirable for this organisation to maintain the commitment, energy and job satisfaction that a rewarding career should provide to each woman.

Whilst individuals draw upon their own unique motivations, abilities and capacities to make choices affecting their career decisions, they may be influenced by a range of discourses which belong to the particular organisation and contribute to the organisational culture. These discourses may include religious discourses, human resource policies, structural arrangements, patterns of communication, customs and spoken and unspoken rules which together build and reflect a culture that may be either unwelcoming or welcoming to women. A focus on career outlook within an organisation can identify the ways that both the ideology of male privilege and the nature of actual male control over other males and females may continue to operate even in gender-sensitive organisations. This focus may reveal how inequalities related to gender and age in particular, continue to be reproduced.

In terms of analysing the social relations within the organisation, Gramsci's theory of hegemony (Anderson, 1976) is useful in discussing how inequalities are often taken for granted as 'normal', rather than being seen as emerging out of a particular group's values, beliefs and practices. Because such group values and beliefs can become dominant and accepted as part of commonsense, or the 'way things are' (Connell, 1987), the systems of language, beliefs and practices (or discourses) that are supported by a dominant group may be used to interpret the differences of subordinate groups as inferiority. This inferiority can further be described as 'natural', thus concealing the

existence of any struggle or conflict over ideas. The existence of gendered hierarchies

within an organisation may be justified within male hegemonic discourses as emerging

out of biological differences between men and women. Women, from a male

hegemonic perspective, have been constructed as 'naturally' nurturing, acquiescent,

passive and supportive. Connell defines these characteristics as 'emphasised

femininity' which positions women as suited to be followers. Conversely, certain kinds

of men (especially white, middle-class, heterosexual men) from an organisational

perspective, have been considered to be more naturally authoritative and suited to

leadership through their so-called masculine qualities of toughness, power, strength,

confidence and ability to 'dominate'.

Within these kinds of dominant constructions of gender differences which

organisational beliefs and values support, there may be a stifling of women's full

capacities and this can stall women's exercise of agency. Those women who do make

it through to the male-dominated senior ranks are often admitted on the basis that they

will bring a feminine balance to the male mode of acting. As a consequence of the

gendered discourses concerned with particular career positions, women and men are

stereotyped. Women in subordinate positions may capitulate to these stereotypes by

passively accepting or remaining ignorant of the discourses that frame the career

structure within the organisation. This case study, however, identifies the many and

varied positions that women take in shaping their own careers. Women collaborate

with other women and with agreeable and supportive men to create change. Women

construct, negotiate and reform their subjective work experiences on a daily basis by

employing strategies that can be described as falling somewhere between co-option

and subversion.

Whilst individual agency is a force for organisational change, there are 'new structuralist issues' (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996) largely outside the control of the individual woman that will influence the way career outlook is perceived by different women. These new structuralist issues include the perceived probability of women being appointed to particular positions and the patriarchal social patterns associated with career commitment which includes such issues as the number of hours required in particular roles. The status associated with particular roles in education will also determine an individual's understanding of career outlook. For some teachers, remaining in the classroom has not attained the status of a career but rather fulfils the requirements of a job. Career outlook may therefore be diminished in the minds of some teachers when associated with lifelong classroom roles.

In analysing career outlook, it is necessary to examine the often taken-for-granted assumptions, which permeate an organisation's response to careers. Connell (1987) refers to the 'gender regime' of education institutions, which reflects a situation of a highly gender-segmented workforce, combined with a gender-segmented division of power. The combined result is a perpetuation of a masculinist culture, which contributes to a particular reified understanding of career. Careers are therefore presented as structurally over-determined by the systemic properties of organisations. A career assumes a reality over and above the individuals who must track through the organisational career context. In addition, the prevailing androcentric understanding of career with its emphasis on linear, hierarchical progression contributes to the undervaluing of teaching as opposed to administration as a career option. Positive career outlook requires the development of organisational cultures which not only respect people's overall identities and encourage balanced commitments (Lewis &

Lewis, 1996), but also contribute to the valuing of differential career decisions including career breaks and lifelong careers in the classroom.

In response to the growing emphasis on industry restructuring in Australia in the 1990's, it is notable that the development of a positive career outlook is on the agenda of organisations. This agenda has resulted in greater emphasis being placed upon such issues as workplace learning, the development of innovative career structures and family-friendly work policies. In terms of addressing the special interests and needs of women within the education profession, many organisations including Catholic education, have established a gender equity policy framework. Affirmative action and equal employment opportunity policies have been developed as a consequence.

From an individual woman's perspective, career outlook may be seen as positive on the basis of her perceived access to opportunities to develop her career with the accrual of both extrinsic and intrinsic rewards and assistance from the organisation in mapping and developing career assets. An individual may consider career outlook within a particular organisation or it may be associated with the occupation of teaching and be viewed across different educational and other organisations. Regardless of the scope of career outlook, however, it must be seen in terms of gender relations, which accommodates an understanding of the embodiment of men and women rather than seeing individuals in terms simply of 'ideal workers'. Adopting such a gendered perspective requires the researcher to pay attention to the career environment of an organisation. This environment includes the need for respectful male-female relations as well as female-female relations and male-male relations. The career environment should allow a woman to reconcile the public/private realms of her life that together contribute to the total lifestream (Burgess-Limerick, 1993).

Lifestreaming

In her study of women owner-managers of small businesses, Burgess-Limerick

(1995) found that women are concerned with composing their own lives – with what

she refers to as 'lifestreaming'. Women do not see self as a static structure, but rather

as a lifestream, to be developed and composed on a day-to-day, year-to-year basis. The

concept of lifestream allows the researcher to focus on the ways women bring the

private and public spheres of their lives into a set of relationships that are continuously

evolving and which wholistically, define who they are. Rather than maintaining a

dualistic understanding of career and domestic/other lives, lifestreaming dismantles the

home-work dichotomy. Women in the case study organisation can be seen to fit in with

the notion of lifestreaming as they seek to 'blend, harmonise and balance' their careers

as an integral part of their lives. This often requires experimentation and risk-taking in

pushing the gender boundaries at home and in the organisation to negotiate a shifting

context. It is now argued that "(o)rganisations that do not give support (to individuals)

in the process of developing their lifestreams will lose them and cannot be sustainable

in the long term' (Limerick et al., 1998, p.130).

A Catholic Religious Career Context

The notion of career outlook provides a foundation for analysing an organisation as

a place for a career. Such an analysis takes account of the relationship between

organisational and individual career needs and interests. Issues of embodiment and

sexuality are important elements affecting this relationship. These issues are

considered in this thesis through an analysis of a Catholic education organisation as a

place for a career for women.

In adopting a gender perspective on organisations, this case study research is sensitive to the ambiguities, complexities and local variations that are apparent in different organisations. The Catholic education system, anchored as it is within the context of the institutional Catholic Church, but located quite strongly in the wider educational marketplace, presents an interesting and complex picture of organisational life. In their study of teachers' careers in Catholic schools throughout Australia, Christie and Smith (1991), indicate the significance of the unique characteristic of Catholic education. "(T)he requirement that teachers operate within the context of both sacred and secular authority . . . has major implications for teachers and their career paths" (p.211). The case study emphasises the politico-religious aspect of the Catholic Church which continues to retain a highly modernist organisational structure. Through such an emphasis, the case study aims to reveal the cultural ambiguity and paradox that this sacred and secular context brings forth in the organisational career context.

Catholic education is an interesting context for examining the gender dynamics of organisational life in relation to teachers' careers. Teachers who are new to Catholic education are provided with a clear understanding that employment in Catholic schools is different from being employed in any other school or system of schools. The difference can be found in the religious work environment that is characterised by a common mission mandated by the Catholic Church. This mission is founded upon the tradition of the Church and espouses a shared values and belief system. These values and beliefs are informed by a vision-driven, inspirational ideology celebrating the primacy of the spiritual and moral life, the dignity of the person, the importance of community and moral commitments to caring, social justice and the common good. The emphasis therefore, for organisational life within Catholic education, is on

'transcendental values'. These values are considered ends in themselves, related to the higher nature of humanity and are closely related with the organisation's metastrategy and identity (Limerick, Cunnington & Crowther, 1998). Such values define "what kind of people we would like to be" (p.163).

Whilst such values are seen to create an organisational structure which is described as "refreshingly different from the centralised formats so long taken for granted in the government system" (Beare, 1994, p.8), the Catholic education organisation is facing new challenges. These challenges have arisen in response to several factors. Firstly, there are ongoing changes in Australian society with increased secularisation resulting in the disaffection of many people from institutional religions (McLaughlin, 1999). This situation has not seen a lessening of the choice by parents to send their children to Catholic schools but parental choices cannot be unilaterally seen as parental affiliation to the Catholic Church. Societal change has seen the great majority of people and especially women, facing increasing demands in their paid and unpaid working lives (Blackmore, 1999). Secondly, there has been a paradoxical response from the Catholic Church in coming to terms with the post-Vatican II renewal which emanated from the Second Vatican Council held in the mid 1960's. The Church is seen as both inward and outward looking with an ultra-conservative and a reform agenda operating simultaneously. Catholic education must be faithful to the purpose and Mission given by the Church and at the same time be conscious of the market effect on education. Thirdly, the emergence of new organisational paradigms has heralded new ideas such as the 'the knowledge economy school' (Seltzer, 2000) and the 'post-job organisation' (Baker, 2000). In response to this changing environment, the relationship between the Catholic Church and its teachers has changed to become more industrial rather than

paternal (Turner, 1992). The organisational structures of the Church, however, have changed very little and remain entrenched in a modernist and perhaps even feudal paradigm.

To enact the purpose and mission of the Catholic education organisation, various structures and processes have been set in place and individuals in a variety of roles are charged with the responsibility of fulfilling their particular ministry of Catholic education through these structures. Included within these structures are the organisational career structure and the processes that support individual careers within the organisation. These career structures and processes are a response to the need for teachers in Catholic schools to help fulfil the mission of the organisation as well as the need to maintain the viability of the organisation by attracting and recruiting suitably qualified staff. Essentially, however, such organisational structures and processes are designed to support teachers in Catholic education through enriching their faith-filled philosophies and resourcing their communal organisations (Bryk, Lee & Holland, 1993).

As an organisational perspective, the teaching career in Catholic education terms evokes a strong sense of vocation especially in the religious sense of responding to 'God's call to serve'. The association of teaching as a ministry of the Church reinforces the sense of vocation that the teaching career in Catholic education demands. The sense of vocation, however, is not the sole factor for teachers seeking a career in Catholic education. Engagement in ministry is not necessarily a conscious decision for those who seek a career in Catholic education. According to Lacey (1996), women in Catholic education in particular, face ambiguity in assenting to a 'full' exercise of ministry in curricular and extra curricular activities within a Church that does not

recognise women as 'full' ministers because of their gender. As a consequence,

Catholic education must be "all the more intentional in seeking out ways to develop

truly collaborative communities of hope and inquiry" (p.268) among its teachers, the

majority of whom are women.

The Catholic education organisation faces certain dilemmas in terms of the

teaching career. The sacred and secular meanings associated with a teaching career in

this environment may remain dualistic and contradictory without a careful and

insightful organisational response. A singularly market-driven approach will not allow

Catholic education to fulfil its transformational purpose. Therefore, an unexamined

appropriation of secular career structures and processes is not suitable for an

organisation that wishes to encourage a strong sense of vocation. In addition, an

uncritical organisational response to teachers' desires, aspirations and motivations

within their chosen career has the potential to be more disabling than enabling of

effective relationships between the organisation and individuals. There must be an

understanding within the organisational career context that a satisfying career is

important in the lives of teachers, both women and men. The question therefore, of

how gender impacts the career context, must be addressed.

Gender is constituted within the competing cultures that influence organisational

processes and practices within Catholic education. As within other work organisations,

gender, the body and sexuality are part of the processes of control in Catholic

education and its sponsoring organisation, the Catholic Church. Because Catholic

education is embedded within the patriarchal structure of the Catholic Church which

emphasises gendered divisions and hierarchy, women must grapple with the

historically formed gender contract which has defined their roles and responsibilities

relative to men. Women's input into the construction of this gender contract has been restricted within the Church arena where it is common for men to speak for women and bishops to speak for the laity.

The Participation of Women in Catholic Education

Women are the majority of teachers in both Catholic primary and secondary schools in Australia (Macdonald et al., 1999). This also applies within the diocese referred to in the case study. Women have played an important if sometimes invisible role throughout the history of Catholic education in Australia. In the past as in the present, women have engaged in the organisation in a reflexive way, living within and beyond the narrow subjectivities assumed within Catholic Church discourse on the role of woman.

For most of Christianity's two thousand year history, the Catholic Church as an institution has been maintained as a male dominated stronghold designed to preserve a hierarchical system of patriarchal power, refusing all attempts to change the status of women in keeping with changes occurring outside the Catholic Church. The Church today remains resolute in the stance taken in regard to women's issues such as ordination and birth control. The unwillingness of Church leaders to seriously address women's issues as articulated by Greeley and Durkin (1984) remains current and many women continue to seek change. They state that "Church leadership does not see a woman problem because it does not want to, perhaps because it is afraid to" (p.144). Church discourse on women which includes language, images and icons, has perpetuated an essentialist and possibly distorted image of 'woman', reinforcing a separate spheres ideology of the feminine and the masculine.

The institutionalised patterns of the Catholic Church have shaped the Catholic education organisation throughout its history and have influenced the production of gendered practices and processes. Although these practices and processes are continually modified in response to the gender struggles played out in the wider society, the religious discourse of the Catholic Church on women brings a particular understanding of women as equal but different to men (Leonard, 1995). This 'equal but different' discourse is of interest to this research. Clearly, women are different to other women and to men but the issue of equality remains an uncertain concept.

Within this religious career context, I emphasise the conundrum so aptly defined by Elshtain (1993) that in the past and in the present, women have been and are both powerful and powerless. Regardless of the Catholic Church's clinging to a dualistic anthropology which inevitably privileges men, women teachers in Catholic schools may reproduce and/or contest gender arrangements in considered or unexamined ways. It is at the micro-structural level, where individuals negotiate between their religious worldview and the economic and political demands of their lives, that it is possible to see the contested nature of gender arrangements played out. At the macro-structural level, the Catholic education organisation is required to operate within the governance of the Church at the same time as it is it required to meet State regulated policies and adapt to changing social, political and economic dynamics. The organisational context therefore, is a complex site of contradiction and contestation, in which gender arrangements are "discursive practices to be negotiated" (Biklen, 1995, p.171).

The Catholic education system as a large employing authority and a publicly funded organisation is committed to providing professional and improved conditions for its teachers. Christie and Smith (1991) allude to some of the tensions and

contradictions within Catholic education when dealing with the wider social reform agenda. In particular, public policy on Equal Opportunity for Women and sex discrimination legislation are not well accommodated in a vision of Church which has not caught up with the changing position of women and other minority groups in society.

Despite some official rhetoric endorsing women's participation in public life, the Church continues to define a woman's role by her sexuality, and her destiny by her biological capacity (Coll, 1994). The concept 'woman' as it is used in this study however, does not adhere scrupulously to one rigid definition. Neither should the concept 'religion' be held as self-evident. This study acknowledges the work of feminist scholars in the area of feminist biblical scholarship and Church history. Such studies have looked at doctrinal questions with new eyes, proposing new patterns of thinking and new ways of talking about God, about Jesus Christ and about Catholic Church theology on the concept of Christian religion (Carr, 1988; Radford-Ruether, 1992; Fiorenza, 1992).

The Catholic Church as an institution is organised along lines of gender. Men historically developed it although it is clear that women were indeed an integral part of the early Christian Church. It is currently dominated by men and symbolically interpreted from the standpoint of men in hierarchically ordained positions. The strength of an all-male, clerical authority also marks the Catholic education organisation as it comes under the authority of the Church. The Catholic Church is an institution which has traditionally encouraged women to value their achievements only in relation to others, especially men, but in recent times has acknowledged that the role

and status of women in the Catholic Church in Australia and in society is a social justice issue.

In October 1992, Bishop William Brennan, chairman of the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council, received a letter requesting the Australian Bishop's Conference to authorise and finance an independent study researching sexism in the Catholic Church in Australia. This proposal, sent on behalf of a sub-committee of the larger body, Catholics in Coalition for Justice and Peace, eventually led to a major research project on the participation of women in the Catholic Church in Australia. This project began in 1994 and culminated in the publication of a substantial report titled, Woman and Man, One in Christ Jesus: A report on the participation of women in the Catholic Church (Macdonald et al., 1999).

Women, as yet, have not been allowed any leadership roles in the professional ranks of the Catholic Church. Whilst there are women who have succeeded in filling positions of leadership in Catholic education there is a lingering patriarchal structure with male priests and bishops bearing the ultimate authority for Catholic schools and overseeing those who inhabit the Catholic education organisation.

These observations contribute to my view of Catholic education as an organisation, which is quite unique and which impacts women's career decisions and choices in particular ways. A focus on career outlook pays attention to the ways women have their career chances and choices validated within given organisational arrangements. Career choices include the decision in the first instance, to work for the Catholic Church whether consciously acknowledged or not. This choice generally requires affiliation to the Catholic Church. Women may express this affiliation differently. There are women who adopt a strong feminist stance, support reform in the Catholic

Church, and may have little sense of belonging to the Church, whilst others may be seen as 'chronically Catholic' and express an unquestioning support for Church teaching and structures. Other women fall somewhere in between these groups with the spiritual dimension of life taking some precedence.

There are other decisions that women may take in shaping a career. These decisions result from the choice or lack of choice to remain as a classroom teacher or to seek and attain more senior organisational positions and the necessity to follow a partner and defer possible career advancement. Maintaining career currency whilst not being fully engaged within the organisational career context for a variety of reasons including family leave is also an issue associated with career outlook. Other choices women must make may influence their career chances within Catholic education. Certain lifestyle issues, in particular, living in a lesbian relationship, require silent vigilance in seeking career progress. In determining career outlook for women in Catholic education, it can be assumed that individual expectations and organisational realities may not be congruent.

Women must find a way to accommodate the understanding that employment within a Catholic Church organisation promotes teaching as a work of and for the Church expressed as ministry with the notion of vocation strongly endorsed. Alongside this religious perspective is the secular idea of a career as a series of experiences in an occupation which accrue extrinsic and intrinsic rewards for the individual whilst meeting organisational objectives. The case study analyses the layering of secular and religious discourses that shape career outlook within the Catholic education organisation site. Within these discourses it is possible to find the spaces in which women resist and accommodate the organisational career context as they negotiate and

are influenced by religious and social discourses and power relations. The study

examines the impact of these competing discourses as different women in Catholic

education provide their interpretation of career outlook in the organisation.

Background to the Research

This research has emerged out of consideration of three main factors. Firstly, there

has been increasing public attention associated with teachers and their work in recent

years with a greater interest from governments and unions in developing different

models for teachers' careers. Secondly, as an employee of a Catholic education

organisation, I have an interest in the organisational career context that has been

created and continues to evolve within this religious organisation. Finally, feminist

research has influenced both the personal and political circumstances of women's lives.

I would like to extend this understanding to the position of women in a Catholic

education organisation. In the following section, these factors are explained.

<u>Government Intervention</u>

The increasing interest in teachers and their work in recent years in Australia has

been generated through government intervention related in some measure, to a

perceived need to improve student learning outcomes by creating the circumstances to

recruit and maintain a skilled and motivated teaching workforce. Under the aegis of

industry restructuring, the structures and processes which create opportunity for

teachers' careers have been placed under close scrutiny. Although Australian State

Governments have constitutional responsibility to provide education for the children of

their particular constituents, the Commonwealth Government, in similar way to other

western countries, has taken a strong interest in education. In 1990 it commissioned the

now defunct Australian Schools' Council to produce a report, titled <u>Australia's</u>

Teachers: an Agenda for the Next Decade. This report was to become a catalyst for

changes to teacher career structures in an effort to overcome, amongst other things,

"the featureless quality of many teachers' career futures" (p.128).

The structure of education organisations has also come under scrutiny as changes

have been prompted by government and industry on the basis of the perceived need for

teachers to do more in terms of student learning outcomes with limited government

supplied resources. A 'more-for-less' culture has emerged. Teachers continue to hear

the message associated with changing labour market conditions, that it is important to

develop 'career capital' by investing in new opportunities and acquiring more

credentials through additional study and training. There is a sense that one must

commodify oneself in order to survive a shift towards education as a marketplace

concern. This sense remains even in the face of the possibility of a teacher shortage.

Whilst the teaching profession remains a highly sex-segregated occupation

organised around the sexual division of labour and patterns of authority that benefit

men (Apple, 1986; Connell, 1985), the scene is changing. The position of women

teachers within this changing education scene is of particular importance when "most

commentators would agree that there is still a long way to go before the status and

standing of men and women in schools are comparable" (Milligan, Ashenden & Quin,

1994, p.1). Catholic education has been a player in this changing education scene.

A Personal Odyssey

Throughout my career, I have experienced a range of roles and responsibilities

including classroom teacher, Deputy Principal, Principal and Assistant Director of the

Catholic Education Office. My career progress has been marked by learning to deal

with the expectation that one can step into a new role such as principal of a large

school without training and proper support. This 'sink or swim' approach has been addressed to some extent in recent years. In terms of my career journey, I am considered to be a successful career woman, having followed the traditional career ladder without finding any of the rungs missing. There are many issues which contributed to my career success, some of a personal nature and some of an organisational nature. The requirements on individuals who work in a Catholic Church organisation, however, have created additional obstacles for me that in a different organisation may have gone almost unnoticed. These requirements included the need for annulment of my first marriage before I could remarry and keep my job with Catholic education.

There have been times when I have wondered if I would have enjoyed a similar career experience in a different educational organisation. A colleague in a position of responsibility in a government school commented that she felt I might not have achieved the same success working for the Department of Education. This was not because of a lack of ability or qualifications she maintained, but because of the male-dominated senior bureaucracy in the government schooling system 'standing guard over senior management positions'. I found her view quite ironic given the male dominated clerical and lay authority structure of Catholic education.

As a woman with strong feminist leanings, other feminist women have challenged me because I have chosen to work in an organisation which is closely associated with the Catholic Church. This is a Church whose religious conservatism in its structures and practices is seen by such women as irredeemably sexist. I was aware of research that clearly indicated that sexism related to teachers' careers in Australian Catholic schools was an important issue for further research and investigation.

Christie and Smith (1991) identified several possible contributing factors to a sexist culture within Catholic education in Australia. These factors include hierarchical distinctions that are grounded in clericalism, which through exclusive gendered church roles, gives power and status to men on the top of the ladder, leaving the lower steps as places of oppression, "not meaningful imposed, but inadvertently neglected" (p.231). Located on these lower steps are women teachers and women in the many support roles in Catholic education. There is also the issue of the pressure, in response to rising divorce rates, placed on women by the Church to maintain the traditional role of wife and mother. Lastly, the divisions in the Church associated with the publication in the 1968 of Pope Paul VI's Encyclical on Birth Control, Humanae Vitae have meant that many Catholic women have found themselves in direct contradiction to this teaching.

Upon reflection, there have been many contradictions and dilemmas throughout my career in Catholic education. Through the process of this research, I had hoped to make sense of my own career experiences in addition to allowing the different voices of women in Catholic education to reveal the contradictions and dilemmas they face in making career progress. Questions of structure, culture and human agency are issues, which I wished to illuminate. Exploring such issues contributes to an understanding of how gendered hierarchies continue to be sustained whilst at the same time notions of career inhabited by disembodied workers are being displaced. "Both everyday interactions and the structural design of organisations are informed by, draw upon and work through dynamics of gender, sexuality and embodiment" (Halford et al., 1996, p.231). I have viewed the notion of organisation as an embodied system of social relations whereby women's position is negotiated through the sometimes contradictory elements of structure and women's agency. Given the overabundance of 'women's

bodies' in Catholic education and the patriarchal Church context sponsoring Catholic education, I was confronted by the issue of how women in all their diversity fare in this organisation in terms of achieving their unique career aspirations.

Institutionalised practices, textual practices, symbols and face-to-face interactions associated with organisational life, express and maintain gendered practices and reproduce hierarchical distinctions between men and women. As a long-term employee of the Catholic education organisation, my experience indicated to me that some women have learned to organise more effectively in order to place their career needs and aspirations on the organisational agenda. In doing so, they are challenging the age-old stereotyped roles that the Catholic Church 'fathers' have identified as appropriate for women. The notion of women and their careers, however, remains problematic in a Catholic education organisation.

A Changing Organisation

Organisational change has been quite dramatic for Catholic education over the past thirty years. Most notably, the almost total replacement of religious personnel with lay staff has contributed to new cultures within Catholic education. Although Catholic education was once a relatively insulated organisation in Australia, it is now subject to an increasingly market-oriented culture infiltrating the wider educational environment. The challenges of individualism, competitiveness and consumerised schooling are a consequence of this culture. These contemporary market values mean Catholic education is subject to ideological forces other than religious ideology. Market ideology associated with efficiency, accountability, cost benefit, customers and product is impacting Catholic education, as it is other school systems. The evolving cultures of Catholic education are shaped and reshaped by the changing social context and

educational context. The need to manage competing influences is a priority in maintaining the authentic identity of Catholic education with an emphasis on realising various conceptions of the common good in society.

Because of the relationship of the Catholic Church to Catholic education, it is important to acknowledge not only the changes that Catholic education has undergone, but also the changes that have occurred and continue to evolve within the Catholic Church. At this stage in its history, McLaughlin (1999) indicates that the majority of Catholic teachers in Australian Catholic schools are members of a Church, which, in many ways, is very different from the Church they were born into.

> For over a thousand years, Catholics tended to see themselves belonging to a monolithic organisation characterised by a unity of language, liturgy, rituals and devotions, sacraments, role definitions and laws as well as a certitude that the authority of the leaders of the Church was God given (p.1).

In the contemporary moment, lay Catholics appear to be 'negotiating' Catholics who have established a practical, tolerant view of Catholicism rather than being unilateral believers. Catholic schools are no longer the "defensive citadels for minority communities anxious to preserve the transmission of the faith and its spiritual and moral codes and symbols" (Grace, 1996, p.17).

Christian women and men, who have an interest in genuine social justice as an integral role of the Church, continue to support change, which is capable of addressing sexism in the Catholic Church. The work of feminist theologians and feminist scripture scholars brings Christianity and feminism into conversation as a way of understanding the contradictions and tensions and the sense of power and powerlessness that women experience in a Catholic Church organisation. As employees within the Church organisation, teachers are expected to contribute to the mission of the Catholic Church.

Desmarchelier's research (2000) suggests that many women feel alienated from the Church and, as a consequence, choose to walk away or, alternatively, to continue to push for change. Women in Catholic education have also been influenced by the changing social and political context of the wider Australian educational industry and society. The extent to which women employed in Catholic education feel either alienated, affiliated or ambivalent to the Catholic Church is a question for this research because it impacts on the construction of career outlook for women in the case study organisation.

Catholic education has also changed as a result of public policy initiatives in affirmative action and equal employment opportunity for women. The introduction of equal opportunities policies and affirmative action has been the major change mechanism designed to bring about positive career outlook for women in Australia. It is instructive however, to examine the rationales which underpin these intervention strategies. Lewis and Lewis (1996) explain the two main rationales for such policy direction. "At its most basic, the equal opportunities objective seeks to give women and men equal access to paid work. A more developed objective is to achieve equal representation of women and men at all levels of organisation" (p.7). These researchers examine the flaws in the equal opportunity approaches, demonstrating the difficulties women face in pursuing a career. Issues such as family responsibilities, sex-segregation of the labour market, undervaluing of the work women do, stereotyping, discrimination and women's exclusion from formal and informal networks of power and decision-making maintain and perpetuate inequality. The most significant limitation of the equal employment opportunity approach is that in attempting to

remove barriers to various career paths within an organisation, what is overlooked is the need to question the appropriateness of the organisational processes and structures.

Although there have been significant gains for women resulting from public policy, there are issues related to current organisational structures and norms as well as informal practices which make it difficult for some women to integrate career and personal lives.

> Cultural beliefs about gender roles, the definition of the 'ideal worker', assumptions about how one demonstrates commitment to work, and assumptions about the necessity of keeping work and personal life separate, are so entrenched they threaten to overwhelm efforts to change. (Fletcher & Rapoport, 1996, p.147)

In addition, there are many questions raised concerning the efficacy of Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity policies for women and other minority groups. Lewis (1996) advocates a gender equity approach with the stated objective: "to challenge and modify all organisational practices based on an assumed separation between work and family lives so as to empower men and women to make optimum contributions in both spheres" (p.8). To achieve this objective, it is necessary to make women and men's family and work roles equally visible, legitimate and valued.

The emphasis on establishing equity for women and men to reach their preferred career destinations goes beyond access to management positions to a focus on recognising the aspirations, needs and attributes which women and men bring to the workplace. Ideally, an organisational response to careers should take account of differences between women and men, between women and women and men and men, whether biologically, historically or culturally determined. As an organisation with a strong commitment to social justice, Catholic education has embraced gender equity

reform. It has not however, examined the impact of such a policy position at any level beyond the individual's knowledge of the policy.

Framing the Research Questions

In framing the research questions, I wanted to give voice to women educators, allowing them to express often unspoken thoughts and feelings concerning being a woman and working for the Catholic Church in its ministry of education. I also wanted to emphasise the discursive and material conditions of a teaching career expressed within the opportunities and constraints of a Catholic education organisation. I hoped to illustrate the continuities and discontinuities in the organisation's conceptualisation and actualisation of career, as this related to women and their lives. The notion of careers in context was a strong conceptual device in my initial planning phase. The career context within the organisation has both a formal and an informal structure; the formal being defined through the policies and procedures associated with the organisations approach to human resource management; the informal is associated with personal sponsorship and influence, combined with an individual's knowledge of the organisation. Essentially, I was concerned with evaluating the organisation as a place for a career establishing an understanding of how different women see themselves and others faring within the organisational career context.

Taking account of the research boundaries I had established, the following research question eventually emerged:

- What is the career outlook for women who choose to work for a Catholic education organisation?

To answer this question required the delineation of further questions including:

- How is the career context of the Catholic education organisation constituted?

A further question, specifically related to women was framed as:

- In what ways does the organisation address career issues for women educators including the acknowledgement and integration of their aspirations and needs?

Career outlook can be seen as an organisational concept. It can be described through the examination of the career structures and processes and their ideological underpinnings which is defined through the texts and symbols associated with the organisational career context. In addition there are discourses which circulate about women within the organisation which impact on career outlook through the subjectivities made available to women.

The organisational career outlook may or may not be congruent with the career desires and needs of individual women. I therefore wanted to study, at the micro-structural level, the dynamics of gender in relation to women's participation in the organisation. I especially wanted to examine the ways women enact change in the organisational career situation giving consideration to how gender relations empower, constrain and mediate women's career chances. It was important in observing a feminist stance in conducting this research to gain an understanding of how women themselves see the career needs and aspirations of women being addressed or otherwise within the organisation. This includes the opportunities that are afforded women in creating circumstances conducive to a positive career outlook. Foregrounding the experiences of women provides a counterpoint to case study analysis of the organisational processes and practices that constitute the career context.

Designing the Case Study

<u>Locating the Study within the Catholic Education Organisation</u>

Within the Australian education sector, systemic Catholic education presents an interesting model of organisation, designed on premises radically different from those that underlie the various government education organisations. Public education comes under the constitutional privilege of the States and Territories, placed under the responsibility of the various Departments of Education. It remains, despite all the touted changes associated with restructuring and devolution to local school management in the 1980's and 1990's, locked within centralised and highly bureaucratic organisations. Contrasting this model, the Catholic education sector can be described as both a unified national structure under the auspices of the National Catholic Education Commission and as autonomous but strategically aligned diocesan organisations based on geographical regions under the control of various diocesan bishops. Each diocese holds a strong degree of autonomy but works collectively with the other diocese' in the State through the particular State Catholic Education Commission. It may be described as a 'weak hierarchy', in regard to the limited nature of the bureaucracy which is responsible for administering the system. This organisational structure consisting of local, state and national units utilises decision-making based on a model of co-operative federalism (Pascoe, 1994, p.123). The Catholic Church, however, gives the mandate for Catholic education, with the diocesan bishop having ultimate authority for the administration and governance of those who work in Catholic education.

The positioning of the Catholic education sector as a significant coalition of regional, state and national organisational units has been a strategic move by the Australian Catholic bishops. In reality, however, the public funding of non-government education made the continued existence of systemic Catholic education possible. Systemic Catholic schools have been partially and differentially funded under Federal and State government agreements for the past three decades.

In defining the boundaries of the case study organisation, I have located the research within three main sites that together, make up three interconnected arenas of the one organisation. These sites include the local diocesan schools which are administered through the Catholic Education Office under the authority of the local Bishop. Another arena of the organisation is the state Catholic Education Commission which is located sixteen hundred kilometres from the diocese in question. The third arena of the organisation is the National Catholic Education Commission located in Canberra, the capital city and seat of government for the Commonwealth of Australia. In referring to the 'case study organisation' throughout this research study, I include all three sites but differentiate the three arenas mentioned. It is within the local diocesan arena, however, that most women are employed.

The local diocesan arena therefore, has particular importance for this case study, as this is the organisational arena from which the majority of research participants were drawn. The case study diocese as a distinct organisational arena, consists of twenty-six primary schools and seven secondary schools under the direction of the Catholic Education Office. The schools in this diocese are either located in a large regional city or in small rural and remote country towns across an area of several thousand square kilometres.

Whilst a diocese is an autonomous structure under the authority of the local

Bishop, the State and National Catholic Education Commissions work with the

imprimatur of all the Australian Bishops to provide a strong network. This structure

provides amongst other things, a useful lobby base when dealing with governments.

There are times when local diocesan Catholic Education offices work in consultation

with other local diocesan offices within the state to achieve certain outcomes because it

is the individual states of Australia that have constitutional responsibility for education.

At other times a diocese may choose to operate independently. Most recently, a co-

operative approach has been notable for the establishment of enterprise bargaining

units through which conditions affecting teacher's working lives are negotiated at the

state level.

Catholic education would not exist if the Catholic Church did not itself continue to

exist and support the establishment of Catholic schools. In this sense, Catholic

education as an organisation cannot be seen as separate from the Church. It is the

Catholic Church which establishes the organisational values and principles for Catholic

education.

The Values and Principles of Catholic Organisations

Catholic education espouses a distinctiveness based on a value-added Mission, the

pursuit of which is believed to be a more effective strategy in building a strong,

resilient and successful organisation than trying to emulate other institutions. Catholic

Church tradition and beliefs in regard to its Mission are to be motivated by the spirit of

wisdom or truth that is determined by and animates the Catholic Church.

The values which form the basis of the organisation's culture are built upon the

religious ideology and norms of the Church. Whilst Catholic education exists within

both the collective and communal ideals espoused by the Catholic Church, it is also affected by the instrumental individualism of the democratic and economic structures of the wider society. It exists within both realms, moving ever more surely into the public education arena but wanting to maintain its distinctiveness in philosophy and in practice.

Within this public-private amalgam, both contradiction and contestation are played out. Gendering is a feature in both these oppositions but it is the religious tradition which gives the organisation its uniqueness and which itself is a site of contradiction and ambiguity. Religious traditions simultaneously contain authoritarian, emancipatory and egalitarian potential (Lesko, 1988), and consequently conclusions may be drawn regarding the effects of these traditions only by examining specific sets of practices which have evolved throughout the organisation's history. Catholic education has evolved to the present organisational structure, which is based on three guiding principles – subsidiarity, complementarity and pluriformity.

> Subsidiarity requires that, in designing a system, you start at the parochial or local level, not from the top or the centre. Pluriformity is a logical sequence. It denotes diversity or a plurality in forms. If a parish or a community believes that a certain configuration of schooling best suits its needs, conformity will not be imposed from without. Complementarity means that each part of the enterprise will dovetail, will complement, help and encourage the other parts, and will not impede them or get in the way of their functioning. (Beare, 1994, pp.7-8)

Such principles may have little impact without the conscious acceptance of individuals as more than employees within organisational practices. Employees are to be recognised as members of the organisation who through individual and collective agency contribute to imagining, re-imagining and constructing the organisational

identity within the limits set by Church authority. Teachers and other Catholics may see the Church as both distant and hierarchical but also local and personal. This study examines the extent to which principles of hierarchy and difference permeate all arenas of the case study organisation.

Creating a Feminist Research Study

The study applies organisational thinking using a feminist lens to examine the religious organisation as a place for a career for women. It looks at organisational discourses and structures through which women may incorporate themselves within the organisation. As the research is addressed from the perspective of how certain discourses position women and how women view career outlook in the organisation, my feminist beliefs and principles were very influential in the design of the research. I use the term 'feminist' to refer to a point of view that: (a) sees women as exploited, devalued, and often oppressed; (b) is committed to changing the conditions of women's material existence; and (c) adopts a critical perspective toward dominant intellectual traditions that have ignored and/or justified women's oppression (Acker, Barry and Esseveld, 1983). Within this feminist researcher stance, I am conscious of the need to take account of the diversity in, and constant movement of, the feminist research terrain (Caine et al., 1998). This movement has resulted in ongoing debate about the intellectual value of new approaches to feminist theory and its ability to create change for women in all their circumstances.

Taking account of this debate, I subscribe to an understanding of feminist research as research that highlights the importance of the development of locally situated understandings, grounded in experience and practice. Feminist research must be accessible and open to change, emphasising the conscious subjectivity of the research

process and the transformation of oppressive situations and systems through

reflexivity, consciousness raising, and empowerment of women in the research activity

(Cook & Fonow, 1990; Reinharz, 1992; Weiner, 1994). In Chapter three of this thesis,

I explain my approach to feminist method and methodology within the research

process.

The research design allows the analysis of the relationship between gender, career

and organisation by examination of factors that contribute to career outlook for women

in a Catholic education organisation. It is not possible to simply 'add-on' gender to an

otherwise gender-neutral theoretical account of how organisations impact on career

outlook. The consequences of this stance indicate a need to think differently about

'human capital' in organisations. The possibility of a new organisational future is

required in which paternalism and dependency are replaced by interdependency based

upon shared transcendental values and meanings. (Limerick et al., 1998; Baker, 2000).

The use of feminist organisational thinking emphasises the need for organisational

change to better accommodate women. Ozga and Walker (1995) suggest the need for

feminist management in an organisation to address the gender question:

> Feminist management requires an explicit commitment to forms of organisation
> that reflect and value women's strengths. That organisational form is not
> hierarchical, but ensures participation; more than that, it produces a situation in
> which there is constant and critical engagement with the possibility that things
> could be otherwise. (p.39)

In addressing this changing perspective on organisation, the research examines the

relationship between women and the organisation bringing two important assumptions

to the fore. Firstly, women's careers can no longer be seen as novelties. Secondly,

present understandings of career, employment practices and the roles played by various

key personnel within the organisation need to be re-framed.

Influenced by the research of Joan Acker (1990, 1992, 1995), this case study

focuses on gendering in the organisation with reference to policy and practices and the

symbolic order that contributes to a particular understanding of career outlook. Acker's

studies of both public and private organisations display a multi-levelled understanding

of gendering – it is not just one thing or process, but many simultaneous processes.

The notion of organisational culture encompasses the impact of changing cultures and

the potential for greater gender compatibility through appropriate gender sensitivity as

opposed to gender blindness.

Theoretical Issues

The theoretical focus in this research is gender and organisations and the impact

this has on the construction of career outlook. I argue in this research that it is not

possible to view career outlook in a gender-neutral way. Through this case study and

the application of feminist perspectives on organisations and careers the research

addresses the ways in which gender imbues an organisational career context played out

through processes and practices and supported by the established organisational

cultures. Therefore, the notion of organisation is an important theoretical concept for

this research study.

Defining Organisation.

In defining the notion of organisation, I begin with the traditional bureaucratic

understanding of organisation. Morgan (1997) points out that the word 'organisation'

which derives from the Greek 'organon' means tool or instrument. In this sense

organisations are instruments created to achieve particular ends. Armies and the

Church provided the earliest examples of organisational form, but as industrialisation grew through the nineteenth century, so did the degree of 'organised' work activity.

German sociologist, Max Weber (1947) was one of the first to articulate a theory of organisations with his work on bureaucracy, which he considered as part of the much broader subject of social domination in society. Weber identified three types of domination, which could legitimate forms of authority: the charismatic, the traditional and the rational-legal. At different historical times he believed that each mode of domination was supported by a particular kind of legitimacy and by a specific form of administrative organisation. Rational-legal domination he saw as expressed through bureaucratic organisational form characterised by hierarchical frameworks of power formally bounded by roles that legitimate the exercise of power. Bureaucracies create formal hierarchies through which formally equal/free individuals enter into contractual roles which give those in superior positions the right to exercise defined authority over those in subordinate positions in order to achieve the goals of the organisation. Weber saw bureaucratic organisations proliferating in the industrialised world, so that bureaucracy routinised and ordered administration just as machinery routinised and ordered production.

There is considerable debate at present about what an organisation is and how organisations are changing. Morgan indicates that increasingly, "bureaucracies and other modes of mechanistic organisation are coming under attack because of their rigidities and other dysfunctional consequences" (p.31). Other writers on organisation have described the emergence of post-Fordist organisations, based not on the hierarchical, abstract principles of the modernist bureaucracy (Clegg, 1990) but instead on de-layered, flexible organisation in which responsibility is delegated to workers.

Furthermore, post-modern theorists suggest that far from discovering a new prescription for the best organisation, there is no one account of organisation, and organisation has to be embedded within specific cultural contexts. In this view, the old certainties of efficiency and rationality should be revealed as discursive expressions of power rather than abstract or neutral principles of 'good' organisation (Clegg, 1990; Morgan, 1997). These changing perspectives of organisation are important in my analysis of both the organisational dimensions of the Catholic education organisation which is influenced by the organisational structure of the Catholic Church. Whilst change is occurring in both Catholic education and the Church, women remain positioned in contradictory ways as a result of Church discourse on women.

The Catholic education organisation is embedded within the politico-religious organisational reality of the Catholic Church. As an organisation, Catholic education must reconcile competing values within sacred and secular authority. It must also ameliorate conflicting interests and competition from other educational providers over limited resources. This has implications for the ways that Catholic education applies sets of beliefs and values to its methods for attainment of organisational goals. Through this case study, I emphasise the need for an organisation to recognise that the positions within the organisational career structures are "literally fleshed out by real, embodied, gendered persons possessing varying amounts of authority, influence, skills and expertise relative to one another" (Halford et al., 1996, p.108). A feminist theoretical perspective on organisations creates this possibility.

Casting the Feminist Gaze on a Religious Organisation

Conducting a feminist research project within a religious workplace setting is an important initiative from the perspective of validating the career choices of women

who choose to accommodate a religious perspective as part of their life context. Over

and against a younger generation of post-modern scholars, for example, who in my

experience, consider the term 'religious feminist' to be an oxymoron, I support

feminist biblical scholar, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza's position that "for millions of

wo/men (the spelling is intended to include marginalised men as well as all women)

religion still provides a framework of meaning that is not just alienating or oppressive

but also self-affirming and liberating" (1998, p.27).

There are several ways of approaching the issue of gendering in organisations.

This research study considers developments in feminist approaches to gender research,

situating gender as a decisive element within an organisation. Through the case study,

important factors are revealed concerning the construction of gender in Catholic

education. The aim of this case study is to describe the process which has led to the

existence of a complicated and multidimensional character of organisational femininity

and masculinity. Recent gender research emphasises differences, arguing against

notions and concepts such as the gender system which is based on organising

principles of hierarchization, segregation and patriarchy, seeing these concepts as too

deterministic and reductionist (Nicholson, 1990; Alvesson & Billing, 1997). I have

chosen to use these concepts, however, acknowledging that more than one kind of

masculinity and one kind of femininity can exist (Walby, 1990). The research focus

requires an elaboration of the forms of masculinities and femininities that are

significant within the Catholic education organisation. This involves a focus upon the

cultural context of the organisation that is steeped in the tradition of the Catholic

Church.

The case study provides an opportunity to analyse the ways women contest and/or accommodate the organisational career context as an element in the construction of career outlook. This is supported by analysis of the cultural meanings and structural arrangements that construct and constrain women's agency, and that "limit the transformative potential of intentionalised activity" (Ortner, 1996, p.2). In general, women are seen as more disadvantaged in making career progress relative to men because of their domestic responsibilities. Such responsibilities may be seen as the natural lot of being a woman creating an essentialist understanding of gender. In this sense, gender is a quality or trait or fundamental attribute that is internal and separate from the ongoing experiences of interaction with the daily contexts of one's life.

A significant problem with an essentialist view of gender is that we may be led to make universalist assumptions. For example, if we say that women think, make moral judgements or exercise decision-making differently from men, which women do we mean? An essentialist understanding of gender supports the assumption that organisational processes and practices are gender neutral and any barriers to women's roles and choices within the organisation are seen to be the result of gender differences between women and men. Women's career limitations therefore, may be seen to be a result of qualities within themselves instead of reflecting the social structures that shape their lives. Such structures include organisational practices and processes that create gendered organisational cultures that ultimately affect career opportunities and career choices.

Adopting a critical feminist perspective on gender, this research assumes that gender is not resident in the person; it exists in those interactions that are socially construed as gendered. This research pays particular attention to the ways in which

gender is embedded within organisational practices and processes and demonstrates the centrality of these practices and processes to career outlook. Paying attention to both gender and organisation emphasises the way that organisational processes and practices create a particular career outlook based on a contested understanding of career.

Within a religious organisation, it is necessary to be critical about the meanings and messages that are embedded within the philosophical and theological framework of the religious tradition upon which the organisation is built. The patriarchal context of the Catholic Church is perpetuated through the hierarchical authority of ordained men and the exclusion of women on the basis of their sex from these ordained positions. Underpinning this ecclesial dimension of patriarchy lies many centuries of patriarchal theology. This patriarchal theology was solidly developed through the writings of Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in the early fifth century, and later in the thirteenth century by Thomas Aquinas (Greeley, 1990). Catholic attitudes toward women have been influenced by the theological writings of these two formidable men of the Church.

For Catholic education, this patriarchal tradition remains visible in the various facets of the Catholic religion including the liturgy, the church's social structures, doctrines and symbolic representations. Addressing the issue of gendering of the Catholic education organisation from a religious perspective presents the question: Does a sexist/androcentric/patriarchal mindset permeate the organisation? (O'Toole, 1995). And if so, what are the implications for the career outlook for women who choose to work within this environment? It is also important to analyse the historical positioning of women within the organisation leading to the current picture for career outlook. In particular, the unique role of religious women in shaping the success of

Catholic education in times past and their continued role alongside lay women in shaping change in the Catholic Church is an important consideration.

Identifying the notion of career outlook involves more than analysing women's access to leadership positions within Catholic education. An organisation has the potential to address career outlook from the perspective of women in a range of roles, positions and at different career phases. It requires attention to the changes in personal qualities and attributes that an organisation promotes. In bringing a feminist perspective to such issues, I move between the private and public, the home and the organisation, blurring those boundaries and categories. A feminist perspective acknowledges that relations between women and men are unstable and contested, that power is wielded and resisted (MacKinnon, 1997), and allows the researcher to map emerging changes in the ways women construct possibilities for themselves in organisations like the Catholic education organisation.

Reflections on the Purpose and Significance of the Research

In considering previous research in the area of gender and teacher's careers, I aimed to do two things through my own research study. Firstly, I wanted to bring a religious organisational perspective to research that has generally been located within a secular understanding of the world and paid work. A study located within a Catholic education organisation expands career and organisational narratives to include ideas such as the spirituality of work and organisational structures based on religiously defined imperatives rather than economic ones alone. This also raises issues pertaining to the Catholic religious tradition which continues to dichotomise life into sacred and secular, the latter being associated with the profane.

The notion of a 'career' is firmly located within the secular world and must therefore be given a religious patina within the Catholic education organisation. The Catholic Church organisation also provides continuing evidence of the tenacity of gender as an axis of oppression for women. This is evidenced by the all-male clerical structure, the promotion of an exclusive male image of the deity, and a gender paradigm which defines 'woman' in a narrow and stereotypical way based on an inappropriate anthropology of essentialism and duality. Such views contribute to a sense of cultural oppression for women although my research stance acknowledges that different women may see the local Church and the universal Catholic Church as separate identities. My concern therefore, was to design research based on contextualisation rather than universalism.

Secondly, I wanted to overcome a shortcoming recognised by Acker (1994) in previous research associated with the teaching career. Acker indicated that an emphasis on individuals when studying teacher's careers sometimes appears to cause structures to disappear from an analysis. Indeed, it was structures and practices within the organisation that I wanted to make visible. According to Acker (1994, p.85), research concerned with women teacher's careers has been limited by an emphasis on "an ideology of individual choice, and a corresponding neglect of constraint at any but familial level".

In her review of the literature on teachers and work, Acker found that much of the recent research into teacher's careers places the emphasis upon individual agency in the choices one makes or does not make concerning career and life plans. In other words, women's pursuit of a career is governed more by the circumstances of their personal lives – family responsibilities, mobility and spousal support than by any

structural constraints associated with gender systems operating in organisations. In the Catholic education organisation, gender systems are informed by competing ideologies that drive practice. Such ideologies are found in the religious tradition of Catholicism and in the public policy domain which shapes teaching as an occupation and as a semi-profession. To counter this ideology of individual choice, emphasis must be given to the organisational context within which the individual is operating.

In Chapter two of this thesis, I provide a feminist research foundation to support an understanding of organisations as gendered and the influences upon the gendered logic of organisations. Changes in ideological, demographic and economic conditions influence education policies, and together impact the organisational career context within which women's commitments and career patterns are shaped. Policy makers and practitioners may ignore the significance of culture in the formulation and adoption of policy.

Given the significance of culture (Angus, 1995; Hargreaves, 1994), this thesis considers organisational culture and gender as shaping forces for careers. Individuals may choose particular career strategies based on their assessment of the best opportunities available to them at the time, but these will fall within sets of social and political constraints (Gaskell, 1992). These constraints contribute to the construction of gendered meanings identifiable within the policies and practices of the organisation and associated with the construction of a career outlook particular to the organisation. Other factors which need to be considered include organisational history and cultures which focuses on "the values, ideas, beliefs, norms, rituals, and other patterns of shared meaning that guide organisational life" (Morgan, 1997, p.7). Gender relations are influenced by and influence organisational cultures within the Catholic education

organisation. The question for organisations is how to influence gender relations to create greater gender compatibility within the organisation.

Historical, demographic, economic, political, and in this particular study, the religious structures, constitute a bargaining arena in which meaning is negotiated and constrained. This statement is the foundation for Chapter four of this thesis which identifies the bargaining arena within which teacher's careers are negotiated in the Catholic education organisation and the impact for women's careers. The tension women experience as a result of the discourses about women that circulate within the organisation, influencing the bargaining arena are explored in Chapter five. In Chapter six, the women who participated in this case study identify the opportunities and barriers they believe are created within the discursive arrangements of the organisation, revealing the consequences of particular organisational discourses and structures for their career decisions. The discourses women draw upon to understand and explain their career choices and actions are inscribed by what it means to be a teacher and a woman within the culture of the Catholic education organisation and in the lives of teachers as adults working in schools. In a religious organisation, teachers do not have to focus on gender for it to significantly mark their lives.

Examining the construction of career outlook within the organisation and the ways women make sense of the organisational career context contributes to a woman-centred perspective on careers and organisation. This perspective supports current understandings of the ways in which women reflexively negotiate the organisational terrain to accommodate their personal and working lives (Acker, 1999). In addition, the study reveals the continuing perceptions of gender-related disadvantage which women in this study shared and related to the ways in which masculine preferment operates

within the organisation. The salient issue from a gender research perspective, is the examination of the ways that gender is embedded within the organisation and the tenacity of gendered practices which persist and are reorganised over time. It also acknowledges that women find ways of making the organisation their own, albeit within the confines of their particular school. In a Catholic setting, the school may or may not have strong ties to the local parish Church. For some women, the total organisational reality may be unclear.

This thesis sharpens the focus on the dynamics of gender relations and the question of change and permanence as a point of tension for members of an organisation. As a study set within a feminist framework, the distinctiveness of the Catholic education organisation presents an opportunity to evaluate certain elements of the organisational form with a view to positioning women as agents who construe and construct social action within the constraints of the Catholic Church. Women who work in this organisation are, from a Church perspective, seen as 'workers in the vineyard' contributing to the mission of the Catholic Church. The teaching career must be seen, therefore, within an understanding of teaching as a ministry with an implied vocational impetus as opposed to the more individualistic and success driven view of the secular career. From a feminist perspective, the Catholic Church as an institution remains a carrier of patriarchal values in unusually pure expression. Feminists of all persuasions would see a need for a reshaping of this institution in some very fundamental ways. This research considers the different ways women inside Catholic education deal with the question of women and the Catholic Church.

Beyond examining the particularities of the Catholic education organisation as a place for a career, the study also has the potential to contribute to the broader study of

teachers as an occupational group in Australia. According to MacLean and McKenzie (1991), teachers as an occupational group in Australia have attracted "surprisingly little study" (p.2) given the significance of the sheer numbers of teachers employed. The need for research into teacher's careers has been emphasised in several recent Government reports including the Australian Schools' Council reports: Teacher Quality: An Issues Paper (1989), and Australia's Teachers - An Agenda for the Next Decade (1990). More recently, the Senate Reference Committee on Employment, Education and Training outlined the importance of and the devaluation of the teaching career in a document titled A Class Act: An inquiry into the status of teachers (1998). Collectively, these documents illustrate the growing concern with the status of teaching as a profession and a career in Australia.

The particular need for research into women teachers was outlined in the 1994 report to the National Board of Employment, Education and Training titled Women in the Teaching Profession (Milligan et al., 1994). This report, along with more recent research by Blackmore (1999) illuminates, on the one hand, how women have for decades been significantly under-represented in formal leadership positions; on the other, there is a gradual trend towards an increasing feminisation of teaching and the labour market in general. Ironically, women are becoming educational leaders in some states in Australia as a consequence of two decades of equal opportunity policies and professional development, at the very moment the teaching profession is being deskilled and de-professionalised. A conjuncture of factors has produced highly gendered effects for teaching in Australia.

It is still apparent after many years of intervention through government policy that teaching career patterns follow sexually divided paths. Perhaps there is still some truth

in the assertion made by Sampson (1991) that women teach but only a few can be said to have careers in teaching. It is possible that with the majority of women in the profession becoming an increasing majority in the near future, women may enter leadership positions in numbers by virtue of them being there and men being in other professions. This is little comfort to women concerned with matters of equality. Whilst accounting for the desires of particular women and the need for women in general to be in leadership in the education profession, I hold a basic understanding of the teaching career as a path in life that affords opportunities to achieve career goals in a variety of roles. I therefore acknowledge that there are many women who wish to have their lifelong careers in the classroom accorded career status which includes appropriate remuneration. The need for organisational structures that allow individuals to reconcile paid work and family and other responsibilities is a necessary condition to achieving a positive career outlook.

In outlining the significance of this research, I subscribe to the reasons identified by MacLean and McKenzie (1991) for the importance of studying teacher's careers. These reasons include:

1. The career structure in which teachers work is of importance to teachers because it is the means by which money, status and power are allocated between individuals.
2. The nature of the career structure in teaching is important to employers because of its direct impact on salary costs and its possible influence on recruitment and retention of teachers in the profession, and their attitudes to the profession and subsequent behaviour.

A further reason relates to the idea presented by Adamson (1997) that opportunities to experience work as a career contribute to a woman's continuous

realisation of self. This understanding of career contributes to personal autonomy and

the achievement of meaning in life. A teacher's career can provide professional

growth, intellectual stimulation and public esteem for the teacher associated with the

contribution teaching makes to the individual student's life chances. In the process of

defining and redefining the research question, I was required to clarify the purpose of

the research. I determined that the purpose of the research was to examine and analyse

the construction of career outlook from the perspective of women within a Catholic

education organisation giving consideration to the many influences that may shape this

construction. This analysis would allow me to expound an understanding of the

relationship between gender, career and organisation when religious ideology is a

major shaping force upon the organisation and theoretically on the women who inhabit

the organisation.

Summary

The research perspective outlined in this chapter is located within the broader

theoretical agenda of exploring the relationship between gender, career and

organisations. Through the case study, I aimed to identify problematic issues arising

out of the relationship between organisational dynamics and the careers of women

teachers in a Catholic education organisation. According to Schmuck (1987), it is not

possible to fully comprehend the dynamics of school organisations, classrooms, or the

people who inhabit them unless we consider the influence of gender. Schmuck states

that:

> Educational institutions are unique in the social fabric; they have different
> purposes, outcomes, clients, and procedures from other social organisations. They
> are among the small number of organisations with a majority of women in the
> professional ranks (indeed, teaching is referred to as a 'feminised profession') . . .

Schools are perhaps the most integrated organisations by sex within all Western cultures and perhaps, simultaneously, the most genderised. Issues of learning, of professionals' task roles, of reward structures (for students as well as employees), of the exercise of power and authority (within the classroom as well as within the school or district organisation), of role distributions, and of individual motivation and aspiration all involve gender as a variable. (pp.12-13)

From this theoretical stance, I acknowledge the essentially political nature of organisational processes and practices through which discourses are articulated and power is exercised creating and recreating gendered organisational cultures. These discourses include historically produced processes of regulation that enact women's subordination. Within the Catholic education organisation, Church discourses associated with both the nature of teaching, work, and the 'essential' woman' are layered within the rational and instrumental discourses associated with corporate managerialism and the discourses of the education marketplace. The focus for this case study is based on analysing the fluid and dynamic interaction of gender with the power of institutional constructions in determining career outlook for women in this explicitly religious organisation.

Within this chapter I have outlined the background to this research and established a research stance firmly located within the feminist research tradition. I have provided an overview of the arenas that constitute the total case study organisation. The particular importance of the religious identity of the organisation for women has been emphasised. I have identified the questions that have given the research its direction and I have defined the notion of career outlook and other important concepts that support the research stance. In Chapter 2, I examine research literature that locates gender within the concepts of organisation and career, with particular reference to the

teaching career. The literature provides a research landscape designed to illuminate

issues associated with a feminist perspective on women and teaching and the impact of

institutional contexts without neglecting the many colourful discursive influences that

shape women teacher's lives and the organisations they animate.