

**THE GAP BETWEEN HOPE AND HAPPENING:  
FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS MEETS  
PNALLOCENTRIC SMOG IN A REGIONAL  
AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY**

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## ABSTRACT

The gap between hope and happening refers to the experiences of four academic women who work at Milton University (MU), the pseudonym for a regional Australian university. This thesis is concerned with the ways in which discourses circulating within MU shape the performances and discursive positionings of the four women — Alice, Madonna, Veronica and Tamaly (all pseudonyms) — and how, in turn, these women negotiate these discourses. Data are drawn from the women's narratives, university policy documents and selected institutional texts. A feminist poststructuralist lens interrogates both policies, reflecting different approaches towards gender equity at MU, and discursive practices, constructing the 'good academic' at MU.

Instead of acts of resistance, what is revealed in this workplace is the continuing covert strategies of marginalization that reproduce women's positioning on the margins of mainstream academia, indicating the presence of a kind of 'phallocentric smog' emerging from a dominant masculine culture. This thesis finds a gap between the transformative potential of the four women at the micro-social (subjectivity) level and the lack of transformation at the macro-social (workplace) level. This suggests that the women's abilities to resist and transform phallocentric discourses at the personal/private level are not sustainable at the public level because of the enduring power of normative institutional discourses or the 'phallocentric smog'. This thesis signals the need for ongoing interrogation of the gap between the hope that feminists have (theory) and the happening for women (practice) in the quest for sustainable equity.

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## **DECLARATION**

**I declare that the main text of this thesis is entirely my own work and that such work has not been previously submitted as a requirement for the award of a degree at Central Queensland University or any other institution of higher education.**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'T Moore', written over a horizontal dotted line.

**Teresa Moore**

**June 2003**

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS MEETS PHALLOCENTRIC SMOG:**

### **GENDER IN ACADEMIA**

#### **1.0 Overview**

With all the talk about feminist theorizing, workplace reform and changing societal norms that Australian women have been exposed to over the past twenty-five years, it might be reasonable to hope that much has changed for women in contemporary Australian society. For example, it should be possible to expect that women would be visible in greater numbers in senior positions within the workplace, and that they might occupy positions of decision making and power within government sectors, exercise independence, have choice and be valued in the pathways that they choose. This hope is supported in many ways by contemporary feminist writing that has moved from representing women as ‘victims’ to portraying them as powerful, resourceful and capable of enacting significant change. For example, post-structuralist feminists, such as Rosi Braidotti (1994) and Donna Haraway (1995), write of women in alternative subject positionings as new feminist figurations and cyborgs (please note that the referencing style adopted in this thesis is standard APA).

Indeed, if one follows the commentary of certain sections of the media, one could be forgiven for thinking that gender reforms had, in fact, gone ‘too far’ with women supposedly taking ‘jobs from men’ and the argument regularly being made that gender is no longer an issue in contemporary Australian society (Gunn, 2000; Hele 1999;

Yallamas, 2002). By this I refer to the perception that women are indeed 'equal' and there is no need for further gender reform in what is often termed as the post-feminist age. The consequence of this commentary can be seen with the review of the Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity) legislation by the Howard Federal (Australian) Government, the reluctance by the same government to appoint a Sex Discrimination Officer and the removal of the Office of Women's Policy from its central Federal Cabinet location to a more marginal location within the government ranks. This same government has also overseen the abolition of gender-neutral terms such as 'chair' and the return to such outmoded forms of address as chairman (Chan, 1999, p. 11).

However: when all the rhetoric (both pro- and anti-feminist) is removed, a simple question is left: does all this talk about multiple figurations, post-feminism, workplace and gender reform, the 'rise' of women and change in societal norms bear any relation to the realities for ordinary Australian women in the workforce? This thesis asks what should be an obvious, but what is often a disregarded, question: what has really changed for women in the workplace?

This, of course, is an extremely large area but in working towards addressing this question my thesis focuses on an environment or context where it could be argued that change in attitudes towards the place of women in contemporary society would be most likely to occur — namely academia. As feminist writers have been located within university structures and many of the women who are employed in universities align themselves (albeit to varying degrees) with feminist politics it would be reasonable to 2

expect that these spaces — at least as much as any other — would reflect much of the best of gender reform or pro-feminist work that has happened in the process of challenging phallocentrism. The term phallocentrism, in this thesis, is defined as an ‘invisible presence’ where the structuring of contemporary society revolves around the privileging and associated power of a culturally dominant male group. This group possesses power by virtue of masculinity, more specifically hegemonic masculinity, where gender practice embodies and legitimizes patriarchy (Connell, 1995, p. 77). This group comprises those males who are more likely to be white, middle class, educated, privileged and wealthy. Phallocentric discourses and practices place this group as the centre of society, where all else is both positioned and measured in relation to the norms, values and beliefs of this group.

Therefore this thesis is concerned with the extent to which the kinds of reforms, practices and ideologies associated with first, second and third wave feminism/s are evident within the discourses and practices of one specific university — Milton University (MU) (a pseudonym). I am going to be looking at the ways in which gender reform is played out in MU, a regional, multi-campus Australian university.

I begin my analysis by investigating the extent to which the university displays any broad understanding of, or responsiveness to, feminist consciousness in its most general sense. From this I am then able to demonstrate not only the common ways in which women are positioned in relation to men in the dominant institutional discourses and the

consequences of this positioning for women, but also the multiple and diverse ways in which these women negotiate this positioning.

While I am able to show the women's awareness of the dissonance between the various institutional discourses and their lived experiences and draw attention to the ways in which these women can be seen as potentially transformative beings, what is also demonstrated is the way that any transformation of this workplace is thwarted by what I refer to as a kind of phallocentric smog that permeates MU. This phallocentric smog is a metaphor or political fiction (Braidotti, 1994) that signals a combination of obstacles that emerge from a "masculine culture" (Burton, 1997) that women come up against in this workplace (see Chapters Two, Five, Six and Seven).

This analysis, then, brings into question the alleged 'transformed' nature of women's workplaces, raising a more controversial issue: that women are not always able to enact/sustain the kind of transformation that contemporary theorizing on resistance/transformation has promised. What this thesis shows is evidence of transformative beginnings, but not so much in the way of transformative results.

### **1.1 Overall aim**

Feminists such as Elizabeth Grosz (1990) suggest two phases are necessary in the transformation of phallocentric systems. The first phase consists of unmasking and challenging current phallocentric discourses while the second phase is characterized by

the construction of alternative figurations and ways of thinking. The overall aim of this thesis parallels these phases.

That aim is to unmask the persistently phallogentric nature of a regional university by analyzing how gender generally, and the question of difference more specifically, are dealt with in official policies and unofficial day-to-day texts. Feminist post-structuralism enables me to read MU, the site of this research, as a text. In reading MU through this lens, I can then look for counternarratives that signify transformation or alternative figurations of the academic. This allows me to ask particular questions.

## **1.2 Research question**

My overall research question asks to what extent is MU inclusive of academic women?

To answer this I will divide this question into three sub-sections:

- How do equity policies at MU construct difference?
- How are the dominant institutional discourses at MU dealing with difference?
- What, if any, resistance and transformation can be identified?

I will analyze the way MU is inclusive of academic women, by attending to the processes through which the university accommodates not just the idea of women, but women as a multiple, complex and diverse group characterized by multiple differences (Braidotti, 1994). Equity policies at MU provide one baseline for workplace conditions and an informal guide to a code of behaviour that should be expected. Dominant institutional discourses convey both explicit and more significantly implicit messages about what



behaviours and practices are valued and rewarded and those that are devalued and punished within MU.

These policies and institutional discourses discursively construct and position academic men and academic women in precise ways in this workplace. By analyzing the ways in which the four women negotiate these constructions it is then possible to identify any resistance to, and transformation of, traditional paradigms that may be present. By doing this I am then able to comment on the extent to which MU is inclusive of academic women. Individually these sub-sections form the three data analysis chapters (see Chapters Four, Five and Six). I will now briefly turn to the site of my research.

### **1.3 Site**

MU is located in a regionallrural community and is rapidly expanding to become what it describes as a global university, with five faculties distributed over eleven campuses located regionally, interstate and internationally —thereby illustrating the ways in which the university operates in an era and context of competition and globalization. In a context of globalization and “technoscape” culture (Appadurai, 1990), the role of the university in the global village is important to consider. The overt move towards a technologized workplace is demonstrated in how MU markets itself on the international scene as innovative and progressive through the use of ‘cutting edge’ technology (see Milton University, 2001a). It is also important to acknowledge the kinds of trends that inform the ways in which universities are responding to ‘global pressures’. MU is currently one of a number of Australian universities that have established a ‘for profit’

subsidiary operating on entirely commercial principles becoming a hybrid university comprising two complementary components — MU Regional and MU Global (Milton University, 2000a). I now turn to the significance of this thesis.

## **1.4 Significance**

This thesis is significant because it:

- draws into question the ‘alleged’ transformative power of women to change their workplace culture;
- highlights the consequences for women of the changing nature of the workplace in an era of intensifying globalization that appears to be controlled by the discourses of corporatism and economic rationalist approaches;
- demonstrates that, while some women have been successful in gaining positions of decision making, power and status (measured against ‘masculine’ indicators of successful performance), the reality for most ordinary ‘working’ women is that they remain undervalued through sex-based disadvantage despite the fact that gender/feminist reforms have been in the workplace for eighteen years;
- signals that transformation, in this context, as understood in post-structuralist theorizing, is extremely difficult to enact/sustain;
- draws attention to the limitations of current equity policies at MU, thereby highlighting what Rowan (2001) refers to as ‘stunt’ equity.

## 1.5 A personal comment

In contemporary Australian society there seems to be a growing intolerance of difference rather than a valuing of difference. Examples of this are seen in the reactions to refugees and migrants, and in how these people are dealt with, spoken about and received by the broader community. This intolerance is also seen in increasing numbers of protection orders being granted, incidents of domestic violence, sexual assault and gay hate crimes. It could be argued that parts of the Australian community do not value difference at its most basic level — that between male and female — and, while I see it is necessary to engage with on-going debates about boys and men, this debate should not be at the expense of the girls or women. For successful outcomes the debate needs to be inclusive of all genders.

I contend that contemporary Australia is still experiencing a backlash against second wave feminist reforms where the gender debate has been hijacked by various quarters, including some radical and not-so-radical men's groups — from the clearly misogynist 'Blackshirts' to the corporate, conservative 'Suits'. This backlash forms part of what I refer to in this thesis as phallogentric smog. This smog clusters around sites of resistance to discourses of patriarchy and heightens the tensions around workplace performances, entrenching embodied discourses that discursively position women on the margins.

This smog is not easily dispersed and neither is there an anti-smog machine to remove this invisible, yet ubiquitous, phenomenon. This signals the huge complexity and the often overwhelming nature of the gender debate, one that is not easily dealt with; nor

does this thesis offer a quick fix. Whilst I see gender relations as an issue involving both men and women, the parameters of this thesis are defined necessarily by time and space to focus on four academic women employed at MU; as such, this thesis does not generalize to include other academic women or men or other academic contexts.

### **1.6 Introducing the women**

This thesis would not have been possible without the four academic women who agreed to participate — they are Alice, Madonna, Veronica and Tamaly. These women generously gave of their time and discussion through providing rich descriptions of their workplaces that enhanced my own appreciation of the multiple perspectives or dimensions of a university. I came to meet these women in very different circumstances.

#### **Alice**

I first met Alice at a breakfast arranged by the Women in Research (WIR) group. She is a very bright, outgoing woman who talked enthusiastically about feminist issues, women doing research and life in academia. During the course of my data collection Alice became a mother for the second time, which provided many passionate discussions about the place of women in both the public and private spheres. Alice is currently finishing her own PhD thesis in combination with being a mother.

#### **Veronica**

During my role as research assistant for Veronica I asked if she would care to participate in my research project. Veronica has strong views about how women are defined by the

contexts in which they find themselves so I looked forward to hearing her stories of her own negotiations of academic and other discourses and was not disappointed. Veronica is also attempting to finish her own PhD work.

### Madonna

Madonna and I share an interest in small and very spoilt dogs. These two small and spoilt dogs also shared an interest in each other when we regularly met on early evening walks in our local suburb. Madonna, like myself, learnt much about the internal 'politics' of a regional university during the data collection phase of this research. Madonna has recently finished a Masters degree and is currently on contract to MU.

### Tamaly

Having been introduced to Tamaly by another PhD student, I later approached her to be part of the group and I was soon enthralled by her stories. Tamaly broadened my appreciation of the different obstacles that some women have in achieving their goals. Tamaly has completed her PhD and is currently focusing on research that connects her to both national and international contexts where she is seen as an expert in her field.

All four women are involved with teaching and research and all four incorporate various aspects of different technologies in their daily interactions as academic women at MU. Alice, Madonna and Veronica are extensively involved with undergraduate teaching, especially first year students; this, in turn, means intensive student consultations. Students mirror the broad cross section of the local community, in that the student body is made up

of mature age, school leavers, international and non-English speaking background students. Teaching activities take up the majority of time for these three women.

Alice and Veronica are doing their own PhD research while Madonna has just finished her Masters degree. Tamaly deals mainly with postgraduates who are primarily distance education students and her research interests lie in the area of her PhD work. Tamaly is able to balance her teaching and research. All four women do administration work associated with course coordination, course development and delivery. Madonna is involved with team research projects with her faculty. Madonna, Alice and Veronica are involved with community partnerships.

I will now discuss issues of anonymity and confidentiality that arise when working with women in an academic workplace within Australia. The academic world in Australia is relatively small; this is particularly so when researching in regional universities. That is, if a particular university is identified it is then relatively easy to identify most, if not all, staff members employed between specific dates. Academic women across Australia represent an even smaller group that can be readily identified and because of this issues of anonymity need to be addressed.

I have chosen a pseudonym for the site of my research, and in order to address the issue of anonymity for the participants I chose to blur necessarily the 'real' identities of the women who are part of this research. This also means that some data sources have been labeled with the same pseudonym to aid this anonymity (see reference list). In other

words, all identifying factors pertaining to the institution have been labeled MU but other identifiers of the data sources have remained true. Although I believe there can be no absolute guarantees of anonymity I will be employing certain methods towards a level of anonymity. I address this in the following manner:

- the women have provided their own pseudonyms;
- references to faculties and colleagues will be disguised;
- I provide a broad overview of academic women employed at MU rather than specific descriptions of my respondents and their faculties.

All four women are employed by MU in either full time or part time positions. Their ranks range from Level B lecturer to Professor in either tenured or contract appointments. Their ages range from thirties to sixties and they are married, single or divorced. These women are located in four of the five faculties at MU and are situated at one of the eleven campus sites.

## **1.7 Outline of the thesis**

I have divided this thesis into seven chapters. In this chapter I have outlined the issues being addressed and the significance of this research. I stated the overall aim and the research question of the thesis. I located my research in a specific site and introduced the participants. In Chapter Two I present a literature review around the area of women, work and universities. Because this area is very broad and comprehensive, I draw on selected literature that informs this thesis, identify gaps within the literature and position this thesis in the growing area of feminist post-structuralism. Specifically this review

highlights the way in which organizations such as the university are perceived as neutral but are actually operating according to male norms.

In Chapter Three a methodological framework underpinning the theoretical positioning of this thesis is set out. In this chapter I explore notions around discourse, subjectivity, bodies and transformation. By beginning from a point that sees women as discursively constructed I am able to use this approach to unmask mechanisms that continue to marginalize women. The design of the research process is outlined and is intimately connected to the methodological framing. This is illustrated by the specific methods that are used in both data collection and data analysis. The following three chapters set out the data analysis of this research.

In Chapter Four I analyze approaches to gender equity at MU that have resulted in specific policies being developed at that institution (the first of two contexts framing gender relations at MU). In so doing I highlight the hope that feminists have envisaged through gender reform. Equity policies are a way of interrogating how an institution deals with issues of difference and this chapter provides those contextual data. The presence of lingering equal opportunity (EO) discourses signals ambiguous messages for equity in the contemporary academic workplace.

Chapter Five deals with the second context — that of institutional discourses. The analysis in this chapter uncovers the phallocentric construction of the ‘good academic’. This chapter builds on the theme, introduced in Chapter Two, in which formal discourses



construct a sexually neutral workplace and then introduces the notion that informal discourses construct women as either different from, or complementary to, men in this workplace, indicating a sexualized workplace. This chapter outlines what is happening in this specific workplace.

Chapter Six, the last of the data analysis chapters, focuses on the negotiation of this workplace by these women and examines how their performances and technological engagements in teaching are 'read' through their bodies, thereby highlighting discourses of embodiment. This chapter indicates and explores the gap between the hope as set out in Chapter Four and what is happening in the workplace as set out in Chapter Five. In this chapter I expose the powerful nature of informal discourses and the notion of embodiment that form part of the phallogentric smog by presenting stories of marginalization as these women reconcile institutional expectations regarding students and phallogentric discourses circulating within this institution.

In Chapter Seven I draw this thesis to a close, firstly by bringing together the findings of this research and its implications when considering the position of academic women, and secondly by suggesting possible directions for future research around women's equity in Australian society. I now begin this thesis by reviewing the selected literature.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **WOMEN, WORK AND UNIVERSITIES:**

#### **ARE THERE MOVES TOWARDS TRANSFORMATION OF THE WORKPLACE?**

##### **2.0 Overview**

There have been enormous amounts of feminist research into various aspects of women and work which have provided many detailed accounts of particular occupations, the relations between women's work and men's work and the nature of work through discussion around what constitutes work (Bielski, 1989; Cockburn, 1991; Game & Pringle, 1984; Probert & Wilson, 1993; Sofia, 1995; Williams, 1988). Because of a wealth of feminist research and literature, I have necessarily included some and excluded other material. My literature review makes no claims to be comprehensive in the traditional sense; rather it is highly selective of particular scholars whose work is informative of my research relating to women and work, women and universities, and women and the concept of transformation. In other words, the purpose of this chapter is to present a detailed and critical review of selected literature, presenting findings that are both relevant and significant to this thesis and to establish a point of departure for the significance of my own research.

My aim is to identify what it is that other feminist writers have said about women/work/universities and gender reforms enacted to address barriers to women's full and valued participation in the public sphere. This allows me to draw into question the

apparent neutrality of the workplace. Themes of this literature include the hope set out by feminist interventions into a sexist workplace; what is happening in contemporary workplaces and universities specifically; and lastly, when considering women entering the workplace, marginalization, resistance and transformation as conceptual devices for explaining the negotiation of contemporary workplaces, including academia. This literature review, then, identifies the complexity of issues arising in contemporary workplaces, including universities.

This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section begins by briefly outlining the underlying discourse of patriarchy and the constructed nature of the public/private divide before introducing a broad picture of women and work, followed by the second section which focuses more specifically on what has been said about women and universities. The third section brings in literature around transformation, linking this with the competing discourses found in the public sphere. In the fourth section I draw this review together and discuss what this means for my research while the fifth and final section deals explicitly with the gaps identified. I begin this review with the broad field of women and work within a specific discursive context. To do that I will briefly outline connections between the political and the personal — that is, discourses around patriarchy, the division of public and private and where this locates women in Australian society.

## **2.1 Women and work**

In this section I examine the literature which focuses on the broad issues facing women in the workplace and because this is a large section I have divided this review into seven sub-sections. In the first sub-section I consider the concept of patriarchy and binary categories that construct a sexual division of labour. This is followed by a discussion of feminist interventions and challenges to patriarchy. The third sub-section deals with globalization and the feminization of the workplace. The fourth sub-section addresses sexuality in the workplace before detailing specific studies of the workplace in the fifth sub-section. The sixth sub-section deals with competing discourses facing young women while the last sub-section brings in the issue of technology, now a dominant discourse within the workplace. Another dominant Contemporary discourse circulating in Australian society is that of patriarchy, to which I now turn. The literature around patriarchy signals the positioning of women in contemporary society.

### 2.1.1 Discourses of patriarchy and the public/private divide

Pateman (1988) draws attention to the ‘sexual contract’ and its relationship to everyday civil society where contracts involve, but are not limited to, citizenship, marriage and workplace relationships. Complementary to the sexual contract is the discourse of patriarchy, a longstanding dominant discourse in Western societies, Australia included, where patriarchal systems work to maintain a sexual division of labour.

Images of women and sexuality are closely connected with the reproduction of ‘community’ where mothers are seen as responsible for the ‘future’ citizens and are the

conveyors of culture. Feminists such as Johnson (1996), Jones (1990), Pettman (1996) and Yeatman (1994) in their literature consider the nation and the state to be gendered, where the nation through a discourse of motherhood is associated with women, while the state through discourses of legitimate control is associated with men. Drawing on such binary constructions shows the divide between the public and the private realms.

As Spivak (1990, p. 377) explains, the political, social, professional, economic and intellectual belong to the public while the emotional, sexual and domestic are part of the private. These binaries have consequently associated men with the public and women with the private where a sexual division of labour has neatly allocated particular jobs based on a biologically determinist argument. However, as Butler (1990) argues, through repetitive gendered performances by specific bodies labelled as either male or female, this allocated sexual division of labour came to be seen as ‘natural’ and normative and therefore unproblematic. What this has meant in contemporary times, as Wearing (1996, p. 143) points out, is that women’s responsibility for child rearing and domestic duties has remained both an expectation and a reality for Australian women.

With the emergence of families headed by single women, rather than a decline of patriarchy what is seen is the replacement of the male breadwinner by the state as a provider of income — many women are independent of men but are dependent on the state — indicating a transition from private to public patriarchy (Jones, 1990; Pettman, 1996). Both Jones (1990, p. 781) and Pettman (1996, p. 2) argue women are ‘second class’ citizens because they lack the full complements of rights accorded to men. What I

mean here is that there is still a perception that Western men are born with particular rights whereas Western women are 'given' them. These rights include the rights to vote, to access education and to work in the public sphere. Consequently, the state is perceived as benevolent in its *giving* of rights to women that are considered 'natural' for men (Jones, 1990, p. 788; Pettman, 1996, p. 9; Yeatman, 1994, p. 187).

Jones (1990, p. 792) argues that in fact the liberal definition of the citizen necessitates women becoming like men in order to be recognized as citizens. This is supported by Everingham (1995, p. 116), who describes the classic liberal citizen as existing in an isolated state without any need for support systems, thus rendering invisible the role of 'caring' assigned to women. The hours that women devote to household labour and childcare are hours that are not available to paid work, unlike men, who gain these hours when they leave housework and childcare to partners (Gatens, 1998, p. 9). This is a significant point when considered in relation to women's participation in the workplace: it demonstrates not only the phallocentric construction of the citizen but also the ways in which women's embodiment is either ignored or sexualized (this theme is taken up again later in this chapter).

Pettman (1996) reveals that women's work compensates for the state's inadequate and inappropriate services in the area of caring. If, as Pettman (1996, p. 14) contends, this work was acknowledged in the economic equation, the state could not afford this. Therefore governments have strong reasons for reinforcing a patriarchal system that maintains this sexual division of labour. What this literature highlights for my thesis is

that the discourses around patriarchy and the valuing of the ‘masculine’ serve to reinforce sexual disadvantage and operate at an invisible or ‘behind the scenes’ level. However, as Johnson (1996, pp. 26-30) points out, women are not totally excluded from the public sphere; rather they are seen as employees with domestic responsibilities which has led to strong messages about how and where women legitimately participate in the public sphere. This led to various strategies by feminists in the hope that the workplace would become free of barriers that inhibited women’s valued participation. I now review literature that focuses on feminist interventions.

#### 2.1.2 Feminist interventions — challenges to patriarchy

Overt sexism was a strategy on the part of men who resisted women’s entry to the public sphere. This included actions such as sexist comments, types of work allocated to women, lower pay scales, less status and the dismissal of women who became pregnant. Governments colluded with this resistance — as evidenced in policies that saw wage differentials (the Harvester Judgment, 1907; cited in Broom 1991) and that required women working in government jobs such as teaching to resign on marriage.

Feminist actions during the 1960s and 1970s can be viewed as strategies to alter the balance of power between men and women and to combat the overt sexism across the institutions of Australian society — from the family to the workplace. As Eisenstein (1991, p. 31) relates:

Feminists have sought affordable childcare, education and training for women, so that they can enter the workforce equipped with the skills they

need and unencumbered by the burdens of domestic responsibilities ... and they have lobbied for anti-discrimination, affirmative action and equal pay legislation so as to break down the sexual division of labour, so that women can earn a decent living.

Captured here is what I would describe as some of the broad hopes to emerge from second wave feminist action. By having affordable childcare, appropriate training and education, it was considered that women could enter the workplace on a similar footing to men. Once women were in the workplace, legislation that addressed discrimination of all kinds would ensure women the opportunity to achieve their goals. Legislation was believed to be a way of removing barriers to women's participation in the public sphere. If women could achieve financial independence through education and employment and control over their domestic responsibilities through contraception and adequate childcare, then women were on the way to some kind of 'equality'.

This literature suggests that one strategy adopted to achieve this hope was to appoint feminists or 'Femocrats' into senior bureaucratic positions where they had the seniority, ability and influence to develop and enact 'women-friendly' policies through the government of the day. Elisabeth Reid, the first advisor on women's affairs, sought Federal funding for childcare, while simultaneously feminist lobby groups pressured government departments for funding for various women centred initiatives — among them equal opportunity for women and girls in education (Eisenstein, 1991, p. 31).



Hopes set out by liberal feminists of the 1970s/1980s gave rise to various policies and legislation that, broadly speaking, recognized that women did not start from the same vantage points as men. This legislation included the Sex Discrimination Act (1984) and the Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity) Act (1986). This legislation was the result of work done by various 'Femocrats' as a response to the overt sexism in the workplace. The legislation was drafted in the hope that, by addressing barriers preventing women's 'equal' inclusion, patriarchy would be broken down and sexism would disappear.

The recognition that men and women began from different vantage points of education and experience and that women's participation in the workplace was closely associated with family responsibilities saw the implementation of such workplace reforms as maternity leave policies, equal opportunity of employment based on merit and equal pay provisions. As Wearing (1996, p. 9) states, by creating equal opportunities through education, job opportunities and anti-discrimination legislation, it was deemed possible for able women as well as men to rise through the system to positions of influence and power. The hope was that, through this participation, women would be able to attain some kind of 'equality' with men.

In this legislation there was some recognition that many women were caregivers and had different educational backgrounds and different life experiences from many men. One of the limitations of this feminist intervention was that the emphasis on difference unfortunately set women up as being 'disadvantaged' with women's experience (or lack

thereof) being measured in relation to men's achievement and success. This construction of 'disadvantage' is evidenced in the rationale behind the legislative change — if women had the same or equal opportunity then they could achieve the same outcomes as men.

During this time women's issues were put firmly on the political agenda. Women and girls were being encouraged to enter non-traditional areas in both employment and education. Contraception and IVF promised women greater flexibility and control over fertility and family planning. There was 'awareness-raising' about issues of sexual assault, rape and domestic violence (Bulbeck, 1998, p. 7). It was hoped that raising awareness of myths around these issues would lessen the happening of violence against women. There was a hope that, while legislation would remove structural barriers, 'awareness-raising' would remove cultural barriers to women's full participation in all areas of society.

The Sex Discrimination Act (1984) acknowledged that all women have the right to be treated no differently from men in public life. However, Gatens (1998, p. 12) insists that the legislation does little to challenge the institutional structures that embody and perpetuate norms of partiality (gender bias in favour of the dominant group); and does nothing to redress women's double load at home.

From the literature it would appear that by the late 1980s many feminists were doubtful about the adequacy of an 'equal opportunity' (EO) approach as it had not changed cultural attitudes and this is shown in the wealth of research around gendered

organizations and women's work. The point I emphasize here is that legislation, while valuable, has the potential to drive attitudes underground rather than changing the discourses circulating within a workplace. Cockburn (1991, p. 161) believed there was suspicion and rejection of 'women only' activities and this could explain why many Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) strategies fail (Probert & Wilson, 1993, p. 11). However, Cockburn (1985) and more recently Probert and Wilson (1993, p. 11) suggest that women do not fail to make headway in male occupations simply because of unequal opportunity and discrimination; what should be looked at is the environments offered to women.

What this literature brings to my research is the limitations of government intervention concerning transformation of cultural attitudes within the workplace. While attitudes were not readily changing, other literature signalled the increasing participation of women in workplaces. In the following sub-section I look at the current move of women into the workplace by exploring the ways in which globalization and the workplace intersect and what this has meant for women entering the workplace and the environments in which they have entered. The current discourse of globalization highlights areas as diverse as communication, finance, images, media and the movement of people (Appadurai, 1990; useful summaries of globalization can be found in texts such as Baumann, 1998; Beck, 2000; Brown & Lauder, 2001; Sassen, 1998; Spring, 1998). One effect of globalization can be seen in the increasing feminization of the workplace.

### 2.1.3 Globalization and the feminization of the workplace

In Australia, as a consequence of second wave feminism and women's activism during the 1960s and 1970s, women have been entering the public sphere and the labour market in increased numbers (Probert & Wilson, 1993; Zajdow, 1995). Perhaps as a consequence of globalization, women are now seen as vital to the labour market, thereby moving towards a feminization of the labour market. This is highlighted through a common status within the peripheral labour market where many women are employed on the basis of short-term contracts, consultancies and casual and on-call arrangements. Beechey (1987) suggests that married women have functioned as a disposable labour force that disappears and re-appears when services are demanded, supporting the notion of the 'reserve army' of workers. Not only have women always been cheaper to employ but they have been prepared to work in both part time and casual jobs, having some flexibility in the hours of work. Availability of childcare and family responsibilities remain important considerations for employed women. For some women this flexibility has enabled them to combine work with those family responsibilities.

Currently I would contend that, while this 'reserve army' is still present, it is not just married women joining the ranks. The composition is changing, and, rather than being a reserve, this army is becoming integral to the globalization processes that are shaping the notion of work generally and women's work specifically. According to Thomas (1999), 80% of jobs created in Queensland over the previous ten years have been either casual or part time, with one in three jobs now casual and heavily concentrated among women.

This has often been promoted under the guise of ‘flexible’ and ‘friendly’ working conditions for mothers, but in reality there is often little choice when these hours are worked; manufacturing and telecommunication industries use female outworkers as ‘working fodder’ while Harris (1998; cited in Milliner, 1998) contends that for some companies flexible work practices mean that they can telephone employees and get them to work two hours today and five hours tomorrow. Changes in workplaces come with less job security and decreased union control over working conditions. The results of a recent study by Probert (2002) suggest that few women actually earn enough to be independent and the new post-Fordist economy is characterized by growing sectors of feminized employment, examples being retailing and hospitality, which pay only a living wage.

What this literature indicates for my thesis is that besides the effects of globalization, as Acker (1991, p. 167) declares, “the structure of the labour market, workplace relations, the control of the work process and the underlying wage relation are always affected by symbols of gender, processes of gender identity and material inequalities between women and men”. This literature assists in establishing the notion of embodiment as a key factor operating within the workplace. In the following sub-section therefore I look at how sexuality has been dealt with in the workplace.

#### 2.1.4 Sex in the city or sexuality in the workplace

Various feminists (Acker, 1991; Cockburn, 1985, 1991; Game & Pringle, 1984; Probert, 1994; Probert & Wilson, 1993; Truman, 1996; Wajcman, 1993; Witz, Halford, & Savage 1996; Zajdow, 1995) have brought new approaches to the investigation of women’s work

and women's labour in organizations highlighting specifically the gendered, rather than the gender neutral, nature of the workplace. Their work forms an entry point into the vast literature concerning women and work.

Cockburn (1991, p. 147) believes that historically the 'scientific rationality' associated with organizations highlighted a separation of private and public spheres. Attempts to ignore or deny the presence of sexuality in the workplace were part of a wider process separating the home (a place of legitimate sexual relations) from the workplace (a location of capitalist, not sexual, (re)production). As both Acker (1991, p. 172) and Cockburn (1991, p. 159) suggest, the concept of the disembodied job symbolizes this separation of work and sexuality, where 'bodied' processes such as reproduction, breast-feeding and emotions are denied. Certain parts of being female are censored out of the workplace — for example, menstruation, PMT, pregnancy, breast-feeding and menopause (Acker, 1991, p. 173; Cockburn, 1991, p. 159). Consequently, when this separation is taken a step further, women are excluded from certain types of jobs.

Conversely the 'sexualization' of a woman was often part of the job (Mackinnon, 1979; cited in Acker, 1991, p. 173). A study by Pringle (1988) looking at secretaries demonstrated the way in which social roles acted out by female secretaries and male managers in the public sphere reinforced a sexual identity and *status quo* that mirrored the private sphere, displaying a gendered performance of work around masculinity and the sexualized nature of 'secretarial work'. Where women's embodiment has been exploited such as with secretaries, sexuality has been used as a form of resistance to male

power (Pringle, 1988), while other female occupations such as airline stewards have fought hard to change the nature of work and play down sexuality (Williams, 1988; Zajdow, 1995, p. 19). What this literature demonstrates is the ease with which socially acceptable definitions of masculinity continue to hinge on the idea that it involves the ability to do things which women cannot do (Probert & Wilson, 1993, p. 11). Game and Pringle (1983) found the relationships between men and women within the workplace contributed to and reproduced a gendered hierarchy.

According to Acker (1991, p. 173), maintaining a gendered hierarchy is controlled by perceptions around bodies and what those bodies can do, where, for example, the ranking of women's jobs was often justified on grounds relating to child bearing, domestic life and 'emotionality'. Women's bodies, in other words, were used to control what work was appropriate with gender segregation a means of controlling or neutralizing sexuality. Gender segregation can be seen where women are excluded from certain types of work or sexualized as part of the job (Acker, 1991, p. 173).

Gender segregation was justified and maintained through a commonly held view that women had a radically different attachment to the workplace from men (Probert, 1994, p. 154). It was assumed that women did not derive a sense of personal identity and worth from their paid work, nor did they need to be the primary breadwinners. Through a prevailing discourse of domesticity (Probert, 2002) it was believed that fulfillment lay in the domestic sphere with the care of children and the home. Consequently, because of this a belief was constructed that women were likely to be satisfied with less interesting

jobs, were not interested in career paths and would be happy about receiving less pay. In terms of work segregation, Australia reflects workplace trends present in other OECD countries, but Australia actually has the highest number of occupations and industries segregated by sex, with male workers having a much greater choice than women (Zajdow, 1995, p. 3).

### 2.1.5 Workplace contexts — studies of gendered organizations

Literature reviewed to this point demonstrates that the majority of workplace contexts have been organized around assumptions concerning the ‘normal’ or ‘universal’ worker, and, as Acker (1991, p. 186) points out, this ‘worker’ is a male. Acker (1991, p. 164) views organizations as gendered processes and believes that what is often regarded as ‘sex-neutral’ within organizations and institutions is, in fact, a situation where masculine principles are dominant — and read unproblematically as ‘normal’.

This means, according to Acker (1991, p. 164), that both gender and sexuality are hidden behind a discourse that is gender-neutral and asexual. I draw attention here to literature that explores the hidden nature of discourses around embodiment and patriarchy and what this means for women. Consequently if workplace contexts are being premised on male norms, presented as gender-neutral, men are more likely to fit job requirements than women (Acker, 1991). As Acker (1991, p. 168) points out, this not only serves to reinforce gendered and segregated workplaces, but also works to exclude and marginalize women, who can never achieve the qualities of a ‘real’ worker, because to do so is to become like a man.



Likewise Gatens (1998, p. 4) discounts the notion of the disembodied worker, arguing people are constrained and formed through either a masculine or a feminine gender norm, with any deviations attracting harsh penalties. Deviation from normative behaviour attacks the very core of what is considered to be a male or female, so the attraction of conformity is very strong, thereby reinforcing gendered norms.

Adkins and Lury (1996) indicate that regarding categories such as 'social', 'cultural' and 'economic' as gender-neutral leaves unexplained the significance of sexuality in the constitution of women's oppression in the workplace. Taking up this theme, Witz *et al.* (1996) looked at everyday male/female interaction in order to understand the construction of organizational hierarchies. What they found was that, rather than a male body being privileged, it is the disciplined body that is privileged (Witz *et al.*, 1996, p. 175), implying a gender-neutral body that performed the appropriate behaviours.

What their study did not elaborate was the notion of behaviour itself as gendered. For example, if a woman accesses the kinds of discourses that are unproblematically associated with men, such as competitiveness or aggression, this is more likely to be read, not as the behaviour of an appropriately disciplined gender-neutral body, but as the behaviour of an undisciplined female body. This illustrates that it is not just behaviour in context, but also behaviour performed by appropriately sexed bodies, that is valued.

Witz *et al.* (1996, p. 179) postulate that in male dominated organizations a (hetero)sexualized discourse is predominant and, because this routinely privileges men's sexuality, it is more difficult for women to access subject positions related to authoritarian or egalitarian locations compared to most men. It can be argued then that real jobs and real workers are embodied, with workplace interactions infused by both gender and sexuality (Witz, *et al.*, 1996, p. 175).

Embodied engagement is seen when, as Cockburn (1991, p. 158) suggests, bodily differences are put to use in workplace processes — bodies are not only put to work both mentally and manually, but also 'dressed' according to organizational norms — sending specific messages about the workplace. This is not done passively; indeed, Cockburn (1991, p. 158) suggests that identities are developed in response to patriarchal pressures, and workers are acutely conscious of the rewards offered for conformity and the punishments awaiting deviance. However, this becomes an ambiguous space when part of the job satisfaction is linked to how people identify themselves in relation to masculinity and femininity and how they want others to see them (Probert & Wilson, 1993, p. 11).

It can be argued from this literature that sex and race are embodied differences that have far-reaching effects on the way that individuals engage with institutions (Gatens, 1998, p. 1; Witz *et al.*, 1996, p. 175). However, more importantly, as Cockburn (1991, p. 143) notes, "men's power from within the private world and civil society accompanies them into the workplace; that means even the most junior man has degrees of sexual authority

over women”. This literature adds to my research by explicitly highlighting the workplace as a ‘non-neutral’ environment.

This decidedly ‘non-neutral’ situation has resulted in consequences, identified in the literature by various feminists, that include women being located at the lower end of the employment scale; a dominance of women in short term or contract positions; and an associated absence of women from managerial positions (Game & Pringle, 1983; Probert, 1997; Truman, 1996). In the next sub-section I turn to current studies of women in the workplace to demonstrate what if any change has materialized for women. I review two significant studies that look specifically at discourses of motherhood and ideologies around the working mother in the late 1990s that signal competing discourses.

#### 2.1.6 What, if any, change has materialized for women?

Probert’s (2002) study is very significant for my thesis because it establishes that, while attitudes to women working have changed since the 1950s, attitudes to motherhood itself, discourses around motherhood and beliefs about what children need are remarkably unchanged in the 1990s and early 2000s. Clearly demonstrated here are two useful points for my research. The first point is her demonstration of the power of normalizing discourses such as those embedded in ideologies of motherhood and domesticity. This leads to the second point: underlying these ideologies is the invisible undercurrent of patriarchy as the mechanism maintaining these discourses.

Probert (2002) states that in the 1950s women as caregivers had very little personal autonomy except that granted by individual husbands. Labour force participation rates matched the culture: hardly any Australian born women with children were in the labour force during the 1950s compared with almost half of those women who had migrated from Yugoslavia or Italy. Family discourses of the 1950s were highly gendered, displaying different and complementary social roles for men and women. Central to these discourses was the dominant paradigm that children need their mothers, with the defining moment for women to give up work in the public sphere and retreat to the private sphere being either pregnancy and/or birth of the first child.

Gender culture of the 1990s, according to Probert (2002, p. 12), had a new dominant paradigm: mothers should be heading back to work. Young mothers interviewed by Probert (2002) almost all expressed preference for both developing lifelong careers *and* having children. Some mothers expressed this preference themselves while others felt that they are criticized by 'society' for choosing to stay at home. Closely associated with this are two important issues that Probert (2002) draws attention to. The first issue is the contradictory nature of government policy concerning working mothers where she highlights:

The contradictory nature of government policy is most starkly revealed in the discussion about sole-parent benefits .... Single mothers must not be allowed to experience the erosion of their social skills and moral fibre while they stay at home with their children, while married women are encouraged to accept just such a state. (p. 15)

In terms of a simple equation what this means is: single mother at home = bad woman; married mother at home = good woman. Discourses of motherhood talk about the 'selflessness of the moral mother' endlessly giving of herself, a female sense of self that is organized around being able to make, then maintain, affiliations and relationships. This ideology of domesticity raises a contradictory discourse: firstly, it equates the 'good woman' with sacrifice and femininity, and secondly, mothers should be going back to work for a variety of reasons. This discourse provides the basis of mixed views about 'good parenting' and gender roles, especially when there is no agreement over how long mothers should 'stay at home' with their children (Probert, 2002).

The second important issue is household models. Here Probert (2002) warns about assumptions concerning a universal shift from the traditional breadwinner household model to something like a symmetrical household model. The breadwinner model was in its heyday during the 1950s and consisted of the nuclear family where Dad was the breadwinner and Mum stayed at home with the kids. A symmetrical model sees both Mum and Dad in the workplace and the care of children shifted to properly state funded childcare. While many fathers expressed stronger interest in forging closer emotional ties with their children and describing their households as following a more symmetrical than a breadwinner model, hardly any of them worked hours or developed careers in ways that made allowances for children (Probert, 2002, p. 15). This literature signals for my thesis the changing discourses around women in the public sphere, but the unchanging discourses around gender roles.

Aveling's (2002) study supports these findings; in this longitudinal study Aveling (2002) interviewed girls who went through school during an era when 'equal opportunity' was a gender intervention discourse. More than a decade later, Aveling (2002) suggests that the problem of 'having it all' has begun to surface for some of them. 'Having it all' refers here to combining motherhood and career. Those who had become mothers increasingly found that, instead of effortlessly being able to combine the demands of small children with the pressures of a challenging job, the more workable option/solution was to put careers on hold (Aveling, 2002).

This literature is particularly significant for my thesis because it clearly establishes the kinds of ambiguous but powerful discourses that are positioning women in contemporary society. This means that, while there are expectations of women working, there has been no change in the expectations of the gendered division of labour in the domestic sphere — *womendo both*, signaling a gap between the hope that feminists set out to achieve and the realities happening for women today.

As Probert (2002, p. 7) emphatically states, "progress towards gender equality appears to have stalled in Australia", and she argues that "effective policy development has run aground on submerged ideas about motherhood and domesticity and the failure to sustain the family as a serious focus of social policy". Good workplace policy development is being undermined by other changes such as longer working hours, increased childcare costs, loss of award protection and the failure of enterprise bargaining and individual

contracts to give women's needs and interests higher priority (Probert, 2002, p. 8). One other significant issue impacting on current workplaces is the incorporation of new technologies. In the following sub-section I acknowledge the relevance of this to my research by briefly examining literature that focuses on technological discourses.

#### 2.1.7 Technological discourses

Whilst the term 'technology' is employed in a number of vague and imprecise ways in universities, in this thesis I am interested in a broad range of what can be called communication technologies. Whilst this could also be read as a very broad 'catchall' of a term, it nevertheless signals my interest in identifying the ways in which the women who are part of this study now negotiate the various technologies that are increasingly read as key components within contemporary university practice. When one considers that this pressure to embrace 'technology' occurs within similarly highly gendered environments to those outlined above, the increasing prioritization of technology has particularly significant consequences for women.

Literature that deals with the introduction of technology into the workplace puts forward the notion that this introduction of technology has reorganized rather than abolished a gendered division of labour that sees much of the new technology as male controlled (Cockburn, 1983, 1985; Game & Pringle, 1984, p. 65; Sofia, 1995, p. 145; Wajcman, 1991, p. 137; Williams, 1988, p. 155). Bush (1983) has suggested that men and women do not benefit equally from technological change, partly because men do the designing but the women are the users and consumers. Wajcman (1993) is rather more critical when she suggests that women have been ignored in the history of invention. Rather than

benefiting from the introduction of technology, Probert and Wilson (1993, p. 12) suggest that existing sex segregation in the workplace has shaped the way in which technologies have been instrumental in maintaining women's disadvantage. For example, the introduction of technology in banking was perceived as staff needing less training or de-skilling as machines replaced certain jobs done by tellers, an area where women were clustered.

Conversely Wajcman (1991, p. 140) suggests "technology as a masculine realm is more likely to reflect the male domination of powerful institutions than an essentially male spirit". Earlier studies by Cockburn (1985) found that women in technical jobs were enthusiastic about their work with this being related to skill. Probert and Wilson (1993, p. 7) contend that clerical workers have been multi-skilled for decades but their skills are devalued because these skills are associated with women. This brief review of literature around technology brings to this thesis the significance of gendered messages attached to technology use. The introduction of technology to the workplace can be seen as a response to pressures of globalization — the university being no different. In the next major section I review literature that deals explicitly with academic women and their workplace.

## **2.2 Women and universities**

The previous section dealt with the workplace in general; now I focus this exploration specifically on academic women and universities. This section is divided into two sub-sections. The first sub-section focuses on the impact of globalization on the academic



workplace, thereby establishing the context. The second sub-section draws on specific literature that develops a theme of institutional discrimination of academic women and details major studies that offer valuable insights for this thesis. I begin by briefly setting out the context within which Australian universities are currently operating — that of globalization.

### 2.2.1 Globalization and universities

In 1987 a new unified system of 37 public universities was created in Australia out of the existing 19 universities and 44 institutes of technology and colleges of advanced education — with MU becoming number 38 in 1992. Since this amalgamation universities have been encouraged to attract full fee paying overseas students, who now constitute a very significant source of income for many institutions, with MU no exception (Milton University, 2000b). This has led to increased competition among institutions with government funding providing less than 60% of the operating revenue (Probert, Ewer, & Whiting, 1998; see also Currie, 1996a). Kenway and Langrhead (1998) state the key messages beneath the current policy rhetoric are: universities are to cost the state less and serve both the state and the market more; consequently transformation of the university has been through three main processes:

- rationalization (downsizing, flexibility, casualization and work intensification);
- corporatization (business management principles and culture, autonomy and accountability);
- marketization (privatization, commercialization and commodification). (p. 222)

These processes are closely aligned with globalization. As Currie (1996b, p. 102) states, globalization has brought the market into universities along with the ideologies of competition, individualism and labour market flexibility and the notion of increased productivity through such mechanisms as performance indicators and quality assurance. This globalization discourse mirrors an ideology of economic rationalism, evident in policies such as the National Competition Policy (The Hilmer Report, 1993). Smith and Sachs (1995) suggest that the intensification of academic work is connected to economic, social and political conditions changing the nature and purpose of the university.

Funding, competition and market forces are, according to Coaldrake and Stedman (1999), changing the nature of academic work. Impacting on contemporary academic work are the introduction of information technology; a move to enterprise bargaining in the mid-1990s; a shift of funding responsibility from the government to the students, either as HECS or full fee paying; inclusion of vocational areas into academic frameworks and knowledge; and move to mass education and the opening up of higher education. This means that universities are responding to issues arising from the impact of globalization and this correspondingly impacts on academic staff (Coaldrake & Stedman, 1999, pp. 3-6).

From this brief discussion it becomes obvious that the nature of academic work is changing in an era of globalization. Keeping in mind the already highly gendered nature of the workplace detailed in the first section of this chapter and the increasing influence of globalization, the following sub-section reviews literature that spells worrisome

implications when considering the lived experiences and positioning of contemporary academic women.

### 2.2.2 Academic women's worlds — institutional discrimination

In this sub-section I review specific literature relating to studies of academic women and I draw primarily on studies done in the UK and Australia. For organizational purposes I divide this sub-section into two sub-sub-sections. The first sub-sub-section deals with literature relating to UK studies. These studies contribute two important points for my thesis: firstly they signal the ineffectiveness of equal opportunity (EO) policies in an academic workplace; and secondly the use of 'discourse' as an analytical device is highlighted. The second sub-sub-section reviews major Australian investigations of academic women. In both sub-sub-sections the theme of institutional discrimination prevails.

#### *2.2.2.1 UK studies*

I take up this theme of institutional discrimination by beginning with Baglihole (1993), who drew attention to the gender segregation within academic work and the role of institutional factors in the process of discrimination against women academics in the UK a decade ago. Bagilhole (1993) found that women had higher teaching, administration and pastoral care loads than men; more important, however, was the academic reward bias towards research and publication, activities engaged in more by men than by women. Pastoral care that was self-imposed, student generated or colleague driven took up large parts of the women's time (see Chapter Five). Consequently this often raised difficulties

with time management and was felt to be damaging to their careers because these duties were not recognized or rewarded by the university.

Baglihole (1993, p. 272) reported that, because married mothers were deemed unacceptable, many women in her study had taken up a 'male model' of choosing a career rather than having children. According to Baglihole (1993, p. 272), the lack of formal procedures and training allows prejudice and discrimination to continue. In a follow-up study Baglihole (2002) gauged the effectiveness of EO policies that had been implemented precisely to address institutional discrimination.

Whilst the numbers of women employed as academics had increased from 20% to 35%, pay scales, tenure and senior employment levels were still skewed in favour of men. The study therefore raised concerns over the effectiveness of EO policies as there were gaps existing between the policy and successful implementation (Baglihole, 2002, p. 31). More significantly, Baglihole (2002, p. 31) found that beneath the surface lies a layer of micro-political activity, or what I referred to earlier as the hidden discourses around patriarchy. Heward and Taylor (1993; cited in Baglihole, 2002, p. 31) believe apparent resistance to EO in old universities (equivalent to Australian sandstones) comes from challenging the "heart of elite male culture". Baglihole (2002) concludes that old universities are resistant to EO policies because of male hegemony proving resistant to women's advancement.

Continuing a similar theme, Brooks (1997a) compared UK and New Zealand academic sites where she used the concept of discourse to investigate the gap between the model of academic fairness and equality (the rhetoric) and the sexist reality within academia. Brooks (1997a) felt there was a contradiction between the liberal and egalitarian aims of the universities and the competitive nature of academic work that defended male privilege in organizations that are male dominated. While Brooks' (1997a) study found similar findings to Baglihole (1993, 2002), it is her use of discourse and feminist post-structuralism as a tool of interrogation that is helpful to my research framework (see Chapter Three). As Brooks (1997a, p. 5) states:

This more critical feminism does not reject earlier feminist analyses but identifies their limitations and cultural biases .... Because feminist post-structuralism is interested in multiplicity and diversity, it facilitates new ways of understanding the diverse and contradictory ways in which women experience power.

I argue it is the negotiation of power that works to position academic women in specific locations within the university, with power negotiated through discourses of embodiment. While Brooks (1997a) found no formal division of labour along gender lines with regard to research, teaching and administration, she contended lip service was paid to equality which was then undermined in numerous and effective ways, signalling how specific discourses can actually mask the sexist reality for academic women in these institutions.

Turning now to studies of Australian universities: a handful of large major quantitative and qualitative studies was undertaken during the 1990s. In the following sub-sub-section the point being made is that despite considerable in-depth investigation institutional discrimination appears to remain. I now review these studies, indicating their findings and significance for this thesis.

#### *2.2.2.2 Australian studies*

Allen and Castleman (1995) in their study of universities in Victoria and South Australia found that women made up 39% of the academic staff but that these women were skewed towards non-permanent and junior appointments. This study is significant because it disputes a commonly held assumption: that the lack of senior academic women is due to women entering the profession/university at a time when opportunities are restricted, rather than any discriminating attitudes or structures (Allen & Castleman, 1995, p. 22). What Allen and Castleman (1995) found was that in tenure rates and employment levels — for men and women in the same age groups *and* the same length of service — men continued to rise more readily to tenured and senior positions. Clearly illustrated are principles and processes in place that favour men, such as ‘old boy networks’ and ‘patronage’ that work to disadvantage women in promotion (Allen & Castleman, 1995, p. 26).

Using data from 1993 and 1999, Allen and Castleman (2001, p. 151) re-examined what they have coined the ‘pipeline fallacy’. This ‘pipeline fallacy’ is the notion that women’s continuing concentration in low level and insecure employment is a legacy of the past rather than the result of current practices. The authors suggest that the process of

restructuring has effectively downsized universities and has the potential to exacerbate gender inequities already present. The ‘pipeline fallacy’, as Allen and Castleman (2001, p. 161) assert, effectively silences the idea of institutional discrimination.

Similarly to Baglihole (1993), Allen and Castleman (1995, pp. 26-27) found the lack of women’s success was also linked to their role in teaching with research clearly privileged over teaching; getting research funds was very competitive. As women tended to have poorer research records this prevented them from securing promotion. Interviews with senior staff demonstrated little familiarity with Affirmative Action (AA) policies. This, according to Allen and Castleman (1995, p. 28), reflects the low priority given to AA rather than ineffectual policy implementation as signalled by Baglihole (2002).

Probert, Ewer and Whiting (1998) extended work done by Allen and Castleman (1995) by looking at payroll data from 18 universities and using a random survey to ask questions about pay, qualifications, family circumstances, experience and career progression. Their study showed substantial gaps between earnings of academic men and academic women. While some differences could be attributed to employment level, full time status, qualifications and numbers of years worked, some could not. The authors equated these differences with direct gender discrimination, where women earned less pay for the same work. Through their gender lens Probert *et al.* (1998) noted that 50% of women compared with 4.2% of men were primary carers of children. Despite differences in domestic responsibilities academic women in this study valued their careers and were as committed to research as their male colleagues.

With the growth of corporate management and the corresponding changing salary and status to match the corporate or business world (Currie & Vidovich, 1998) and the continuing lack of women represented in leadership positions, the gendered divide within academia is set to get worse. This is also indicated by the continuing large-scale research projects into women's positioning in academic sites.

The issue of women's inequitable positioning was thoroughly interrogated by Burton (1998) in her comprehensive study that aimed to identify the cultural and the structural barriers facing women in Australian universities. A significant finding by Burton (1998) was that disciplinary mix, geographical location and the status of universities (pre— and post—1987) were clearly factors contributing to the overall profile of academic women. This has implications for my thesis in relation to the location of the research site.

Burton (1998) used a range of data from a questionnaire distributed to all 36 publicly funded universities, all 1995 Affirmative Action Agency reports from these same universities, 22 equity reviews and the 1996 Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DEETYA) staffing statistics. In keeping with other Australian studies Burton (1998) found that, while the academic labour market conditions have undergone a great many changes over the past 15—20 years and there are more women employed as academics, they are represented in lower level academic positions, on fixed term contracts and in sessional employment (<http://wel.org.au/burton>). Burton (1998) also found that significant policy implementation gaps exist.



There are two significant points from Burton's (1998) study that are relevant to this thesis. The first point is her use of culture as a tool to identify particular processes and instances of discrimination in individual organizations. Burton (1998, p. 18) defined culture as "the values and priorities which become embedded in structural arrangements and are reflected in policies, interpretation, decision-making and everyday practices". The second point is Burton's (1998) declaration that "masculine culture" drove the university. Her definition of this second term differed slightly from that of culture, in that she defined "masculine culture" as the situation in which "employment terms and conditions, policies and practices and reward structures historically have been organized around a cluster of characteristics, attributes and background circumstances typical of men" (p. 18). This notion of "masculine culture" mirrors to some extent my own metaphor of phallogentric smog (see Chapter Five) as the invisible mechanism that reproduces and reinforces women's embodied subordination within academia.

In their investigation of gender and organizational culture within Western Australian universities, Harris, Thiele and Currie (1998) found that recent changes to academic workplaces such as the intensification of labour, an accent on productivity and output, and managerialist approaches have different implications for men and women. Earlier Currie (1996a) had detailed the shift in decision making practices from a participatory collegiality to a non-participatory bureaucratic approach in these universities. Similarly to Burton (1998), Currie (1996b) found there were important differences both within and among the universities relating to historical, geographical and contextual factors. Currie

(1996b, p. 104) indicated academics were working longer hours in more fragmented roles; while their productivity increased, this was accompanied by a heightened sense of stress and lower morale.

While the jobs of academics are becoming increasingly proletarianized and controlled by external factors (Currie, 1996b, p. 106), in this era of increasing corporatism Currie (1996a, p. 15) suggests that retaining tenure is an important resistance strategy as contract staff members are unlikely to speak out about management. This is a significant point when combined with the likelihood of women being positioned in the growing casual academic labour market (Allen & Castleman, 1995, p. 21), leading to the possibility and probability of continuing institutional gender discrimination.

Harris *et al.* (1998, p. 137) indicated that for their respondents the key to academic success is research output, hard work and also getting big research grants. The “successful academics” were those who farmed out their teaching (Harris *et al.*, 1998, p. 141). As Harris *et al.* (1998, p. 143) indicated, this produces particular patterns of male advantage where men can be upwardly mobile at women’s expense. With all the emphasis on research productivity, Harris *et al.* (1998) expressed concern that the process that makes this activity possible — that is, keeping universities functioning and teaching current and producing future researchers — is rendered invisible.

McInnis (2000) reapplied a survey questionnaire that he had applied in 1993, allowing him to compare changes in academic work over a period of seven years. His sample

included academics across all levels and disciplines from 15 universities across five states. What he found was a changing composition of academic staff with increasing proportions of part time and casual appointments (McInnis, 2000, p. 117). The proportion of full time staff declined from 83.6% in 1988 to 76.3% in 1998, accompanied by an increase in casual employment, overwhelmingly for staff undertaking teaching only (Jones *et al.*, 1999; cited in McInnis, 2000, p. 136). This is very worrying considering that women are disproportionately represented in teaching roles (Allen & Castleman, 1995, 2001; Brooks, 1997a; Burton, 1998; Harris *et al.*, 1998; McInnis, 2000; Probert *et al.*, 1998).

In light of the ‘hostile’ environment set out by McInnis (2000), it was timely that Currie, Harris and Thiele (2000) used Coser’s (1974) notion of the “greedy institution” to draw attention to the hold that universities have over their staff. This study detailed the range of personal and professional sacrifices that staff made to be part of their university culture. Currie *et al.* (2000) argued that a masculinist discourse treats men and women the same, demanding particular kinds of work and a particular orientation to work — that of total loyalty. As Wise (1997, p. 122) states, “working excessive hours, it seems, has crept up to become the norm for those who want success or increasingly who just want to do the job properly” — clearly those with domestic responsibilities or who want a life outside work won’t go far. Managerialist discourses, in other words, operate to normalize high workloads and a prime commitment to the institution — this is what a ‘good university staff member’ does.

What this literature demonstrates is an on-going interest in the changing nature of academic work and the bodies that perform that work. Eleven years ago Luke and Gore (1992) emphasized the patriarchal framework within which universities operate:

Few other places of work exemplify patriarchal rule better than the university ....[D]espite significant gains in the last two decades women continue to be grossly underrepresented in senior positions and remain locked in the contract mill of the junior ghetto (cf. Slater & Glazer, 1989). Journal and book publishing editorial boards are dominated by males, promotion committees are stocked by suits, and department heads, Faculty and School chairs remain seats of male control. (Luke & Gore, 1992, p. 202)

Indeed the wealth of feminist research and literature since then has continued to illustrate the inequities for academic women. Evans (1997) showed women were excluded from universities but over time they have worked to gain entry, initially as students, then as academics, but, as Allen and Castleman (2001) showed, time can no longer be used as the answer/excuse to overcome academic women's positioning. What is required is a new way of looking at an old problem (Hills & Rowan, 2002). Feminist post-structuralism offers a different way of conceptualizing women's positioning through the processes of resistance and transformation. In the following section I present the way in which these notions of resistance and transformation can be useful for this thesis.

### **2.3 Women and transformation**

Any moves by women to go beyond the private realm can, in the very broad sense, be seen as resisting dominant patriarchal discourses; indeed, coupled with the assumption that earlier feminist interventions have now brought a ‘new symmetry’ between the sexes (Braidotti, 1991, p. 154), it would be reasonable to expect that the process of transformation was happening or had actually happened. This section reviews selected literature concerning the concepts of resistance and transformation and is divided into three sub-sections. In the first sub-section I review literature that outlines the theoretical moves towards transformation by broadly mapping the course of feminist resistance to dominant male paradigms. The second sub-section looks at literature that focuses on the concept of resistance where I introduce Braidotti’s (1994) notion of nomadic consciousness as a form of resistance at the level of subjectivity. The last sub-section deals with specific sites of resistance within MU.

### 2.3.1 Theoretical moves towards transformation

Literature focused around feminist politics, in the broad sense, has represented theoretical moves towards transformation as waves, with the first wave associated with the notion of equality where women were seeking equal rights, largely in the form of suffrage. This first wave was based on women’s claims about being the same as men. At this point women were demanding the same rights and recognition as men, based not so much on a denial of sexual difference as on an emphasis on women’s rationality and ability.

The second wave of feminist politics emerged during the 1960s and 1970s, initially continuing a focus on equality but then expanding as different strands of feminism

became evident. These different strands were broadly termed structural feminisms. Structural feminisms assumed a cause of women's oppression could be found and that this oppression lay at the level of social structure (Barrett & Philips, 1992, p. 2). The patriarchal structure of Australian society differentiated social roles for men and women and the different feminist strands followed particular notions about the cause of oppression. The liberal feminist strand saw oppression as prejudice and sexism based on discriminatory practices that denied women equal opportunities to men. Socialist feminists saw the capitalist system benefiting from women's unpaid labour where oppression emerged from exploitation rather than sexism. Radical feminists stressed that patriarchy and men were the oppressors of women who gained through sexual exploitation of women's bodies and reproduction.

A key debate at this time was the extent to which women were the same as one another or the same as men. This debate saw the 'essentialist woman' as a reaction to attempts to erase differences between men and women (Hekman, 1999). In parallel to this debate a paradigm shift from a focus on 'equality' to one of 'difference' can be mapped. Within the literature, at this point, was the increasing recognition of women of colour who were stating that much of what was significant and relevant for white women did not address the concerns of women of colour, thereby highlighting a difference among women (Braidotti, 1994). According to Hekman (1999, p. 20), the 1990s saw feminist politics defined in terms of the politics of difference.

Structuralist feminist theorizing was limited in explanations of the differences among women and indeed within women. Importantly for my thesis, this mapping of the literature signals limitations concerning the structuralist feminism/s and my own move towards post-structuralist feminism as a way of explanation and analysis in my research design. As Barrett and Philips (1992) point out, post-structuralism was a way for feminists to destabilize and deconstruct the dominant models of liberalism, humanism and Marxism. Nicholson (1992; cited in Brooks, 1997b, p. 99) claims that post-modernism does not entail the abandonment of common values and beliefs, nor does it entail abandoning politically useful tools like categories such as race, gender and oppression. Rather, she contends, what is required is a shift in how these categories are used and understood. Emerging from this the heterogeneity of women was celebrated and feminists increasingly adopted and appropriated post-structuralist and post-modern concepts to interrogate 'gender' and sexuality. This signalled the third wave of feminist politics where there is a focus on the transformation of 'Woman'.

Braidotti (1994, p. 160) believes transformation involves the re-definition of "woman as other" in terms of positivity; the start of this transformation is establishing the specificity of the lived female bodily experience. In other words the first step in cultural transformation is the recognition of sexual difference and that there are differences between men and women. As Hills (1998) suggests, there is no one definitive model of transformation. Indeed, as Rowan argues:

Whilst some figurations demonstrate radical departures from norms for women, others may have the appearance of fairly traditional practice but what

makes them significant is the way these performances are taken into non-traditional spaces. In this framework simply being a woman in a university can be read as a political act. (1998, p. 24)

Significantly this literature suggests a multiplicity of transformative representations; this, in turn, raises the necessity of carefully deconstructing this notion of transformation. Therefore, as my thesis argues, the need for this deconstruction is *precisely because* of women moving “into non-traditional spaces” such as the university. The literature reviewed signals a gap emerging about how far resistance and transformation may have gone. For many, the mere fact that women have moved “into non-traditional spaces” in a myriad of workplaces is often used as anecdotal evidence that women have won the so-called ‘equality’ battle. While I strongly support moves by women to move into any workplace environment, this movement alone does not necessarily facilitate cultural transformation. It does however signal sites of resistance for women.

### 2.3.2 Resistance

The notion of resistance in feminist post-structuralism allows for a subjectivity that is not entirely governed by structures of male domination, thus enabling explanations of why women do not all experience oppression in the same manner. Wearing (1996, p. 36) suggests that the notion of women as subjects and as producers of knowledge and theory resists the assumption that male experience is universal.

According to Wearing (1996, p. 34), Foucault’s work gives prominence to the possibility of resistance at the micro-social level — subjectivity (see Chapter Six). Braidotti (1994)



uses the concept of nomadic subjects as a theoretical figuration to explain contemporary sexed subjectivity. As Braidotti (1994, p. 5) writes, nomadic subjects can be perceived as travellers across time, space and consciousness:

Though the image of 'nomadic subjects' is inspired by the experience of peoples or cultures that are literally nomadic, the nomadism in question here refers to the kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behaviour. Not all nomads are world travelers; some of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one's habitat. It is the subversion of set conventions that defines the nomadic state, not the literal act of traveling.

Braidotti (1994) is suggesting here that nomadism refers to stepping out of normative behaviour associated with traditional constructions of masculinity and femininity. In other words, traditional gendered behavioural patterns are disrupted when the nomadic subject moves into spaces between rigid boundaries of limited subject positionings. Contradictions in experience, according to Davies (1989, p. 139), rather than failures of rational thought are a creative source of new understandings and new discourses. Braidotti (1994) sees this as a way of opening up new discursive fields that can be perceived as sites of resistance.

### 2.3.3 Sites of resistance

Establishing sites of resistance was part of a broad range of feminist interventions. Examples of sites outside the academy are Women's Health Centres, Rape Crisis Centres,

Women's Shelters and the Femocracy with the government bureaucracy (Broom, 1991; Eisenstein, 1991). The suffragettes and writers like Virginia Woolf, Betty Friedan and Kate Millet can be described as sites of resistance. The emergence of feminist discourses within the academy saw the growth of Women's Studies during the 1960s and 1970s within Europe and the UK, establishing a number of sites of resistance for women within universities. Brooks (1997b, p. 117) rather optimistically believes that despite the limitations of second wave feminist interventions the positioning of Women's Studies within the academy established a 'voice', facilitated a 'space' and encouraged an intellectually dynamic forum for the articulation of contested theoretical debates.

MU does not run any Women's Studies programs; although there are bridging courses facilitating women into non-traditional areas such as computing, science and technology (see Chapter Four), there remains an absence of courses resembling feminist/gender theorizing. Alternative discourses to mainstream theoretical positions are facilitated within small groups contained within faculties. Local research (Eade, McNamee, Cox, & Gregor, 1995) and anecdotal evidence at MU pointed to the lack of academic women developing research profiles, and, as a response, Women in Research (WIR) was established (Hills & Rowan, 2002; Rowan & Brennan, 1998).

This group offered 'space', 'voice' and collectivity (Brooks, 1997b) for women to support one another in research. While the group did not necessarily maintain or project an overtly feminist stance, the fact there was a separate group for women researchers implied such a stance. Yeatman (1994) warns that, while Women's Studies opened up

real opportunity for feminist intellectual debate, the way in which it is institutionalized ensures that it remains marginalized in relation to what is regarded as mainstream academia.

Key members of this group later left to go to other universities, resulting in membership steadily declining on the main Milton campus; but curiously and notably WIR has become stronger on the peripheral campuses. While not replacing WIR, a second group 'Gender in Research' developed on the main campus but has members at other campuses; membership of this group is not restricted to women. The activities and location of WIR demonstrate two significant points. The first point is the negotiation of resistance where the strong location of membership away from the main campus can be interpreted as using the experience of being marginalized as a site of resistance (Danaher, 2001).

The second point raised is the resistance of the resistor: WIR can be resisted by the 'establishment', through such mechanisms as budget cuts and increased formal accounting procedures; as such, WIR is more easily silenced or controlled. This can be seen through such actions as MU allocating to WIR a small operating budget that does not fully cover the running of an annual conference, let alone any professional development workshops for women researchers.

Significant also is the negotiation of discourses around research. While research continues to be a significant activity for MU, it appears that legitimate research is that sanctioned by the institution and done by male bodies (see Chapter Five). The university

wants to raise its research profile, but men rather than women are seen as legitimate researchers. This is re-positioning women researchers back to their pre—1994 positioning (Rowan & Brennan, 1998) prior to the setting up of WIR.

Various feminists have commented on the nature of transformation at MU: Baillie and Moxham (1998) referred to women's contribution to teaching strategies; Lynch, Clayton and Cranston (1998) wrote about developing courses for women in computing; and Swanbrick, Howard and Augustine (1998) looked at cultures in engineering. What these demonstrate are personal transformations for many academic women. At a local level, individual acts of resistance can include introducing feminist texts to reading lists, alternative theoretical positions in class debates, new ideas in lectures and encouraging specific reflective processes (Luke, 1994; Luke & Gore, 1992).

This personal transformation provides a valuable contribution, but I raise concerns that, in spite of multiple performances of personal resistance, there appears to be no visible change or public transformation within the academic workplace. In the next section I draw together the main points made in the selected literature reviewed in this chapter and signal what this means for academic women and for this thesis.

## **2.4 What does this mean for academic women?**

Drawn together the literature reviewed in this chapter brings to the fore a number of significant points for this thesis. Women's participation in the workforce has been growing steadily; however women have remained 'second class' citizens at work. This

has been shown by the fact that women's jobs have been consistently lowly paid and given low status when compared to men's jobs. Whilst there has been a steady incursion of women into the 'legitimate' labour market over the past 100 years, the notion of the typical employee as 'male' has continued to dominate the structure of workplace environments — meaning that in the university environment, for example, "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1995, 2002) is valued.

Sexuality plays an important part in what jobs are seen as legitimate for women. Although there is nothing inherent in jobs that makes them male or female, as Game and Pringle (1983, p. 15) showed, what remains constant is the distinction between men's work and women's work. Similarly, Truman (1996, p. 35) believes that it is in the area of women and work that inequalities between women and men are at their most visible. Bradley (1998) contends women's status in the workplace is undermined by government policy with a social agenda that is pro-family, supporting patterns of the 1950s.

Probert (2002) expands on this by demonstrating that, while women are encouraged to enter the workplace, discourses around domesticity and motherhood remain relatively unchanged. There is an expectation of a second wage but childcare and domestic responsibility still fall primarily to women (Lupton, Short & Whip, 1992). While women in Aveling's (2002) study showed they could succeed on male terms, a number of competing discourses coupled with a workplace culture that enshrined male norms ensured that women's work patterns replicated those of a generation ago. Therefore competing discourses of motherhood/caring (traditional) and women/working

(counternarrative) are present but these discourses are more likely to be negotiated by women in the private sphere (Lafferty & Fleming, 2000).

Significant amounts of contemporary feminist research have demonstrated ways in which universities have been constituted as 'masculine' contexts, within which the experiences, perspectives and skills of women have been either marginalized or ignored (Evans, 1997; Rowan, 1998; Rowan & Bartlett, 1997; Sofia, 1995; Sutherland, 1986; Wise, 1997). Indeed, academic feminists have argued that any university context can be regarded as a political and non-neutral experience, with institutional experiences that are gendered (Brooks, 1997a; Cockburn, 1983; Game & Pringle, 1984; Rowan, 1998).

McInnis (2000, p. 136) argues that there is continuing gender segregation within the academic workplace, with women located in teaching roles and forming part of the feminized casual labour market. Currie, Harris and Thiele (2000) suggest that significant parts of academic women's work are rendered invisible by dominant phallogentric discourses, compounded by dominant managerialist discourses pervading the university, reproducing and reinforcing a masculinist culture. Burton (1998) expressed the view that universities have known about the impediments to women's progress in this workplace for considerable time but have done little to remove these impediments. This signals both the power of normalizing discourses and the vested interests in maintaining a patriarchal structure and power relationship that segregate and position women's academic work as secondary to men's work. I would argue that a lack of accountability built into equity related policies maintains this inequity and as these policies do not relate to any economic

benefit they are co-opted to serve a masculinist environment (see Chapter Four). This literature also demonstrated some significant gaps in the current literature.

## **2.5 Gaps in the literature**

There are two gaps highlighted within this literature to which that my thesis attends. The first gap concerns the reduction of academic women's lived experiences to a 'universal' male norm within a masculinist discourse. The second gap concerns the ability of women to transform their workplace contexts. I look firstly at the way in which women's experiences are reduced to men's experiences or what I call homogenizing discourses.

### 2.5.1 Gap one —homogenizing discourses

Currie *et al.* (2000) suggest the impact of current economic and neo-liberal discourses minimizes differences between male and female academic staff, with this apparent uniformity resulting from a peak masculinist discourse; in other words, the experience of academic staff was one of similarities rather than differences. In this thesis I argue that these discourses enhance, rather than minimize, the differences between academic women and their male colleagues by reinforcing discourses of embodiment that result in the on-going marginalized positioning of academic women.

While in the broader picture it is possible to claim, as do Currie *et al.* (2000), that these discourses have a homogenizing effect, I contend that this is part of the phallogentric nature/outcome of these discourses. Therefore in this thesis I argue that in the MU workplace dominated by masculinist discourses women's experiences are different rather

than the same. Although equity discourses construct women as the same as men, there are embodied discourses circulating within this workplace that construct and position academic women differently from men. This is a very significant point as my research concerns the ways in which women are rendered invisible.

Currie *et al.* (2000) consider that the functioning (that is, the teaching and administration — areas where women are increasingly clustered) within, and of, the university is being rendered invisible by the overt reward bias associated with research and the generation of external funding (areas that continue to be male dominated). The literature reviewed around women and universities indicates the continuation of women's disadvantage within this workplace. What this thesis shows is the mechanism that reproduces the sexual disadvantage of four women at MU. In utilizing a post-structuralist analysis (see Chapter Three) I show that women are disadvantaged and 'how' women continue to be disadvantaged. I now turn to the second gap in the literature.

#### 2.5.2 Gap two — women's transformative abilities

There has been much discussion of the ways that women are able to resist particular discourses and to transform their personal contexts, implying their ability to transform public contexts. The literature reviewed in Sections 2.1 and 2.2 is testament to women's resistance in the workplace. Broadly speaking the fact and the number of women entering the workplace can be seen as resistance to the dominant male paradigm that women's place is in the private sphere.



In contemporary times Probert (2002) demonstrates that this traditional discourse has been transformed *albeit* with limitations, where women are now encouraged to return to the workplace, but there has been no transformation of discourses of domesticity. Likewise, there is little transformation regarding women's roles within various workplace environments. So while some sites of resistance can be mapped through the literature reviewed — indeed there is ample literature associated with resisting phallogentric discourses at a personal level — there is a gap in the literature concerning women's abilities when it comes to transforming workplaces generally and universities specifically. This thesis points to this by highlighting the gap between the hope that feminists have set out and the happening within a specific university site that results in material consequences for academic women.

Over the past ten years there have been large qualitative and quantitative studies investigating academic women's on-going inequity; simultaneously theoretical debates moved into the philosophical arena away from the realities of women's lives (Brooks, 1997b, p. 41). Literature around transformation and gender reform within the workplace highlights a gap between women's abilities *to be* transformative and their abilities *to* transform their workplace.

By this I mean that women can resist and transform themselves at the subjective or micro-social level but beyond this level — at the macro-social level — the performance of resistance in workplaces is difficult and dangerous in a neo-liberal era, where economic rationalist approaches dominate workplace policy and procedure (see Chapter

Six). While women are 'free' to choose to resist, this freedom is not embedded in a 'no-consequence, no-risk' context. That is, there are material consequences for those who step out of line in an environment dominated by powerful phallogentric discourses.

Brooks (1997b, p. 58) raises the point that Foucault's argument of power has limitations in that seeing power everywhere and accessible to everyone could result in a lack of acknowledgement of women's systemic subordination to other women, as well as systemic subordination by men. Similarly to Brooks (1997b, pp. 57-58), I argue that there has been insufficient analysis of the middle ground of the relations of power, in other words, the micro-politics of everyday life and the consolidation of deeply entrenched male privilege throughout social life. In this thesis I highlight the lived experience of four women who, in their everyday interactions within MU, come up against invisible discourses of embodiment and patriarchy that continue to construct these women in relation to men.

My thesis adds to the growing body of literature that employs a new lens on an issue that does not seem to be resolved. A feminist post-structuralist framework allows me to look at the body, constructions of femininity and masculinity and how sexuality fashions relations of the labour process (Zajdow, 1995, p. 16). Where my study differs from those reviewed is that, while focusing in detail on the lived experience of four academic women within an Australian regional/rural university, I employ a textual analytical method to unmask the on-going phallogentric nature of this academic site. The work of this thesis uncovers a gap between the transformative potential of the four academic

women at MU at the micro-social (subjectivity) level and the lack of transformation at the macro-social (workplace) level — in other words the gap between hope and happening (Kenway, Willis, Blackmore & Rennie 1997) at MU. Kenway, Willis, Blackmore and Rennie (1997) refer to the mysterious gap between hope and happening in their survey of gender reform programs in schools. They found that there was seldom a perfect match between the aspirations of the policies and the practices associated with change. The work of this thesis, then, makes visible the ‘mysterious’ gap between personal and public transformation.

## **2.6 Review of the chapter**

In this chapter I have reviewed selected literature around the broad area of women, work, universities and transformation. In this review five important points were established:

- women are forming a feminized and casual labour force;
- women remain positioned as secondary to men;
- sexuality and embodiment impact on the workplace;
- systemic institutional gender discrimination is ubiquitous;
- women are transforming the ‘personal’.

Also established in this review was the need to pursue a new way of looking at an old problem (Hills & Rowan, 2002). Studies by Brooks (1997a) and Burton (1998) signal an emerging focus on discourse analysis and the need to deconstruct the social and cultural realm. Bodies are paramount in the interrogation of workplace relationships as they are in any social interaction. This review has outlined the focus of this thesis — that is,

academic women negotiating their workplace — and signalled the framework associated with this investigation.

The literature reviewed in this chapter has identified the complexity associated with researching the contemporary workplace, with the university no exception. Specifically this review drew attention to three issues important to this thesis. The first issue concerned the identification of gender neutral assumptions underpinning the workplace. The second issue related to the way that discourses operate at different levels and the third issue identified the work of this thesis — to demonstrate the gap between personal and public transformation — where this signals a specific research design. In the following chapter I present a conceptual and methodological framework that supports and locates the positioning of this thesis within the growing field of feminist post-structuralism and my use of a textual analytical approach.

# **CHAPTER THREE**

## **FEMINIST POLITICS:**

### **A CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL STARTING POINT**

#### **3.0 Overview**

In the previous chapter the literature review highlighted three important issues for this thesis. Firstly, gender neutral assumptions underpinning the workplace were identified; secondly, the way that some discourses work ‘behind the scenes’ suggests that discourses operate at different levels; and thirdly, there is a significant gap in the literature around the notion of transformation and women in the workplace. These three issues, in turn, point to a particular kind of investigation.

Rowan (1998, p. 15) asserts that feminist political projects are commonly characterized by a desire to unmask the apparent neutrality of various social and cultural discourses in order to highlight the ways in which women and men are positioned differently within discursive contexts. This position argues that there are political consequences of being positioned as a ‘woman’ or a ‘man’ within particular geographical, temporal and cultural contexts and recognition of these consequences involves critiquing the practices of cultural institutions and discourses. This chapter, then, lays out the ‘what’ and ‘how’ of feminist research.

The ‘what’ of feminist research is couched in terms of ontology and epistemology while the ‘how’ is concerned with feminist processes. This chapter attends to the ‘what’ and

‘how’ of my research process by outlining my methodological positioning, thus locating this thesis in the wider field of feminist theory; as well, the research process is set out for both transparency and critique.

This chapter is divided into seven sections. The first section deals with feminist issues or the ‘what’ of feminist research. The second section attends to the study’s conceptual framing by outlining discourse, subjectivity, embodiment and performance. Although my discussion deals (necessarily) with these key concepts separately and in a linear fashion, I hasten to add that I do not see them as discrete. Rather I have chosen to work through them in this manner in order to demonstrate my understanding, interpretation and conceptualization as applied to this thesis. The third section engages with the political dimension and ethical dilemmas of the research. The fourth section of this chapter sets out the research design or ‘how’ of research and covers the more practical details, still however couched within a theoretically informed feminist research process addressing pertinent methodological issues. The fifth section of this chapter covers my toolkit underpinning the analytical approach of the thesis. The sixth section addresses the trustworthiness of the research, and the seventh section acknowledges the limitations of the study. I now begin by addressing feminist research interests.

### **3.1 Feminist interests (the ‘what’ of research)**

Historically feminist researchers struggled with issues concerning ontology and epistemology revolving around the broad question of what is ‘knowledge’. As Guba and Lincoln (1991, p. 164) explain, a researcher’s methodology emerges from her response to

an ontological and epistemological position. With a commitment to broadening out what counts as knowledge feminist scholars, from the 1970s onwards, undertook a range of research projects that focused on the absence of women from certain contexts and the invisibility of women in others.

This served the dual purpose of allowing feminists to identify that knowledge (or history or science or whatever was routinely presented as ‘knowledge’) was ultimately the view of white male (and often middle class) society, constructed by white male researchers. This view centred on the public world and either ignored the private sphere where women were predominantly located (Smith & Noble-Spruell, 1986, pp. 135-6) or focused on it only to argue for the legitimacy of its ‘feminine’ nature. Much early feminist research emphasized the consequence of this separation for women and pointed to the importance of developing new ways of thinking about knowledge, research and women’s place in relation to both.

Broadening feminist research agendas was done on two fronts. The first involved a focus on de-naturalizing traditional research principles, a theme to which I return in the fourth section of this chapter. The second front attended to the question of what constituted ‘legitimate’ knowledge. Everyday life and local society were not recognized as ‘legitimate’ areas of inquiry because they were viewed as ‘natural’ and therefore unproblematic. Feminists challenged this by emphasizing strongly the relations of power and gender that were operating within society.

By the 1980s feminist research gave prominence to previously ignored areas, for example, housework and mothering (Smith & Noble-Spruell, 1986, p. 137). This does not mean that feminist research is merely about adding women; rather, as Finch (1991, p. 199) states, it is a combination of factors that value women. It is the realization that gender or sexual difference is always present (James, 1986, p. 18). Consequently the ‘what’ of research broadened not only to look at women’s issues, but also to interrogate how women are positioned in those fields; it is about recognizing that women’s exclusion has particular consequences. I begin my engagement with the ‘what’ of feminist research by interrogating specific concepts that frame this research project.

### **3.2 A conceptual starting point**

This section looks at the relationships among discourse, subjectivity, the body and performance. My argument focuses on the way in which discourse, personal experiences and the body construct subjectivity and influence the performance of those bodies within different discursive environments. As this is a ‘fleshing out’ of theoretical concepts I have divided this section into four smaller sub-sections that together map out the theoretical positioning of this thesis.

In the first sub-section I define the concept of discourse. In the second sub-section I show the relationship between discourse and subjectivity by looking at the way women either take up or reject various discourses where I also introduce the concept of ‘multiple mes’ — a device for explaining how women reconcile competing discourses. The term embodiment signals the beginning of the third sub-section where I continue a detailed



discussion around the body, sex and gender and introduce the notion of sexed scripts. The fourth sub-section builds on the previous sub-section where I discuss resisting normative sexed scripts and the power of normalizing discourses that influence performance. These four concepts — discourse, subjectivity, embodiment and performance — enable me to organise my data analysis in particular ways where the interplay of discourse, subjectivity and embodiment is demonstrated in the construction of sexed scripts; together this leads to specific kinds of performances (see Chapters Five and Six). I now define the concept of discourse in relation to this thesis.

### 3.2.1 Defining discourse

As my interpretation basically follows a Foucauldian conceptualization, I reiterate an excellent definition of discourse provided by Weedon, who states:

Discourses in Foucault's work are ways of constituting knowledge together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations, which inhere in such knowledges, and the relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects they seek to govern. Neither the body nor thoughts and feelings have meaning outside their discursive articulation, but the way in which discourse constitutes the minds and bodies of individuals is always part of a wider network of power relations, often with institutional bases. (1987, p. 108)

From this I see discourses as occurring within various institutional contexts such as the family, media, education, religion and workplace, to name just a few. Discourse is about knowledge production, social practices and power relations. Meaning is contained within the discursive field/s associated with the discourse. There is no meaning outside these discursive fields.

Some discourses are clearly more powerful within particular historical or cultural contexts and legitimized within various institutions (Kenway, Willis, Blackmore & Rennie, 1994, 1997). Institutions occupying powerful positions in particular contexts have discourses associated with them: these are particular ways of speaking about themselves and others that reflect the values and beliefs of that institution. Smith (1987, p. 214) suggests that institutional discourses create relations among subjects, appearing as a body of knowledge existing in its own right, with these forms of discourse accomplished through socially organized practices. Tied to the belief that discourses produce particular kinds of realities is an acceptance that power is tied to the ability to produce knowledges; similarly significant is the recognition that knowledges are, therefore, always produced.

Discourses and discursive practices are embedded within various institutions, beginning with the family. It is here that cultural practices, beliefs and values are first encountered (Lindsey, 1994; Weedon, 1987). Patterns and processes of socialization begin from the moment of birth when parents often dress their babies in either pink, signifying a girl, or blue for a boy (there is little choice in many clothing stores). I would argue here that the

institution of the family is the most significant socializing agent in shaping and constituting gender norms (Gatens, 1998; Lindsey, 1994). I emphasize that socialization processes within the institution of the family establish cultural beliefs, practices and values. Similarly the family can act as a site of resistance to cultural hegemony by disrupting or transforming 'nonnative expectations. In other words, not all children or adults are socialized into identical expectations and social roles, nor are these fixed and immutable.

But discourses pertaining to 'family' are powerful and emotive; families are perceived as 'natural' entities rather than an institution constructed within specific historical, social and political relations of power (Gatens, 1998, p. 3) that regulate cultural values and underpin particular ideologies and practices. For example, women are the majority of primary care givers and this practice is associated with the nurturing discourse. Mothers are believed to have a 'natural' maternal instinct that fathers do not possess; these assumptions are tied to observations relating not only to who gives birth, but also to the ways that women nurture, including breastfeeding. Nurturing practices, then, are often regarded as being biological attributes of women; this is because nurturing practices done by women are seen as a 'natural' activity by many people or as a matter of common sense (Weedon, 1987, p. 75).

Whilst some see nurturing behaviour as proof of biological traits, and indeed biological determinism, others (myself included here) interpret this behaviour as something that is produced by, and in turn reproduces, certain dominant discourses that are associated with

women generally and maternity specifically, and that are consequently 'taken for granted' and rarely questioned as a power relationship. As Weedon (1987, p. 75) asserts, this common sense articulated in language represents quite specific values and interests. Motherhood is spoken about in ways that associate women with caring, compassionate and emotional behaviour. As a result women are encouraged (socialized) to demonstrate these precise activities and values when they become mothers. Within dominant Western discourses a 'good mother' nurtures and cherishes her children, loves and supports her husband, and cares for and maintains a clean home, reinforcing an ideology of femininity and domesticity (Probert, 2002). An untidy house is often viewed as indicative of a dysfunctional woman and a bad mother.

What this serves to demonstrate is the way in which institutions —the family, the church or the media, for example — all participate in the construction/circulation and naturalization of specific and limiting norms. Many norms reflect those established in traditional families and result in the on-going ascription of 'nurturing' roles to women and 'leadership' roles to men. In the following data analysis chapters I take up institutional discourses as this notion of constructed conversations that define social relationships constituting what it means to be an academic woman, or an academic man, or just simply men and women.

In the following sub-section, I build on this connection between discourse and the construction and naturalization of gender norms to focus on how women 'read' these discourses. This serves the dual purpose of illustrating the construction of nonnative

understandings of ‘woman’ and of showing the multiple ways that women accept, reject or transform dominant ways of speaking about themselves as women.

### 3.2.2 Discourse and subjectivity: ‘Becoming a woman’

In this sub-section I build on the ideas put forward in the previous sub-section by exploring the link between discourse and subjectivity where I aim to show a relationship between discourse and the construction of gender norms. This relationship becomes particularly important when viewed, more broadly, in terms of institutional discourses and the naturalization and reinforcement of specific gender norms. To show a relationship between discourse and subjectivity I draw on a number of resources, notably the work of Kenway, Willis, Blackmore and Rennie (1993, 1997), Davies (1990) and Braidotti (1994).

These resources enable me to demonstrate two things: firstly, how women actively take up or reject various discourses and consequently how particular norms and expectations become associated with being male and female; and secondly, having detailed the presence of multiple subjectivities (Braidotti, 1994; Davies, 1990), I then combine theories originating with Goffman (1959), Mead (1962) and Davies (1990) to discuss what I refer to as the concept of ‘multiple mes’; this concept serves to explain how women negotiate and reconcile differences between their lived experiences and institutional discourses.

Kenway *et al.* (1993, p. 67) suggest that women learn from an early age how to be female through the *discourses of the everyday*; as de Beauvoir (1997, p. 295) articulates, in her famous phrase, “one is not born a woman, rather becomes a woman”. Women’s desires are often dictated by prevailing beliefs centring on appropriate behaviour. In other words, dominant discourses around motherhood and femininity construct acceptable roles for women. Consequently a ‘good woman’ is seen as a particular body — heterosexual, young, predominantly white, middle class, passive, unselfish, feminine, mother, wife, emotional supporter and domestic goddess.

While Kenway *et al.* (1993) suggest that women learn how to be women (in the culturally codified/endorsed sense) through the discourses of the everyday, Davies (1990, p. 506) contends that women learn to choose among different discourses, taking up some and rejecting others, thus enabling women to position themselves in relation to their lived experience:

We learn categories of people and who is excluded and included in these, eg, male/female, father/daughter. We learn how to participate in the discursive practices that give meaning to these categories, including the storylines in which various subject positionings are elaborated. We learn, importantly, how to position ourselves in terms of these categories and storylines as though we, in fact, are in one category rather than the other (eg, as girl not boy, as ‘good’ girl and not ‘bad’ girl). Finally we come to see ourselves as having those characteristics that locate us in these different categories, as belonging in the world in certain ways and thus seeing it accordingly. Through this latter

process, we become emotionally committed to our category memberships and experience our belonging and not belonging in moral terms.

Davies (1990, p. 506) suggests that the discourses and discursive practices of the everyday are taken up in the process of “becoming a person” where people choose to act out particular storylines that determine their category memberships. This can be read to suggest that women and men make choices in a ‘no consequence/no pressure’ vacuum which clearly is not the case. I would argue that this choice is constrained by two things:

- firstly, by limited storylines or options being available to certain people. I contend that there are bodily attributes or markers of difference (Braidotti, 1994) that influence the kinds of storylines that people are able to access;
- secondly, by the power of normative discourses where bodies are regulated and institutional discourses serve to correct inappropriate behaviour.

As Kenway *et al.* (1993, p. 67, 1997, p. 192) state, women ‘read’ what is being offered and respond in particular ways dependent on how their histories and their present come together. This is clearly evident in Chapter Six where I present an analysis of the women’s negotiations of their respective workplaces. From this it can be seen that women negotiate a sense of self at the intersection of multiple and often competing discourses where women struggle to reconcile within themselves multiple pressures from various discursive fields. What I term ‘multiple mes’ is helpful in this context. Here I extend an idea developed by Goffman (1959), Mead (1962) and more recently Davies (1990) around the concept of ‘me’.

Because a woman may negotiate a number of discursive fields, that is, daughter, wife, mother, worker, carer to name a few, she often holds a different 'subject position' and can be seen to be a different self or 'me' in each of these fields. I stress here that these different subject positions have no clear boundaries or cut off points. This multiplicity incorporates contradictory discourses; for example, she is both a daughter and a mother. As a daughter she may be subordinate to a patriarchal father, but as a sole parent/mother she could be an independent breadwinner and head of her own household. On top of this there are markers of difference — such as age, race, ethnicity and physical ability — that also provide particular discursive constructions influencing how a woman is seen in society and that indicate differences among women (Braidotti, 1994).

Seeing women as contradictory has been used (and still is used) as evidence of women's inferiority, emotional instability and unsuitability for inclusion in public life. However, I would argue that women as contradictory beings are a sign of strength rather than inferiority — this being due to the multiple positions, experiences and spaces occupied. This indicates fluidity among the membership categories described by Davies (1990).

This fluidity challenges the narrow traditional construction of 'woman' and allows agency. 'Woman as contradictory' recognises a multiplicity of subjectivities where Braidotti (1994) argues multiple spaces are traversed and opened up, creating new feminist figurations that celebrate difference. New feminist figurations, according to Braidotti (1994, p. 4), are politically informed images that portray the complex



interaction of levels of subjectivity. This empowers women to speak from a range of unique subject positions.

The concept of ‘multiple mes’ is significant because it enables me to explain how the women engage in negotiation and reconciliation of competing discourses and, often contradictory, positions. It demonstrates that choices of performances are made in contexts where external pressures and phallogentric discourses converge on this negotiation. ‘Multiple mes’ allow women to perform differently and do different performances, but this is inextricably tied to their bodies.

I elaborate these points in Chapter Five when I talk about the formal and informal discourses that influence the kinds of institutional expectations demanded by MU that are ‘read’ by the women in this study. The kinds of dominant ‘good woman’ discourses associated with motherhood and femininity infiltrate and regulate bodies in contexts outside the home; consequently women are often expected to perform particular nurturing or caring practices and roles in their employment and/or social relationships (see Chapter Five). I also return to these points in Chapter Six, where I draw attention to the ways in which these women negotiate a phallogentric smog that shrouds their workplaces.

In this sub-section I developed my argument of the concept of multiple subjectivities and contended women’s subjectivities are formed at the intersection of past experience and everyday discourses; in the next sub-section I add to this argument by showing how

bodies form part of subjectivity. The term 'embodiment' is useful and this concept leads to my discussion of bodies, sex and gender.

### 3.2.3 Sex + gender = the body: Embodiment and sexed scripts

I continue to develop my argument that discourse and subjectivity are linked with each other and are inextricably tied to the body. To demonstrate this connection I argue in this sub-section that sexed bodies construct sexed subjectivities. In this thesis I define the term 'body' as a conflation of the terms 'sex' and 'gender' and draw on the work of Braidotti (1994) and Gatens (1996) to support this argument. By conflating the terms 'sex' and 'gender' I contend that the sex/gender distinction is no longer as analytically useful as it once was (Braidotti, 1994; Butler, 1990; Gatens, 1992, 1996). Historically this conceptual distinction was valuable to feminists as it enabled the differentiation between the biological and the social, thus providing a useful base for debating essentialism versus the construction of femininity/masculinity. In more recent years this distinction has been increasingly read as artificial.

The sex/gender distinction implies that gender differences are socially constructed and as such can be changed, while sexual differences are fixed and socially neutral (Hills, 1998). This can be construed as sex being equated with the physical body while gender, being socially constructed, is associated with learnt behaviour and the mind — reinforcing a mind/body separation. This separation suggests that, although the body is sexually different, the mind is unconnected to that sexual difference. As Hills (1998) suggests, the

body in this instance is recognised as sexually specific whilst the mind is conceptualized as sexually neutral.

By conflating the terms ‘sex/gender’ I am not implying a sexually neutral or androgynous body but a sexed body that has sexual differences, hormonal differences and sexed subjectivities, all of which constitute that body. This conflation allows me to talk about bodies without reverting to an essentialist position. The terms ‘sex/gender’ and ‘embodiment’ are useful in establishing the notion of sexed bodies. I now turn to the concept of embodiment and establish the significance of this concept to my argument.

According to Wearing (1996, p. 80), embodiment incorporates values, perceptions and gestures inscribed in and through the body that determine the lived experiences through those bodies as men and women; some men for example use voice, gestures and body position in particular ways as they occupy public space — hands behind their head, leaning back on chairs with legs splayed out — thus appearing to take up more space. It is how they perform their act of ‘body language’ that creates their self perception of themselves as men.

The concept of embodiment is significant because it signals why women are called upon to ‘nurture’ outside the home, demonstrating how discourses of motherhood follow women into the workplace. Traditionally norms and expectations associated with ‘the teacher’ position this role as neutral or supposedly objective or unemotional. However, teachers of particular year levels are often conceptualized in a nurturing, almost childcare

role. Thus when a teacher occupies a female body, certain gendered expectations result such as the expectation of caring and compassion; and this is linked to the ‘natural’ extension of the biological dimensions of the female body. Conversely when a teacher occupies a male body, expectations regarding legitimacy of knowledge, truth and objectivity are automatically assigned with these attributes being valued and again seen as the ‘natural’ extension of the biological dimensions of the male body.

These attributes are valued only within a male body; when a woman displays attributes associated with a male body, she is at risk of being deemed an unruly, bad woman. Conversely if a man displays caring or traits associated with a female body, he is often regarded as effeminate or is regarded with suspicion. This means that different bodies often need to perform different behaviours in order to get the same reward. There is a link between embodiment and social location that needs to be acknowledged: markers of difference — such as sexuality, age, ethnicity, class, race and physical ability — attach social messages to bodies that determine social location. This social location, in turn, defines both value of, and appropriate behaviour for, that body.

I argue, therefore, that people learn how to act in certain ways to elicit particular responses or because they see certain acts as being expected of them (Sarra, 2002). This point is taken up in Chapter Five, where Alice is expected to ‘care’ for students. Performances and roles are influenced by what behaviours and social practices are valued, rewarded, expected, devalued and punished. Reward and punishment are often determined by the social location, and the social value associated with ‘whose body’

performs what social practices. This suggests that bodies themselves are part of behaviour and the construction of subjectivity, establishing the body as sexed subjectivities. The relationship between bodies and subjectivities highlights the presence of sexed scripts (Elsdon, 1999) that have different consequences for men and women. I now turn to the presence of sexed scripts (Elsdon, 1999) —discourses around what sexed bodies do.

For the purpose of this thesis I define sexed scripts as normative discourses that prescribe behaviours/performances associated with male bodies and different behaviours associated with female bodies. In other words, these normative discourses work towards constituting appropriate and specific performances that categorize male and female bodies. Specific discourses and practices become naturalized to such an extent that it is perceived that men ‘naturally’ belong in the public sphere and women in the private sphere. I now bring together the threads of my argument around bodies, sex and gender, by illustrating connections among discourse, subjectivity and bodies through the presence of sexed scripts (Elsdon, 1999).

As I established earlier, women and men experience the world and what it means differently because they inhabit differently sexed bodies. As Braidotti (1994, p. 163) states, women may have common situations and experiences —for example, pregnancy, birth, menstruation and menopause — but they are NOT, in any way, THE SAME as one another. These commonalities differentiate women from women, and indeed women from men, and it is this latter differentiation that I contend constructs sexed subjectivities that

men are unlikely to experience. This allows me to argue that being male in a male body is different from being female in a female body. This kind of argument also signals the possibility of potential alienation among men who experience negative consequences of their performances of masculinity, thus indicating difference among men and their difference from women.

I agree with Braidotti (1994, p. 198) that sexuality is a dominant discourse of power in the West, but more specifically I see heterosexuality as a powerful normalizing discourse. Sexuality becomes significant when categorized sexed bodies perform behaviours that contravene normative practices such as gay men or lesbian women living in a relationship who wish to have children. Braidotti (1994, p. 198) sees the body as intimately connected to subjectivity where the body is a surface of signification situated at the intersection of anatomy and language. Grosz (1994, p. 20) puts this another way when she asserts the body provides a point of mediation between what is perceived as purely internal and accessible only to the subject and what is external and publicly observable.

More importantly, Gatens (1992, p. 130) suggests that if the body is granted a history then traditional associations of female body/domestic sphere and male body/public sphere can be acknowledged as historical realities, allowing the 'imaginary body' associated with normative definitions of femininity to be seen as an effect, not of genetics, but of relations of power. In other words, the 'imaginary body' is a consequence of particular social, cultural and historical values and beliefs, generated by those who have the power to influence societal norms and values, thus creating 'Woman'. This imaginary body or

myth not only establishes the performer, but also defines cultural norms and expectations; various meanings become attached to this body, thereby prescribing appropriate performances.

Meanings attached to those sexed bodies attract greater significance when bodies are located in specific sites (McDowell, 1999). Feminist geographers such as McDowell (1999) regard the body as a place, as well as being located in a place. Academic women, for example, could be seen as a site within a site (that is, they are bodies within a university) and are thus likely to experience particular inscriptions on these bodies that are different from what they may experience at home or in other sites. This is explored in Chapter Six through the use of technology in the academic workplace.

Sexed scripts imposed on women and men can have significant consequences when these scripts negatively define women as secondary to men and influence the spaces in which women perform. Likewise sexed scripts influence women's subjectivities as they perform in various sites (Elsdon, 1999). This becomes significant when bodies are perceived as 'out of place' (McDowell, 1999). As Marshall (1994, p. 117) suggests, women, as knowledgeable acting subjects, can also participate in the legitimation of conditions which reproduce their 'position'. In other words, they may choose to conform to traditional discourses and gender norms for various reasons — a theme taken up in Chapter Six through what I term 'strategic conformity'.

In the previous sub-section I established a relationship between discourse and subjectivity and in this sub-section I have shown how this is inextricably tied to the body. These sub-sections have brought together key concepts such as discourse, subjectivity, embodiment and sexed scripts that will assist in the mapping of women's experiences at MU and the answering of the first and second sub-questions related to my overall research question outlined in Chapter One.

Traditional discourses around motherhood, family and femininity construct representations of the 'good woman' and work towards regulating and reinforcing patterns of gendered social behaviour — thus constructing sexed bodies with sexed subjectivities and signalling the presence of sexed scripts. But these are scripts when all is said and done — suggesting bodies are able to learn new scripts, choose among scripts and re-write scripts. The re-writing of scripts is clearly a hope put forward by feminists in their desire to effect gender reform that is seen in the formation of equity related policies.

The types of scripts that are available to academic women are illustrated in my analysis of institutional discourses in Chapter Five. The choice associated with limited scripts on offer at MU can be seen in both the institutional expectations and the informal discourses demonstrated in Chapter Five as well as the negotiation of the workplace explored in Chapter Six. In the following sub-section I draw on Butler's (1990) concept of performative acts to demonstrate that bodies are able to conform, resist and/or work towards the transformation of 'Woman' by resisting and re-writing normative scripts. The



notion of changing scripts and performance assists in answering the third sub-question and signals the potential for resistance and transformation.

#### 3.2.4 Embodied performance: Resisting normative sexed scripts

In this sub-section I argue the complexity of embodied performance by drawing on Butler's (1990) concept of performative acts. This concept allows me to contend that bodies, through performance, are able to reflect, resist and challenge normative institutional discourses that attempt to correct inappropriate bodily behaviour. Butler (1990) suggests that gender is an impersonation that passes for the real thing, meaning that being female is not 'natural' but rather a cultural performance where 'naturalness' is constituted through repetitive performative acts. Therefore Butler (1990) sees gender as a performative act arising from discourses constructing biological categories labelled 'female' and 'male'.

Butler (1990) very succinctly describes this connection among sex, gender and performance when analyzing the performance of 'drag' where:

we are actually in the presence of three contingent dimensions of significant corporeality: anatomical sex, gender identity and gender performance. If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer and both of these are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance, but sex and gender and gender and performance. (p. 137)

This is clearly shown in the parodying of heterosexuality with the performances of the 'gay skinhead' and the 'lipstick lesbian' (McDowell, 1999, p. 62). Here acting in a 'masculine' way does not automatically or naturally 'equate' to being male, thus showing that there can be a range of ways/behaviours/acts associated with being male and correspondingly with being female. In other words, I believe the performance of gender to be the (re)production of an impersonation, and that there is no 'natural' version of femaleness (or masculinity) but instead only various culturally constructed norms or representations.

Performance then is the (re)production of an impersonation — signalling the possibility of disruption, subversion and new performances. Families can be a site of subversion or transformation, with this evident among those women and men who exhibit non-traditional behaviour. However these new performances have consequences, some of which may be punitive. Similarly Lucal (1999) raises the point that those people who do not 'do' gender correctly are often punished. A woman who speaks loudly or takes up space in conversations is often interpreted as aggressive, whereas the same performance by a man is seldom commented on; rather it is taken for granted as a natural consequence of 'masculinity'.

Conforming to gender norms, therefore, is part of the normalizing effect of dominant institutional discourses. Discourses and norms learnt in the family follow men and women into the public sphere (Cockburn, 1991, p. 143). Those people who do not conform to normative expectations in the workplace —perceived either as subversive or

as non-players — may subsequently be overlooked when it comes to promotion, contract renewals and recognition of work.

Consequently specific values and beliefs reflecting the dominant cultural group in society are reinforced and reproduced. I agree with Gatens' (1998) argument that dominant institutional discourses work to 'correct' any inappropriate gender norms originating from a 'subversive' family. As Gatens (1998) points out:

Failure to live up to norms of masculinity (if you are a man) or norms of femininity (if you are a woman) is not simply to fail as a 'player' in any given institutional setting, it is to fail as a person — it is to *be* a failure. (p. 7; emphasis in original)

Therefore for some people deviation from normative gendered behaviour attacks the very core of what it means to be male or female; for that reason the attraction and incentive to conform are very strong. As Davies (1990, p. 506) comments, "[W]e learn about who is included and excluded", and this exerts powerful influences if one wants to be included. As argued earlier those women who do not 'fit' the representation of the 'good woman' image are at risk of being deemed mad, bad, unfit or unruly.

Moreover, Foucault (cited in Diprose, 1994, p. 21) suggests that bodies are made to fit within social structures, supporting my point that institutions exert, implicitly and explicitly, influences strongly encouraging conformity to institutional ideologies and gendered expectations. In linking theory to practice what this means for academic women

at MU is that dominant discourses circulating within MU promote what is desirable behaviour for academics generally, and academic women specifically, and what 'body' is seen as a 'good academic'.

In this thesis I define 'good academic' to refer to a person, who is not necessarily morally good, but who is 'read' within the university contexts as good; a person who is given access to institutional rewards and resources on the basis of conforming to, and in turn reproducing, specific norms and expectations associated with being an academic. These institutional rewards are tangible in the form of promotion and/or tenure. This can also be non-tangible, referring to a sense of legitimacy concerning the type of academic/scholarly work undertaken. This non-tangible reward system is a type of status, honour or prestige that is conferred upon an academic in acknowledgment of worthiness by others. Therefore, I see a 'good academic' as someone who is valued and rewarded, in both tangible and non-tangible ways, within the university environment by both management and colleagues.

To bring this back to academic women, I am not contending that these women are female impersonators. What I am saying is the act of being female is an impersonation, as is the act of being male, and that these impersonations have different values, social expectations and institutional experiences. Various feminists have described institutional experiences as gendered (see Chapter Two) and this theme is taken up more specifically in Chapter Five where I analyze the construction of the 'good academic' at MU. Attempts to 'correct' any non-traditional behaviour within the university occur through rewarding

institutionally endorsed behaviour by pay increases, contract renewal, promotion and recognition, while those people exhibiting inappropriate behaviour are unlikely to have contracts renewed or promotion approved, illustrating that conformity is the key to career progression.

From this I would argue, then, that what is performed in the hallowed halls of the university are acts, gestures and desires that result from the negotiation of discourses that circulate within the institutions of society generally and universities specifically. These acts, gestures and desires are not the same for all academic women as responses/performances depends on bodily inscriptions and multiple subjectivities.

I argue in the following data analysis chapters that academics respond to formal and informal discourses circulating within the university in various ways depending on their cultural, historical and familial contexts and their lived experiences and that this response is in the form of 'performance' where these academics actively engage in responding to institutional discourses and discursive practices. To outline the way in which I gathered data to inform this thesis I now turn to the third section of this chapter —the political and ethical dimensions of the research. Feminist research means looking not only at the issues but also at the means by which research is conducted (Finch, 1991, p. 194; Rheinharz; cited in Smith & Noble-Spruell, 1986, p. 142).

### 3.3 The politics and ethics of researching women

This section builds on the conceptual framing outlined in the previous section by presenting the political and ethical dimensions associated with this methodological map. During the pre-fieldwork phase I spent time reflecting on the political and ethical dimensions embedded in feminist methodology. Marjorie de Vault (1996, p. 32) locates the distinctiveness of feminist methodology in the shared commitment to three goals. The first goal sees the focus of research shift to women and *their* concerns where research has revealed that which has been ignored, silenced and dismissed, while at the same time exposing those mechanisms that make women invisible (de Vault, 1996, p. 32). This goal connects my overall aim of this thesis (see Chapter One) to what I regard as the political dimension of feminist research.

The second goal is to minimize ‘harm’ and control in the research process, ‘empowering’ both the researcher and the researched. This goal signals the ethical dilemmas around feminist research. Finally, the third goal of a feminist methodology is to support research that is of value to women and that leads to social change (de Vault, 1996, pp. 32-33; Olesen, 1994, p. 158). While this third goal signals the desired outcome of my research process, the first two offer a point of departure for my methodological framework.

To present this framework I divide this section into two sub-sections: the first sub-section addresses research as a political process; while the second sub-section focuses on research as an ethical dilemma. I consider it imperative to acknowledge these issues during the preparation stage of my research as I considered my site as a hostile terrain for

many women and that I am a beginning researcher to the field. I begin with the political dimension associated with my research process.

### 3.3.1 Research as a political process

In this sub-section I consider the political process of researching women. Preparation prior to the actual fieldwork allowed me to reflect on my own participation and provided the opportunity to revisit my feminist and cultural values and biases; as Punch (1994, p. 86) states, the impact of feminist research has been to awaken the whole issue of gender in research and to politicise the debate on the conduct of research.

There are political dimensions of this research that involve legitimacy and credibility. To 'do' feminist research in a climate where the words 'feminism/s' and 'feminist' have no legitimacy is to walk a fine line between madness and stupidity. It also signals the contested terrain of 'academic freedom', whatever that may mean at MU. In other words, only certain academics researching institutionally endorsed studies are seen as legitimate (a theme explored further in Chapter Five). This raised three important concerns for me. Firstly my options for a feminist supervisor (or someone working in a post-structuralist framework, or even just pro-feminist) were limited and were to become more limited by the submission date. Secondly it meant I was, and still am, concerned 'office politics' could easily work against me, in effect replicating the very marginalization that I highlight in this thesis.

Thirdly it meant that I took an oppositional ideological position in regard to what counts as knowledge and what kinds of experiences matter in both my faculty and my university. As Lather (1992, p. 5) states, “to do feminist research is to put the social construction of gender at the centre of one’s inquiry”. Cook and Fonow (1990) contend that, by understanding the ‘taken-for-granted, mundane social aspects of social reality, the daily occurrences that reinforce male domination and marginalize women can be made visible, and this is what I wanted to do. Feminist research draws attention to the centrality of male power in what has been constructed as ‘knowledge’ (Maguire, 1996, p. 111); therefore to do feminist research is to challenge this power.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994, p. 11) assert that what counts as knowledge is directly related to an understanding of the nature of reality. Feminists argued, in their re-visioning of different research projects, that methodologies that valued rationality, objectivity and detachment limited access to certain knowledges, namely the lived experiences of women and men (Smith & Noble-Spruell, 1986, p. 137). Stanley and Wise (1990, p. 24) see feminist theory as emerging from experience as reality that is analytically interrogated by feminists. This means that experience and process are constantly reflected on as everyday experiences inform theory and practice.

By explicitly establishing a feminist post-structuralist perspective as my lens on the world, I am acknowledging a position premised on multiple truths and realities, as well as a clear focus on women’s experiences as reality. In other words, what the women say are



their 'truths' and during the course of our conversations a shared understanding of realities is built up through mutual trust and negotiation.

A theory/practice nexus is highlighted through my concern for the well being of the four academic women in this study, the type of data collection used, the offer of reciprocity and the choice to focus on their concerns. Therefore I have overtly signalled a political position because of the nature of my research topic, choice of participants and site of research, indicating that this is not a value free process (Maguire, 1996).

Theory becomes practice through using specific tools such as semi-structured interviews generating 'rich' data and enabling the women's voices to be included or heard through this thesis. Oakley (1981, p. 45) describes the act of interviewing women as a 'personal' involvement, becoming a two-way interaction, clearly demonstrating that this process is neither distanced nor objective. Oakley (1981) rejects the notion that the researcher can maintain an objective distance from the participants. Historically objectivity was highly valued in research projects sanctioned by most educational institutions, while anything related to subjectivity was regarded as 'sloppy' research (Sutherland, 1986, p. 155). By conducting interviews I form relationships and communication pathways with the women that change the women from being objects of research to participants/subjects in research.

Feminist methodology has enabled a paradigm shift in the nature of reality and what is regarded as 'suitable' to research. There has been an inclusion of the personal where the personal has also become the political, making sure that those issues important to women

are heard. The focus on personal experiences as data indicates the way in which I conceptualize legitimate research. What I mean here is that I believe there is no such thing as ‘value free’ research. Identifying with a feminist positioning I am declaring a personal ideological or political position regarding the nature of knowledge production. The kinds of issues that I explore, question and analyze come not only from the way I view the world, but also from what I value, believe in and cherish, such as freedom of choice, the right to live in peace and harmony, respecting difference, tolerance of those who believe in different perspectives and social justice (Maguire, 1996).

I also believe in speaking up against injustice and making visible the mechanisms that subjugate and subordinate those people considered as ‘others’. This means that I believe research is fundamentally political; it is about who gets heard and the power (or powerlessness) of their voice and how they are represented. As a feminist, this also means promoting women to represent their own perspectives and to be seen as participants/subjects rather than objects. As well as being a political process, doing research is also an ethical dilemma and I now explore this dimension.

### 3.3.2 Research as an ethical dilemma

In this sub-section I draw attention to the multiple dimensions that make research an ethical dilemma. Here questions such as who benefits and whether this research will be ‘harmful’, the shaping of data collection by the researcher and the stance taken by the researcher in this process are engaged with specifically to highlight the slippery nature of an ethical dilemma. I contend the terms ‘ethics’ and ‘politics’ make uneasy bedfellows —

but they signal the hope and happening around why we research, with whom we research and with what effects. I begin by reflecting on my own position as a researcher and what I bring to this process —in other words, my own biases.

Bias, specifically observer bias, refers to the cultural assumptions that researchers bring into their work (Marshall, 1994, p. 363). Therefore researchers cannot be rid of the cultural self that is brought to the research process. Rowan (1998, p. 25) suggests that feminists new to the field of academic research can, in acknowledging their own ‘realities’, add their journey as part of the research process that ultimately makes a contribution towards cultural transformation (see Chapter Seven). I believe that, if I am sufficiently reflexive, my biases or cultural assumptions can be used as a resource to guide my data gathering, interpretation and understanding of my location in this process.

My own multiplicity positions me in a new ‘in-between space’ (Braidotti, 2002) where I am both a student and a researcher within MU. I am a nomad crossing boundaries (Braidotti, 1994) and among categories (Davies, 1990); consequently some of my map is being recorded as I travel, while the rest of the map has signposts and lookout points provided by the literature reviewed (Chapter Two) and the conceptual framework outlined earlier (Section 3.2). I am conscious of taking my own cultural baggage and attitudes with me into the research process and I need to acknowledge that my own multiple subject positioning could influence the shared understandings and exchange of stories between myself as the researcher and the women as the researched. Examples of

such considerations pertain to the ‘office politics’ and underlying power relations that position me, my respondents and peers in this university.

Bloom (1998, p. 1) suggests feminist methodology promises a more interpersonal and reciprocal relationship between researchers and those whose lives are the focus of the research. But at the same time this can bring dilemmas or concerns over ethics, reflexivity and interpretation — this is particularly so considering my respondents are academic women employed at the same institution where I am a doctoral student. This relationship may have filtered the data that the women were prepared to share with me.

Lather (1986, p. 263) suggests that reciprocity creates a fertile and supportive environment, generates ‘rich’ data and presents an opportunity for the researcher to become part of the research inquiry. Reciprocity allows me to give something in return to the participants, thereby attempting to foster an environment where a level of mutual trust can begin to develop. I have attempted to do this by means of the following:

- I shared my own thoughts, opinions, and stance on the university with the women;
- I have worked on projects for one of my respondents;
- as a way of demonstrating the value placed on their participation, interviews with the women were scheduled to fit around their commitments;
- I was flexible in regard to length and location of interviews;
- I provided an information sheet and sought their permission to tape/record conversations and interviews and made sure that the women were aware that they could stop participation at any time;

- I will be giving a copy of the thesis to each participant when it is finalized.

I acknowledge that, while reciprocity is an excellent principle, it can sometimes also be an impossible goal. By this I mean that there are limits to what I feel comfortable in doing. Reciprocity is another slippery notion that, on the surface, appears harmonious and benign, but past experience has made me cautious. During my Honours year, I interviewed a small group of women and as reciprocity I provided each of the women, plus the Women's Health Centre — the subject of the research — with their own copy of the thesis.

I arranged to meet all the participants at a members' meeting to distribute the copies; each woman was eager to see herself in the text, but as they flicked through the chapters I began to realize from their body language and the changes in their demeanour that their expectations and interpretations had been somewhat different from mine. I felt that in the thesis I had portrayed the women in ways that were empowering, positive and strong, but the thesis was also a theoretical academic text, presenting an analysis from a feminist perspective. These women did not see themselves as feminists, nor had I presented them as such, and, although they had appropriated a feminist organization to meet their needs, the women were very uncomfortable with anything overtly relating to feminism.

Their individual reactions to my thesis shocked me and made me consider two significant points; one, who benefited from that research and two, did I 'do harm' in the field? While this experience is something that I will always remember and hopefully will make me a

more accountable researcher, I am also concerned about ‘doing no harm’ when researching women. I now unpack this notion of ‘ham’ and the risk that comes with doing research. The notion of doing critical research in one’s own backyard is highly dangerous and reflects the ambiguous nature of liberal ideology, raising for me some significant questions relating to ‘harm’ in the field (Fine & Weis, 1996). I see three levels of potential harm: that is, h a m to my respondents, harm to my supervisors, and harm to me as a researcher.

There have been periods during this thesis when I have not wanted to ‘admit’ that I was researching academic women and equity related issues, nor would I readily ‘admit’ to researching at MU. I wondered whether things would have been different had I researched a different site; in what kind of danger had I put my respondents? I declared on the ethical clearance form that no harm or risk would befall my respondents; after all, this was not a scientific or medical procedure (ethical clearance approved 15/9/99, Appendix One). But what if their identity was revealed, what if someone was wrongly accused of taking part when she had not? My supervisor(s) is/are part of the academic workplace that I actively critique (which implies their collusion in my topic) and at the same time my research topic signals potential ‘harm’ for the women who participated in this study. So what is it about politics and ethics that could cause possible ‘harm’ or risk to my respondents and possibly to my supervisors and me?

I argue this potential ‘harm’ or risk lies in the presence of phallocentric smog; in other words, ‘harm’ lurks in the micro-politics of a workplace culture that is forever applying

subtle pressure on people to conform to a rigid code not only of who we are and what we do, but also of how we do things in an institution such as a university in spite of the rhetoric of egalitarian claims and liberal ideology (Brooks, 1997a). Luke (1994) declares that:

[T]he tenuous position of most women working in academic (non clerical) capacities provides minimal job security and limited advancement which, in turn, 'silences' them even further. One does not speak out against unjust or sexist practices from a position of powerlessness and job insecurity. (p. 217)

This sets up an inevitable clash between being a covert researcher and contributing to research that is empowering. This shows that feminist research is a politically and ethically orientated process and as such can never be regarded as neutral or value free. Dilemmas faced by researchers, and indeed activists for social justice, are not just personal, but also something felt globally and witnessed in the politics of war, globalization and the consolidation of conservative and masculinist political positioning. In the current global climate of fear and insecurity and in a highly charged conservative political context, to critique the status quo can be viewed with suspicion, if not as being downright unpatriotic.

While I can only hope for cultural transformation at the global level, what I can make happen in my research process is a move towards some kind of perceived mutual trust between the researcher and the researched in order to analyze critically and establish two important issues underpinning this thesis, one: the confirmation of a non-neutral context

that the four women in this research negotiate on a daily basis; and two: the women's potential to bridge the gap between hope and happening. While I am very conscious that my thesis is unlikely to change the world, it is written in the hope that, at least by issues of difference being kept on the agenda, any movement towards transformation within the workplace continues to happen.

In the preceding sub-sections both the political nature and the ethical dimension of feminist methodology have been outlined. This exploration assisted me in working through de Vault's (1996) second goal of feminist research, outlined on Section 3.3, where I have sought to minimize harm and encourage empowerment. Emerging from my ontological and epistemological positioning come particular data collection tools that complement a feminist methodology. In the next section I address the actual data collection process.

### **3.4 Mapping the discursive terrain: Data collection (the 'how' of research)**

Data collection includes tools and processes that enable the gathering together of various data while data analysis includes the theorized devices and processes for interpretation of these same data. Both collection and interpretation processes need to align with the methodological positioning in order to add congruency to the overall design (Maguire, 1996). A feminist research process is accompanied by particular kinds of data collection where de Vault (1996, p. 32) asserts three important considerations are maintained: firstly, the women's stories are valued; secondly, the process works to empower both the researcher and the researched; and thirdly, there is a focus on issues that concern the



women. This meant that I put together multiple data sources that included specific literature, formal university documents, formal interviews and informal conversations that helped to construct the “discursive terrain” (Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001, p. 198) of MU.

Semi-structured interviews were a major data source along with various university texts, newspaper reports and other academic investigations concerning MU. To map the discursive terrain I have divided this section into two sub-sections: the first deals with semi-structured interviews as a process of valuing women’s stories; and the second lists the documents and texts used to complement the women’s data. I now discuss why semi-structured interviews were critical in my research process.

#### 3.4.1 Semi-structured interviews

Over a period of six to eight months during 2000/2001 I arranged two formal interviews —each of 90 minutes in duration —with each of the participants. These interviews were scheduled to suit the women’s busy timetables. During this time I also had various informal chats with the women at different times when we met for coffee, after meetings and around the campus. Whilst these meetings were not recorded, I would jot down ‘field notes’ and write up particular stories that had been related. Combining this with the formal interviews gathered rich data.

Through the use of semi-structured interviews, data collection took on a life of its own. By this I mean that, although I went into each interview with some guiding ideas about

our discussion, it was the women's initial responses that set the course of the interview. Often the interview entered avenues that I would not have originally thought to seek out, making the field component of this thesis dynamic, exciting and full of unexpected twists and turns.

Whilst the presentation of the research design states my considerations and reasons for approaching data collection in a specific manner, it unfortunately works towards sterilizing and homogenizing this process as a fairly conservative performance. I stress here that this was far from the case when dealing with four women who were passionate about their work, their lives and the broader issues concerning women in contemporary Australian society. The questions that guided the initial interviews are set out as follows:

- What do you think are the most common technologies used at MU, in your faculty who uses what, and how do you see yourself as a technology user?
- Whilst I am interested in technology use in MU, I am also interested in the broader positioning of women in the university. Do you think, for example, that the university experience is the same for women and men at this university?

These two broad themes — technology and equity — provided the basis of my initial discussions with the women. The use of 'technology' is an area where often workplace inequities are most visible (Probert & Wilson, 1993; Shute, 1997). Semi-structured interviews allowed flexibility where I could guide the interview and also keep a focus on relevant issues (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990, p. 92). This flexibility

enabled me to move to broader issues when the conversation offered opportunities to discuss secondary concerns.

A semi-structured format, rather than a survey questionnaire, facilitated a less hierarchical relationship. In other words, whilst I could guide the questions there was more of an emphasis on the women talking about issues that were of concern to them. This helped me to achieve de Vault's (1996) first goal of feminist research where the focus of feminist research shifts to the concerns of each woman (Section 3.3).

I believe that, although survey questionnaires have their place for collecting specific types of information, both semi-structured interviews and informal chats elicit a deeper level of 'rich' data. Feminist researchers, such as Finch (1984) and Oakley (1981), have often found women, once over any initial nervousness, to be enthusiastic to talk about the research issue. As Hammersley (2003, p. 122) asserts, "in real life we recognise that the accounts we receive every day contain some mix of the real and the representation" and this is the same in data collection. By using my 'self' as the data instrument I was able to pick up on certain points or stories from the women.

By asking the women to elaborate some stories I am conscious that other stories were closed off. Semi-structured interviews can be a 'closing off' mechanism by restricting avenues of discussion, as much as they can be an 'opening up' of voice, ownership and participation. To limit possible closure, in follow-up conversations issues raised were

revisited and the women had the opportunity either to continue the discussion or to move on.

Minichiello *et al.* (1990, p. 87) describe in-depth interviewing as “conversation with a specific purpose”. For me this was a way to gain access to, and subsequently attempt to understand, how Tamaly, Veronica, Madonna and Alice saw their world. I found in-depth interviewing a way of eliciting and understanding significant experiences in each of the women’s lives that I could not observe in action (Minichiello *et al.*, 1990, p. 96). Initial analysis began during interviews that in effect made me my own research instrument as I asked further questions (Punch, 1994, p. 84). Hammersley (2003) raises an important point when he declares that:

[I]t is certainly true that they [interviews] are social situations with distinctive characteristics that will shape what is said. But their distinctiveness makes them a useful complement to observational data. Nor is it always true that what people think in ‘private’ affects what they actually do in more public settings, but it does sometimes. (p. 123)

I pick up on this precise point in my analysis in the following chapters (Chapters Four, Five and Six). It is the gap between hope (and what the women are thinking) and the happening (the realities of their workplaces) that influences their negotiation of this dissonance within the context of MU. It is in this gap that the micro-politics of power work to continue subtle marginalization.

The use of semi-structured interviews valued my own epistemological assumptions of what constitutes knowledge and social reality with data collecting methods indicating an understanding of social reality (Minichiello *et al.*, 1990, p. 100). The point I make here is that my meanings and representations of social reality emerge from communication among people. As a way of complementing the women's data, I sought out specific documents and texts. These are listed in the next sub-section.

#### 3.4.2 Documents and texts

Various documents and texts were used as secondary data including the following:

- Mission Statements;
- Strategic Plans;
- Annual Reports;
- University Handbook;
- *Uninews* (the university electronic newsletter);
- Newspapers and policy documents.

Other than the newspapers, the above are 'university endorsed' texts containing institutional discourses that express the core values and beliefs and form part of the 'public face' of the university. The combination of interview texts and document texts provided discourse as data. To determine what was to be included as data, a rather informal, but useful, common denominator was developed. Data were included if they were connected in any way to MU — produced by MU, written about MU, talked about MU — while contextual data pertaining to the broader discursive field of Australian

universities, which included data on MU, were included in Chapter Two. These multiple data sources assisted in evaluating the trustworthiness of the research (see Section 3.5) and of the data used.

In this section I explained why I felt semi-structured interviews to be a source of rich data and why this particular tool is useful to feminists. The kind of data collected also leads to using specific analytical tools. In the next section I outline my ‘textual toolkit’ used to analyze and interpret the data.

### **3.5 Analyzing the discursive terrain: My toolkit**

In the previous section I termed data collection as a way of building up the “discursive terrain” (Wetherell *et al.*, 2001, p. 198) of this project. This consisted of gathering pertinent data that would assist me to answer my overall research question: to what extent is MU inclusive of academic women? (see Chapter One). A starting point for any critical analysis is identifying social issues (Fairclough, 2001, p. 229). In this research I was curious as to why, despite the presence of equity related policies, the gendered nature of the academic workplace persisted.

Kellner and Durham (2001) suggest that fresh or new critical strategies are needed to read cultural texts in this post-modern age, where this involves exploring those public spaces where political debate and contestation are evolving. To understand adequately the way that this contextualization of cultural texts (such as the university) produces, reproduces

or challenges existing figurations of class, race, gender and other forms of power and domination is integral to transforming these public spaces.

Therefore I have aligned my methodological approach with the kinds of processes broadly associated with post-structuralist/post-modern analysis that are designed to highlight the operation of power, processes of marginalization and struggles between dominant and subordinate subjectivities. This also aligns my thesis with readings conducted in the broad fields of textual analysis and discourse analysis, although my analysis does not follow any of the more prescriptive methods associated with discourse analysis. Rather, I adopt a methodology which emphasizes the study of particular themes and the analysis of how these themes draw attention to processes of inclusion and exclusion, marginalization and transformation, resistance and conformity and so on.

As such, this thesis has been designed as an ‘interpretive repertoire’. Gilbert and Mulkay (1984; cited in Wetherell *et al.*, 2001) used this term to define their study that ‘focused on participants’ own understandings of what was involved in scientific work. The researchers found that, rather than there being one story, there were multiple ways of talking about or constructing scientific activity — it was the multiple ways of talking about the one topic that Gilbert and Mulkay termed “interpretative repertoires” (Wetherell *et al.*, 2001, p. 197). I have also drawn upon a framework frequently referred to as transformative textual analysis (Rowan, 2001). This framework requires me to identify the circulation, naturalization and contestation of particular discourses in ways

that I will outline later in this section. Taken together I call this toolkit ‘Moore’s mapping’ which I now detail.

My initial step in both the collection and subsequent analysis of the data sources — the women’s texts and the university texts — was to map:

- a) the discursive positioning of women at MU;
- b) four women’s responses to this positioning.

During the interviews with Tamaly, Veronica, Alice and Madonna I encouraged the women to talk about how they saw themselves as academic women at MU and we also talked about the use of technologies at MU. In this way their interviews could provide data where I would be able to identify the current and common discourses operating within their discursive fields. This meant that I needed to:

- a) identify the multiplicities of the women;
- b) map dominant, informal and formal discourses circulating at MU.

Mapping the multiplicities of the women focused around the concept of ‘multiple mes’ where I looked for different performances among the women, and indeed different performances by the same woman, in response to the sexed scripts embedded within dominant discourses. Identifying discourses present in the interviews would then allow me to ‘read’ the women’s responses against traditional and/or transformative discourses found in university texts and the dominant discourses circulating within MU. By doing



this, the ‘naturalness’ of social arrangements could be challenged, as well as the ideological process that reinforces certain norms (Lather, 1986, p. 268; Rowan, 1998).

This required me to employ a critical framing that looked at:

- what is represented as natural and normal within particular contexts;
- whose body is valued/what practice is valued;
- whose body is devalued/what practice is devalued;
- who is rewarded and for what;
- the extent to which individuals are aware of these constructions. (Rowan, 2001)

I used these questions as a general framework in which to interrogate various ‘themes’ and contexts within the data. These themes included discourses around women and work, technology, teaching, research and transformation. The contexts consisted of women’s stories, and specific university texts such as policies, reports and strategic plans. Within each of these contexts I used these questions, not necessarily in an overt step-by-step fashion, but rather as a kind of ‘mindset’ or guiding framework to explore the data. I applied these same critical framing questions to the institutional, formal and informal discourses mapped from the university texts and women’s texts. This enabled me to identify the ‘behind the scenes’ discourses that operate to position my respondents in relation to the institution in which they work.

For the data analysis in the next three chapters I am drawing from a particular form of transformative textual analysis (Rowan, 2001) that derives from the study’s conceptual

and methodological framework. This version of transformative textual analysis contains the following steps:

- I looked at the words used by the women, and the words used in the texts and policy documents;
- I looked for words that were not used in the women's stories, university texts and policy documents;
- I looked for words and phrases indicating specific themes emerging across the stories and texts;
- These were coded according to association with discourse, subjectivity, embodiment, sexed scripts and performance;
- If something controversial arose I dealt with it as follows:
  - I cross-checked with statements/stories of the other women;
  - I re-visited institutional texts and/or policy documents;
  - If I had no other source of verification I:
    - Reported in good faith what the woman said;
    - Stated any situations where there was no other method of verification.

The strength of the data comes through the multiple conversations with the women and other people in the academic community. I used this as an informal way of confirming the trustworthiness of the data without infringing the confidentiality of these data and in a way that valued the women's words. This process has multiple payoffs, the most

significant being that in discussing data in this manner I am helping to circulate a counternarrative (Rowan, Knobel, Bigum, & Lankshear, 2002; see p. 121 in this thesis).

My analytical toolkit, 'Moore's mapping', sought to highlight the relationship among discourses, subjectivity and gender norms (Section 3.2) through a process of interrogating the themes and discourses using my critical framing questions. When analyzing the women's discourses I looked for three initial issues/foci:

- a) what these women said about their realities;
- b) their perceptions of others;
- c) the social practices that they saw occurring in their workplace.

Using 'Moore's mapping' as an analytical toolkit enabled me to identify the following four points: firstly, that lived experiences may be, and indeed often are, quite different from the dominant ways of talking, thereby opening up a new discursive space where women's experiences can inform an alternative epistemology (Rowan, 1998, p. 18); secondly, that women respond to dominant institutional discourses in varied ways, indicating a range of 'multiple mes' that they call on when negotiating their workplace; thirdly, that gender norms relating to women and their work are constructed and subsequently naturalized in various ways in dominant institutional discourses; and fourthly, that women's actions and practices are read through their bodies, signalling that embodiment is ubiquitous.

Through the interview and conversation processes both the women and I made sense of our own interpretations of realities as we shared reciprocal stories about the university. I developed a shared understanding of how each individual woman experienced her multiple subjectivities and subject positionings as we shared stories of the workplace. Consequently I was able to develop some kind of sense of what it meant to be an academic woman for each of these women. I gained insight into and insider knowledge about ‘university culture’ or the cultural context that linked us all.

Therefore, as stated earlier, this thesis can be seen as an interpretive repertoire — where I have stories from the women about what it means to be an academic woman within MU and a discursive terrain made up of multiple sites replicating inequity and patriarchal discourses. Knowing what makes up interpretive repertoires comes from being familiar with the data, as it is about recognizing patterns across stories, or particular representations or images, and getting a feel for the “discursive terrain” (Wetherell *et al.*, 2001, p. 198).

Edley (2001, p. 198) contends interpretative repertoires are part and parcel of any community’s common sense, providing a basis for shared social understanding where “people seem to be taking similar lines or making the same kinds of arguments as others” — thus by immersing myself in the data I came to recognize patterns across different discourses that established coding categories and began to get a feel for the discursive terrain that encompassed the university. Reading the data through coding categories of

discourse, subjectivity, embodiment, sexed scripts and performance I looked for words/phrases that were indicative of these categories (Cook & Fonow, 1990, p. 83).

Subjectivity and discourse were categories that enabled me to illustrate two significant points. The first point concerns how women read the expectations of MU and what this then means for their performances as academic women. The second point concerns how women either take up or reject certain discourses and negotiate other discourses as multiple beings. Embodiment and sexed scripts are also significant categories for my analysis in that these lenses show HOW women are marginalized by dominant institutional discourses and informal discourses. In my analysis I demonstrate that informal discourses form powerful normalizing texts of the everyday that underpin the micro-politics of the workplace. This demonstrates the power of certain discourses in constructing subjectivity through embodiment.

In establishing a connection between gender norms and dominant institutional discourses I sought out women's responses to dominant discourses — in other words performances showing resistance and challenges to dominant discourses — but, instead of being able to map various moves towards cultural transformation, I found a practice of strategic conformity could be mapped. In my initial analysis I was looking for stories of resistance or counternarratives against dominant patriarchal discourses found in the university texts and practices adopted within the workplace. Rowan *et al.* (2002, p. 72) point out that “the term ‘counternarrative’ has been used by various feminists, for example, bell hooks (1990) and Trinh Minh-ha (1990), among others, who define counternarratives as stories,

histories and representations that stand in opposition to, and therefore implicitly critique the legitimacy of, mainstream texts and discourses”.

As Rowan *et al.* (2002, p. 72) suggest, “[C]ounternarratives about women, in other words, provide alternatives .... They provide, instead, evidence of women’s multiplicity, diversity and power”. This meant that I hoped to map stories of resistance and transformation, but this did not happen. While the women’s responses to their positioning show some resistance, what became much more obvious were the strategies of marginalization encountered by these women on a daily basis.

Performances associated with embodiment and sexed scripts established themes around marginalization and strategic conformity (Chapters Five and Six). Women as active agents choose to do certain things, but these actions are read through their bodies. While it became clear that the women take up and reject various dominant discourses in their negotiation of the academic workplace at MU, this was related more to personal transformation than to public transformation of the academic workplace.

In this section I have described a methodological approach that is useful in analyzing the discursive terrain. With this approach I have brought to the study of the university, as a cultural text/site, fresh critical strategies that are aligned with the principles, although not in practice, of mainstream approaches to discourse analysis; where my particular strategy of transformative textual analysis forms an interpretive repertoire of what it means to be an academic woman at MU, while disrupting phallogentric discourses. For the purposes

of explanation I have set this process in a linear process. In practice these steps occur in a much more intertwined and circular motion. In the following section I address the trustworthiness of this research.

### **3.6 Questions of 'truth'/trustworthiness**

Murphy, Dingwell, Greatbatch, Parker and Watson (1998) assert the trustworthiness of qualitative research depends very much on the reader being able to form a judgement of the research process. One way to assist this judgement is to provide a map of the research process — thus offering transparency — from contacting possible respondents, deciding what are data, methods of data collection and finally implementing a complementary analytical process. Rowan (personal communication, 1999) argues that the research process is transparent when others are able to see what the process is. It is important that the research process be open to critique and reflection by both the researcher and her peers. Part of that procedure involves the following:

- providing a consent form and information sheet to the participants stating that the participants are volunteers and can withdraw from the project at any stage without offering a reason;
- obtaining ethical clearance through the formal channels of the university (see Appendix One);
- acknowledging the potentially exploitative nature of the interview process (Finch, 1984) in the risky world of academic micro-politics;
- maintaining a reflexive process;

- acknowledging that the relationship between the researcher and the participants is negotiated and that therefore the process cannot be regarded as objective.

Credibility is a concept used to describe a process by which researchers seek to establish the 'truthfulness' and trustworthiness of their data, interpretation and analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lincoln and Guba (1985) talk about strategies for achieving credibility that include the following: persistent observation, prolonged engagement, triangulation and peer debriefings.

I have been part of MU since 1994 and during that time have been able to observe the changing nature of the university as a site of learning and employment. This means that I have had both persistent observation of and prolonged engagement with my site of research. Triangulation has been used to complement the women's stories. Multiple data sources including the literature review, case studies, university texts, observations and talking with a range of people associated with MU have been used. This served to add to my formal primary data collection of semi-structured interviews. Interviews were taped for later analysis and checking of data. This allowed transcripts to be produced as 'items of discourse' for analyzing themes. I reviewed other major studies that included my site of research as a way of using other investigators' qualitative and quantitative data to support my data (Cook & Fonow, 1990, p. 82). By doing this I found that my study 'dovetailed' with these major reports and studies (see Chapter Two).



By immersing myself in relevant literature pertaining to women, work, universities and academic lives I am able to construct my own interpretive repertoire — one of many understandings of what it means to be an academic woman (Edley, 2001; see also Section 3.5). The use of multiple sources of evidence including the work of different investigators and different types of data collection added credibility. My literature review highlighted specific patterns in employment, equity policies and the use of discourse as data. I found the use of peer debriefing an invaluable tool and here I had the experience and knowledge of both my supervisors and two critical friends. These people provided knowledge of the context and fulfilled the role of ‘in-depth questioning and listening board’ where I defended ethical, methodological and analytical issues and interpretation relating to this thesis.

I found the use of field notes also invaluable where I wrote about the interviews and the conversations I had in the field. I also jotted down points to follow up during the interviews. These could be later checked against the audiotapes and were used as memory prompts. The writing up of field notes supplemented the interview process and provided the opportunity for initial analysis and noting of possible questions to take back to the women. As a tutor, while I experienced the university workplace differently from my experiences as a student, I felt I remained on the margins of this site (Glesne & Peshlun, 1992, p. 58); however I was involved enough to consider myself a participant observer of the university in general.

Murphy *et al.* (1998) believe the trustworthiness of the data and confidence in the findings are increased “where there is evidence of researcher sensitivity to the ways in which the data have been shaped by the researcher’s presence” ([www.hta.nhsweb.nhs.uk/execsumm/summ216.htm](http://www.hta.nhsweb.nhs.uk/execsumm/summ216.htm)). In my research this trustworthiness is built up and exposed through the nature of the relationships among me as researcher, the respondents and my data. I assert that my analysis process shows a valuing of the various ways in which Alice, Veronica, Madonna and Tamaly speak about themselves as academics and as women (as mothers or partners if relevant) and the different subjectivities that they access at different points in their professional lives. As this involves attending to the multiple subject positions accessed by the four women, I recognize that identity is neither fixed nor permanent (see Section 3.2). In doing this I have also made visible the links among particular contexts, discourses and performances of these four academic women. I also draw on my own experiences of MU, as both a student and a part time tutor. This provided a contextual framework through which to prepare my interviews with academic women, becoming part of my “Headwork, fieldwork and textwork” (McWilliam, Lather, & Morgan, 1997, p. 1).

Part of my theory/practice nexus involves the writing phase or ‘textwork’ of this thesis where there is a combination of data, analysis and the construction of meaning/knowledge. As Richardson (1997) states:

[W]riting is a theoretical and practical process through which we can (a) reveal epistemological assumptions, (b) discover grounds for questioning received scripts and hegemonic ideals — both those within the academy and

those incorporated within ourselves, (c) find ways to change those scripts, (d) connect to others and form community and (e) nurture our emergent selves.  
(p. 295)

For me this means being able to include both the voices of the women on this study and my own voice, in the presentation of stories that need to be told, and, the possibility of closing at least some of the gap between hope and happening for academic women. My presentation of a map or audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) will enable those who read this thesis, in turn, to decide the status of trustworthiness and credibility of the data, the corresponding interpretation/analysis and whether or not this study can offer insights into their own positionings and multiple subjectivities. In establishing the trustworthiness I also acknowledge the limitations associated with this study.

### **3.7 Limitations of the study**

The major limitations associated with this research process were time and the availability of Madonna, Alice, Veronica and Tamaly. It was obviously important to recognize that, the pressures of academic work being what they are, women may not have necessarily responded to my invitation. Thankfully, the four women initially approached all agreed to participate. Interviews were negotiated around their teaching, research and personal commitments and conducted during a time of change and restructure at MU. This provided a dynamic and sometimes stressful environment where effects of the restructuring were felt in a myriad of ways.

Reflecting upon my desire to produce a feminist counternarrative that signalled both transformation and social change, I found that this thesis fell short of that lofty aspiration. While I looked for resistance and counternarratives I found strategies of marginalization (Danaher, 2001), posing the very real danger of replicating that marginalization. I stress vehemently that the women in this study are not passive recipients of dominant discourses, but are active agents negotiating a hostile terrain, while maintaining the welfare of their clients and nurturing their own multiplicities.

There are a lot of data and analysis that have not been put into this thesis simply because of the structural limitations, and I am conscious of the way in which my writing constructs the women, the context and the analysis. In the following data analysis chapters I present a small part of the complexities that represent the women in this study and it is only now, nearing the end of this personal research process, that I am coming to understand the actions and negotiations of these wonderful women. The research was limited to the requirements of a doctoral program. This means that selected aspects of both reviewed literature and data collection have been included in order to make this project manageable for a beginning researcher; as well certain arguments are acknowledged but not necessarily addressed because of the limited scope of a doctoral thesis. I ultimately made the choices about what was included and (necessarily) excluded.

My research was designed to capture a richness of detail of the everyday lived experiences of a group of four women. My results and analysis therefore do not generalize to include all academic women, or indeed all academic sites. However, my

analysis does point to various implications that need to be considered when engaging with how academic women perceive and experience their workplace context (see Chapter Seven).

### **3.8 Review of the chapter**

I began this chapter by briefly mapping the broadening out of feminist research interests. I highlighted that feminist research is not just about adding women, but also about interrogating how women are positioned and/or excluded. The second section dealt with the conceptual framing of my research where I established a strong relationship among discourse, subjectivity and bodies where discourses of the everyday work towards reinforcing and reproducing specific gender norms. Messages about how to be a 'good woman' are embedded in institutional discourses and norms ranging from the family to the university and the broader society. These discourses shape bodies and behaviours of bodies; depending on whether these bodies conform to appropriate and traditional expectations they are either valued and rewarded or devalued and punished.

The third section of this chapter set out the politics and ethics associated with researching women while the fourth section dealt with methods of mapping the discursive terrain and covered such practical details as semi-structured interviews and various documents that provided additional data. In the fifth section of this chapter I covered the analytical approaches linked to the following data analysis chapters. The trustworthiness of the research formed the sixth section of this chapter and here I provided evidence of triangulation and peer debriefings and discussed my prolonged engagement with and

persistent observation of the research site. In the seventh section I acknowledged the limitations associated with this thesis. In the following chapter I begin my analysis by setting out the hope envisaged by feminists to be achieved through gender reform and policy development around the broad issue of equity in the workplace and address the first of three research sub-questions.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **TURNING PROMISES INTO POLICY: HOW TO UNDERMINE THE HOPE**

#### **4.0 Overview**

In Chapter One I contended that it could be reasonable to expect that universities would reflect much of the best of gender reform. In Chapter Two I detailed the way in which organizations, universities included, are seen as neutral, but are actually premised on male norms. My conceptual and methodological framework, outlined in Chapter Three, signaled that representations of women are discursively constructed and this highlighted an approach that is useful in unmasking mechanisms that continue to marginalize women.

In this chapter I argue that a particular version of a dominant Equal Opportunity (EO) discourse in current equity policies, in spite of changing responses to equity, serves to mask discrimination against women. The intention in this chapter, then, is to show a dominant theme of EO, embedded within equity related policies that constructs and positions academic women in relation to men at MU. To do that I interrogate the discourses embedded with equity related policies. This, then, allows me to address the first of three sub-questions set out in Chapter One. This sub-question concerns how difference is dealt with in official texts such as institutional policies.

In addressing the answer to this sub-question I have divided this chapter into five sections. The first section deals with the context in which feminists were working in their

quest to dismantle patriarchy and eliminate sexism and prejudice; and spells out some of the hope that they had for women's achievement. The second section focuses on how this hope has been turned into action at MU through analyzing the different institutional approaches to gender reform at MU. The third section looks at what academic women at MU could hope for and here I analyze dominant discourses embedded in specific equity related policies. In the fourth section of this chapter I analyze what this means for academic women at MU. In doing so I signal a gap between the hope and happening which is then covered in the fifth and last section of this chapter. I now turn to explore the hope set out by feminist reforms and interventions.

#### **4.1 The hope set out by feminists**

In this section I draw attention to the outcomes that feminists hoped would result from various gender interventions enacted during the 1960s and 1970s, while briefly analyzing the political context through which these interventions happened. I acknowledge here that the term 'feminist' is a very broad term and one that relates to diverse alliances of women. Eisenstein (1991, p. 31) suggests that the broad hope was to change the sexual division of labour and then to assist women to enter the workplace on more equitable terms. To do this EO legislation developed by Femocrats during the 1970s was enacted by the state in the hope that women would no longer be subject to sexism and prejudice (see Chapter Two). Feminist analyses during the 1970s and 1980s also focused on the ways in which family responsibilities constrained women from participating on an equal footing to men (Probert & Wilson, 1993, p. 8). In response to this Affirmative Action (AA) policies were being implemented in the workplace.



Behind this legislation was an unwritten belief that, if women could be seen as ‘equals’ in the workplace, then household responsibilities and childcare would be viewed differently. Currie, Thiele and Harris (2002) articulate this hope when they suggest that many women, since the 1960s, thought they would share the domestic load with their partners in marriages where both were seen as equal. They go on to suggest that:

Women went to work in universities believing in an equality of treatment, an assessment of their work on its merit and a belief that they would rise to the top in the same way that men rise to the top of their disciplines. (p. 3)

Historically women were excluded from universities but gradually over time they worked to be accepted as students and more recently as academics (M. Evans, 1997; Maling, 1990; Probert, Ewer & Whiting, 1998). Upon their admission as students, women were generally relegated to ‘feminine spaces’ — in the study of Arts particularly the Humanities, in Education and more recently in Health Science Faculties. As academics, women have been accorded the same marginal status (Gray, 1994; Luke, 1993; Wise, 1997).

With the establishment of Women’s Studies in some universities and the introduction of new paradigms of theory and practice by feminists (M. Evans, 1997, p. 46), there was also the hope that, under the umbrella of egalitarian aims and liberal ideologies associated with the academy (Brooks, 1997a), the barriers to women’s ‘equal’ participation would be eliminated. It is perhaps ironic that universities or the alleged ‘homes of enlightened

enquiry' were sites that had long participated in systemic and systematic discrimination against women.

Gender reform, then, was characterized by the presence of Femocrats working openly for gender reform within the state (Blackmore, 1999; Eisenstein, 1996). As Blackmore (1999) states, this meant that liberal feminists had relied on the state to intervene strategically and to enable gender reform. In 1986 the Australian Commonwealth Affirmative Action (Equal Employment Opportunity for Women) Act (1986) extended the principles of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and AA to the private (workplace) sector and provided an agency to administer this Act (Wearing, 1996). With the introduction of AA (EEO for Women) Act (1986) all higher education institutions, which had not already appointed equal opportunity officers, were in effect required to do so. The Act required each institution to develop an action plan and report annually to the Affirmative Action Agency (Allen & Castleman, 1995, p. 27; Maling, 1990, p. 50).

Part of the rationale behind the 'new unified system of universities' was the principle of equity and many equity units were specifically developed to monitor AA programs of universities where this included both staff and students (Bacchi, 2001, p. 121). This signals equity units as sites of competing discourses where staff in these units, on the one hand, were employed by the university and, on the other, were required to monitor the activities of that same employer and to report to an outside agency. Blackmore (1999, p. 89) argues that the shifting social, political and economic agendas shape the way in which EO policy is conceptualized and received. By the late 1980s and early 1990s there

were substantial shifts in the political sector with Australia's entry to the global marketplace (Sklair, 1996, p. 15).

While the state, at the time that AA legislation was introduced during the 1980s, could be classified as a welfare state, by the mid 1990s there had been a major shift to the 'New Right' style of politics with a conservative Coalition government, reluctant to intervene in a free market climate. What this means is that the state is no longer the major mechanism for gender reform. Both the 'market' and 'education' can now be seen as mechanisms for reform — themes that are continued in the following chapter. During this time there were substantial shifts in feminist theorizing (see Chapter Two) that also impacted on the ways in which equity was thought about.

In this section I have briefly described the context in which feminists began gender reform in the workplace with legislative strategies put in place by state intervention. By the 1990s responses to gender reform mirrored the changing political and economic climate where global responses to the market saw women forming a feminized labour market. This means that 'equity' is being responded to differently within sites such as universities. In the following section of this chapter I present an analysis of the changing institutional responses to gender equity that have occurred at MU.

## **4.2 Turning hope into happening — institutional responses to gender reform at MU**

In this section I analyze the ways in which MU, as an institution, has responded to the changing discourses around equity in the workplace. This allows me to demonstrate

awareness by the university of two issues: the first issue is an awareness of obstacles to gender reform; the second issue concerns awareness of the changing discourses attached to the notion of 'equity'. Responses by MU can be collectively described as consistent with "models of difference" (Rowan, 2001) where these models are loosely based on approaches running parallel to the waves of feminist theorizing (see Chapter Two). I acknowledge here that these models are not to be taken as rigorous theoretical debates around the issue of difference, but rather, as Rowan (2001) prefers, 'mindsets' around institutionalized approaches to dealing with difference.

The first approach is associated with an EO mindset where it is assumed EO meant equal outcome. The second approach can be equated with the emerging debate around sameness/difference where feminists hoped for a 'valuing of difference' where difference would be viewed as positive rather than negative. The third approach is associated with a socialization mindset where skills and behaviour are learnt. The fourth and last approach – that associated with a transformative mindset —highlights the strengths and limitations associated with the other models and recognizes that bodies have meanings attached, thereby constructing differences among people (Rowan, 2001). It recognizes and values diversity and individual differences rather than a broad group/category difference.

To explore these responses I have divided this section into five sub-sections. The first sub-section introduces the Equity and Diversity Office at MU, while the second looks at the EO model of gender equity. This third sub-section focuses on a valuing of difference model with the fourth sub-section assigned to a socialization model. The fifth and last

sub-section attends to a transformative model. I now introduce the Equity and Diversity Office.

#### 4.2.1 The Equity and Diversity Office at MU

Following the implementation of the AA (EEO for Women) Act (1986), MU established both an Equity Committee, as an advisory body to the Vice-Chancellor, and the Equity Office, the operational and management site that formally responds to issues of difference. The Equity Office was established in 1992, the year that MU gained official university status.

The present Coordinator, who is the third person to hold this position, is directly responsible to the Vice-Chancellor, so much would be resting on the relationship developed between these two people. On her recent appointment (2002) the unit changed its title from 'Equity' to 'Equity and Diversity Office', indicating a new direction or broader inclusiveness. All ten staff, with the exception of two Administration Officers and the Coordinator, work in the area of disability. Equity contact officers, located on all local regional campuses, are to "provide information, support and outreach to students and staff with particular emphasis on supporting and ensuring that appropriate accommodation is made for students and staff with a disability" (Milton University, 2000c, [www.MU.edu.au/equity](http://www.MU.edu.au/equity) assessed 17/6/02).

From this it can be argued that the prime focus of the unit is now on disability, indicating a change of discourse around equity with gender no longer a 'target' area. This reduced

focus reflects a common assumption that gender is no longer an issue in either universities or indeed other workplaces, and clearly positions MU's current approach to equity. MU has had the 'benefit' of up to 30 years of increasingly public explorations of women's positioning within society generally, and universities specifically, to draw upon in formulating its own response to, and strategies towards, gender equity regarding women's employment.

In the remaining four sub-sections I map the changing responses to and resulting initiatives concerning gender equity at MU since 1992. My analysis within each sub-section is twofold: firstly I give examples of what constitutes this model within MU; and secondly I present a critique of the strengths and limitations of each model. This enables me to analyze the extent to which MU has responded to, or promotes general understanding of, various feminist reforms in the broadest sense. I begin with the most common approach to difference — the EO model.

#### 4.2.2 The EO model

This model has been associated with the first wave of feminist action and the early reform interventions of the 1970s. Historically reforms associated with this approach include granting women the right to vote, the right to equal education and equal employment opportunities. More recently the introduction of wheelchair access to buildings and the recognition of a range of disabilities have become a major focus. Indeed access is a consistent emphasis within EO approaches to difference.

Within MU the introduction of wheelchair toilet facilities and general wheelchair access, Braille assisted computers for students with vision impairment and general computer access for all students at MU encourage equal opportunity of access to tertiary education. MU prides itself on encouraging access to rural and remote students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students who are first in their family to go to university, and it has established a relatively successful support program aimed at these students.

The EO model recognizes that ‘difference’ exists — men are men and women are women; but basically people are the same (in the ‘all men are created equal’ version of sameness) and should therefore have the same rights. This model recognizes that men and women have not had the same opportunities to gain relevant qualifications and experience owing to differential experiences in education and in workplaces. Hence there is a strong emphasis on EO, where this model promotes, through legislative change, the removal of any structural barriers that may impede EO.

Therefore it can be argued that MU is aware of differences within the community which might function as obstacles to access and undertakes a broad range of access and equity initiatives to enhance the educational opportunities for all students, following the corporate slogan —where students come first. At the staffing level policy statements that explicitly deal with equity and recruitment provisions are seen as ways of removing any structural barrier to women’s full participation in this workplace. The policies in place at MU include the MU recruitment selection procedures and Equity policy statement and the provision of maternity leave.

In this discourse access has come to mean EO and this follows the rationale behind the 'new unified university system' set up in the 1980s (Bacchi, 2001). Although MU places priority on access to the university, once there the university then assumes 'sameness' whether of student or of staff member. This can be seen in the explicit emphasis on 'access' then 'merit', meaning the same qualifications and experience as a determining factor in promotion. By having wheelchair access it is deemed that those with disabilities now become the same as able-bodied students because of the same physical access. The EO model of difference does not address the associated cultural barriers such as class or socio-economic differences; rather it assumes homogeneity once access is achieved. Everyone is treated as the same with difference other than biological difference denied.

While this model offers a basic recognition of sexual difference, it relies on legislative change to promote attitudinal change. There is an assumption that access is enough to alter the disadvantage caused by women's unequal positioning. This model fails to address the inability of legislation to change attitudes and completely ignores the cultural values and meanings attached to bodies. This model does not take into account that the cultural context —for example, the use of activities such as boating, fishing and the pub as venues for 'work' meetings (Cockburn, 1983) —may exclude women or women may choose to absent themselves (Probert & Wilson, 1993, p. 11).

In this sub-section the analysis has revealed that there is an EO response evident at MU in the development of specific policies and a focus on access, but that this response has



limitations in addressing women's inequity. In the following sub-section I address the second model of difference —that of valuing difference.

#### 4.2.3 The valuing difference model

This second model of difference is a rather more radical approach than the EO model in that it acknowledges and values the difference that exists among people, both biological and cultural. This valuing of difference model is illustrated within MU in the establishment of Nulloo Yumbah — an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander place of learning. I applaud the university's effort to value its Indigenous students by recognizing particular needs of Indigenous students, for example, provision of tutors, access to specialist resources, and involvement of community elders, all of which are valuable. From the official MU standpoint, there is a lack of attention to the differences within this student group; conversely from the unofficial standpoint of the Nulloo Yumbah staff, there is very much a valuing of individual differences among their students.

This approach promotes inclusion of people with different perspectives and abilities, often seeing difference as fundamental or 'natural'. For this reason there is the possibility that, when there is a desire to define any 'essential' differences within groups, people become categorized into a marginalized group. Within this model, then, women and 'minority' groups are constructed as different from, or lacking when compared to, the culturally hegemonic group. This has led to these groups being seen as deficient, such that they need special allowances to make them equal to 'the norm'. In other words, reforms associated with this approach have tended to 'stereotype' people, positively or

negatively, into categories (Kenway *et al.*, 1997), often resulting in these groups becoming 'special needs' categories.

Unfortunately this model fails to accommodate any differences among the Indigenous student body and places all Indigenous students as a separate category, reflecting instead the difference between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. This tends to segregate the Indigenous students from the mainstream student body and relies on Nulloo Yumbah to forge networks within the university. Similarly international students at MU are seen as different from domestic students but the same as one another (which is clearly not the case, with international students coming from the US, Europe, Asia, Africa and South America). This creates the perception that, while their issues are the same as one another's, these issues would not be the same as those dealt with by local students.

At a staff level policy statements that explicitly deal with AA and maternity leave can be associated with the valuing difference model. The introduction of AA saw some women rise to leadership positions (Blackmore, 1999). This can also be interpreted as tokenism as only a handful of women were in positions to do so and these women may have followed patterns associated with male norms. This is often used as an argument that stresses that feminism benefits only a few privileged and powerful white women and forgets other women. Faludi (1992) argues that this argument is part of the backlash to feminism designed to disrupt 'unity' among women. At MU this approach has seen some women promoted to professorial positions and the appointment of a woman Vice-Chancellor.

While this model of difference works to some extent to acknowledge and value the social and sexual differences between men and women, there is the tendency to generalize attributes to all women when attempting to identify the ‘essential’ differences between men and women (Rowan, 2001). This model ignores women’s (and men’s, for that matter) individual differences where these differences may be perceived as ‘not the norm’. This model overlooks the way that differences between men and women have been constructed as binaries where, for example, nurturing and caring are what women ‘naturally’ do and men do not. This is the kind of scenario that Rowan (2000, p. 149) warns of when saying that:

Even with the best of intentions, it is easy to homogenize and to essentialize the categories in ways that deny differences within the group and which ultimately contribute to the categorization of women as different to men and *naturally* suited to different context and experiences. (emphasis in original)

Through provision of maternity leave an impression is given that, owing to pregnancy, all women experience disadvantage or that it is only women who will need to use childcare services. This model sees all women as being the same as one another but different from men, and does not attend to any differences among women or among men (Braidotti, 1994). For instance, the introduction of women’s professional development programs very often emphasized the importance of ‘listening to the voices of women’ as though these individual voices were a single and undifferentiated voice. These leadership courses often critique a ‘masculine’ management approach, presenting women as being able to

bring an alternative, collaborative, feminine management style to the workplace (Wajcman 1998, p. 66).

Similarly to the EO model, then, this second model does not address the differences found among women nor does it address the social and cultural meanings that become attached to bodies. The point being made here is that the experience of living within a particular classed, sexed and racialized body engaging with a site such as a regional university is not addressed. In this sub-section I have identified a valuing of difference approach to equity where this has resulted in the targeting of ‘special needs’ groups within MU. As with the EO model, this response to equity is valuable but limited in addressing forms of discrimination. In the following sub-section I analyze the third model of difference — that where socialization is seen as the key to equity.

#### 4.2.4 The socialization model

The third model of difference draws attention to the ways that people learn or are socialized into the roles they take up. This approach to equity is significant because it recognizes the way people learn patterns of behaviour rather than behaviour being ‘natural’. This illustrates that gendered behaviour is based on norms learnt within the family, at school and in the public sphere. Therefore it is possible to change or learn new behaviours and skill development — the rationale behind leadership courses and professional development programs. Reforms associated with this include the promotion of non-traditional roles for men and women, role models and mentoring programs and the education of those women in leadership positions.

Within MU the introduction of wheelchair toilet facilities and general wheelchair access, Braille assisted computers for students with vision impairment and general computer access for all students at MU encourage equal opportunity of access to tertiary education. MU prides itself on encouraging access to rural and remote students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students who are first in their family to go to university, and it has established a relatively successful support program aimed at these students.

The EO model recognizes that ‘difference’ exists — men are men and women are women; but basically people are the same (in the ‘all men are created equal’ version of sameness) and should therefore have the same rights. This model recognizes that men and women have not had the same opportunities to gain relevant qualifications and experience owing to differential experiences in education and in workplaces. Hence there is a strong emphasis on EO, where this model promotes, through legislative change, the removal of any structural barriers that may impede EO.

Therefore it can be argued that MU is aware of differences within the community which might function as obstacles to access and undertakes a broad range of access and equity initiatives to enhance the educational opportunities for all students, following the corporate slogan —where students come first. At the staffing level policy statements that explicitly deal with equity and recruitment provisions are seen as ways of removing any structural barrier to women’s full participation in this workplace. The policies in place at MU include the MU recruitment selection procedures and Equity policy statement and the provision of maternity leave.

differences, abilities, desires or cultural capital. The assumption is that with adequate/appropriate support people can become whatever they choose with this following an EO theme. This actually ignores that people occupy real physical bodies that may prevent this happening. In this sub-section I have shown a socialization response to equity includes actions such as the implementation of professional development courses, bridging programs and policies to enhance women's skills in non-traditional areas but this model is still limited when taking account of the differences that exist among people. In the last sub-section of this section I turn to the transformative model as an approach to gender equity.

#### 4.2.5 The transformative model

The transformative model acknowledges the strengths and addresses some of the limitations present in the previous three approaches. This approach recognizes that significant differences exist among people, where bodies are marked by differences such as age, gender, race, physical ability, sexuality and religion, and suggests that people are able to effect cultural transformation.

This approach at MU is characterized by a move by the Equity Office to reinvent itself as the Equity and Diversity Office, in line with the current political climate, where acknowledgement of discrimination has now broadened to recognize that people are discriminated against not only on grounds of sex/gender but also in regard to race and disability. This use of the word 'Diversity' indicates that this Office wants to be seen as inclusive of all groups at MU. Bacchi (2001, p. 119) offers an alternative reading when

she states “equity and diversity units have sprung up to address reporting requirements of the government and to attract international full fee paying students who have become the ‘bread and butter’ of some universities”.

Another illustration of a transformative approach is reflected in the move towards flexible delivery in teaching. This is an example where political and economic agendas are coming together. In this reading ‘flexible delivery’ can be seen as a way of catering to different learning styles, different levels of ability and knowledge, and the different circumstances of the students. Many of the students accessing MU are mature age, are doing postgraduate courses while working full or part time and have family commitments. In other words, the representation of the student is changing and it could be argued that MU is changing teaching practices to cater for this ‘new’ kind of student. I take up an oppositional reading in the following data analysis chapters where I suggest ‘flexible delivery’ at MU actually means web based delivery only.

At the staff level a transformative approach to equity would recognize and value individual differences found among each staff member. In other words, evidence of this approach would be found in the diverse range of positions held by women across faculties, and valuing of women’s contributions would be seen in promotion to senior appointments and permanent or tenured positions. While it could be argued that a transformative approach is evident with the change of focus within the Equity and Diversity Office it is not so easy to find evidence of this approach within the staffing

Within MU the introduction of wheelchair toilet facilities and general wheelchair access, Braille assisted computers for students with vision impairment and general computer access for all students at MU encourage equal opportunity of access to tertiary education. MU prides itself on encouraging access to rural and remote students, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students who are first in their family to go to university, and it has established a relatively successful support program aimed at these students.

The EO model recognizes that ‘difference’ exists — men are men and women are women; but basically people are the same (in the ‘all men are created equal’ version of sameness) and should therefore have the same rights. This model recognizes that men and women have not had the same opportunities to gain relevant qualifications and experience owing to differential experiences in education and in workplaces. Hence there is a strong emphasis on EO, where this model promotes, through legislative change, the removal of any structural barriers that may impede EO.

Therefore it can be argued that MU is aware of differences within the community which might function as obstacles to access and undertakes a broad range of access and equity initiatives to enhance the educational opportunities for all students, following the corporate slogan —where students come first. At the staffing level policy statements that explicitly deal with equity and recruitment provisions are seen as ways of removing any structural barrier to women’s full participation in this workplace. The policies in place at MU include the MU recruitment selection procedures and Equity policy statement and the provision of maternity leave.



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- Equal Employment Opportunity (Affirmative Action for Women) policy statement (Milton University, 1995);
- Gender Representation on Decision-making Bodies policy (Milton University, 1996b);
- Parental Leave policy (Milton University, 1997a);
- Recruitment Selection Procedures policy (Milton University, 1997b).

All of the above policies were formulated between 1992 and 1997 during a time of political change from a Federal Labor government to a Federal Coalition government. So it would be fair to say that these policies were developed at a time when MU was establishing new directions, values and norms as a university, while responding to changing political ideologies. Likewise there was on-going debate about the nature of workplace reform and the appearance of a new discourse appearing in the equity field — managing diversity (Eveline & Todd, 2000).

In the following five sub-sections I introduce each policy and outline, briefly, the key focus/objective and identify, in this process, the kind of ‘hope’ particular readings of each policy may open up for women employed at MU. I draw attention to specific discourses embedded within the reviewed policies through the use of particular words/phrases. In doing so I can then argue that there is a dominant EO discourse running through all of the equity related policies. This allows me to assert, in the sixth and final sub-section, that equity discourses are constructing women as the same as men, and that this serves to mask women’s continued discrimination within MU.

#### 4.3.1 Equity policy statement

MU heads its Equity Policy Statement with the words that “people are a university’s most valuable resource” (Milton University, 1996, p. 1). It goes on to state:

- MU has a commitment to a comprehensive *policy of equal opportunity* with regard to employment and education;
- Selection for employment and education is *based solely on relevant merits and abilities*;
- MU seeks to have an organization which *values diversity*, does not allow discrimination and *discourages unnecessary conformity*;
- MU’s Mission Statement proclaims that the university will demonstrate social responsibility in its programs, research and community service and will provide its students and staff with *equality of opportunity* and recognition of their *diverse individual contributions*;
- MU seeks to ensure that all students and staff are aware of the philosophies and processes of *equal opportunity*. (Milton University, 1996, p. 1; emphasis added)

The current equity policy statement, published in November 1996, refers to the University’s previous Mission Statement where words such as “social responsibility, equality of opportunity” and “recognition of their diverse individual contributions” acknowledge two significant points: that differences exist among people; and that the university is committed officially to work towards emphasizing the equal value, status and importance of all people (Rowan, 2001).

Unfortunately this statement no longer appears in the new Vision Statement of MU (Milton University, 2002b), updated since the re-election of the current Federal Howard government in late 1998 and the accompanying intensification of economic rationalist precepts (Lafferty & Fleming, 2000, p. 258). There is a strong focus on equal opportunity and recognition of merit and the elimination of discrimination. Also present is evidence of a transformative approach towards equity through the use of words such as “values diversity”, “diverse individual contributions” and “discourages unnecessary conformity” that, coincidentally, are in line with the new focus of the Equity and Diversity Office. The hope signaled in this policy is that men and women would be treated fairly.

By the use of such terms as “EO”, “relevant merit” and “equality of opportunity” it can be argued that the Equity Policy statement is couched within an EO discourse. There are three key points that I wish to make here about the way that equity is discursively constructed in this policy statement. Firstly, while the Equity Policy Statement officially recognizes that discrimination has occurred previously, there is an assumption that this is no longer the case. What is expressed implicitly within this document is that MU has reached a state of gender equality and this state is maintained through the promotion of an equity discourse — where, being equal, all people are given the same opportunity.

Secondly, EO is realized through a recruitment procedure where all academics are treated as the same and all have an equal opportunity to be selected for recruitment; this implies an expectation that all academics have identical qualifications and experience, which enable them to meet specific established criteria to compete for the same position/level.

The third and last point is that equity, in this policy statement, is interpreted as equal opportunity where this term means equal qualifications, experience and abilities. Therefore equity can be read as sameness or homogeneity. Thus it can be argued that by “promoting equity” (read as equal opportunity) gender equality will be maintained; this, then, eliminates any discrimination. In other words, discrimination occurs only when equal opportunity is not practised.

#### 4.3.2 The Equal Employment Opportunity (Affirmative Action for Women) policy statement

In this policy statement (November 1995) the following claims are made:

- MU accepts the responsibility to eliminate discrimination against women in all aspects of university life;
- MU states that “*Affirmative Action leads to equal opportunity*”;
- *Appointment and advancement are based on merit* — qualifications, experience and ability;
- MU has an *on-going* Equal Employment Opportunity (*Affirmative Action* for Women) program. (Milton University, 1995, p. 1; emphasis added)

The Equal Employment Opportunity (Affirmative Action for Women) policy statement is clearly focused on women as a separate target group and highlights two significant points. Firstly, this policy constructs women as different from men. Secondly, the policy shows awareness of past discrimination against women in the workplace. This policy promises hope that women can be judged on their own merits, will not be disadvantaged

by family responsibilities or by interrupted work records where they may have worked part time to accommodate family, or would not be disadvantaged through personal characteristics. There is a commitment to continuing AA opportunities for women, indicating that MU has developed AA strategies in the past.

As women in Australia have been acknowledged as having a greater responsibility for (or interest in) childcare (Wearing, 1996), the establishment of a parents' room and childcare services on the main campus by the university signals a perception that the lack of childcare is seen as a structural barrier to women's workplace participation. While this policy acknowledges some level of engagement with the notion that women may have needs that are fundamentally different from those of men, initiatives put in place by MU have set up women's needs as almost solely related to childcare issues, thus supporting an underlying patriarchal discourse that constructs all women as mothers. Alternatively, the assumption is that if there are special 'needs' for women, these would probably relate to a narrow and stereotypical version of parenting where women are the exclusive site of care and nurturing. So, while there is an awareness of AA legislation and the university's corresponding legal obligation, there is little in the way of understanding of AA expressed within these policies.

#### 4.3.3 The Gender Representation on Decision-making Bodies policy

According to this policy (November, 1996):

- MU states that *women's participation* on decision-making committees is *fundamental to the achievement of equal opportunity*;

- MU recognizes that there is a *gender imbalance* on decision-making committees within its structures;
- MU recognizes that ex-officio positions, which are largely occupied by senior academics who are male, contribute significantly to the *gender imbalance* in the composition of committees within MU;
- There is a Register of women stating qualifications and areas of interest and expertise. (Milton University? 1996, p. 3; emphasis added)

The focus of this policy is on women's participation on committees — where this participation is seen as necessary to the socially just operation of the university. Gender imbalance exists on various academic committees at MU owing to ex officio positions being occupied by senior male academics? prompting the development of a policy addressing the lack of women on committees. Ex officio positions held by senior male academics and administrators both demonstrate and reinforce the phallogentric structure and phallogentric culture surrounding the university.

The ideal representation of women on faculty and divisional committees and sub-committees is set out to be approximately equivalent to the relevant female staff or student populations, while a target of at least 40% membership of women on Council, Council committees and sub-committees was set for 2000. This was achieved by not filling two vacancies on the Council. The hope set out in this policy is one of participation by women, as the decisions made within the university impact on the women within this institution. Significantly? in an EO discourse, appropriate

representation means equal numbers of male and female; therefore 40% falls below 'equal representation'. It is possible then to identify in this policy directive the desire on the university's part to retain 60% of men on the key decision making committees, thereby maintaining the patriarchal structure and power-base.

While there is an element of 'fairness' towards women participating in decision making committees, this follows an example of the 'add women and stir' attitude prevalent in EO approaches to gender equity. Although this policy appears to be inclusive of women, it does nothing to change the overall phallocentric culture in which this policy is operational. Until the number of senior women appointed as professors, deans or administrators is addressed, the academic structure will continue to be phallocentric (Grosz, 1988).

This policy does not recognize the percentage of eligible women for committee work at MU is roughly 50% less than that of men nor does it address this lack of available women. There is a need to increase the overall number of academic women, in order for 'fairness' not to impact negatively on those women taking up committee roles. Therefore, if women do not put themselves forward for possible selection, this can be read as a personal issue for women rather than a structural problem with the academic system. At the same time the culture surrounding the election process and the aggressive 'masculinist' nature of committee discussions puts off many people — both male and female.



#### 4.3.4 Parental Leave policy

MU has a parental leave policy (November 1997) that states:

- Parental leave policy covers maternity leave, extended maternity leave and paternity leave for contract and permanent staff employed for 12 months or more;
- Casual staff are not entitled to parental leave;
- Paid maternity leave and paternity leave count as continuous service. Unpaid leave up to three months also counts as continuous service. (Milton University, 1997, p. 3)

This policy allows those women who have been employed permanently or on contract for longer than one year to take three months' paid leave around the time of birth, with the option of extending this leave on an unpaid basis. This policy also acknowledges fathers by granting paternity leave at the time of birth. Parental leave provisions set out the hope of eliminating any discrimination against pregnant women who continue to work at MU, plus the hope that time off from work to deal with children can be negotiated. This policy explicitly confirms that women should not be discriminated against because they have taken time away from their work owing to pregnancy.

The parental leave policy acknowledges two important points: one, fathers' opportunity to be at the birth of their child/ren; and two, women's childbearing role, where this role is acknowledged through the granting of twelve weeks' paid maternity leave. The words "parental leave" signify that a parent rather than just the mother is able to have leave to attend to issues associated with their children, which is clearly not really the case with

this policy. Whilst the title of this policy is parental leave it focuses only on leave at the time of birth. In effect, this policy ‘allows’ women time off to have babies but does not recognize that issues around childcare continue. This substantiates what Wearing (1996, p. 147) suggests when she states that women are expected to accommodate their domestic routines and childcare on the assumption that these will be carried out by someone else. Those excluded from this policy are casual staff, significantly the bulk of whom are women (Milton University, 2002a, p. 7).

Accompanying this is an assumption that childcare issues can and will be sorted out permanently three months post birth. This policy addresses (albeit to a minimum extent) a previous structural barrier to women’s employment by granting up to three months’ leave which is regarded as continuous service; however after the maternity leave finishes women revert to being seen the same as men (Grosz, 1988).

#### 4.3.5 Recruitment Selection Procedures policy

Working in conjunction with the equity statement is the Recruitment Selection Procedures policy (October 1997) that claims:

- Providing guidelines for recruitment and selection procedures will *avoid discrimination and ensure equal employment opportunity*;
- MU seeks to eliminate any direct, indirect and systemic discrimination in recruitment selection procedures;
- Applications should be *measured against the established criteria* for the position;

- *Merit based selection* refers to the appointment of the best available applicant for a vacancy in open competition. (Milton University, 1997, p. 2; emphasis added)

This policy, as does the Equity Policy Statement (section 4.3.1), emphasizes that people are the university's most valuable resource, conveying a hope that people are put before economics — a significant point in an era of economic rationalism. Current recruitment and selection procedures in place at MU set up the hope that women will be treated fairly in recruitment selection with promotion based on merit. There is a strong emphasis on ending discrimination; however established criteria and merit based selection based on male norms mean that women are less likely to meet those criteria.

This, in effect, is reproducing the very level of discrimination that this policy claims is being addressed — that of indirect discrimination — where indirect discrimination refers to those rules, practices or decisions that treat people in the same way but are not equally fair in their effects (Blackmore, 1999). Here the assumption of homogeneity makes up the indirect discrimination: for example, where full time employment is regarded as the norm for 'good employees' this could lead to indirect discrimination against women who, because of family commitments, have worked part time hours.

The recruitment selection procedures policy also draws attention to direct discrimination and systemic discrimination. Direct discrimination refers to personal characteristics or sex-role stereotypes that may cause barriers to selection: for example, advertising a position for a gardener as being open only to men (Blackmore, 1999; Milton University,

1997b, p. 1). Systemic discrimination refers to societal patterns of discrimination, where this type of discrimination can lead to the reduction of opportunities for specific groups of people; in particular the lack of appropriate and available childcare services limits employment choices for women (Blackmore, 1999; Milton University, 1997b, p. 1). Basically this means that the university policy makers are aware of the interconnectedness of discrimination at all levels and that this impacts on the recruitment of women.

From the rhetoric of this policy “promotion of equity” and merit based selection in employment issues are said to “overcome these levels of discrimination”. In other words, by having this policy in place, discrimination does not happen. This sends the message that “Okay, well, we have said that this will stop the problem and so, *voilà*, the problem disappears”, which is a rather fanciful, if novel, way of dealing with such issues. This policy continues to reinforce the EO discourse where the best applicant for a position within the university is based solely on merit. More importantly, merit is based on specific criteria that only a few may meet, meaning that ‘difference’ is ignored.

I also make the point here that ‘merit’ and women are not incompatible because MU presumably needs some standards or criteria in place; what remains the significant question however is how promotion can be accessed using ‘merit’ based criteria. I draw attention to the contradiction implied between the use of established selection criteria against which all applications are to be measured and the training of EO awareness for those university staff members on selection panels. While merit based selection is an

excellent way of choosing the most appropriate person for the position, what this means for many women, is that this type of process continues to mask the very real fact that not all women can compete on the same level as many male academics. Merit, as Game and Pringle (1983) point out, is defined by male norms with this illustrated by the fact that some women's skills are ignored. While EO is interpreted as 'sameness', discrimination is replicated and extended rather than eliminated; so what then was the point of the 'equal opportunity' training for the selection panelists?

The assumption made in this recruitment policy is that women have had the same opportunity to gain the 'same' as their male colleagues. While there are some women who have had this opportunity, this group remains small; therefore many women through direct, indirect and systemic discrimination will always be overlooked for appointments and promotion because of 'this type of merit based selection'. The EO discourse couched in this policy constructs the lack of appropriate qualifications and experience of many academic women as a personal problem rather than a systemic problem.

The universal application of merit criteria for promotion would be acceptable if there was an arrangement in place to ensure that many of the academic women at MU had the necessary opportunities to meet the relevant criteria, for example, through AA in the form of study time and research time. By maintaining merit in the form of qualifications and experience and by treating women in relation to the work experiences of men, the dominance of male academics, particularly in the senior ranks, will continue. Therefore it can be argued here that this recruitment policy does not eliminate discrimination; in fact

the reliance on EO discourses to enforce an anti-discrimination rhetoric actually serves to reinforce employment discrimination.

Another, and generally unexplored, assumption within these documents is that the ‘norm’ in terms of qualifications is not in any way problematic — that is, the ‘ideal’ university would have everyone with doctorates and years of research/teaching experience when, in fact, a greater diversity of experience could well be more valuable; but this is not even hinted at in most university discourses.

In the previous sub-sections I analyzed specific policies highlighting the key objectives and hopes set out in these texts. I also highlighted some of the shortfalls within these policies. In the following sub-section I draw this analysis together to argue that, despite a range of responses to equity by the university, indicating an awareness of changing perspectives on what constitutes equity, there is a lingering dominant EO discourse that constructs women as the same as men. This indicates that equity related policy development has been a site of competing discourses where issues of women’s inequity have been influenced by patriarchal and political discourses. In other words, equity policy development takes place in a non-neutral, political context.

#### 4.3.6 Merit, equity and Affirmative Action = Equal Opportunity

What is clearly shown in this analysis is the development of two opposing messages relating to equity at MU: while the Equity Statement implies equality has been reached and the promotion of equity will maintain this state, the Equal Employment Opportunity

(Affirmative Action for Women) policy statement recognizes that women in universities are still discriminated against when it comes to promotion and career advancement. It is explicitly stated in this policy statement that Affirmative Action is the mechanism that “allows equal opportunity”. The Parental Leave policy was developed to overcome ‘disadvantage’ owing to discontinuity of workplace participation because of childbirth, considered to be a structural barrier to women’s progression in academia

At MU AA means “provision of limited childcare services, paid parental leave and merit based recruitment”. In other words, AA has been narrowly defined as offering some help towards that ‘children problem’. AA at MU acknowledges that childcare impacts on the ‘working lives’ of academic women, sometimes limiting the time available to work (Gatens, 1998, p. 9). However, as Cockburn (1991, p. 161) warns, there is often suspicion and rejection of women only activities and EEO initiatives because men feel threatened by these. Consequently, AA at MU is constructed as childcare and has done little to alter the systemic bias in favour of male academics (Gatens, 1998, p. 12). Parental leave is seen as one of the answers to women’s disadvantage but this applies only at the time of birth.

There are varying degrees of understanding among Deans and Heads of Departments regarding AA (Moore, 1998, p. 54), following a trend indicated by Allen and Castleman (1995, p. 28), where senior staff had little familiarity with the principles of AA. Consequently any special treatment of women because of any previous systemic discrimination is likely to be viewed as discrimination against men, thereby causing a

backlash (Faludi, 1992) where women's 'disadvantage' is reinforced at the same time as masking the 'advantage' that has become the norm for men (Eveline, 1994).

While senior male academics retain *ex officio* positions on all decision making committees, the same people control the decision making process. Therefore increasing gender representation on decision making committees will not necessarily alter the balance of power. I acknowledge that the inclusion of women makes for greater diversity and input into decisions; however there are some serious implications associated with this particular policy.

At the faculty level, 'gender imbalance' has been addressed by targeting women to take up committee positions. In effect what this has meant is that, because there are fewer female academics employed, many academic women are called on to do more than their 'fair' share of committee work, on top of an already heavy teaching load. This, in effect, reduces the load on male academics, allowing them to attend to research and publication interests and produces what Harris *et al.* (1998) refer to as men's advantage at women's expense (see Chapter Two). What this represents, in fact, is the reproduction of indirect discrimination of junior academic women where practices that treat people in the same way are not equally fair in their effect (Blackmore, 1999).

A consistent theme underpinning the equity policies at MU is an EO discourse, with this being evidenced by the following:



- Women are seen as biologically different from men, but can perform the same as men on decision making committees;
- By making the assumption that 'equality' has been reached, women are judged on the same merit as men when it comes to recruitment and promotion;
- Policies addressing the removal of structural barriers position women as different from men. While the Parental Leave policy sees women as different from men, this is only for the three months' duration of the leave, at which point women return to being the same as men;
- AA initiatives are supposed to address the 'children problem', thus giving women the opportunity to be the same as men.

The assumptions made are that all women experience the workplace in the same manner, have the same issues and do the same kinds of work, thus institutionalizing homogeneity. Except for limited recognition of maternity leave the academic workplace of MU is constructed as sexually neutral, accompanied by a denial of cultural norms and messages attached to the 'real' bodies of these women, again creating a strong emphasis on homogeneity. At MU those part time postgraduate academic women, employed in full time positions, face changes brought about by the institution changing from a College of Adult Education to a 'new' university, where McCormack and Pamphilon (1998, p. 695) state there is now increased pressure to perform as researchers, apply for grants and upgrade qualifications. These changes also created pressures for some men. Clearly the women at MU are at different stages of their careers, with different needs for study time,

research grants and mentoring/supervision, but there is an expectation that they perform as ‘good academics’ — a theme taken up in the following chapter.

Although MU acknowledges that the organization has a responsibility to eliminate discrimination from both university structures and practices, the university continues to be conservative in the recruitment of senior women. In 2001 MU promoted the female Deputy Vice-Chancellor to the position of Vice-Chancellor. In 2002 there was a change in the management structure that now comprises a Vice-Chancellor, who is also President, three Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic and Research, Resources and International), five Faculty Deans, a Dean International and seven Heads of Academic Support and Administrative Divisions (Hancock, 2002, p. 2).

Although there has been a complete change in administrative structure and a corresponding change of senior staff at this time, there has been no emphasis on attracting or appointing women to these senior positions within MU. Rather what has happened here is what Lafferty and Fleming (2000, p. 261) describe as the consolidation of the core — a key strategy in the centralization of control that consolidates power in the hands of a select few. This suggests the appointment of the female Vice-Chancellor can be ‘read’ in at least two different ways: as owing to merit where this has been based on male work norms; as tokenism and therefore as a politically correct act. As such, it could be expected that the performances of this body — the female Vice-Chancellor — follow a precise sexed script where she upholds the managerialist practice and accompanying masculinist culture within this workplace.

It is clearly visible that a dominant EO discourse underpins policy development and there is limited understanding of AA principles expressed in policies. This does not mean that successive equity officers or policy developers at MU were unaware of gender reform and respective approaches. Rather this signals that, in a conservative, rural based context such as MU, the recognition of even a baseline approach to gender reform is an achievement. The point that I make here is that there is the possibility that gender reform could have been facilitated more easily in a metropolitan university where 'women's differences' are more readily accepted. However with EO and AA discourses being present within the workplace for the past 18 years there is an increasing belief that some form of 'equity' has been reached. Therefore I argue in this context the continued use of EO discourses actually now masks women's continuing inequity in the MU academic workplace.

For women entering this workplace there is baseline support in the form of an Equity and Diversity Office, with one Equity Officer to cover a staff of 2,359 employees (Hills & Rowan, 2002). By July 2002 the total student enrolment had risen to 18,541 (Nathan McDonald, 2002, personal communication). This signals a lack of resources assigned to gender equity in the belief that gender is no longer an issue at MU. In the following section I look at what this means for academic women at MU.

#### **4.4 So what does all this mean for academic women at MU?**

In this section I look at the consequences of a prevailing EO discourse for academic women at MU. The dominant EO discourse values sameness rather than difference and in

a workplace premised on male norms women are constructed as ‘lacking’ compared to men. This has material consequences for women in that they are over-represented in the lower ranks, are on short term or fixed term contracts, progress more slowly in terms of promotion and are under-represented in senior continuing positions (Allen & Castleman, 1995; Burton, 1997).

The staffing profile of MU indicates that academic women follow this same trend with this situation compounded by restructuring and reduced funding (Lafferty & Fleming, 2000, p. 261). Whilst there has been some recognition of child bearing roles, this has positioned women as different from men but only in physiological terms, expressing what Luke and Gore (1992, p. 192) call the gender politics of local sites — the embodied ‘situatedness’ of academic women. This construction of ‘difference’ effectively labels women collectively as having ‘special needs’.

In exploring what this means for academic women at MU I make two major points. Firstly, looks can be deceiving: here I draw attention to how these policies appear to work in favor of women by seemingly addressing disadvantage. Secondly, attitudes do not change because of reformist legislation: here I demonstrate the continuing phallogentric nature of these policies.

#### 4.4.1 Looks can be deceiving

The policies, programs and initiatives explored in this chapter are all valuable because they seek to identify and address various structural barriers to workplace participation

for/by women. There is a perception that, because AA and anti-discrimination legislation have been around since the 1970s/80s, the kind of 'equality' that feminists hoped for has actually been achieved. Consequently women are not only expected to have the same qualifications and experience as men but are also judged accordingly.

The Equal Employment Opportunity (Affirmative Action for Women) policy statement draws attention to women's disadvantage, but this disadvantage is seen as limited to childcare issues and thus as something women tend to bring on themselves. At the same time this kind of policy presents childcare as a gift or service to women, as though men have no substantive responsibilities in this area. While the focus of AA remains on childcare and maternity leave, increasing women's skills is ignored. Merit based recruitment and selection sound wonderful; if only women could have the same opportunity to reach a comparable level as many of their male colleagues in qualifications, research and publication experience. The hope that academic women would be able to rise through the ranks of academia on merit is not happening, simply because many women are yet to reach a stage of 'sameness'.

If doctorates become the minimum qualification for entry into academic posts, because traditionally it has been men who enrol in higher degrees on a full time basis, this means that many male academics will meet the criteria more readily than many women (Acker, 1991), resulting in fewer women being eligible for university appointments. Research done locally indicates that there is not the same rate of doctorates, research grants or

sense of legitimacy about being ‘real’ researchers among the women interviewed at MU (Eade, McNamee, Cox & Gregor, 1995; Hills & Rowan, 2002).

When research and publication experience remain low promotion is slow, but more concerning is that the lack of a PhD is taken to mean that these women are more interested in teaching than in research; they are then more likely to end up with heavier teaching loads; and as part of this sex-role stereotyping academic women are remaining primarily in lower ranks of Levels A and B, in part time and increasingly casual positions (Milton University, 2002a, p. 2). The hope that women would be judged on qualities other than ‘male norms’ is not happening in these policies.

Women at MU themselves still see the workplace as based on male norms of work practices. This is evidenced in the way that women take maternity leave; of those women taking maternity leave in 2000-2001, 74% took the allocated three months paid leave and on their return to work 78% of those women resumed full time work (Milton University, 2002a, p. 8). What this means is that academic women are being compared (and see themselves as being compared) to the male ‘norm’ of work patterns and there are few questions being asked about the value or ‘normalcy’ of this norm in the first place. This shows that attitudes don’t change because of gender reform put in place by legislation.

#### 4.4.2 Attitudes do not change because of reformist legislation

Eisenstein (1991, p. 30) argues that feminist analysis has been effective in revealing how, historically, government policy has been in the interest of men, reinforcing traditional

gendered roles. Patriarchal interests can be seen in workplace policies beginning as far back as the Harvester Judgment (1907), where a man's wage was set to be sufficient to support a wife and three children (Broom, 1991, p. 61). This created the Australian worker as both male and married with children, reinforcing the sexual division of labour positioning men as public labourers and women as domestic labourers — an image that I contend lingers to this day through women's responsibility for child rearing and for domestic duties being both an expectation and a reality in contemporary Australian society (Wearing, 1996, p. 143; Whip & Lupton, 1992, p. 190).

This gendered discourse within government policies continued through to the 1970s, as Wearing (1996) observes:

Until the 1950s women in the Commonwealth Public Service had to resign on marriage in order to fulfill their proper roles of child-bearer and child carer. Even in the 1970s Government policy was to provide incentives for mothers to stay at home to care for their children and not work .... Such policies, as Game and Pringle (1983) point out, enable even working class males in Australian to act as if they had servants. (p. 7)

I would argue here that this gendered discourse remains today. Equity issues are given lip service — seen most vividly in the outcry and backlash against the possible increase to paid maternity leave. Headlines in the *Courier Mail* newspaper, such as “Maternity leave issue splits the workplace” (Greber & Nolan, 2001, p. 5), “Alarm and delight at maternity leave” (Green, 2001, p. 17) and “Jobs alarm after maternity deal” (Greber & Hele, 2001,

p. 3), all contain reports that carry comments about how employers would be discouraged from hiring women.

One could be forgiven for thinking that the date of these newspaper headlines was 1971 instead of 2001. After thirty years of public debate around issues of women's 'equal' participation within the workplace, the idea of increasing paid maternity benefits still bring cries of sexist condemnation. This is despite anti-discrimination legislation that explicitly deals with gender discrimination. As Williams (1988) highlighted, prior to sex discrimination legislation the expectation was that women would not want promotion and that they would probably stop working (in the public sphere) when they had children. Probert (2002) suggests that the discourses around domesticity reinforce this kind of attitude highlighting that, while Williams (1988) indicates some initial structural change, Probert (2002) emphasizes the lack of corresponding attitudinal change.

Signified here is the strength of attitudes concerning whose body fits into the workplace; women's bodies are still seen as 'out of place' (McDowell, 1999) in the academic workplace. In the type of environment set up by equity related policies at MU only certain bodies are valued. While maternity leave and AA initiatives acknowledge women as being biologically different from men, discourses value sameness.

The underlying theme, consistent throughout the equity related policies, is the neutral worker where neutral is code for male (Acker, 1991; Gatens, 1992). This neutral worker sets up a 'male' norm by which all academics are then measured, where the 'good



academic' is one who follows the male norm. Having set up this norm there are limited positionings that 'allow' women to be different, albeit for a limited period — the pregnant worker and the post-natal mother. As Diprose (1994, p. 26) declares, the pregnant body is an obvious mark of sexual difference.

While there is a dominant EO discourse where sameness is expected, the 'lack of' sameness is construed as personal deficiency. I argue in this analysis that, although current equity discourses value students from diverse backgrounds, this same diversity is not expected among staff. It is therefore possible to identify a gap between the hope set out by feminists and what academic women could hope for at MU.

#### **4.5 This signals a gap between hope and policies**

It is important to acknowledge the gap between the rhetoric of equity and the kind of 'equity' that is constructed at MU. All the issues that I have identified above can be summarized as a failure of MU to respond in a sufficiently detailed, sophisticated, long term way to the challenge of difference. Policies in place at MU reflect a legal obligation towards gender issues but do not address anything in the way of attitudinal change towards the place of women. A legal obligation to acknowledge gender discrimination has resulted in a series of equity policies that have little in the way of accountability.

This points to a gap between the policies and their effective implementation beyond the policy writing stage. What is exhibited here, then, is the practice Rowan (2001) refers to as "stunt equity", where the mere presence of these policies is given as hard evidence that

gender issues in this specific workplace have been addressed. Unfortunately recognition of past discrimination and structural barriers does not address the unequal positioning of men and women (Rowan, 2000,p. 153).

While an assumption that ‘equality’ has been reached remains, merit-based recruitment falls short of equal opportunity for academic women. The kind of equity being constructed at MU sees any deviation from the ‘male norm’ as a ‘lack’ on the part of academic women, thus positioning those women without PhDs, research profiles and an innovative (read technological) teaching focus on the margins of mainstream university life. If women are assumed to be now starting from the same vantage points as their male colleagues, then any lack of appropriate qualifications and experience can be regarded as a personal failure rather than a systemic problem.

Bulbeck (1998, p. 7) asserts that liberal feminism has been the acceptable face of feminism in Western politics, suggesting that the differences between the sexes are the result of sexist attitudes rather than unequal social structures or ‘real’ differences between women and men; merely including women as men’s equals does not allow for women’s differences. An EO discourse signals legislative resistance to sexist discourses but has not transformed the entrenched patriarchal structures in place or sexist discourses, and neither does it challenge phallogentric representations (Grosz, 1988,p. 95).

AA at MU has not succeeded in providing academic women at MU with an alternative means of being judged on merit; instead women are being treated identically. While these

policies indicate a willingness to acknowledge legal obligations to redress women's past discrimination, they fall short of actually addressing continuing discrimination of academic women. Communicated here is a theme that acknowledges a basic biological difference between men and women that regards men as men and women as women, but to be an academic is to model performance on the neutral (male) worker.

Policies can go only so far in effecting change. The point that I make here is that real people have to do the work of both interpreting and implementing these policies. A dominant EO discourse has lingered despite changing responses to equity. While at different times, and through successive equity officers, various responses to equity have reflected social changes towards equity, these responses have occurred in a 'non-neutral' or highly charged political context.

The current response to equity has resulted in a focus on diversity among students but not so much among staff. There is no corresponding change in the equity related policies; therefore while a dominant EO discourse remains there will not be a valuing of diversity through individual academic strengths. Rather there will be a continuing marginalization and systemic discrimination of those academic women who are yet to be in the position to 'compete as men'. It is possible to assert, then, a gap between hope and happening where the results fall short of the hope that feminists had for the possibility of cultural transformation through a mechanism of equity related policies.

## 4.6 Review of the chapter

This chapter addressed the first of two contexts — gender reform — and began by setting out what feminists had hoped for through state intervention into workplace discrimination. At MU four different perspectives or approaches to gender reform were analysed, signalling both the strengths and limitations of these approaches. Policy developments and specific initiatives for academic women spelt hope that institutional discrimination would be overcome. Rather than improving women's positioning continuing gender segregation within the academic workplace and a dominant theme of EO discourses embedded within each policy have been demonstrated by my analysis.

In answering the first sub-question — how do equity policies at MU construct difference? — my analysis determined two significant points:

- the lingering EO discourse underpinning all equity related policies denies the presence of difference; in other words women are constructed as being the same as men.
- when difference is recognized — seen with the implementation of AA initiatives — then this difference is viewed in both traditional and limiting ways.

This difference is viewed as issues pivoting around 'children and mothering', where women's 'lack of sameness' with men is seen as being due to the 'motherhood problem'. The answer to this problem at MU has been, under the heading of AA, to provide limited childcare and maternity leave. This can be seen as following a form of public patriarchy, with the university seen as benevolent in its giving of 'legislated rights' to those women

who are mothers. Therefore in this chapter it was established that, through specific policies in place, MU is inclusive of women academics only when they perform as men. This means that there is a gap between the hope that feminists had with gender reform through state and legislation mechanisms and what is happening in policy implementation at MU. In the following chapter I look at the second context of this thesis — that of institutional discourses — and analyze the ways in which both formal and informal discourses construct the bodies of those who work as academics.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **SEXISM MASQUERADES AS ‘CORPORATE CARE’: IS THIS WHAT IS HAPPENING IN THE WORKPLACE?**

#### **5.0 Overview**

In Chapter Four I focused on the first context of analysis — that of equity related policies — and here I unmasked the presence of an embedded, phallogentric, EO discourse. On the surface these policies were designed to address women’s sexual disadvantage, but in fact this EO discourse positioned women as the same as men (Grosz, 1986). This indicated the perception of a sexually neutral workplace. In this chapter I introduce the second context of analysis — that of institutional discourses — where I demonstrate the ways in which formal institutional discourses continue to construct the myth of the neutral workplace, but informal workplace discourses construct women as either different from, or complementary to, men.

In this chapter I argue that formal institutional discourses construct a sexually neutral ‘good academic’, masking the fact that this is actually a male figuration, while dominant informal workplace discourses constitute a kind of phallogentric smog, positioning academic women in relation to this symbolic male figuration. This points to discourses of embodiment as reproducing the sexual disadvantage of women at MU. Embodiment as defined here signals that performances are read in ways which tie them to meanings culturally ascribed to sexed bodies. The intention of this chapter, then, is to show that the ‘good academic’ is more likely to fit a male body, and that for academic women to be

valued they need to perform as ‘nurturers’, an activity not required of men. This, then, allows me to address the second sub-question set out in Chapter One — how do dominant institutional discourses at MU deal with difference?

In addressing the answer to this question I have divided this chapter into five sections. The first section focuses on the institutional responses to the global pressures in the tertiary market place and establishes the context of academic work at MU. The second section analyzes the construction of the ‘good academic’ — a body responding to global and local pressures. In the third section I analyze the informal discourses that serve to position the academic women in this project as secondary to their male colleagues. The fourth section examines what this means for the academic women involved and the last section identifies the gap apparent between hope and happening as experienced in this academic workplace. I begin my analysis in the first section by focusing on the global discourses circulating at MU and the ways in which these kinds of discourses are impacting on what is considered as academic work in the global marketplace.

### **5.1 An institutional response to global discourses at MU**

In this section I look at ‘global pressures’ or processes of globalization that are impacting on the performances of academics in this specific site, setting out the kind of context in which MU operates. I have divided this section into two sub-sections: in the first I briefly outline global pressures associated with technology and competition, while the second sub-section deals with customer focus.

### 5.1.1 Global pressures —technology and competition

Globalization processes are felt at MU through an increased emphasis on the use of technologies, the promotion of academic courses to international students and the increasing networking of academics worldwide. Carnoy (1998, p. 23) believes that the essence of globalization is in the re-conception of new ways of thinking about economic and social space and time; people are reconceptualizing their particular world in association with new technology, information and the interchange of knowledge over geographical space. As a response to global pressures, then, MU has introduced a range of what it calls innovations — a computerized financial and administration system; voice mail; email; niche marketing of education; vocational courses where graduate satisfaction (measured in terms of graduate employment) has become a determining factor in course provision; and the directing of research towards industry partnerships in the local region.

MU is embracing the processes of globalization through an emphasis on flexible and innovative teaching and learning technologies through the application of modern information and communication technologies (Milton University, 2000b, p. 6). This emphasis, in turn, shapes the practices of academics employed at this institution. Ling and Ling (1998, p. 30) maintain that with the advent of technology there is a change in the image of universities coupled with the requirement that all academics be computer literate: this signals, also, an environment within which technology is now most commonly equated with *computing* technology.



In the case of higher education, 'computer literacy' is often associated with the ability of an academic to use 'technology' to work towards 'improving teaching and learning'. The logical consequence of this association between technology and quality educational practice is that more emphasis is placed on technology based teaching and learning. This emphasis is also seen as a way to improve efficiency and effectiveness, thus making the institution much more competitive in its delivery of education, reducing costs while maintaining productivity. Global competitiveness is driven by economic rationalist policies that, in turn, are pressuring the economic context to operate more efficiently whereby profit margins can increase through such strategies as niche marketing, value adding, customer service and flexible workforces (see Carnoy, 1998; Emy, 1993).

In this era of globalization more focus is placed on accountability where this appears, at least anecdotally, to be focused on accountancy and bottom line figures rather than on what could be termed moral accountability with issues such as equity and social justice. According to Currie and Thiele (2001) and Yeatman (1993), academia has moved from a collegiality-based to a performance-based culture. This change is visible at MU through the restructuring of the senior executive and the re-writing of mission statements directing university philosophies and values (see Chapter Four). This change coincided with the election of the Howard Federal Government in 1996. While Smith and Sachs (1995) and Luke (2001) suggest that collegiality was a myth, I would argue that discourses associated with quality assurance, productivity, efficiency and effectiveness are being increasingly observed within the higher education sector (Rowan, 2000), thus

making discourses of economic rationalism and global competitiveness now firmly part of the university discourse (Currie, 1996b, p. 102).

The amalgamation of universities and Colleges of Advanced Education in 1989 initiated an era of intensified competition among universities. As Yeatman (1993, p. 14) asserts, restructuring within universities has been largely dominated by market orientated economic cultures of action and *laissez faire* ideology, where universities are now required to respond effectively and rapidly to on-going socio-cultural change and complexity. What this means for MU is the need to respond quickly to the diversity of students/customers in the mass market of education, but with limited funds from government sector sources. In other words a response to global pressures must have a customer focus.

#### 5.1.2 Global pressures — a customer focus

Performance and product are geared towards the local and global markets — educational packages or degrees are supplied on a user-pays arrangement with interest initially seen in the postgraduate business and computing courses (Marginson, 1995). Global markets are a source of ‘private sector’ funding that universities have tapped into – MU being no exception. Tamaly sees the image of MU changing as a result of its response to global trends:

It's [the image of the university] beginning to change because of the vocational nature now of academia, if you like .... I mean the sort of programs that you are offering. We've got to be very mindful of the market

place, student numbers, marketing and making sure that the courses that we're offering [suit] today's market. There are changes in that sense, so it's not just following your own dream any more. I mean you're got to be in line with some of the other external expectations. (Tamaly)

Basically Tamaly see the local changes at MU as responses to the increasing global market oriented focus being taken by the senior managers. This is following what Currie (1996a, p. 1) believes is encouragement by politicians to "embrace the marketplace and become customer-focused business enterprises". The university, according to Tamaly, is now a competitive arena where academics must also take responsibility for developing appropriate courses that suit the market or corporate world, a world that she is comfortable in, but one that she believes some academics may have difficulty in adjusting to:

When you look at academics who have just stayed in academia all their lives, they have far more problems, in my view, than people who have done other things. Someone like me who's been out and had multiple experiences in other real world sort of situations, when you come into an organization such as a university you understand the commercial aspect, the political agenda and so it becomes second nature to you to function within that. (Tamaly)

Tamaly feels that she can function in this kind of commercial and political arena. MU could be seen as being overly aggressive in the marketing push into the South East Asian student market (Ashenden & Milligan, 2001), seen as an immense source of external

revenue. Marginson (1995, p. 28) warns that there are increasing reports that this aggressive attitude, with little attention to the quality of services offered or to educational rather than financial objectives, has generated resentment among students.

Marginson (1995, p. 28) cites a case where Singaporeans viewed Australian institutions as treating overseas students as a ‘money-making’ racket; present here is a clash of values between the Singaporeans who revere education, and the ideology of education as a commodity. Similarly, Veronica is concerned that this same ideology and commodification of education is happening at MU with courses being dumped on-line without any thought given to the consequences: “... it is important that we look at the Internet and that we make use of it, but I also think that it’s not just a matter of getting your stuff on the Web and that will be fine” (Veronica).

Tamaly is also concerned about the lack of thought given to the development of courses in a climate of customer service where all types of learners need to be catered for, while at the same time teaching students how to engage with lifelong learning practices — something that she has suggested to her faculty. Tamaly engages with notions of flexibility and adaptability — both key concepts in the globalization discourse — as she sets out her own priorities with educational delivery:

You are dealing with individuals who have different circumstances for starters. Secondly, they’ve got different learning styles. So it’s those factors of your learning style and your circumstances at the time that really influence what method suits you best. So my argument has been that we’ve got to

provide the normal printed material. We can provide it on a downloadable file, and yes, we can provide it on-line. We can provide it in a variety of different ways so that if one method doesn't suit you can go to another method to get the material. It gives them [the students] options for their self-directed learning which I think is what we've got to be promoting anyway because by the time they finish out the course, everything will have changed, particularly technology. (Tamaly)

Tamaly outlines what she considers her faculty should offer to the diverse range of student learning styles of the customers now accessing her faculty. This outline identifies the shortcomings associated with a 'Web only' delivery. While Tamaly sees the Web as one option for teaching delivery, she resists the institutional discourse of 'Web only' delivery by acknowledging the different learning styles of students. She highlights the dynamic nature of the educational environment where, over the course of a three or four year degree, most things including technologies will have changed and for this reason Tamaly promotes the development of skills that enhance self-directed learning.

Tamaly emphasizes the notions of "suit[ing] today's market ... commercial aspect[s] ... and the political agenda", signifying the managerialist style existing in contemporary Australian universities that co-exists with the neo-liberal ideology of competitiveness, economic rationalism and corporate business. From this it can be seen that Tamaly sees global trends and pressures impacting differently on academics and students, highlighting, in turn, differences she perceives among academics. Coaldrake and Stedman (1999, p. 3) believe there is a clash of values between students and academics

over what a university provides. While students see a degree as credentials for a job, academics see a degree as critical thinking and specific discipline study. According to Currie and Thiele (2001, p. 105), this change of focus has seen critical studies losing ground to the more practical and job-orientated courses.

It is important to acknowledge the kinds of trends that inform the ways in which universities are responding to 'global pressures'. Therefore in this section I have set out a broad context of global discourses, such as technology, competition and customer focus in which MU now needs to operate. This response to global pressures includes the hope that fairness is happening within the workplace. Keeping in mind that there are also equity issues embedded in the university workplace, MU, like all other Australian universities, has responded to these pressures in a particular way. This, in turn, leads to the construction of a particular kind of 'good academic' which is both similar to, and quite distinct from, the way other institutions construct this figuration. In the following section I analyze a range of formal institutional discourses, which work towards creating this 'good academic' body at MU.

## **5.2 Turning discourse into practice — constructing the 'good academic'**

In this section I analyze discourses that are found in formal texts such as the University Handbook, Strategic Plans, Statements and Reports and within the narratives of Alice, Tamaly, Veronica and Madonna that construct the 'good academic'. I use the narratives of the women as texts, enabling me to 'read' their discursive fields. By interrogating these texts I am able to illustrate the discursive construction of the 'good academic' that

is valued and then rewarded by this institution. I begin my textual analysis by focusing on the practices associated with this figuration through the dimensions of technology use, teaching, research and entrepreneurial expectations (see Chapter Three). By looking at what is rewarded and valued it becomes obvious that this figuration is more likely to ‘fit’ a male body at MU.

This section is divided into three sub-sections where I present an analysis of three different and valued aspects of academic performance at MU. In the first sub-section I analyze discourses around teaching where the use of technology is valued. The second sub-section deals with discourses around research, where research within the ‘local’ is valued. The third and final sub-section attends to entrepreneurial discourses where the marketing of MU is valued. I begin each sub-section by outlining, briefly, the key characteristics of these discourses and identify, in this process, what is valued in this particular workplace, thus illustrating what it means to be a ‘good academic’ employed at MU. I now look at teaching discourses.

#### 5.2.1 Teaching in ‘technoscape’

MU, in common with other universities in the broad context of globalization, has specific things to say about what it means to be an academic. Discourses, for example, about effective teaching emphasize, among other things, efficiency, student satisfaction and retention, speed and flexibility, with many of these outcomes being linked unproblematically, as evidenced by some policy documents and various informal

practices, to the use of technology. Informal practices and technology for the women in this study include:

I mainly use the computer, videos, voice mail and e-mail. My favorite would be the telephone; is that still seen as technology these days? (Madonna)

I e-mail constantly ... . That's probably my major form of communicating with other people around the university. (Veronica)

I use e-mail a lot. I communicate with people from around the country and around the world, all the time, as well as my students. (Tamaly)

Well, I use a computer, e-mail, voice mail, ISL, the Internet and the photocopier, and also the telephone, but that's old tech now. (Alice)

Illustrated here is how all four women incorporate specific technologies into their academic practice. As McWilliam and Palmer (1996, pp. 101-102) assert, in a context of globalization and competition there is increasing pressure on academics to use specific technologies and flexible forms of course delivery. It can then be argued that one of the consequences of globalization is the increasing emphasis on the use of technology within universities such as MU. In this context of globalization the 'good academic' is someone who can operate within a 'technoscape' culture (Appadurai, 1990).

Consequently, as evidenced earlier by the examples of technology use given by my respondents, in this framework there is an emphasis placed on the ability of academics to access/control computer space, Internet space, flexible delivery modes and on-line communication. 'Technoscape' culture is made possible with the increased availability of



Internet access, satellite telecommunications and mobile phone links where it could be said that both isolation and spatial distance have been figuratively reduced. This has certainly been the argument made by many people working in the broad field of open and distance learning who echo Giddens' claim that globalization has involved the collapse of space and time (T. Evans, 1997). What this suggests is a hope whereby isolation and the tyranny of distance (Blainey, 1982), experienced by those located in regional/rural and remote areas, will be overcome by the use of the new information and communication technologies.

Within MU, this 'technoscape' is evidenced by the growing promotion and use of on-line communication, use of innovative teaching and learning technologies and flexible modes of delivery to accommodate students' lifestyles (Milton University, 2001a, p. 14). What is valued here is the *use* of teaching technologies that is seen as *innovative* and *flexible*. One such technological delivery mode is the Interactive Systemwide Learning (ISL) facility, where students receive lectures simultaneously irrespective of the campus where they are located (Milton University, 2001a, p. 10).

The focus on innovation is intimately linked to technology. Therefore being innovative, in this discourse, is read as the ability to use technology in a way that can be seen as efficient, effective and modern and is linked to such 'buzz' words as 'on-line', 'e-mail' and 'CD-ROM' where 'smart' packaging and flexible delivery are becoming synonymous with the 'student as client' discourse (Morgan & McWilliam, 1995).

*Flexible* delivery is becoming synonymous with *new technology*; in this case, however, technology is often read to refer *only* to computers coupled with associated information/communication technologies and software. At MU there is significant pressure placed on individual lecturers to make use of a 'template' for the delivery of on-line courses via the product known as WebCT (this is set to be replaced in 2004 by Blackboard, a more recent software program). This pressure is conveyed to staff in faculty meetings, as Madonna indicates here:

Yeah, the university is clearly moving in that direction .... That's the reading I take at our faculty meetings. I think we are going to have to move that way [putting courses on the Web] .... It will be all on the Net. (Madonna)

Madonna detects this move towards on-line delivery as inevitable where, at her faculty meetings, there has been much discussion of new directions with teaching delivery. What is valued is the use of the Internet as a teaching technology. Because of the strong technology discourse circulating at MU, on-line teaching and communication could be perceived as both 'good' and necessary for effective, and therefore efficient, educational delivery. Consequently, in this particular discourse a slippage occurs whereby 'good teaching' comes to mean teaching on-line and using technology across campuses engaging with ISL, Web based courses and CD-ROM packages, making the ability to use technology highly valued, while positioning the academic (user) on the 'cutting edge' of educational delivery.

Wajcman (1991, pp. 144-145) argues that being on the ‘cutting edge’ of the latest technology signifies directing the future and is highly valued in Australian society. Similarly, I argue here that this representation signals the power *to* control — giving status to the person possessing this power to use and control the use of certain technologies. In the following quotation Veronica draws attention to this discursive construction, whilst suggesting another significant reason behind the implementation of specific technology at MU. Both can be identified with the ‘student as client’ discourse (Morgan & McWilliam, 1995) and demonstrate the way that Veronica believes the university is positioning itself in the competitive tertiary education market:

Part of that discourse I believe refers to get it on the Web because we want to be at the cutting edge of education delivery. We want to be perceived as a university that’s got our stuff on the Web. But another part of that discourse refers to get it on the Web so we can get those full fee paying students to enrol at our university. (Veronica)

Veronica raises the controversial issue that, although MU is promoting on-line courses as innovative, the actual motivation, it could be argued, is the external funding generated. What is actually valued is the generation of private sector funding from international and full fee paying students through the draw-card of so-called innovative teaching methods. Innovative, according to Veronica, means using the Web to attract a particular kind of student, namely the international market. There are two implications of Veronica’s suggestion that I will briefly explore.

Firstly, coinciding with the implementation of new technologies has been the establishment, during 1994-98, of capital city campuses of MU. Secondly, these campuses have proved attractive to the international student market; the number of international fee paying students at MU's Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane international campuses rose from 1,757 in 1999 to 2,562 in 2000 — a growth rate of 46% (Milton University, 2000b, p. 34). While these two points are not necessarily linked, what it means is that both geography and technology (along with competitive pricing of degrees) are draw-cards. In this environment the 'good academic' is someone generating external funding through a variety of means, one such means being marketing designer courses to international (and domestic full fee paying) students.

Whilst there has been some controversy inside MU over the vigorous pursuit of international student business (Ashenden & Milligan, 2001, p. 77), MU has positioned itself as being what it perceives as competitive and customer focused in the higher education marketplace. Smith and Sachs (1995, p. 235) suggest that the development of new technologies has enabled the market to expand to a wider circle of customers. In tertiary education, this expansion includes international full fee paying students and the students in remote locations or 'distanced' from the university campuses. In this scenario, then, as Carnoy (1998, p. 23) and Terry Evans (1997) assert, globalization processes, specifically technology use, have enabled the collapse of time and space and facilitated the interchange of knowledge through this collapse, allowing those students located remotely access to the university, thus appearing to address an equity issue.

What this means for both students and academics is a requirement to use the latest technology (Ling & Ling, 1998). As Veronica explains:

Just the fact that we all have computers and we are expected to use them ....

I guess that's how it [technology use] gets naturalized, because if you don't use [the technology] you are outside the mainstream. (Veronica)

For Veronica, a technological discourse that privileges the information/communication technologies is created through the supply of, and expectation to use, computer technology. Consequently in this kind of discourse academics must be seen to use computers. As Veronica stresses in this quotation, *not to use* computers places the academic on the margins of mainstream academia at MU. Therefore, not to use computers in this discursive space is to send a strong message that conveys, 'I am not a good academic'.

These same staff members subscribe to the MU—staff e-mail list and faculty specific lists, indicating e-mail as an important communication tool within the institutional complex. Ironically, however, recent dictates have suggested that staff need the approval of their Head of School or supervisor to be able to send a 'blanket' or 'broadcast' e-mail to the MU-staff list, implying control over communication among staff. On the other hand *frequent* electronic communication between academics and students is *strongly* encouraged. Introduction to e-mail and the Internet happens during 'O' week with "dial in from home access to MU's on-line databases" (Ashenden & Milligan, 2001, p. 77) offered to students. To encourage technology use further, first year students enrolled in

certain courses are set up with individual e-mail accounts and subscribe themselves to campus specific student mailing lists as part of their tutorial assessment. This particular discourse sees technology use (read as electronic communication) between staff and students as valued practice. In this sub-section the focus has been on teaching where there is a privileging of specific technologies as communication devices between staff members and students. In the next sub-section I turn to what MU regards as institutionally endorsed research.

#### 5.2.2 Researching the rural/regional

In this sub-section I analyze a range of discourses associated with research at MU. At the same time that a technoscape teaching environment is promoted, MU has specific things to say around 'quality' research, or what MU designates quality research, which emphasizes, among other things, success in securing research grant funding, producing research publications and papers and collaboration with industry, business and community (Milton University, 2000b, p. 28). Curiously, despite the technological focus with on-line delivery of teaching and learning, the Research Centre for Open and Distance Learning was disestablished in 2000 (Milton University, 2001d, p. 2). The Statement of Strategic Intent (2001-2005) emphasizes an institutional focus on research by stating that one of the four primary strategic priorities concerns the proactive targeting of 'quality' research to raise the institutional research profile (Milton University, 2001b, p.13). Therefore in this institutional discourse 'good academics' do research. I now turn to the institutional discourses associated with research at MU where researching the 'rural/regional' signifies the niche that MU is advocating.

According to the University Handbook (Milton University, 2001a, pp. 14-15), MU has developed strong research networks with both government and local industry. By way of example the faculty of Arts, Health and Sciences (AHS) has established partnerships with key government agencies such as the Department of Primary Industry (DPI), the Department of the Environment, and the Tropical Beef Centre. The AHS faculty markets itself as having considerable strength in research (Milton University, 2001a, p. 11) — possibly a consequence of the large percentage of university staff being in this ‘mega’ faculty. As a result this faculty is seen as a key research site within MU, a position endorsed by the university through nominating the faculty to host four of the six designated Research Centres established within MU, thus demonstrating the value placed by the university on specific research undertaken in this faculty.

Legitimate research, for this faculty, is that nominated by its partnership agencies, often resulting in the sourcing and securing of postgraduate scholarship funding. The faculty justifies the legitimacy of these arrangements through statements like “these liaisons bring a ‘real world’ focus to the Group’s activities and contribute significantly to the funding of scholarships and equipment” (Milton University, 2001a, p. 10). Not only does this devalue research that lies outside the commercial interest of government agencies, but these liaisons are also being used to justify particular research by stressing the mutual benefit (however problematic) of these partnerships. What is actually valued again is the extra revenue being brought into the university. Here the ‘good academic’ is someone who can secure highly competitive research funding and forge partnerships and networks with the local rural communities.

According to the Annual Report (Milton University, 2000b, p. 28), external funding for research activities in 2000 included competitive grants and private sector funding which totaled \$2,811,557. MU also provided competitive internal research funding targeted at specific researchers — they were early career researchers, established researchers with a demonstrated track record and finally those researchers engaged in specific research concerning sustainable regional development (Milton University, 2000b, p. 28). This funding allocation signifies three groups of legitimate researchers at MU.

Early career researchers are just beginning their research career as recent PhD graduates (or those recently appointed within the university). The second group comprises those with proven track records in both receiving research funding and extensive publication records. The third group is made up of those researchers working in the area of sustainable regional development who have close links to particular industries within the local region. What is valued here is the researcher who has a PhD, who works in specific research areas — namely, rural/regional spaces — and who can generate external funding sources.

Broadly speaking, the current Research Centres demonstrate science and industry connections. With this particular choice of research focus the university is sending a strong message about where MU is positioning itself in the research world. The kinds of partnerships that are being fostered within MU represent connections to traditional ‘masculine’ industries such as the cattle industry, mining, railways and occupations associated with the ‘rural’ (Milton University, 2001a, pp. 10-11), reflecting a



phallographic image of masculine interests (M. Evans, 1997; Currie & Newson, 1998). It can be argued, then, that the 'good academic' in this discourse is someone who has a PhD and a research profile with extensive publications and who also does particular types of research through industry partnerships.

All four women in this study recognize the value placed on research by the institution but I would argue that, as many junior academic women have large teaching loads, research is not always easy to accommodate, as I show later in this chapter. Alice sees institutional discourses at MU as valuing research over teaching. Evidence of this lies in the following comments about teaching scholars at MU:

I mean our core business here is teaching and learning and it isn't valued, certainly it isn't reflected in promotion, that's for sure. If you want to be a teaching scholar don't think that you will get promoted. Promotions in this university are all about research and the biggest thing about research is, have you a PhD? (Alice)

This has serious consequences for women such as Alice, Veronica and Madonna who do not yet have PhDs. It means that their research is often not taken seriously; consequently they are seen as teachers rather than academics, or more specifically as having more interest in teaching than in research. Because promotion is primarily based on research profiles and publication records rather than teaching experience, these women are not 'read' as 'good academics'. While Tamaly has a PhD, publishes regularly and belongs to various national professional bodies in a consultative role, she may not necessarily be

regarded as a 'good academic' because her area of expertise is not one officially endorsed by MU through any of the six designated Research Centres. Significantly her research networks lie outside MU and she has formed partnerships among peers in other universities and professional groups. Tamaly uses technology to maintain these networks.

Tamaly, in keeping with current institutional discourses, contends that the growth areas within universities lie in postgraduate degrees and courses and the way to engage with professionals in the workplace is to design courses relevant to workplace issues. This is in line with current research agendas at MU which is about promoting commercial ventures and interests. In the following sub-section I analyze discourses around the new focus in academic workplaces, that of the entrepreneurial academic.

### 5.2.3 Entrepreneurial flair and business 'cents'

In this sub-section my analysis concerns discourses associated with entrepreneurial activities. Commercial ventures have meant promotion of degrees/courses to suit industry partnerships (Milton University, 2001a, p. 14). Valued here is the partnership between the university and local industry when it secures commercial interests for both partners. In this way MU markets itself as a provider of relevant, flexible training to meet market requirements and contribute to regional development.

I cite two examples here. The first is the new degree for teachers where there is a strong involvement of local 'industry current' teachers as coordinators and supervisors of university students in the field; these same teachers are involved with curriculum

development of the degree program. In return, these teachers, as a form of professional development, are supported in postgraduate courses. Second, the faculty of Engineering and Physical Systems extends partnerships through work experience, where students, as part of their degree, spend time in the field away from the classroom. This has resulted in a 100% employment success with many students being offered positions before completing their final exams (Milton University, 1999, p. 12).

Consequently effective university teaching becomes equated with student satisfaction, where student satisfaction is linked to, or shown as gaining, full time employment, thus endorsing the focus on vocationally orientated courses. In this discourse the kinds of activities valued are those ensuring student satisfaction and industry satisfaction and raising the institution's positive profile. This constitutes a simple syllogism: because students are employed, the teaching is therefore effective and seen as the outcome of effective industry consultation and vocationally orientated courses.

I referred earlier to Tamaly's observation that the traditional image of the university generally, and MU specifically, is changing because of the need to satisfy the market demands for particular graduates. Academia for Tamaly, then, means a site firstly where academics need to be aware of the 'market' and secondly where students and potential employers determine the courses that are wanted. The 'good academic' in this discourse is someone who provides effective training that caters to industry demand, with effectiveness equated with industry ready graduates. This focus is clearly demonstrated in the university's corporate slogan of 'MU — where students come first'. This focus draws

together two key concepts of innovation and flexibility. An example of innovation in this sense is the introduction of a four-term year.

The four-term year was introduced to enable ‘fast-tracking’ of degrees, or as a catch-up device for those students who may need to repeat courses. Veronica considers this may challenge some academics in the way they negotiate their workloads and engage with their content material:

Even in teaching delivery, we’re running a four-term year and that means some subjects are delivered in a brief period and that tests the teacher and the student. So rather than having three hours a week for twelve weeks, it might run for three or four days, nine hours a day or two weekends at various parts of the semester and that really challenges you on how you’re going to deliver the material. It pushes the students to discover new ways of engaging with materials; it also forces the teachers, I believe, to think about new ways of assessment and evaluation. (Veronica)

What this means for Veronica, and the women like her with big teaching loads, is that she needs to be creative while being flexible in response to the demands of student requirements. This expectation, in fact, increases already heavy workloads and adds longer teaching periods, effectively reducing research time. Extra time outside ‘traditional’ teaching periods was once set aside for personal research and course development but now, because of the four-term year, this time is taken up with more teaching. While this gives students ‘flexible’ options, it closes down options for those

academics allocated more teaching (Currie, 1996a; Harris *et al.*, 1998). An entrepreneurial discourse constructs the ‘good academic’ at MU as someone who is endlessly flexible and innovative (innovative in this sense pertains to words such as ‘dynamic’ and ‘changeable’, both key components of the vocabulary associated with market trends) and who is able to ‘read’ and compete within the market. As well the ‘good academic’ is instantly responsive and open to the diversity of both ‘HECS supported’ and full fee paying students, who are the customers now accessing MU.

This ‘good academic’ has to be very conscious of external pressures where needs of the student and the potential employer influence both the type and the content of courses being offered and the use of technology to achieve this. Veronica put this succinctly when she commented: “I don’t see how having stuff on the Web is going to necessarily free people up to do other things and I think that there is an expectation that it will”. Earlier in this discussion Veronica felt that there were two major reasons why MU implemented new technology: one, to be on the cutting edge of teaching delivery; and two, as an attraction to international students, subsequently generating income from their enrolment. She now suggests that there is a third underlying reason and that this has to do with students accessing and teaching themselves from the courses posted on the Web.

In this quotation Veronica strongly believes that there is an underlying assumption that “having stuff on the Web is going to necessarily free people up to do other things”, where teaching loads will be figuratively reduced, thereby enabling the academic to focus on other priority areas such as research and other entrepreneurial work (Harris *et al.*, 1998).

In other words, once the course is on the Web the academic is no longer needed to deliver the course — the technology will do this.

In this section I have presented an analysis of various discourses that work towards constructing the ‘good academic’ at MU. In these formal institutional discourses the ‘good academic’ provides ‘good teaching’ by performing within the ‘technoscape’ culture, ‘good research’ by performing in the regional niche, and ‘good community service’ by marketing courses, attracting new clients and engaging with students locally and globally. On the surface for a woman to be ‘read’ as a ‘good academic’, therefore, one would expect that all she need do is to perform the above requirements but I argue that this ‘good academic’ actually occupies a male body. In the following section I turn to the informal discourses circulating at MU that construct certain expectations associated with academic women that see the ‘academic’ role and its ‘good’ performance as gendered.

### **5.3 Informal discourses — practices expected of the women**

My intention in this section is to demonstrate that informal discourses attach specific messages to different academic ‘bodies’ that, in turn, govern what performances are valued at MU. This allows me then to argue two significant points for this thesis: one, that the ‘good academic’ as conceptualized at MU is more likely to fit a male body; and two, that the academic role is gendered. To present this analysis I have divided this section into four sub-sections. In the first sub-section I look at the changing nature of the academic workplace. In the second sub-section I introduce the metaphor of ‘phallogentric

smog' that enhances discourses of embodiment. The third sub-section analyzes the ways in which academic women are positioned as being different from academic men while the fourth sub-section analyses women as complementary to men. This analysis allows me then to argue that academic women are valued only when they perform specific roles linked to discourses of embodiment.

#### 5.3.1 The changing nature of the contemporary academic workplace

In this sub-section I explore the changing nature of the academic workplace at MU, where dominant discourses construct a symbolic figuration of the 'good academic'. However, I contend that this symbolic figuration represents a male body because of three significant issues that feminist research has drawn attention to. Firstly, women have not had the same opportunities as men because of previous barriers to equitable participation; and secondly, a neutral subject positioning within the workplace is coded for male — where the universal (male) subject subsumes the feminine (Acker, 1991; Gatens, 1992; Luke & Gore, 1992). This brings me to the third issue — the concept of embodiment reminds us that performance is never neutral but is always embodied and situated (Wearing, 1996). These arguments have already been substantiated in detail outside this thesis and I acknowledge that more detailed attention can be found in the literature used to inform this thesis (Chapter Two). Because of the limited scope/space of this doctoral thesis I have taken these issues as already well established.

Complicating the above three significant issues are two further important factors. The first factor is the changing nature of universities where non-academic employees/lecturers

are being brought in to address the growing vocational focus of many university courses. Many of these people, specifically those associated with such fields as nursing, teaching and business, who have extensive practical experience and knowledge, do not have doctorates or research backgrounds. The second factor pertains to the changing profile of women's participation in the public sphere or what has often been referred to as the feminization of the workforce. This has resulted in legislative attempts to resist gender discrimination through equity related policies. However, as demonstrated by my analysis in the previous chapter, the equal opportunity and recruitment policies support Gaten's (1992, p. 124) notion of sexual neutrality of the workplace, while the maternity leave and gender representation policies point to the sexualized nature of the workplace.

In a sexually neutral workplace logic would have it that all an academic woman need do to be seen as a 'good academic' is to perform as a 'techno' teacher and a regional researcher, be innovative and address vocational demand, but it is not as simple as that. As Rowan (2000, p. 166) describes, experience is always embodied; that is, the experiences a woman has in a workplace can and must be read as tied to her body. In the previous chapter I signalled that discourses around AA construct women as mothers and therefore as different from men, while a dominant EO discourse constructs the workplace as sexually neutral. Therefore I argue that discourses around the 'good academic' construct a symbolic body that is more likely to fit a male body than a female body.

At MU male academics hold senior and tenured positions and most male academics have PhDs and can therefore focus their research on current issues within the regional research



niche. These senior academics are in a position to combine research and vocational links with industry partnerships. Many of these same academics are able to buy out their teaching with research grants (Harris *et al.*, 1998). The university endorsed research partnerships largely revolve around the ‘masculine’ and traditionally ‘rural’ industries where many of the senior academics (Levels C and D) have had longstanding associations owing to their length of service at MU. According to the EOWA Report (Milton University, 2002a), there are more men than women employed as academics; with 73.1% of the senior academics being male and 64% of these men in management roles. This, then, shows the phallogentric nature of the ‘good academic’ (Grosz, 1986) and the patriarchal structure of the university.

Contemporary employment practices at MU create the academic workplace as a site of multiple bodies; however within this site the ‘good academic’ is constructed as a specific body. This profile is more likely to be associated with a male body. This does not necessarily mean that male academics are ‘good academics’; instead it means that men are more likely to fit this ‘symbolic’ as opposed to ‘real’ body (Braidotti, 1994). Taken together these points signal a significant arena where contesting discourses (both formal and informal) are played out that have consequences for the ways in which academic women experience their workplace. My metaphor — phallogentric smog — is useful here.

### 5.3.2 Phallogentric smog

I use the term ‘phallogentric smog’ as a metaphor to signify the obstacles that many women come up against in the public sphere — more specifically in phallogentric institutions such as the university, the government, the media and the church, for example. I use ‘smog’ rather than ‘fog’ because of the dynamic, shifting, fluid nature of this signifier that is always lingering, albeit in different strengths, thicknesses and locations over time. Sometimes it is visible; at other times it is invisible; it is also produced and is not natural.

I contend that ‘phallogentric smog’ is more appropriate than ‘glass ceiling’ to describe the nature of the obstacles experienced by women in the current era. This is because some women emerge from this smog and attain powerful positions and leadership roles while, for other women, the smog thickens around them and constrains their efforts. The notion of the glass ceiling implies that women see the top but can never get there. The phallogentric smog has the ability to change depending on what is at stake — the more powerful or the more influential the role, then the more smog for women to navigate through, if they can get through at all. I argue that this phallogentric smog concerns a ‘hidden’ text attached to women’s bodies.

This hidden text signifies the sexualized nature of the workplace. While academic women have been positioned the same as men by legislative discourses such as equity policies, because of cultural messages attached to women’s bodies, a traditional (and often less formal) discourse continues to circulate within MU that positions academic women as

different from, or complementary to, academic men. Traditional discourses attach meanings that construct women's bodies as sites of nurturing, caring and emotional labour rather than sites of academic labour. Connell puts this in another way:

For instance, the modern liberal state defines men and women as citizens, that is, as alike. But the dominant sexual code defines men and women as opposites. Meanwhile customary ideas about the division of labour in family life define women as housewives and carers of children. Accordingly women entering the public domain – trying to exercise their rights as citizens – have an uphill battle to have their authority recognized. (2002, p. 56)

It is important to make visible this embodiment because it has material consequences played out in the workplace. I argue that discourses of embodiment construct and position the bodies of academic women at MU — as either different from or complementary to men — within what I consider still to be a phallocentric workplace. According to Gatens (1992, p. 131), socially appropriate bodies are produced by the micro-political operations of power. These operations of power work through the dominant discourse where they produce the kinds of academic bodies appropriate to signify a particular institution.

When coupled with specific university agendas that mirror the corporate world and economic rationalist approaches, this makes for uneasy times when only certain kinds of bodies have value in this workplace or when only certain performances by particular bodies are valued. The previous two sub-sections provide the basis to argue the presence of a power dimension or the 'micro-politics' surrounding embodiment circulating within

MU. I argue in the following sub-sections that these micro-political operations of power work through informal discourses, which I contend are the dominant discourses circulating within the MU workplace. These informal discourses can also be viewed as what Grosz (1986) describes as sexist and patriarchal discourses. In the following sub-section I analyze how women are seen as different from men and how this can be seen as following a sexist discourse.

### 5.3.3 Being different from — a sexist discourse

In this sub-section I analyze the texts of the women in order to determine the ways in which they see themselves and are positioned by, and discursively constructed through, informal workplace discourses. By showing that women are positioned differently from men I can then argue that dominant discourses deal with difference in a particular way in this workplace — women are positioned as secondary to men.

One way in which women are often positioned as different from men is in the kinds of employment pathways they are placed on. From the moment of appointment they are routinely positioned in a different relationship to the university from that of their male colleagues. This perception is clearly illustrated by Veronica:

I came in on a very low level and I worked for three years and then was reliably informed that I was the lowest paid academic in the faculty .... I [now] know that when one of my colleagues, who works in a similar area, was offered a position here, he said, “I’ll only come if you give me blah, blah, blah”, and he negotiated quite a good set of conditions for himself. (Veronica)

From this it could be said that men are offered different conditions to begin with and know the 'rules of the game' better. This also reflects how dominant discourses associated with the workplace demonstrate the routine acceptance (although it may never be stated in public) that men are bargainers because of their perceived 'natural' skills or abilities, while women are often the grateful recipients of masculine, patriarchal workplace benevolence. Women have not usually been in a position to negotiate employment terms and conditions, reproducing an expectation that women should be grateful for being allowed to participate in the male public sphere.

Therefore this has resulted in women being more likely to be employed in lowly paid positions, in low status ranks and on short term contracts, offering less security than full time permanent positions. This is certainly the way Madonna reads her appointment at MU:

I'm only on a short term contract and I am led to believe that this is a fairly usual situation for women in universities. A lot of them are on short term contracts with the assumption being, I presume, that that's okay because they have a husband to care [provide] for them. There's no security for me to stay longer .... Certainly within our team, there are seven of us and only one has permanent tenure. (Madonna)

There are three points that I will draw attention to here. The first is that, while Madonna's comments highlight the changing nature of the workplace with more part time, casual and contract workers, it also reinforces the notion of women workers as a "reserve army" (Beechey, 1987) who supplement the family income and smooth out seasonal work. This

can be seen in the comment “because they have a husband to care [provide] for them”. The second point is Madonna’s awareness of how women are being positioned differently from men when she states that women being employed on short term contracts “is a fairly usual situation for women in universities”, thus identifying how she sees a gendered positioning of women in universities generally.

The last point is that for Madonna a short term contract provides no security and within her team only one academic woman has a permanent position. Madonna specifies that “Certainly within our team, there are seven of us and only one has permanent tenure”, signalling that contracts are more prevalent than tenured positions for women within her faculty. Madonna was originally invited to provide guest lectures and was later employed as a tutor for that subject area. She has a Master’s degree but this stage of her career within MU she “spend[s] most of my time trying to get the teaching bit under control”, so upgrading of her qualifications or embarking on research within her faculty is curtailed by the pressures of large teaching loads.

Within the hierarchy of the university, teaching of first year students is often allocated to junior lecturers and tutors, employed in lower ranks that carry lower status and lower pay. At the same time there is an expectation that these junior lecturers (who are often women) will perform other tasks, such as research and publishing, to be seen as a ‘good academic’. This is a point made by Madonna:

Yes, you will be teaching but you will also be seen to be researching and producing publications from that research. There is also an obligation to work

with the community and I think that I do that okay. I haven't produced any wonderful [research] cases since I have been here because I spend most of my time trying to get the teaching bit under control, but clearly the expectation is that you will do research. I mean the Dean says that quite explicitly.

(Madonna)

Clearly demonstrated here is Madonna's awareness of the pressures and expectations associated with the 'good academic' discourse where research and publications are valued. While Madonna is aware of this discourse, she is a contract employee who has been given a heavy teaching load, resulting in her being unable to put aside time to conduct research. Consequently, Madonna may be (and feels that she probably is) perceived by her Dean as having more of an interest in teaching than in research.

Madonna states that her Dean expects his staff to focus on teaching, community partnerships and research, with an insistence on "be[ing] seen to be researching and producing publications from that research". This insistence testifies to the importance or value placed by the Dean on staff who focus on research activities. Madonna feels, however, that her energies are going into getting her teaching commitments organized and establishing her relationships within the local community, and has yet to come to terms with the research aspect of her role.

Here Madonna is positioning herself at odds with the Dean's expectations. She finds her teaching load is taking up most of her time, which is often the case with junior lecturers.

Significantly, Madonna has a contract, rather than being a permanent staff member; therefore it could be argued that the Dean in this faculty values permanent academic staff who focus on research and publication while leaving teaching to contract staff.

This sets up the perception that if women ‘don’t make the grade’ —that is, operate on the ‘good academic’ model — then it is a personal fault, rather than a systemic fault. This moves the ‘problem’ from the ‘public’ to the ‘personal’. I would argue here that this has resulted from the way in which discourses of EO and AA are being interpreted at MU (see Chapter Four).

Alice definitely feels pressure on her both to do the teaching allocated to her and to complete her PhD. Many women, positioned within lower ranks with large teaching loads, find that time for research and other academic activities can become limited, as Alice explains:

I mean it’s [research and PhD writing] extremely difficult to juggle. I harp on about Joe but he’s been here for four years now and has had one subject each semester to teach to enable him to finish his PhD .... Now I’ve got four subjects going this semester ... and like finish my PhD .... I can’t do it.  
(Alice)

Alice is presenting a clear example of how she perceives that she is being positioned differently from her male colleague. Implicit in this statement is discrimination being played out through bodies. This supports what Rowan (2000, p. 153) points out — that,



even when women and men are employed with identical professional qualifications and thus have technically the same kinds of employment or career opportunities, there are still significant differences between the ways that women and men experience the workplace.

Favouritism or patronage has apparently been shown to Alice's male colleague by virtue of having a male body where he seemingly assumes his 'natural' right as part of the 'old boy' network and patriarchal structure. Alice states that she believes Joe's workload has been reduced in order for him to concentrate on finishing his PhD while the same consideration has not been shown to her. This example sends some strong messages — only certain bodies can be seen as legitimate academics; women doing PhDs are not taken seriously; women's research is not proper research; and women are more suited to teaching than to research, as seen by the comments made by both Madonna and Alice. This kind of positioning has material consequences for academic women when it comes to gaining tenure or promotion and could be construed as a mechanism of exclusion for some women. Significantly this exclusion does not extend to all women; from this I argue that those women who are 'read' as unruly and not conforming to expected norms are more likely to be excluded.

Promotion and the gaining of tenure are being linked with having a PhD, such that it is now almost becoming synonymous with many academic appointments. Tamaly draws attention to this point:

People are now looking for a PhD at Level B ... yeah, Level €3 onwards.

Traditionally this may not have been the case although it varies between the

disciplines, because you find, for example in the Business Faculty, people are taken into academia from being in a successful business career in some form or another .... They just don't have the same level of PhD in that area and nursing has been the same sort of problem. There just haven't been the sorts of PhD programs available for nurses. So you see differences, whereas if you look in the traditional Sciences they're always had PhDs. (Tamaly)

There are two significant points that I consider here. The first point concerns the changing nature of the academic workplace and women's participation in that workplace signalled earlier. Because of the vocational nature of many courses within MU, there has been a movement of non-academic staff into this workplace where this has been advocated as offering industry current experience embedded within academically framed courses. The second point refers to the way in which recruitment selection procedures, couched in an EO discourse, have been co-opted to mean 'sameness' rather than 'equivalence'. What is significant is the use of 'sameness' as eligibility for academic positions. Adding to this is the increasing practice of contracting short term, industry current professionals who may not wish to pursue an academic career, but who are using these contracts to gain alternative experience.

Significantly, this use of 'sameness' does not readily apply to a male body. My argument can be seen with Alice, as she continues her story of the consequences of being positioned as 'different from' her male colleague:

I'm on tenurable track at the moment, which means basically that I'm on probation to be a good girl for three years and then if there's a position available then you go onto tenure .... But on that, those staff members I was talking about earlier, the young one has managed to get tenure without having to go through a tenurable track, without having any performance appraisals done. I mean it's good for him, but Karen and I had to go through major battles even getting onto tenurable tracks. And he just walks in and they handed him his tenure without having to go through all this process and the same thing happened to two senior lecturers over at [another] school. Tenured straight up, extraordinary. (Alice)

What is significant here is that this isn't extraordinary — it happens all the time but it appears in this instance to be foreign to Alice. Alice could also be reading this practice as extraordinary because of the following three reasons: firstly that no-one actually voices opposition to this kind of practice; secondly there is no accountability in such blatant practices despite policies that advocate selection on 'merit'; or thirdly that equity related policies as argued earlier (see Chapter Four) highlight a discourse of 'sameness' accorded to academics when clearly this is not happening here. Alice believes that practices within her faculty reveal the way in which men are positioned and consequently treated differently from the two women.

Alice indicates that if she behaves herself — meaning that she performs in the way that her senior managers expect — then and only then “if there is a position available then

you go onto tenure”. From this statement it appears that Alice’s status as a tenured academic is dependent on two issues. Firstly, her status relies on a position becoming available within the faculty, which in turn is determined by senior management, acting on recommendations of the Academic Staffing Committee, whose members, correspondingly, act on the advice of faculty senior management. Secondly, her status depends on her performance as a compliant “good girl” — determined by the same people and process. Rather than being given an automatic ‘continuing’ or permanent appointment as was her male colleague, Alice has been placed on a ‘tenurable track’, and the statement “Karen and I had to go through major battles even getting onto tenurable tracks” indicates this feat was difficult enough in itself to achieve.

From this example it could be argued that ‘tenurable track’ in this instance serves as a controlling mechanism to curb the activities, practices and voices of wayward academic women. It is a way of silencing and marginalizing women while at the same time it dangles the possibility of being valued only if these women ‘fit’ the norms and expectations of the faculty. This is expressed in Alice’s understanding of tenurable track as “basically ... I’m on probation to be a good girl for three years”, where she is now conscious of how her actions are likely to be interpreted at any time during these three years, at the end of which there is still no guarantee that there will be a “position available”. As Burton (1997, p. 30) suggests, there are pressures to conform to particular faculty environments and the overall university culture, particularly so if the academic woman is on a short term contract.

Whilst Alice's male colleague does not appear to have followed a similar pathway of 'tenurable track' and 'performance appraisals', he may indeed have followed a form of conformity associated with the norms and expectations for male academics within his school/faculty. I argue that this example indicates Alice's feeling of a gendered nature associated with the 'tenurable track' process within her school where difference/s is/are clearly based on bodily difference. Alice's experience testifies to the notion that certain tacit prerequisites — such as being male — help to smooth the way for a tenured position and career progression in the academic workplace. In other words, Alice believes that having a penis makes it easier to gain tenure in her particular school.

It could be argued here that these practices indicate an underlying sexist discourse that signifies a powerful informal discourse that does not appear to be challenged by formal discourses explicitly set out in MU's equity related policies. I take this notion further in the following sub-section where I examine another informal discourse/expectation where academic women are expected to care, signaling what Grosz (1986) describes as a patriarchal discourse.

#### 5.3.4 'Having to care' — complementary to the 'male'

In this sub-section I continue the theme of phallocentric positioning of academic women. From the analysis done in the previous chapter, formal equity responses position women as either the same as men or different from men (Grosz, 1986). The discourses of sexuality (specifically that of heterosexuality) constructs 'good women' as nurturing, caring, emotional beings, who are attracted to, and are attractive for, men; they have

responsibility for the domestic side of life, regardless of whether they are full time/part time in the public sphere.

To that end, then, in the Western heterosexual discourse, 'good women' complement the activities of 'good men' in the public sphere, by taking care of business at home. In the academic workplace this discourse positions 'good women' as complementary to male academics in a 'caring' role where 'good women' take care of students' pastoral needs. This positioning, along with its consequences, can be identified in the following narratives where the women on this study share their everyday experiences of having to care. Veronica believes there is a constant 'caring' message attached to the bodies of women:

You are very conscious of being a woman and you are also very conscious of not wanting to be a stereotypical woman who cares for people, but you don't want to be the bastard who doesn't care. So, I mean, I think women who are ... in public places are constantly walking that fine line and I think that for many women it's almost impossible and they go over the edge one way or the other. (Veronica)

Veronica finds this negotiation of the 'caring woman' impossible to avoid and one that women in the public sphere continually face. It is not that she objects to being constructed as caring; rather she feels women are constantly judged on how well they fit the 'good woman' stereotype where the notion of 'caring' is omnipresent. This same scrutiny is not readily applied to men in either the public sphere or even the private

sphere. According to Veronica, if women within the university do not exhibit caring and nurturing towards students then they are not ‘real’ women. This same action is not required of men at MU; neither are men judged on their ‘caring’ performance. This signals a gendered aspect to the academic role.

Indicated here is Veronica’s awareness of a patriarchal discourse that constructs women in a binary relationship as either caring and compassionate or as uncaring and ‘bastardly’. She explicitly describes her difficulty associated with being perceived as *either one or the other*; as the ‘good woman’ is constructed as the nurturer, by association, in order to be seen as a good ‘female’ teacher, there is an extra layer of nurturing required. Veronica contends that this extra layer is not a prerequisite for a ‘good male academic’ at MU.

This performance of caring, involving both staff and students, is both on an institutional level, where teaching areas must be cared for, and on a personal level, where the pastoral care of students is intimately connected to the bodies of women academics. While both levels are professional, the action of caring is associated with the ‘personal’, constructing caring as emotional labour (Jarzabkowski, 2001) rather than as academic labour. In this section I draw on two specific happenings to illustrate this ‘having to care’ by academic women at MU. Veronica and Alice provide graphic illustrations of coming up against the phallogentric smog and its consequences, when the bodies of academic women are constructed as sites of emotional labour (Jarzabkowski, 2001).

The first illustration of care concerns Veronica and her male colleagues. For Veronica, discourses of embodiment strongly influence how she performs as an academic and how she sees her own position within her faculty. This narrative provides a striking example of how personal responsibility has been subtly transferred by her male colleague from himself to Veronica while at the same time this personal responsibility has changed to 'caring' where Veronica takes up the care and protection of her own teaching network and colleagues within that network:

I work with two other people .... I have to negotiate my position with two males and then negotiate my position both as a member of that group and as an individual in the larger faculty at MU .... One of my male colleagues had a number of situations that developed because of the e-mails that he sends .... Now he will often read them to me [before he sends them] .... I don't want to see myself as having to monitor anyone's e-mail but the difficulties that have developed have impinged on me as well because I'm part of that network.

(Veronica)

In this instance Veronica has to negotiate her own embodied location as part of two groups within her faculty. She sees herself as a woman, with this sexual difference enhanced by the fact that she has assumed the role of carer, but Veronica also sees herself as an individual academic within the faculty. The actions of her immediate group impact on how both her group and she are perceived by the rest of the faculty.



As Smith (1987, p. 219) explains, the reputation of an academic woman is intimately connected to how she is seen in her own academic environment as well as in external settings. At the same time, her individual standing in her professional area contributes to the overall standing of the institution, highlighting a mutual interlocking relationship (Smith, 1987, p. 219). In the relationship between Veronica and her immediate colleagues, I argue the transference of care from the personal to the institutional level is evident. Veronica can be seen as a mother protecting her baby — that is, her teaching network and research area. She is taking on the responsibility of monitoring her male colleague's behaviour in order to negotiate the place of her and his network within her faculty.

It has become part of Veronica's role as an academic to care for and nurture her network of colleagues. She has been assigned the role of caring to make sure that her area does not get cut back in uncertain times of economic pressures at both the faculty and university levels. There are connections here to how the actions of others may put this network in jeopardy through misconstrued e-mail messages. The embodied negotiation that Veronica acts out can be clearly identified in the goals that she is currently pursuing: "I guess my goal is, at the moment, a pragmatic one — to protect my work area and hopefully maintain a vigorous identity for that area".

This statement indicates some insecurity associated with the academic workplace where economic decisions form the bottom line. Indeed, the indirect effect is one of maintaining conformity and expected normative behaviour, as displayed by Veronica. In this narrative

Veronica takes on the role of ‘good woman’ whilst at the same time her male colleague has assigned this role to Veronica, evident in the action of having to read his e-mails prior to his sending them. This action in effect absolves him of any blame if any decisions about this particular network are negative. These subtle shifts enable Veronica’s male colleague to continue his habits and behaviour while Veronica is required to monitor and clean up in the wake of any unruly behaviour.

Nurturing and caring are not confined to colleagues; it also includes students. A second example of caring can be seen in the following statement of Alice concerning the role of counsellor, nurturer or surrogate mother, where she considers the ways in which she is called on to conduct student consultation:

They [the students] talk to you more, they come and consult with you where they wouldn’t consult with the fellas and ... yeah, they become quite personal with you and quite different. The guys [male lecturers] seem to go in and do their class and come out and sometimes I feel they have a blatant disregard for students. Whereas I think we almost take on a nurturing role with some of the students. And can spend inordinate amounts of time with some of them when I know my male colleagues have said, “Our 20 minutes is up — go”.

(Alice)

Alice sees herself as having to take on a nurturing role with students. Here she sees herself as a counsellor as well as a teacher, while her male colleagues appear to view their teaching responsibilities as a small function of their overall expectations associated with being an academic.

There are two points I wish to highlight here. Firstly, Alice has taken on this role because of two reasons. One reason is that she feels that some of the students will benefit from the type of learning environment that she is attempting to provide. The other reason is that she feels that she has to take on this role because her male colleagues ignore this role. Secondly, she has also been assigned this role by the actions of others — firstly by the students and secondly by her male colleagues. Alice believes that her male colleagues do not see counselling with the student as part of their role, and that her male colleagues are quite aware of this role but have seen it as an extension of women's 'natural' abilities.

For her male colleagues, consultation with students is limited to a set time for specific questions. Sexed scripts (Elsdon, 1999) played out within the university have represented the role of teacher either as neutral and unemotional (associated with the masculine) or as caring and nurturing (associated with the feminine) in this context. An oppositional reading is that, by offloading student consultation to Alice, they have more free time to pursue research activities. This reading indicates a power relationship between gendered patterns of student consultation. Either way, what this means for Alice is that more time is taken away from research and finishing her PhD. By taking on this role, Alice can again be perceived as more suited to teaching and student contact than to research.

In this role the academic woman is being constructed as the 'good woman' who complements the male academic, constituting evidence of a patriarchal discourse. In other words, gender segregation sets up male academics as 'naturally' suited to such

activities as research, while women academics are ‘naturally’ suited to support roles. As a consequence Alice finds herself with extra ‘caring’ duties:

I have been told students apparently are having or feeling a great sense of not, more a lack of belonging in the school, so now I send each student in our school, and there’s over 300, individualized birthday cards. (Alice)

Implicit here is an expectation by her male colleagues that Alice will attend to the nurturing requirement expressed by her male colleagues. As Burton (1997, p. 30) suggests, there are pressures to conform to particular faculty environments and the overall university culture. This is particularly so if the academic woman is on a short term contract or, in Alice’s case, on tenurable track. This compulsory caring has consequences with the allocation of various extra duties within some faculties: caring becomes part of the unseen and extra work that Alice is performing in her role as an academic woman. As Alice points out, she feels the normative expectation is that women will look after the needs of students. Caring or nurturing behaviour is perceived as an extension of women’s work or the extension of women’s ‘natural’ attributes, in a context where the discourse of the ‘good woman’ circulates.

In this discourse there are expectations of women that are not required of their male colleagues. Women’s bodies are seen as a site of maternal care — while this is valued in women, it is certainly not valued in male bodies. It is possible to identify here the ways in which women academics are being positioned as complementary to male academics in

the construction of heterosexuality, femininity and masculinity. These constructions are played out through the practices of real bodies, as illustrated by Alice's story.

This illustrates the phallogentric nature of MU where academic women are being positioned as both different from, and complementary to, male academics. As a result, while Alice continues in her role as the nurturer or student counsellor, this reinforces a gendered divide where men are associated with research while women prefer teaching. From this, it is easy to see how a slippage can occur whereby it becomes a belief that women academics are more interested in teaching and student contact than in doing research.

I continue with Alice's stories because of consequences in the broader university setting when it came to her promotion. I do this in order to draw attention to a specific event where contesting discourses highlight gendered practices — the meeting of equity policies and gendered bodies. The interpretation of AA has been narrowly constructed as being associated with childcare issues, thus sexualizing women's bodies. Simultaneously a dominant EO discourse ensures 'sameness' for both men and women, thus neutralizing difference. As part of this 'sameness' all permanent staff can access promotion workshops.

At MU regular 'promotion training' workshops are provided for staff who are considering applying for promotions. These programs are in place to guide staff because, as Tamaly points out:

From research done, traditionally men always overstate their capacities and traditionally women always understate their capacities and I think that that's probably one of the biggest factors that have gone against women actually being promoted. They are far more honest in that sense and they understate their ability and capacity. It's just part of the cultural thing that men just seem to have this capacity to go ego tripping much more than women do, on the whole. So the training sessions are for assisting people and guiding them into the sorts of things being looked for. (Tamaly)

This shows that MU is attempting to redress certain perceived barriers associated with career progression. These training sessions highlight the sort of evidence that can be seen as working towards merit and experience. Alice took advantage of these workshops when she was considering applying for promotion. Alice is in the process of her PhD research and she holds a full time academic position at a Level B rank. Recently she applied for promotion and this was Alice's experience:

I was applying for promotion from Level B to Level C, that is senior lecturer.

The first question was PhD or equivalent and I don't have a PhD so I went down the equivalent line. But as it progressed the goalposts changed every step of the way .... Basically my letter says, you don't have a PhD. So the whole five criteria were a load of crock and what they should have said in the first place, don't bother applying if you don't have a PhD because that is the only criteria they look at. (Alice)

Alice felt she met the criterion along the 'equivalent' pathway as she has yet to submit her PhD. Alice was sure that she had a strong chance of success because of the five criteria stipulated she needed to satisfy only three. She had met four of the five criteria and was confident that her interpretation of 'equivalent' had been suitable. Most universities do not grant a Senior Lecturer position without a PhD but Alice believes that MU pretends that it does. Clearly this is a loophole that can be used to great effect within the phallogentric smog filled environment. Now at the end of this process she has become unsure of what the term 'equivalent' means because as her application "progressed the goalposts changed every step of the way", indicating that there was no standard or set process that appeared to be followed in her case.

The response to her application has plainly disillusioned Alice, this being clearly stated in her comment: "... don't bother applying if you don't have a PhD". Although there was obviously a pathway to explore an alternative equivalent of merit comparable to the PhD qualification, this 'equal opportunity' was not taken in Alice's case. As McCormack and Pamphilon (1998, p. 695) state, postgraduate research degrees have become a necessity, not a luxury, for most women academics. It is possible to identify here how the mechanism of merit is being used as a barrier to career progression for some women.

When talking with Alice about her application, she hinted at what she considered was a misogynist undertone in the way that her application was considered because of how "the goalposts changed every step of the way". Alice felt that the Academic Staffing committee became focused on her lack of a PhD as the only impediment available to

them to deny Alice's promotion. As far as Alice is concerned, after going through this entire process, the only criterion that the Academic Staffing committee was interested in (or became interested in) was the one that she did not meet — having a PhD. Alice had been optimistic about getting her promotion because certain key people within her Faculty had supported her application:

The Dean at first didn't support it because he thought that I only had 19 publications; however when it was pointed out that there were in fact 29 publications he supported it. He also, I don't think, could not support it on the grounds of not having a PhD because he doesn't have a PhD and he has only been recently appointed to the position of Dean. (Alice)

Alice raises an interesting situation in this statement when she refers to the Dean as not being in a position to reject her application. She believed that the Dean could not reject her application on the grounds of not having a PhD "because he doesn't have a PhD and he has only recently been appointed to the position of Dean", illustrating that having a PhD is not mandatory for a Dean's appointment — a position ranked superior to that of a senior lecturer. Although Alice's Dean does not have a PhD, "he" obviously met the 'equivalent' criteria/interpretation.

From what Alice is saying it seems that the Dean had to support her application despite the fact that he originally felt she did not meet the criteria. Illustrated here is a difference in how Alice and the Dean have been considered in their respective promotion, emphasizing male bodies as more valued than female bodies and correspondingly



rewarded. In this context the kinds of bodies that are valued are those male bodies that perform as the ‘good academic’. In the next section I draw together the points made so far to see what this means for the academic women in this research.

#### **5.4 What does this mean for the academic women?**

In this section I highlight specific points made in this chapter that show the non-neutral status of the subject positioning — the ‘good academic’ — and the informal discourses that attach messages to specific bodies.

In the above analysis it is possible to identify the ways in which Tamaly, Veronica, Alice and Madonna engage with various local and global responses. Yeatman (1993, p. 22) predicted (quite correctly) that marketable research that “pulls in big dollars will become the new patriarchal heartland of the university”. Reflected in the ‘good academic’ discourse outlined in the previous analytical section is the shift towards research that is directly tied to business needs, an increasing role of private sector funding in academic appointments (seen particularly in the AHS faculty’s use of scholarships) and a focus on international students that has seen a rapid growth in full fee courses. According to Lafferty and Fleming (2000, p. 259), this is a form of informal privatization following economic rationalist policies resulting in funding cuts to Australian universities.

In the corporate university research and teaching are geared to market terms such as ‘competitive grants’, ‘teaching packages’ and ‘corporate care’. Largely owing to its College of Advanced Education history and its previous focus on distance education, M11

is in a strong position to embrace the technological focus of globalization discourses as a key educational exporter of tertiary study — in other words, MU is tapping into the global knowledge economy through what it sees as innovation, flexibility and adaptability.

Lafferty and Fleming (2000) suggest that Australia's university system has been re-designated as an export industry where universities are charged with achieving greater competitiveness through enhancing national skills and the education base of Australia. As a result of entrepreneurial endeavours MU has won a prestigious export award in the Education category of the state Premier's Export Award for two consecutive years. This means that, for those women with large teaching loads, substantial work is required to maintain this export business that includes catering to student demands and demonstrating flexibility and adaptability; Alice, Madonna and Veronica all teach undergraduate students, both domestic HECS funded and full fee paying international students; Tamaly, on the other hand, deals mainly with postgraduate students.

There is a strong emphasis on particular kinds of research at MU, establishing 'legitimate' researchers/academics. Legitimate research is seen as quantitative, which is requested by industry partners and done by academics with PhDs. This locates Alice, Veronica and Madonna on the margins of the research discourses circulating within MU. These women are part of a group of academic women who are often invisible in the university sector — namely those women who are part time post-graduate research students who hold full time academic positions (McCormack & Pamphilon, 1998, p.

695). From the above analysis it is possible to draw attention to the gendered research experiences of the women academics in this study. While the women are being encouraged to finish their PhD research, barriers such as teaching commitments and family responsibilities continue to impact on the ways in which many academic women attempt to succeed in completing postgraduate study.

While traditional constructions of 'Woman' continue, performances by academic women will continue to be read through messages attached to their bodies that allocate 'nurturing' as part of their teaching role but not part of the role of a male academic. If 'good teaching' becomes 'on-line' and falls into a technical domain, student contact for junior lecturers could become more of a counselling and support role, rather than a supposedly integral part of the teaching and learning process. This has the potential to marginalize academic women further if this technical domain retains a 'masculine' culture (see Chapter Six). While a move towards on-line teaching is both supported and seen as inevitable by the four women in this study, their comments serve to highlight the potential 'pitfalls' of an 'on-line only' model, as well as challenging this gendered digital divide in teaching.

Therefore the 'good academic' body constructed through institutional discourses circulating at MU is more likely to be male, with status gained through the acquisition of privileged positions such as the researcher, the good academic, the entrepreneur, the professor and the dean. Ten years ago, Yeatman (1993, p. 19) warned that the neo-liberal agenda of restructuring had the potential to develop social polarization within the

university, mirroring the business/corporate world, and suggested that restructuring would see a consolidation of highly paid academics as the core managers with a more lowly paid periphery; I would contend that this contains a gender dimension because women are more likely to be part of the periphery than the core. It is possible to argue, then, that this reinforces the normalization of male culture that works against the inclusion of 'difference' within the MU academic workplace (Burton, 1997; Currie *et al.*, 2000; Harris *et al.*, 1998). There are some female bodies comfortable in this context where they can perform in a 'masculinist' culture (Wajcman, 1998). Signalled here is a gap between the hope set out by feminists that women could participate 'equally' in the workplace and what is actually happening for these women academics in their workplace of MU. I now look at this gap in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

### **5.5 Signalling the gap between hope and happening**

In this section of the chapter I analyze the gap between hope and happening in the workplace for these women. The hope that academic women would have the same conditions of work as their male colleagues will not eventuate while women are sexualized in the academic workplace. As Burton (1998) points out, more women are being employed as academics than previously, but these women are represented disproportionately in lower level academic positions on part time, sessional and fixed term contracts. What Burton's (1998) report signals is that not much has changed in the patterns of workplace inclusion of academic women generally. More worrisome is a recent MU EWOA Voluntary Report (Milton University, 2002a) from the Equity and Diversity Office of MU that shows a similar pattern.

This signifies that gendered practices at MU have not changed despite an Equity Policy Statement being in place since 1997. The workplace profile continues to reflect both a phallogentric structure, as evidenced by the MU EOWA Report (Milton University, 2002a), and the presence of a phallogentric culture, as evidenced by the responses of Alice, Veronica, Madonna and Tamaly. Although Tamaly can be seen as comfortable in operating in this kind of environment and as having cut through some of the phallogentric smog, what can be identified here is the age-old practice whereby men are unproblematically linked to academia while women are re-positioned in a more tenuous role.

This analysis has unmasked the apparent neutrality associated with the 'good academic' by identifying a 'hidden text' where discourses around the 'good academic' actually refer to a heterosexual male body. Informal discourses have constructed women's bodies in roles as either complementary to or the opposite of men. This suggests the gendered nature of the 'good academic' at MU, where men are valued for their academic skills and women are valued for their nurturing attributes. There are expectations of care and nurturance associated with female bodies that are not expected of male bodies. This reinforces the traditional discourse of patriarchy underlying a so-called sexually neutral workplace. These informal discourses are masked by EO discourses that treat women as being the same as men, and by AA discourses that construct women as mothers and categorize women as the same as one another but different from men.

This signals a gap between hope and happening. Thus it may be seen that MU, despite its responses to equity (implicit and explicit), continues to position academic women in very narrow ways; specifically it continues to position them in phallogentric relationships to men as their opposites, as their complements or as people who are fundamentally the same. This leaves a vast range of issues associated with the production and experience of sex-based disadvantage, sexual difference and embodiment unacknowledged and not addressed. Therefore it can be argued that MU is not readily inclusive of women who are different from the constructed traditional stereotype of the 'caring' woman. To be included at a basic level, then, academic women need to perform as caring, nurturing women.

This means 'difference' is dealt with in a particular way; specifically these four women are positioned on the margins of research, are expected to maintain an export business through constant flexibility and adaptability to market demands and customer preference, and are expected to care. To be included, then, means these women have to perform certain acts — namely, caring or nurturing — that are not required (expected) of the male academics whom they work alongside. Therefore this allows me to argue that difference is not readily included, but instead is conditional on particular performances by gendered bodies. These performances echo traditional gender norms, which in turn segregate what is seen as women's work and men's work in the academic workplace.

## 5.6 Review of the chapter

In this chapter I have interrogated both formal and informal discourses circulating within the academic workplace. This chapter dealt with what is happening in this specific site and highlighted three significant points for this thesis:

- Formal discourses construct an ‘academic’ based on male norms and performance; therefore this ‘academic’ constituted from these discourses is more likely to fit a male body;
- Academic women on the other hand are included only when they perform as ‘good women’ rather than as ‘good academics’, meaning that difference is dealt with in traditional ways;
- This analysis demonstrated the presence of phallogentric smog that signified the highly sexualized nature of the workplace.

Specific cultural messages attached to particular bodies illustrated the strength of traditional discourses that work towards both normalizing and privileging a hegemonic male culture. In this sexualized workplace environment women’s bodies are read as sites of emotional labour (Jarzabkowski, 2001) where there is an expectation of ‘corporate care’ towards students and workplace networks, but, as this is only expected of women academics, this can be seen as sexism. In addressing the second sub-question of this thesis —“How are the dominant institutional discourses at MU dealing with difference?” —I have found that there is a negative inclusion of difference (Rowan, 2001), signalling the continued sexual disadvantage present at this site. In the following chapter I analyze the way these women negotiate this workplace, looking for what feminists had hoped for

through gender reform — signs of transformation. However my analysis points to other things happening here.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PERFORMING IN PUBLIC: 'MULTIPLE MES' NEGOTIATE THE WORKPLACE**

#### **6.0 Overview**

My analysis in Chapter Four focused on the first of two contexts associated with the MU academic workplace: that of equity related policies. My analysis showed the presence of EO and AA rhetoric that constructed academic women as being the same as men (Grosz, 1988). Therefore it is possible to argue that these policies deal with 'difference' on a cosmetic level only, in the manner of "stunt equity" (Rowan, 2001). In Chapter Five my analysis focused on the second context, that of institutional discourses, where I identified MU as a phallogentric site consisting of multiple bodies, but where only a specific body is granted the status of 'good academic'. That body is more likely to fit a male body in a context where men are valued as researchers, while women are valued as nurturers. In this second context because academic women are constructed as either different from, or complementary to, their male colleagues it is tenable to argue that 'difference' is dealt with at the workplace level as negative inclusion (Rowan, 2001).

The intention in this chapter, therefore, is to present an analysis of workplace negotiations that identifies two significant issues: firstly, that, despite some resistance by the women in this study, the phallogentric positioning and marginalization of women in this workplace continues; and secondly, the power of normalizing discourses that correct inappropriate gender norms (Gatens, 1998). From this I am then able to argue that

dominant discourses circulating within MU are more powerful and limiting than is currently fashionable to suggest and, when coupled with the fact that there has been insufficient space for academic women to undo or deconstruct these phallogentric discourses, a transformative process at MU is extremely difficult to map. My analysis in this chapter therefore highlights performances or negotiations by the women that illustrate a gap between resistance as an ideal (hope) and resistance as a workable sustainable project (happening) at the specific site of MU.

My original hope for this chapter was to map multiple and invigorating acts of resistance located across the university, thereby demonstrating both transformation and counternarratives, that is, stories that critique the legitimacy of mainstream and traditional discourses (Rowan *et al.*, 2002). Sadly, this did not happen — this caused considerable angst on my part. Instead of being a counternarrative this thesis has become an interpretive repertoire (see Chapter Three) and, as such, contributes to productive and practical understandings of how four academic women negotiate, on a daily basis, the dissonance between personal and public transformation that signals the presence of phallogentric smog. Because of this smog, I argue that the varying episodes of personal resistance explored in this chapter have not materialized into sustained transformation of the workplace.

Much contemporary feminist literature focuses on resistance rather than marginalization (Braidotti, 1994; Brooks, 1997a, 1997b; Butler, 1990; Haraway, 1995; Hills & Rowan, 2002; Rowan, 1998). While I see this focus as both positive and vital, it also sends an

implicit message that the presence of resistance somehow produces the transformation desired. In this chapter I draw attention to the continued, relentless, subtle marginalization that occurs on a daily basis within MU. I realize and acknowledge that emphasizing marginalization conjures up historical visions of the ‘victim’ but these women are not passive victims. To determine what is happening in this workplace, in this final data analysis chapter, then, I ask the last sub-question of this thesis — what, if any, resistance and transformation by women can be identified?

To answer this question I have divided this chapter into three sections. In the first section I introduce what I identify as the first domain of resistance — micro-social or (personal) subjectivity level — where I map the presence of nomadic consciousness within each of the four women, displaying individual moves towards transformation. In the second section I analyze what I identify as the second domain of resistance — macro-social or (public) workplace level — where my analysis of the women’s negotiations within their workplace uncovers strategies of marginalization rather than acts of resistance.

Part of my on-going angst concerns the mixed messages emerging from the data. The data have ambiguous or ambivalent readings and represent mild acts of either resistance or strategic conformity (a concept that I have developed for this thesis and that I explain later in this chapter). I argue that this is due to the nature of the micro-politics underpinning the academic workplace. In seeking resistance and transformation I became conscious of the coercion of informal discourses. There was something happening that was difficult to grasp. This ‘thing’ is explored in the third and final section of this chapter

where I unpack the gap between personal and public transformation and contest the alleged transformative abilities of women to change attitudes prevalent in the public sphere. My analysis highlights the gap between the practice and theory of transformation, questioning the sustainability of resistant and transformative practices. I begin with the micro-social or domain of subjectivity.

### **6.1 Negotiating the micro-social: ‘Multiple mes’ and personal transformation**

In this section I explore what I have identified as the first domain of resistance — that of subjectivity or the micro-social. My intention is to establish the presence of nomadic consciousness (Braidotti, 1994), thus indicating both agency and resistance. The term ‘resistance’ is used in this thesis to describe the subtle kinds of subversive negotiation used to disrupt dominant patriarchal discourses. As Wearing (1996, p. 34) notes, “contradictory discourses, subjectivities and oppositional positions ... allow space for resistance to dominant ways of thinking”.

Braidotti’s (1994) figuration of the nomadic subject is helpful to this thesis in that it offers a representation of personal transformation and the “space for resistance” to which Wearing (1996, p. 24) refers to. As Braidotti notes:

The nomadic subject is a myth, that is to say a political fiction that allows me to think through and move across established categories and levels of experience: blurring boundaries without burning bridges. (1994, p. 4)

What Braidotti (1994) is describing here is a way of reconciling the changing consciousness associated with experience. In other words, this nomadic subject is a complex subjectivity that culminates in a realization of the dissonance between discourse (hope) and experience (happening). This political fiction, then, enables me to draw attention to nomadic consciousness — where women can be seen at a personal level as stepping out of rigid stereotypes associated with the ‘good woman’ discourse. Tamaly, Veronica, Alice and Madonna challenge the traditional image of an academic and resist dominant patriarchal discourses simply by entering the university as academic women (Baillie & Moxham, 1998, p. 103) and, merely by this act, prove their willingness to step outside the traditional gender norms associated with the representation of the ‘good woman’. Nomadic consciousness is useful to my analysis because it explains a process by which these women transgress the boundaries of the ‘good woman’, creating the space for personal resistance through the presence of ‘multiple mes’ (see Chapter Three). In other words, the presence of nomadic consciousness identifies moves towards personal transformation.

To present this analysis I have divided this section into four sub-sections; in each of these sub-sections, I present a vignette or story from the women that relates personal histories and experiences, serving as signposts illustrating particular values, beliefs and attitudes that, in turn, have shaped their multiple subjectivities. After each vignette I analyze links between the women’s stories and their current discursive terrain, enabling me to argue that at the level of subjectivity these women exhibit potential personal transformative practices while demonstrating that differences exist among women as well as within each

woman (Braidotti, 1994). Although I make connections between the individual women and their workplaces I am not focusing on their resistance in the workplace (for this see the following section, 6.2). Instead, at this stage I am demonstrating the presence of nomadic consciousness as the space for personal transformation at the level of subjectivity based on past histories and current experiences. I now turn to Tamaly.

#### 6.1.1 Tamaly

Tamaly tells one of her many stories; this one demonstrates how familial experiences came to form some of her values around teaching and learning:

My father, I mean it used to drive me up the wall, if I ever asked a question on anything he would never give me a straight answer. He would always say, “There is a phone book over there; there is whatever; go and find it” and I’d say, “Oh dad, don’t give me that, just tell me” but no, he wouldn’t. So he would never give me a straight answer on anything and so he has forced me to always go looking and find it for myself from a very early age.

I was 12 or 13 when I came to Australia and English is not my first language. I had one year of high school before I came to Australia so I’d learnt the basics of English. I went to school here and at 14 I had to leave school because my family just couldn’t afford to keep me there; they needed my income to support the family. My mother was pregnant so I left school and the headmaster said to me, “Oh, but you are doing so well, it’s such a shame” and I said, “Oh, I’ll get my education” and he said, “You’ll never do that”.

And so I got myself a job as an office junior and I started looking at where I could get evening classes to finish my high school education. I did three years of night school — so what I’m saying is that I was the one who was already at that age inclined to take control of my own education. (Tamaly)

The male headmaster in this story considers Tamaly to be intelligent but believes that she is following traditional expectations of the era, where women left school at 14 and did not continue their ‘education’. In that era (post World War II) migrant women worked in factories while middle class Australian women remained in the home (Probert, 2002, p. 11). Tamaly did not follow the pattern of her mother’s life and her father’s encouragement led her to discover other possibilities. Tamaly resisted the stereotypical labelling of her headmaster that positioned her in the gendered and racial patterns of the era.

While the headmaster expressed hope that she would be able to step out of this stereotypical mould — implied in his comments of “. . . but you are doing so well, it’s such a shame” — at the same time the discursive positioning by the headmaster attempts to ‘correct’ inappropriate norms learnt in the family (Gatens, 1998). By labeling Tamaly as female and unlikely to finish high school, the headmaster is reinforcing that her position in life is to be a mother and remain at home. Tamaly responded to and resisted this positioning by clearly stating that she would both work and attend night school.

Tamaly’s continued response to dominant gendered discourses is visible in the way that she places value on self-directed learning, insisting that her students take responsibility

for their own learning process. She regards herself as a guide and therefore expects students to seek information and skills needed to perform in the public sphere. This runs parallel to her familial socialization where her father directed Tamaly to carry out this same performance from a young age.

Tamaly occupies a variety of subject positions, such as daughter, mother, academic, worker and migrant. Responding to these multiple discourses has come together in an Australian academic context where she sees herself as someone who is flexible and able to operate in the commercial and political worlds associated with a market orientated workplace and who positions herself as this person; she also appreciates and enjoys the traditional image of the academic — one who follows her dream in a scholarly manner, thus demonstrating the intersection of multiple discourses (Kenway *et al.*, 1993, 1997). Tamaly illustrates a nomadic consciousness of the changing discourses around the ‘good academic’ and her own representation as an academic woman (Braidotti, 1994).

Tamaly sees the university as a competitive arena where academics must also take responsibility for developing appropriate courses that suit the market (Chapter Five). She values multiple experiences and regards this as part of her ability to be flexible and innovative. Some of this flexibility can be associated with her migration to Australia and having to re-adjust to different schooling, different language and different domestic expectations. What this shows also is the power of familial socialization processes and how strong discourses within the family impact on the ways in which values and beliefs



form. Her father's influence is evident in her facilitation of learning environments within her 'real' and 'virtual' classrooms.

Tamaly responded to gendered and racialized discourses by stepping away from stereotypical images of migrant women in Australian society in the post World War II migration era. As an academic woman Tamaly has specific expectations of her students, both male and female, namely that they take control of their learning, develop skills that will enable them to adapt to a rapidly changing world and demonstrate independence. These are clearly new images for women that Tarnaly both promotes and models.

#### 6.1.2. Madonna

I now turn to Madonna, who relates a story about her postgraduate experiences around technology use that have helped to form her values and beliefs associated with teaching and learning. She begins by referring to the student who had just left her office as I arrived to conduct an interview:

That girl I have just talked to now, I talked to her via e-mail the day before and I have told her the same thing, but in a way I haven't. Because when she was talking to me now, she was actually able to re-engage and ask me further questions while I was right there on the spot. Whereas with the e-mail that I sent, I don't know whether she has got it, I don't know whether it made sense to her.

I did my Masters through Distance Education and it was really hard. They [the lecturers at Queensland University of Technology] were not always

available. I would attend the tele-links where you would have a picture of them [the lecturers] and they would put up their overheads that could be downloaded and you had access to that kind of thing. But it is clearly not the same as if I was sitting in the classroom at QUT. There was nobody else that you could talk to about what they were talking about.

I suppose it comes back to what you value. I know computers are taking over our world and all that, but hey I really don't like it. If I have children I wouldn't have one [a computer] for my children until later. But if you look at something like distance education in the bush, I mean that, they used to have the old 'school of the air' and it was like using an old two-way [radio]. Now they would be accessing lots of stuff through the Web, I'm sure .... Technology there is critical, because without the technology those kids would, well I don't know how they would access education. I mean if it wasn't for the technology .... And I mean in that situation it's wonderful but I don't think you can replace the humanity of teachers and the social relationships .... That's important in learning and communication. (Madonna)

Madonna was born in a small town and has lived in regional Australia where she has experienced a rural-like lifestyle for most of her life. Owing to her own experiences of isolation when doing her Masters — this isolation derived from communication being mediated through an electronic medium — Madonna places value on being personally available to her students and speaking through issues with them either personally or via

telephone. Madonna's comments demonstrate what she believes are limitations of communication technologies used at MU. However her responses in this example bring together discourses that are both contradictory of and resistant to the dominant technological discourses circulating at MU (Kenway *et al.*, 1993).

For Madonna, the *act* of communication remains more important than the *mode* of communication. As Donaldson (2000, p. 34) suggests, the use of e-mail with lecturers may provide an alternative channel of communication, especially if the student is unlikely to speak up in traditional classrooms. Madonna is happy to use e-mail and telephone, but prefers face-to-face, suggesting a contextualized and nuanced approach to technology. While she is a competent technology user, she prefers telephones to e-mail; she places value on the new computing technologies for those isolated in the bush despite her own sense of isolation when using these same technologies. When read against Braidotti's (1994) construction of the nomadic subject, Madonna can be seen as moving across rigid categories associated with technophobia/technophilia, thereby facilitating a nomadic consciousness. As Madonna moves between these categories she is traversing and destabilizing this binary.

Madonna's performance as an academic woman draws on her own experiences as Madonna the student. Madonna's positioning with technology illustrates the fragmented, contradictory and situated notion of nomadic movement across subject locations (Braidotti, 1994). Because she values the traditional classroom approach and face-to-face interaction with her students, Madonna the academic is resisting the dominant

technological discourse promoted by MU, but at the same time this resistance of dominant hegemonic discourses is also confirming a dominant gendered discourse of technophobia commonly assigned to women who do not take up specific kinds of technology, namely computers and associated software.

### 6.1.3. Alice

It is now time to hear from Alice, who during the course of this project became a mother for the second time. Alice sees herself as a career-orientated woman, but also a mother, daughter, academic and student counsellor. I asked her about life with another baby:

Well, it actually had quite a profound impact on me this time; it's very different to my first child, which is really interesting. I would really like to go and work part time now. No one would ever think that would come out of my mouth prior to having the baby and I certainly wouldn't have thought that either. I've never wanted to work part time. I never wanted to be a mother — like a stay-at-home mother .... I've always worked; with my first child I went back to work when she was seven weeks old. I've always worked since I was seventeen.

When I came back — I was actually away for eleven weeks [on maternity leave] — not only has no-one said, “Oh look, welcome back”; in fact some of our senior staff haven't even bothered to say hello. The only thing they do is joke about fertility, even when we had a school meeting this morning. We're planning an awards night for the students and there will be various awards for

academics as well, and one of my male colleagues said, “Oh, and you’ll get the award for being the most fertile” —that was the comment.

I only have one supervisor [with my PhD]. I didn’t have a supervisor for two and a half years because he left and I didn’t know that he had left and I had sent a whole bunch of stuff — which has all disappeared. I jumped up and down and the Head of School said, “Oh well, I’ll look at your stuff”, so I started sending him stuff last year. Seventeen weeks it took him to respond to four chapter drafts .... My supervisor is in [another state], I have never seen the faculty, I’ve never laid eyes on this man, he doesn’t know who I am and he doesn’t e-mail, I’ve e-mailed him — six weeks [and] still no response. In the meantime I did send 32,000 words about three weeks ago; he hasn’t even said whether he has got them. So I just give up now. I mean I’ve tried over four years now and now it’s like — I’m going to do this PhD and I’m going to do it whether these men are around supervising or not. (Alice)

Alice demonstrates what Davies (1990, p. 506) sees as women choosing among various discourses. With her first child Alice wanted to continue as the career woman, while with her second child she wants to choose a different storyline. But as Alice has experienced there are consequences of the choices she makes. In her story Alice is implying that her male colleagues are treating her as though she is invisible except when it comes to comments about fertility and babies, and for Alice this appears to confirm differences between herself and her male colleagues.

Alice, in other words, is highly aware of being perceived as a stereotypical ‘good woman’ who has babies and cares for students. Alice the mother is recognized as a maternal body that has produced two children, but as Alice the academic woman she feels invisible to her male colleagues and to her PhD supervisor. She hovers in a space between categories of the ‘good woman’ and the ‘bad woman’ where her body is acceptable as a mother but out of place (McDowell, 1999) as an academic. This is consistent with the point made by Wearing (1996, p. 37), that each actor constructs subjectivity at the interface of discourses that may be contradictory and where the forces of power are present.

Within her story, and indeed within her perception of institutional expectations (see Chapter Five), Alice outlines a patriarchal discourse that concludes that if an academic woman does not perform as the caring and compassionate teacher then she is not being a ‘real’ woman. Paradoxically, if Alice performs as a ‘real’ woman then she does not see herself as the ‘good academic’ as she defines this representation — that is, someone who has a primary focus on research and a secondary focus on teaching.

Whilst she perceives an institutional expectation concerning student consultation (constructed in this particular faculty as nurturing), Alice also positions herself as a career orientated woman with her expectations and emphasis on research and finishing her PhD. I argue that Alice sees student consultation, not as part of a nurturing discourse associated with her baby or her body, but rather as a professional relationship of student support. Contradictory readings can occur when Alice’s performances are read by others through her body.

Alice resists dominant patriarchal discourses and this is shown in her description of student consultation as a professional domain, thus resisting the power and dominance of these discourses (Grosz, 1986; Wearing, 1996). Alice places a lot of value on her ability to respond to students in a professional manner. Part of this may stem from her own experiences with academic supervisors and, while she values being able to help students, as a student herself Alice is independent and self-motivated. She has created a discursive space where she can work through competing discourses at a personal level that constructs a sense of self that she desires (Kenway *et al.*, 1993, 1997).

#### 6.1.4 Veronica

In this final sub-section Veronica presents her vignette where her early experiences of migrants have stayed with her throughout her life:

My parents were not very well off and in the post-war housing shortage we lived in the Wacol Migrant Camp for about eighteen months. At that time we made friends with a lot of people who came from European countries. I think that that probably had some influence over my future interest in students from non-English speaking countries.

I think it is really difficult for the average Australian to establish a relationship with a person who speaks a second language. I think most people in our faculty are average Australians and they have probably had no experience with people who speak second languages and particularly in Milton where there's not a huge Chinese population, there's not a Vietnamese

community, there is an Indian community, there's a few Japanese people who live in Milton. I think as far as the average Australian, particularly the average provincial Australian, the notion of having to interact with people who have a second language is quite intimidating and nerve wracking. I think the worst case scenario is racism. For many people, that's not really what is operating. What is operating is fear of the unknown.

As I grew up I always liked language, I had a father who wanted me to be, I don't know, a rocket scientist or something — I'm not sure what he wanted me to be — but he had been in the Airforce. So I did four Maths/Science subjects in senior which was a bit of a disaster, but I won the English prize at my school and I'm still disappointed that I didn't win the French prize. So when I went to university, which was not immediately after I left school, I wanted to study, to continue to study French, but I didn't have the confidence to do that. Then I looked around for something else, which had to fit into my babysitting requirements, so I ended up doing literature.

I had a number of family members who were studying Accountancy and Economics and I was always the butt of their — not unpleasantness, but their jokes nevertheless. They were doing practical, real-life education while Veronica was doing 'arty-farty' stuff because my major was literature. Education for education sake, ho, ho, ho was the common lunchtime joke.



And that actually had quite an impact on me in that I felt that my areas of study were a bit self-indulgent. (Veronica)

Veronica also told me that it was quite some time in her academic career before she felt that her area of research was legitimate and this I suspect emerged from her experiences of family jokes. It was the support and encouragement from her peers that eventually convinced her that she was doing legitimate work; however, overshadowing this negotiation were dominant discourses at MU that construct the legitimate researcher as male, with a PhD, doing institutionally endorsed research (see Chapter Five). Veronica is not male, has not yet finished her PhD and is pursuing her own research.

Veronica noted the increase of international students now enrolling at MU and the possible impact that this may have on the local community. As she reflects on her past experiences, Veronica suggests others who have not had those kinds of experiences may find interaction with some international students rather daunting and intimidating. She is concerned with the impressions and possible misinterpretations that international students may form through their experiences as students and indeed as 'foreign' people. This is an example of what McWilliam and Palmer (1996) refer to as learning as an embodied practice where the international students learn through their embodied experience of different norms and expectations at work in mainstream Australian society. This can be related to Veronica's earlier concern (see Chapter Five) that international students are critical consumers and will judge both the university and the people within it.

Veronica is also very conscious of the potential difficulties that non-English speaking students may have in learning material that uses English as the only language option — with this compounded by having to access this material from the Web. Veronica's childhood experiences of watching migrants learn English have obviously heightened her sensitivity to this issue. Veronica also places value on flexibility and this can be related back to her own experiences of university, where her choice of majors was determined in the end by timetabling and babysitting requirements rather than by interest or expertise.

As Veronica the student, one of her multiple subjectivities, she found the academic system so inflexible — it did actually cause her to study something other than her first choice — that the options that she tries to give her students (as Veronica the academic) include as much flexibility as possible. Here Veronica promotes flexibility in both format and delivery of teaching and learning resources. While flexibility falls neatly into the discourses of globalization and innovation that MU is currently promoting, this discourse is ambiguous because MU works to a standardized system, incorporating such innovations as WebCT and electronic enrolment.

As Brabazon (2002) states, the market-inflected innovations promoted by universities and the embrace of technology are framed as being cheaper, more efficient and a replacement for teachers. This is coupled with Veronica's awareness of the market orientation associated with MU's corporate discourse of "where students come first"; Veronica recognizes the caring expectations associated with performing as an academic woman at MU and the way in which she is required to negotiate an either/or construction of the

‘good woman’ image (see Chapter Five). Through highlighting these concerns Veronica demonstrates her attempts at reconciling both the corporate motto and the directions she sees the senior executive staff steering MU. This recognition of multiple discourses and positionings within these discourses indicates a nomadic consciousness, shifting between workplace discourses and personal experiences (Braidotti, 1994).

From the above analyses of the women’s vignettes it can be argued that, by occupying multiple subject positionings, the women take up or reject various discourses (Kenway *et al.*, 1993, 1997). The taking up of multiple and contradictory positions is in itself evidence of the way that certain discourses can be rejected. At the same time, Tamaly, Alice, Madonna and Veronica each invest emotional labour (Jarzabkowski, 2001) as they construct their own subjectivities and performances as academic women. Therefore these women “become the person” they construct from the storylines that make up their past histories and current discursive fields (Davies, 1990, p. 506), thereby signifying agency. This enables me to argue that women choose certain performances, although it is also important to note that these women are not in a ‘no risk/no consequence’ context.

Resistance at the subjective level is important because it indicates the presence of discursive space in which to unpack phallogentric discourses. There has been much feminist writing around the concept of resistance from scheming secretaries (Pringle, 1988) to action heroines (Hills, 1998). This literature draws attention to the multiple ways in which women transform spaces or sites. As Wearing (1996, p. 37) states, the process of transformation begins with resistance. In this section, then, the women’s vignettes

showed the presence of nomadic consciousness, indicating space that offers both resistance to normative and normalizing discourses and the potential of transformation. I argue that resistance at this subjective level equals personal transformation. As indicated in my literature review (see Chapter Two), there has been much discussion concerning the non-neutrality of the workplace and the kinds of performances/resistances that the women use to negotiate these spaces. In the next section I analyze what I have identified as the second domain of resistance — the macro-social or workplace level.

## 6.2 Negotiating the macro-social: **Looking** for workplace transformation

In this section I argue that, despite women's resistance of normative patriarchal discourses at a micro-social or subjectivity level, there is little in the way of evidence that this resistance is overtly operating at the macro-social or workplace level. As the women in this study negotiate the presence of powerful normalizing discourses and their desire for resistance, dominant institutional discourses are shaping the resultant performances. In Chapter Five I established that the academic workplace was a non-neutral site of competing discourses. By establishing MU as a non-neutral environment I have indicated the presence of both power and resistance (Foucault, 1980, 1983; cited in Wearing, 1996, p. 34). In this section I argue that the potential for transformation in the academic workplace — a multidimensional context within the public sphere — is thwarted by phallogentric smog. My analysis signals embodied performances around teaching and the use of technology that have consequences for the potential (or otherwise) of workplace transformation.

### 6.2.1 'Techno teaching.' is the new game

In this sub-section I analyze various performances by the women in the context of teaching and technology. These performances confirm that discourses around teaching and technology are embodied. The point being emphasized is that the way that these four women each engages with teaching and technology is read through their bodies. This means that bodies are not separate from the performance and both the body and the attached performance indicate what is valued or devalued in this context. Performing as a teacher in a male body is different from performing as a teacher in a female body because gendered messages come with these bodies (see Chapter Three). Performing with technology in this role adds another layer of complexity.

In the following four sub-sub-sections I analyze different stories from the women that signal the women's awareness of specific discourses relating to institutional expectations concerning the use of particular technologies associated with teaching and learning circulating at MU. This awareness subsequently modifies their performances, but their performances can be and are read through their bodies. It is important to make visible these actions because I argue that they result in women's continued positioning on the margins of MU. I present my analysis as four individual interpretive repertoires of the women (Edley, 2001; Wetherell *et al.*, 2001). I begin with performances by Alice.

#### 6.2.I.1 Alice —a technophile (really)

Alice states, "I like e-mail, I must admit and I like voice mail too, because it means that I don't miss a student". Alice sees these two technologies as ways of communicating effectively with students, especially if she is not readily available. She feels that her

students appreciate her ability to respond to their inquiries quickly and these technologies facilitate that quick response. However other technologies that MU requires Alice to use, such as ISL, are not so comfortable.

Alice finds that teaching via ISL restricts and alters her preferred teaching style because “[W]hen using the ISL you have to stay within camera range so it actually really changes the way you teach”. Alice is stating here that the technology, in this case ISL, actually changes the way that she conducts her teaching. The technology requires that Alice stay within the field of the camera, which means modifying her movement that she would use when in front of a ‘real’ class. So here the technology itself, plus the discourses around technology, are modifying her performance.

The institutional expectation that she use this particular technology in her teaching is working against the kind of teaching style that she is comfortable with. At MU this association between technology and ‘good’ educational practice has meant that, for some faculties, all courses/subjects need to be on the Web. Alice is concerned about the possible introduction of on-line only teaching delivery, as she indicates in the following example:

For me there certainly feels a very big push that *all* the subjects have to go on the Web. I think we need to show them that we are doing it, but I don’t think we need to go that far. Ultimately students leave university and they are going to work in a ‘work’ environment and have to have interpersonal

skills. If everything is done via technology they won't have any. (Alice; emphasis in original)

Here Alice is promoting specific skills and sees the adoption of on-line only teaching as failing to provide particular needs in the current employment sector, so her argument is for the retention of face-to-face teaching practices as complementary to other methods. Alice relates the response from her colleagues to her suggestion that one of her courses/subjects was more appropriately delivered in a face-to-face format:

We had a school meeting and I was told, "You will put things on the Web"  
.... Now I teach a subject called [subject]. I don't want to teach this subject via the Web. I think it needs to have face-to-face stuff ... but I was told that that was a Venus—Mars thing. (Alice)

The implication of Alice's comments is that only those courses/subjects taught via the Web are regarded as legitimate in her faculty. Alice considers that her comments have been disregarded because they are going against the faculty's pro-Web discourse, thus placing Alice in opposition to the male academics within her school. She was given a direct order: "You will put things on the Web". Not to obey, in this sense, can send a message that challenges the legitimacy of a patriarchal order present in this faculty.

Alice implies that any non-compliance to putting courses on-line is constructed as not only negative but also technophobic. This is signified in the 'throw away' comment that "that was a Venus—Mars thing", where this comment is referring to a popular culture

book *Men are from Mars and women are from Venus* (Gray, 1993) that focused on the perceived ‘natural’ differences between men and women. On this occasion Alice is attempting to point out that there are times where certain forms of technology may not be the most effective mode of delivery. Her reluctance to comply was construed by her male colleagues as an indication of technophobia. This means that this performance is being read in limiting ways through her body.

In this instance, Alice’s performance at this meeting is read by her male colleagues in particular ways because of meanings attached to her body. I would argue here that Alice’s performance is viewed as technophobic because she inhabits a female body. Unfortunately, because she is appearing to go against the desired trend within her school, this performance is viewed negatively, which serves to compound the gendered assumptions attached to her body. Her own reading of her performance is one where she emphasizes that not all courses are appropriate for Web delivery.

Alice is actively critiquing the direction in which she perceives her faculty is moving in its teaching approach by pointing out the limitations of using a ‘Web only’ method. It is possible to argue here that, by courses being placed on the Web, the act or performance of teaching is being removed from the realm of the ‘good academic’. What I refer to here is the assumption that, once a course has been formatted to suit Web based delivery (seen unproblematically as a further homogenization of ‘flexible’ delivery), teaching becomes a technologized process where the interpersonal becomes the extrapersonal (Price, 1997) — that is, where the gap between human contact is increasingly widened by placing



networks of technology such as computers and the Internet between ‘real’ bodies (Law & Singleton, 2000). This changes teaching from an emotional, female activity to a technical, male activity, thus making it an acceptable activity for the male body.

While Alice does not fully embrace an exclusive implementation of technology for all teaching delivery, neither does she totally reject technology as a useful tool. For students to begin to develop technological skills, staff should set an example regarding technology use to the students. If there is the expectation that students use technology, then it follows for Alice that staff need to show their competency with various technologies. As she explains, “The students need to see that [staff using the technology] because we’re encouraging them to do it .... So if we are encouraging students to have to use technology I think we need to show them that we’re doing it too”.

There are two points that I draw attention to in this combined narrative. Firstly, Alice’s discourse identifies how she is able to challenge what Sofia (1995) refers to as a technophobia/technophilia binary by moving between these two locations. Sofia (1995) has been concerned with the apparent oversimplification of the relationships that people have with technology where this has been reduced to a binary of either technophobia or technophilia. This construction routinely positions ‘good women’ as technophobic and ‘real men’ as technophilic. Alice is positioning herself as a nomadic subject (Braidotti, 1994) where she is moving across rigid boundaries that categorize her as one or the other. In this instance Alice, as an embodied performer, can be read as speaking from a new space between technophobia and technophilia, where she is critiquing the blanket use of

computers. This illustrates the highly complex relationships that people establish in technology use. It also suggests at least some degree of resistance but unfortunately not public transformation in her immediate workplace as her concerns are simply disregarded because her performance is positioned as that of a ‘naughty girl’ who really needs to obey the professional academics in her school.

The second point concerns Alice’s sophisticated understanding of both the positive and negative aspects of using these particular technologies. Alice responds to the way that she feels her colleagues view her engagement with technology; the broad point to be acknowledged here is that Alice knows that she is not technophobic but that her response may indicate that. While she does not accept the technophobic label, at the same time Alice is aware that the ‘student comes first’ corporate discourse illustrates the strength of normalizing institutional expectations and discourses. Alice constructs herself as the educator providing a range of academic services/products to the student/client and, in turn, the skilled graduate as a product for potential employers. Alice’s performance indicates competing discourses and embodied practice and the emotional investment that Alice places in her own construction as an academic woman (Davies, 1990, p. 506).

#### 6.2.1.2 Veronica — more of a technosceptic

To be considered part of MU, then, is to use specific technology designated as key components in service delivery, a point highlighted by Veronica when she reflects on her own computer use as something that she feels is expected of academics:

We use computers — I mean they are just integrated as part of everyday life — and we use e-mail and most things associated with the Internet. I e-mail constantly, every day; that's probably my major method of communicating with other people around the University, even though I don't like it very much because I think it's very open to misinterpretation. (Veronica)

While Veronica uses “e-mail constantly” she expresses a dislike of this technology, pointing out what she considers to be a limitation of e-mail. This is positioning Veronica as someone who, although not technophobic, does not see e-mail technology as an effective communication tool. In much the same way as Alice, Veronica believes that academics should be seen to be using the technology, albeit for different reasons. She continues to use e-mail and the Internet despite the limitations because to do otherwise, she knows, would result in herself being positioned outside the mainstream at MU. Here Veronica is conforming to a specific discourse in order to maintain her position as a legitimate member of her university culture.

There is an institutional expectation that she use e-mail/computers; at the same time she chooses to use a tool that she does not like. Both the use of the technology itself and the associated discourses influence Veronica's performance. I contend that in this instance Veronica's preference for telephones is modified because she is aware of stereotypical constructions associated with women using telephones. If she chose not to use e-mail, this ‘stereotype’ image would be enhanced. Again here Veronica recognizes some dissonance between how she views her actions and the labels that become attached to female bodies when practices are read through sexed bodies.

The use of both the telephone and e-mail are practices that are visible; the point I make here is that someone receives either the phone call or the e-mail message. The act of performing these practices becomes visible when the recipients receive the message. Conversely, the use of the Internet is not as visible in the same sense. 'Surfing the Net' can take place in the privacy of an academic's office and in this way Veronica has co-opted the Internet as a way of networking among peers. The use of technologies such as the Internet can be heralded as another opportunity for inclusiveness, equity and access. To this end McWilliam and Palmer (1996, p. 103) have raised the suggestion of 'virtual space' being a 'virtuous space' and how this could reduce/stop abusive or sexual misconduct.

Shute (1997, p. 244) rather more cautiously believes the cybenvorld offers contradictory possibilities for women, in that there are new and exciting forms of communication, but there is also the possibility of new forms of discrimination or exclusion. As Veronica commented, "[B]ecause I am on a list service I can contact people who are luminaries in my field", which she finds very positive for her work. Although Veronica does not like e-mail, the option of being on an e-mail list and the ability to contact specific people have been excellent. Opportunities for access to 'virtual communities' via e-mail bulletin boards and chat rooms offer avenues where traditional gender identity can be 'denied' (Donaldson, 2000, p. 36). This rhetoric coupling technology and equity discourses sounds promising for those women with Internet access where access to global information links can act as another strategy in dismantling patriarchy and inequality.

This illustrates two points that I wish to emphasize. The first point is Veronica's awareness of the importance placed on specific technology use at MU. The second point refers to Veronica's awareness of how easily marginalized academic women can be when performances are read against normalizing discourses. This last point confirms what Probert and Wilson (1993, p. 4) postulated: that gender relations become prominent in the ways that particular practices become normalized. In other words, Veronica does not want to be labelled either as technophobic or as an outsider to the mainstream university community.

The term that I have developed called 'strategic conformity' is useful here. By this I mean Veronica is deliberately conforming to a particular performance, in this example, using e-mail to communicate with colleagues despite her judgment regarding its effectiveness, *precisely* because of the negative consequences that she knows would follow if she chose not to conform. I argue that Veronica's acute awareness of potential marginalization is due to her already heightened awareness of being a 'woman in a man's world' after having to care both for her male colleagues in their work network and for her students (analyzed in the previous chapter). In other words, Veronica's performance is responding to 'masculine' discourses that construct 'woman' in specific terms.

Whilst she can never be the 'good academic' constructed by dominant institutional discourses at MU because of her female embodiment, Veronica resists being positioned as a 'bad' woman by actively caring for her colleagues and immediate networks. She also resists the 'good woman' label with her mixed performances around technology use. The

position that Veronica has chosen for herself in this technological discourse lies with strategically conforming to certain practices in order for her to be recognized by others as a legitimate 'academic'. This is a strategic move because she wants to be able to challenge university policy, but in rejecting dominant discourses she is easily marginalized when colleagues draw on embodied discourses to interpret her actions as demonstrating that Veronica is 'naturally' technophobic, when clearly this is not the case.

This becomes evident as Veronica reconciles her own competing discourses relating to the institutional push towards the 'virtual university'. On the one hand, Veronica suggests this demand for technology is driven by potential students when she comments that "I think that students will look around and, if you're just still using pen and pencil and print, I think you'll be judged as archaic". In Veronica's eyes, students are critical consumers judging academics and universities on performance. At the same time, having courses on-line leads students to have certain expectations, as outlined in the University Handbook:

Students will benefit from our commitment to excellence in teaching and the use of innovative teaching and learning technologies to offer courses to students across a range of campuses and learning modes including distance education. Flexible modes of delivery are offered to give students opportunities to tailor their study to their lifestyle. (Milton University, 2001a, p. 14)

On the other hand, Veronica is aware that there is an institutional expectation to provide a technologized learning environment. As the large majority of 'teaching' academics are

women, to provide this will impact subsequently on the ways in which the women teach. Possibly because of this, Veronica is cautious of this 'virtual campus', warning extra support will be necessary with on-line students:

I think that a lot of support is going to be needed for the student who enrolls in those courses and providing for it is going to be quite expensive .... I certainly think that we should have as much as we can publicly on the Web. I really support that but as far as putting it [course materials] on the Web for students to access ... is actually quite demanding [and] requires a lot of effort on the part of the lecturers. (Veronica)

While Veronica indicates that there should be as much as possible available on the Web, she strongly believes that there are some material consequences for those academics involved with teaching. There are two points that I wish to highlight concerning this impact. Firstly, what this means, for those women with high teaching loads, is that computer literacy is a necessity. In order to use the new technologies, academics must be able to use them correctly and more importantly understand what these technologies can and cannot do. This means that 'bad teaching' doesn't become 'fixed' by changing technologies.

The second point is that courses will need to be rewritten to fit the Web template designated by the university. This is where an understanding of the technology becomes even more important. This extra work needs to be built into already high workloads; otherwise it will continue to take time away from other activities such as research and publication work. By this provision not being built into workloads, a hidden layer of

work is created (Brabazon, 2002, p. 11). Conversely if this rewriting of course material is taken over by graphic artists and Web page developers then it will remove 'teaching' further from the 'teacher'. Veronica then is acutely aware of how the technology itself, plus the discourses around the technology, and resultant institutional expectations modify her performance.

Both Alice and Veronica are sceptical of the notion that teaching delivery via the Web will be more effective and efficient; rather than such delivery saving time, they are acutely aware of how this introduction of on-line courses will impact on their academic work (Brabazon, 2002). However to draw attention to this is to attract possible accusations of being technophobic; consequently Veronica is conscious of the fact that not to use the common methods of communication such as e-mail could easily position her in this way.

#### 6.2.1.3 Madonna — a probable technophobe

Similarly to Alice and Veronica, Madonna sees technology use as a signifier of 'belonging' to the mainstream university community. In her faculty, there is overt privileging of Web pages and electronic communication, explicitly because the Dean holds them in high regard. Madonna feels that status is conferred on those academics with Web sites available for students to access:

People like David who is our Head of School and George, one of our senior lecturers, have Web sites for their students to get into .... It is kind of prized; the Dean holds it in high regard .... It's like the normal part of how people



operate. I wouldn't have a clue how to even set up a Web site. It's kind of gobbledegook to me, so I feel a little like — inadequate, particularly when they [George and David] are held in high regard because they are able to manipulate that aspect of technology. (Madonna)

Madonna sees certain colleagues as valued because of their perceived ability to set up Web pages and believes that this devalues her own academic work. She does not indicate whether her two colleagues actually set up these sites themselves or had someone else do this. Madonna is thus highlighting the status surrounding the *perceived* ability to manipulate certain technologies apparently prized by the (male) Dean. From this example, it is easy to see how status and privilege are transferred to those bodies already holding status positions — George and David are senior academics. Therefore it can be argued that, whilst there are many women who use information and communication technologies, there is a perception, especially in Madonna's faculty, that technology is closely associated with the 'masculine' (Cockburn, 1983; Shute, 1997; Sofia, 1995; Wajcman, 1991) and 'techno' performances by these male bodies are rewarded accordingly.

Consequently Madonna sees the probability of being positioned differently from these two men because of her own perceived lack of knowledge with Web pages. By not having a Web page, Madonna implies that she is outside "the normal part of how people [in her faculty] operate". From this comment it is possible to argue that those people who do not have Web pages are invisible to the Dean. She believes that because George and

David both perform as being knowledgeable and competent by having Web pages they gain status and the Dean's approval, leaving Madonna to believe she has less status and possibly the Dean's disapproval by not having a Web page for students to access. It is possible to identify here that Madonna feels marginalized because of a perceived lack of 'techno' knowledge or that her marginalization is being set up *because of* her lack of knowledge.

Madonna believes that the push to have on-line delivery and computer based learning will restrict who will become students enrolled at MU. She is concerned that there will be potential students denied access to the university because of economic circumstances and the requirement to have computer access:

I would say that our distance material which are currently in book form — that will be superseded. It will all be on the Net. But I still don't think that many people realize that not everyone out there has a computer. Like it is almost assumed that each household can afford to pay \$3000 for a computer and lots of people would not be able to do that .... The university is clearly moving towards that .... I think it is tied up with that 'make the money' stuff.

(Madonna)

Madonna is convinced that the market driven push to introduce on-line delivery will reduce or even phase out other forms of educational delivery. Standardizing delivery modes to a WebCT format (although this will be replaced with Blackboard as from 2004) has the potential to phase out other forms of delivery. She re-emphasizes the economic

imperative that she believes is the underlying incentive of the university. Her comments make visible the competitive nature of a neo-liberal discourse where equal opportunity offers equal outcomes; for those who cannot compete to have equal opportunity the equity gap becomes wider. Madonna has raised a social justice issue where she believes that only particular ‘economic citizens’ — those who can afford to buy computers — will be able to choose MU as a university. This constructs the ‘digital divide as a personal failure rather than a structural/access issue.

During our conversations Madonna expressed her concern that currently “they [the students] don’t all have e-mail, so that’s not always the most effective means of communication”. While she is acutely aware of the shift towards a ‘virtual campus’ within her faculty, being a ‘good academic’ for Madonna involves being able to communicate with her students:

It is all tied in with us being able to talk to students and provide them with information and I think that I do that in other ways .... I always ring them back and talk to them [students]. I probably don’t hold that kind of technology [Web sites] in high regard because I think that it is quite impersonal. But David would see it as personal communication with the student as they can get into the site and see his photo .... Even though I don’t know what they [students] look like and they don’t know what I look like, I talk to them enough to develop a professional relationship. (Madonna)

Madonna's preference to use the telephone comes from her value of personal communication and here the choice of technology influences her performance. Madonna defines an institutional expectation as communicating with the students and for this Madonna uses 'old technology' or the telephone, employing alternative means to develop professional relationships. Her disclosure of a lack of skills and knowledge associated with Web pages demonstrates that again technology itself modifies her choices in communication with her students. She sees the perception around her choice of telephone, in a context where discourses around technology reify the new information/communication technologies, as positioning her as 'lacking' and devalued, but also that this could be expected by the Dean as he sees male bodies as the appropriate user, and therefore as the rightful body for this performance. It is as though Madonna, as a contract teaching only female body, would not be expected to perform as a 'real' academic.

In this example Madonna draws attention to a significant issue — the growing emphasis on the 'new technologies' as the preferred communication tool — reinforcing the seductive power of this discourse and the accompanying restrictive definition of technology that is now creeping into dominant discourses. Rather than being technophobic, Madonna chooses to reject the language, discourse and culture often associated with computer/technology use (Donaldson, 2000, p. 33). By rejecting these discourses Madonna is also rejecting the limited subject positionings embedded in these discourses and practices (Davies, 1992, p. 56). This signals the possibility of opening up new/alternative positionings, providing counternarratives to the dominant discourses.

Implicit in this narrative are Madonna's departures from institutional norms set up in her faculty. It is important to note here that although Madonna has male and female colleagues it is the males who are publicly congratulated on their technological actions by the Dean. This public acknowledgement serves to support the invisibility of women's technological engagement occurring in this particular faculty, paralleling a similar trend of the invisibility of women when it comes to tenure in Madonna's school/division, thereby signalling the ubiquitous phallocentric smog. In this instance the phallocentric smog emerges as the privileging of the 'masculine' body in Madonna's faculty and the devaluing of any kind of technological engagement by the female body except that associated with negative stereotypes — chatting on the telephone.

Thus it is possible to argue that male bodies are rewarded for particular actions — that is, technology use — while these same actions by female bodies are marginalized with the difference being the type of technology used: Madonna uses the telephone, but her male colleagues have Web pages. Once more the discourses, institutional expectations, the technology itself and the associated performance by either a male body or a female body determine both the value and the actual performance.

Implicit in this is how Wajcman (1991, p. 151) suggests technologies, like people, become sex-typed by social discourses as soon as they enter the workplace. This process of sex-typing works to demonstrate how easily messages around 'who uses technology' become attached to bodies. This kind of practice works towards constructing technology use (in MU at least) as a 'masculine' domain, but describing technology as a 'masculine'

domain implies that technology is an area both inappropriate and inappropriable for women (Sofia, 1995, p. 151).

In these sub-sections I have argued that certain bodies need to perform certain roles in order to be valued. What has been demonstrated here is the way in which embodiment acts as a further layer of complexity with performances ‘read’ through bodies. It also signals the encircling nature of the phallogentric smog within this complexity and the way in which the phallogentric smog can thicken around specific performances. These performances take place within a context where specific norms and expectations are attached to male bodies and female bodies. Performances done by the wrong body are devalued and marginalized. In the next sub-section Tamaly’s experiences of technology discourses highlight her involvement with teaching staff members’ and students’ generic computing skills that she sees as prerequisite workplace skills of the future regardless of occupation. She also comments on how she perceives technological uptake at MU.

#### 6.2.1.4 Tamaly — definitely the techno-whiz kid

Because of her experience with using various computer programs, Tamaly was asked to facilitate a group of academics in a different school within her faculty to “get them up to speed” using technology. This was her experience:

I couldn’t get them up to speed about the use of technology to support [content material] and it was much easier to get them involved in using the technology to support their teaching because that gave them personal interaction and experience of how the technology can be used. But I had to

use all sorts of bribery. I mean just to teach them about PowerPoint we had to put on a special evening class and offer them tea, otherwise they wouldn't have even come. (Tamaly)

Tamaly's colleagues indicate some resistance to the introduction of new technologies, indicated by the need to bribe academics just to come to the class. What is significant here is that the group comprised both male and female academics, but the image of the competent technology user remains male and the technophobe remains female. Highlighted also is the reluctance of the academics to increase further their already loaded timetables, shown by having to hold "a special evening class" in order to fit in this extra work.

This hidden and time consuming work of learning to manipulate technologies, especially computing software, is clearly not acknowledged or understood by senior managers, resulting in some resistance by academics to the introduction of on-line teaching. I draw parallels here with the unpaid and unseen domestic work put in by women at home. Tamaly's experience, with both attempting to show academics how to use PowerPoint and setting up mailing lists for students, provides a lens into this hidden work, clearly highlighting the 'work' involved in understanding the technology as well as maintaining a 'virtual' learning space (Brazabon, 2002, p. 11).

Tamaly attributes some of this reluctance to use certain technologies to something developed through socialization processes beginning back in kindergarten where children

imitate roles, see rewards and punishments for gendered behaviour and become socialized into specific gendered roles:

It's already happening in playschool, like kindergarten. If you put boys and girls together in a kindergarten to use particular technology the boys will make fun of the girls if they can't use it so the girls are put off. If you put the girls there on their own and there's nobody to put them down then they're okay. So from an early age boys have learnt from role models around them that "girls are silly, they don't know anything, we'll tell them what to do".

(Tamaly)

Tamaly is implying that gendered norms and expectations around technology use (and indeed social roles) begin even in kindergarten where the boys take over and marginalize the girls in their activities. She identifies this kind of action as stemming from the role models and attitudes that boys and girls see and experience in the broader community. So right from an early age gendered expectations and norms are being circulated in the *texts and discourses of the everyday*.

Tamaly is concerned for those people who are not technologically literate, as she believes that they run the risk of being marginalized in a 'technoscape' world (Appadurai, 1990). From her personal experience Tamaly expresses frustration with trying to encourage many of her students to use computing technologies. As part of her courses she has previously "tried to set up mailing lists with the students and you certainly do that with



the undergraduate students, but then I found that you have to constantly stimulate people to actually use it and they didn't necessarily find it all that useful".

Therefore, for Tamaly, the way that technology is taken up by people in the workplace depends on what relevance these people see the technology as having for their daily function. In her own research of technology uptake in various workplaces Tamaly found that "in my research, for example nurse educators do not use computers very well and they are unable to understand how contemporary nurses could possibly adopt technology use as part of the support of their nurse practice". This meant that students were not learning about technology use because their lecturers were not using the technology.

It is tenable to argue here that the representation of the 'good nurse' includes images associated with caring and nurturing rather than using computers, again setting up particular 'mindsets' about what makes a 'good nurse'. This became quite evident in the following excerpt from Tamaly's interview when she talked about the differences between university and hospital trained nurses:

In the nursing profession in particular, we teach nurses in universities now and they are taught to think independently, and on the whole the university does a fairly good job in doing that, but as soon as you put a nurse into the traditional role and they are the only one with nurses who have been working there for X years, and as soon as that nurse doesn't fit in with the values and the way of thinking of the rest of them, she'll get ridiculed. So what does the nurse do? She has to either stand firm in what she believes or she modifies

according to what everyone else is telling her because that is easier. And if she can't stand it, she'll get out and that's exactly what happens. (Tamaly)

What Tamaly is describing here is the way in which entrenched institutions — in this instance, the hospital — work to 'correct' inappropriate norms performed by nurses trained in the university (Gatens, 1998). This also serves as an example of the way in which bodies are made to fit certain institutions (Foucault; cited in Diprose, 1994, p. 21). Associated here is the image of the 'good woman' who cares for and nurtures the sick, not the image of the high-tech, knowledgeable and independent nurse. According to Acker (1991, p. 168), the linking of technical skills and gender reinforces images of masculinity, so consequently linking women and technical skills is often perceived as a threat. It is the interpretations of this threat that I argue reinforce the normalizing power of specific embodied discourses and inhibit transformation of the public domain. Tamaly implies that this is resulting in the way that some students are reluctant to take up technology use unless it is explicitly part of the assessment or that the relevance of technology is made explicit. This means that certain technologies remain the domain of the 'masculine' and women who use these technologies run the risk of being marginalized in the workplace.

Current technological discourses have generated a male dominated culture around the use of specific technologies — namely those homogenized as 'computers' (Cockburn, 1983; Sofia, 1995; Wajcman, 1991). Clearly as all four women use and appropriate technology in ways that value add to their academic work, technology discourses at MU are being

challenged but this challenge is being resisted by MU. Similarly to Wajcman (1991), I argue that the construction of technology as a distinctly 'masculine' realm is largely a reflection of male domination in powerful public institutions, like hospitals and universities, rather than something specific to the male spirit or an 'essential' part of being male. Rather it is a reflection of the 'masculine' culture, that is, the majority of men and patriarchal order associated with both technology and computer discourses.

This analysis unfortunately illustrates how women continue to be positioned on the periphery of technology use or to be seen to be intruding on a 'masculine' domain. It is possible to identify ways in which the women are positioned opposite to men in these technological discourses; thus it can be argued that this positioning of women is reproducing the domain of technology as a 'masculine' terrain, even though women at MU use computers and are also employed as technicians. Consequently while performances around technology continue to be read through stereotypical representations of women's bodies any transformation of the workplace will be stalled.

Basically if a woman overtly resists the use of technology or suggests that technology may be inappropriate in certain circumstances, then this act is deemed as 'proving women's technophobia'. Consequently, regardless of any particular performance these acts, whether resistant of or conforming to gendered stereotypes, continue to position some women in oppositional and secondary locations in relation to their male colleagues, indicating the persistent phallogentric construction of the 'academic woman' at MU. This construction adds to the entrenchment of phallogentric smog in this workplace. In this

section I have highlighted the ubiquitous nature of this phallogentric smog surrounding the constructed 'masculine' terrain of technology (read as computers) associated with the academic workplace at MU. The above performances with technology illustrated both acts of resistance and strategic conformity by the women to dominant institutional discourses — thus signalling personal transformation but highlighting the lack of institutional transformation. In the following and final section of this chapter I address this gap between private and public transformation.

### **6.3 The gap between private and public transformation**

In this final section I unpack the gap between the personal transformation of the women and the unchanging phallogentric attitudes that persistently position women on the periphery of the university. In other words, I am looking at why this personal transformation is not translating into public transformation of the workplace. If one follows the logic that informs much contemporary feminist theory, it would be reasonable to expect that the performances analyzed in the previous sections of this chapter would escalate in number, significance or radical ways to such a point that they would be considered as transformative.

I argue that the transformative process is being held back because of the powerful normalizing discourses that circulate throughout the workplace. These discourses result in the gendered positioning of women in a masculine university culture. This positioning is reinforced and reproduced in a climate pressured by performing in an era of globalization. The masculine culture, in turn, is kept in place by the lingering power of

the ‘good girl’ and ‘good woman’ stereotype invoked by powerful normalizing discourses. This can be seen as a vicious circle and one not easy to disrupt; at the same time the stakes are high in this kind of environment so the fight can get dirty.

My intention in this section is to bring together two key ideas. The first idea is the notion of phallogentric smog that I introduced in Chapter Five and in this section I call upon Braidotti’s (1994) use of a ‘political fiction’ (Section 6.1) to work through this idea. This notion of phallogentric smog is directly tied to the second key idea — the notion of embodiment — where part of the problem with transformation I argue stems from the way that performances by the women are seen through their bodies.

I use the metaphor ‘phallogentric smog’ as a political fiction to explain what is happening in this workplace. It is a useful device to navigate the episodes of marginalization and the attempts at resistance by the women. Phallogentric smog allows me to see things that are otherwise invisible. Smog itself is invisible and this is part of the problem. Smog floats about in the atmosphere and circles and swirls around collection points. In some places it clears or becomes thinner, but in other places it thickens and condenses and causes fallout (indeed, in some places acid rain). So smog is all around, and it is very powerful and dangerous to the health. Katila and Merilainen (2002, p. 351) talk about patriarchy in similar terms when they say: “If people choose, for whatever reasons, to deny its existence, they can do so readily because it is not something you can permanently nail down but rather something that is constantly shifting”. For me the process of writing

about this smog is an act of resistance, as well as an act of making sense of what is being resisted (Katila & Merilainen, 2002).

These two key ideas — phallogentric smog and embodied discourses — when brought together generate the normalization of male privilege (Eveline, 1994) that has material consequences for women in the workplace. While this thesis does not generalize to other sites or women, what can be gleaned from this study is that these four women are not alone in their marginalization. In the following sub-section I focus on this thickening of smog in a context of increasing globalization discourses and what this means for the academic workplace at MU.

#### 6.3.1 Thickening of the smog: The normalization of ‘male’ culture

In this sub-section I focus on the consequences of the phallogentric smog. As Burton (1997, p. 17) argues, dominant values and priorities become embedded in structural arrangements and are reflected in policies, interpretation, decision making and everyday practices. At MU this is evidenced in the equity related policies and approaches to gender reform (see Chapter Four). It is also evidenced in the practices and discourses that construct the ‘good academic’ (see Chapter Five). Current economic rationalist measures coupled with traditional power structures are exacerbating this process (Lafferty & Fleming, 2000, p. 263).

I argue that the women’s performances analyzed throughout this thesis range from acts of strategic conformity to small degrees of resistance. These performances come about

because of two issues: firstly, the insecurity of employment within a neo-liberal environment where economic rationalism is a dominant discourse; and secondly, the effort constantly required to challenge phallocentric, sexist and patriarchal discourses and practices (Luke & Gore, 1992). What this indicates is a move towards the normalization of male privilege and the entrenchment of masculine culture.

Currie and Theile (2001, p. 90) consider this normalization of male culture pervades organizations such as universities and this is reflected and reinforced in the structure of MU, as Veronica describes here:

At the present time we've got 15 male professors and 2 women professors. To me, that sums up a lot of things. We've got a lot of women in the lower levels, Lecturer B, a lot of women on contracts. From my understanding of local research done by the Equity Office, at Level A it stays about the same, male and female; Level B might actually be a little bit in favour of women, but after that the women just drop away. The decision making positions that women are concentrated in are the hard work positions, but the positions where the 'real' decisions are made fall away. I think that universities are not very women-friendly working institutions. (Veronica)

Veronica sees the overall structure of MU as being rather hostile towards women in that women are excluded from the "real" decision making committees but are seen as useful in "the hard work positions" that often take these women away from being able to focus on teaching and research. Within this kind of discourse women are included on the

committees that demand hard work and time away from teaching and research, but these are not the committees that have status and power within the university. This means that the ways in which women have been included represent not just tokenism but also negative inclusion. By this I mean that women are offered the worst jobs or conditions and, if they are seen to refuse these, then it shows that they are *obviously* unsuited to being an academic; in other words, women's inclusion has conditions as opposed to men's unconditional inclusion.

Currie and Thiele (2001, p. 110) comment that, while women are supposed to adapt to the male norm, male managers are oblivious to this juggling act because it takes place in the domestic sphere of the home, not the public sphere of the workplace. I argue here that, while women's bodies continue to be constructed as sites of nurturing and emotional labour, women would continue to be seen as 'mothers who work' rather than as 'academic women'. This is exacerbated by having continually to negotiate family responsibilities and paid work, while simultaneously being judged according to the male work 'norms' used to signify the 'good worker'.

A case in point is the faculty retreat — a practice whereby permanent staff members retreat to usually an off-campus location to discuss faculty business and future direction away from interruptions — this often requires travel and nights away from home. While classes and student consultations can be cancelled or re-scheduled, this same action does not happen for those academics with family responsibilities. In this situation those women who are full time employees are expected to act the same as men. Implicit here is



what Glazer-Raymo (1999, p. 29) suggests when she states: “Women academics are excluded from full participation based on their perceived differences, but are included with the expectation that they will readily adapt to existing institutional norms and accommodate their differences”. As a consequence those academics who are mothers find themselves in yet another minority or marginalized group (Leonard & Malina, 1994).

This normalization of male culture is reflected through the lack of senior women in the professorial positions and upper echelons of MU. The most powerful organizational positionings are almost entirely occupied by men, with the exception of the occasional biological female who acts as a social man (Sorenson, 1984; cited in Acker, 1991, p. 162). This is one reading that can apply to the female Vice-Chancellor and other senior academic women where appointments by merit would be judged against male norms. This reading can also apply to Tamaly. All these negotiations are taking place in a context where women’s bodies are included in precise ways — negative inclusion, tokenism or stereotypical representation, all resulting in some degree of marginalization.

This is also reflected in the allocation of tenure, as Madonna suggested when of the seven women academics in her team “only one has permanent tenure”. Luke and Gore (1992, p. 202) believe the university is still a patriarchal site, even though women have entered this workplace as academics. Men are more likely to be in senior and continuing positions as implied by Veronica’s description highlighting the cluster of women at Levels A and B. This is supported by the workplace profile where the “representation of academic women remains skewed toward the lower award levels and in casual and contract employment”

(Milton University, 2002a, p. 2). Economic rationalist cuts are likely to be discriminatory against women because women are concentrated in these lower employment categories and casual positions (Currie & Thiele, 2001, p. 93; Probert *et al.*, 1998).

Alongside the normalization of male privilege something else is happening. I contend that there is increased pressure on academic women to perform ‘corporate care’ of the student body. Evidence of this ‘corporate care’ lies in the corporate slogan of MU — “where students come first”. It has become an organizational requirement for women to ‘look after’ students, especially the first year undergraduates. This means that women are explicitly exploited to care and nurture (Lafferty & Fleming, 2000, p. 262), with this enhancing the normalization of male advantage.

This spells greater gaps between hope and happening for academic women. Working in this new marketplace means having a flexible workforce where it is possible to identify a gendered segregation of workers — a majority of women in part time and casual employment positions and a majority of full time male academics with tenure as the core elite of the university. Currie *et al.* (1998) suggest that, as a result of neo-liberal restructuring, universities are being reduced to a core of permanent tenured staff and many part time staff. This puts increased pressure on the core and degrades the working conditions of the part time. McInnis (2000, p. 144) warns that universities are at a critical point for the academic profession where excessive workloads and fragmentation of tasks seriously threaten the quality of both research and teaching.

This sex segregation of academic work sees many male academics able to pursue research and publication agendas, while many academic women take care of the large teaching loads with undergraduate students. It becomes possible to argue, then, that academic women are included only through, and in, their capacity to care — in other words, a token gesture towards inclusion. The hope that women would be treated as ‘equal’ in their academic endeavours is still not happening and if women step outside the stereotypical construction of ‘woman’ then these women are further marginalized to the periphery of the university. While this illustrates the thickening of phallocentric smog, it also highlights the way in which performances by the women continue to be ‘read’ through their bodies, thus sexualizing the female body through embodied discourses.

### 6.3.2 Embodiment: Sexualizing the female body

Indicated here, then, is the powerful normative effect of institutional expectations and discourses against the performances read through bodies (Diprose, 1994; Gatens, 1998). Limited options are open to the women: they cannot buck the system too much because of job insecurity, tenuous positioning and contracts. At the same time, they desire to construct their own image as academic women where they do not want to be seen as ‘bad women’ or ‘ball breaking lesbian feminists’, so, in other words, there are not many options open when women are constructed in narrow and limited ways in traditional patriarchal discourses.

With the emphasis in feminist theorizing moving from a politics of equality to the politics of difference/s, a new dimension has been opened up for feminists to challenge the

limited images of women (Hekman, 1999). But this is not always easy in a highly charged political environment such as the university. I strongly emphasize here that this non-transformation of the workplace is not because of anything lacking with women. Rather it is about a workplace culture, organizational change and a new style of communicating change. As such I argue the women may be post-Woman women, but the context in which these women operate is not post-patriarchy. I contend that this is because of the lingering traditional images attached to women's bodies: performances by women are tied to their bodies and read through their bodies; culturally defined norms are hard to disrupt because, although some families can be seen as sites of resistance that disrupt traditional norms, other powerful institutions within Australian society work towards correcting 'inappropriate' behaviour by specific bodies (Diprose, 1994; Gatens, 1998).

Grosz (1986) describes how the notion of 'woman' has been constructed in phallogentric terms as the same as, different from or complementary to men. This is clearly what is happening at MU, as seen in Chapter Four with the lingering EO discourses that construct women as the same, and in Chapter Five where women are defined as either different from or complementary to men in the roles of nurturing, caring and housekeeping duties within MU. This is enhanced by an image of the female teacher as the caring, nurturing body working within the private sphere of the university, attentive to the emotional side of the university but invisible to the public domain. Implicit here is what Currie and Thiele (2001) describe as the unseen processes aligned with women's work that maintain the internal workings of a university —teaching and administration.

When taken together the two key ideas explored in this section — the normalization of male culture and female embodiment — draw attention to negotiated performances within a context of phallogentric smog within the MU academic workplace. Practices outlined by the women in this study have consequences that result in their positioning on the margins of MU because of the way in which ‘difference’ is responded to in this workplace. Differences presented by women on this study are often responded to by MU in ‘universal’ ways: if difference is acknowledged then women are seen as ‘different’ from men, differences among women are often overlooked and multiplicities or ‘multiple mes’ are completely ignored. The women in this study feel their ‘difference’; for example, Veronica is “very conscious of being a woman”, while Alice states she is:

[a]cutely aware of being female, but not just with the faculty, within the university structure, the whole promotions process and all that sort of stuff, makes you very aware of being a girl in a man’s world. (Alice)

For these women this ‘difference’ is negative and highlights a phallogentric organization that privileges hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995, 2002). This leads to a normalization of male culture, more specifically, as Eveline (1994) suggests, a normalization of male advantage. The connection among the ‘market’, the corporate world and the university serves to enhance the masculine space where the imagery of suits, money, men and compulsory heterosexuality combine to reinforce norms and expectations that tell us who can perform legitimately and correctly in this space. This ‘masculine’ space provides a context in which the phallogentric smog hovers and thickens, and where competition, market forces and consumerism — all key concepts

associated with globalization — can operate freely, which in turn requires a certain type of ‘good academic’ — a male body that performs with specific technologies, does institutionally endorsed research, has a PhD and has a wife to ‘care’ for him.

#### **6.4 Review of the chapter**

In this chapter I have argued that there are two levels of resistance: the personal, associated with the private or subjectivity; and the public, associated with the workplace. This then enabled me to demonstrate the gap between the hope that feminists had for transformation and the actual happening in a specific site. The chapter signals the need to be cautious in celebrating the distance that transformation has travelled; this is because of the very real possibility of masking the persistent systemic and systematic discrimination that occurs within MU — that is, the very thing that feminists hope to make visible. It is the insidious nature of underground discourses forming the micro-politics of the institution that work against an inclusion of difference.

The sub-question addressed in this last analysis chapter asked what, if any, resistance and transformation could be identified. In answering this sub-question I have identified the presence of different layers of resistance where the women in this study can be potentially transformative at the subjective level but this is not taken into the workplace level. Their ability to be transformative at the subjective or personal level does not automatically equate to acts of resistance and transformation in their workplace situations. Therefore the notions of transformation, and indeed of resistance, can be seen as complex and influenced by discourses that range in power, intensity and endurance.

So while I was able to demonstrate some resistance to phallocentric discourses, notably through the women's choice of working in a non-traditional site such as a university, this chapter and this thesis have demonstrated how these women are continually engaging with powerful, masculinist discourses such as economic rationalism, competition and patriarchy that construct a highly charged environment where the stakes are high. Therefore the work of this thesis has identified a gap between the transformative potential of Alice, Madonna, Veronica and Tamaly and the lack of transformation of their workplace.

In this thesis I have drawn attention to the hidden, informal discourses that constitute the women's subordination when they negotiate a workplace that they see as benefiting from their contribution as academic women. These informal discourses assist in the accumulation of phallocentric smog and work behind the scenes to reinforce a non-neutral workplace where embodied discourses construct the sex segregated practices assigning 'legitimate work' to male and female academic bodies. By using the metaphor of the phallocentric smog as a political fiction I can make visible the links among male privilege, female marginalization and the negotiation of power that are on-going in the non-neutral environment of MU. This enables me to argue that, whilst there is some evidence of personal transformation, there is little in the way of evidence demonstrating sustainable workplace transformation. The negotiation of power and lack of sustainable transformation have implications for those women engaging with this environment and these are dealt with in the following and final chapter of this thesis.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SMOG WATCH: EXPOSING THE GAPS

#### 7.0 Overview

In the previous chapter, instead of revealing acts of resistance by the women, what was demonstrated was continuing marginalization of these women as they went about their day-to-day engagements with the academic workplace. I argued, in Chapter Four, that the presence of a lingering EO discourse treats women and men as the same, and, in Chapter Five, that the strong formal and informal discourses construct, then accentuate, gendered differences assigned to men and women; these sets of discourses come together in MU to form part of the phallogentric smog that, in turn, enhances the marginalization illustrated in Chapter Six.

This marginalization was evident in specific gendered performances happening within MU, a context where the women were constrained by the dominant discourses and expectations set out by the university and their own desires as academic women. This context also signals the insidious nature of informal, or underground, discourses that constitute the micro-politics of the institution that, in turn, work to consolidate male privilege rather than an inclusion of difference. So where does this lead?

My intention in this last chapter is to answer this query by drawing together the findings and significance of this thesis and suggesting some new directions to be considered when researching women, academic workplaces and sustainable transformation. I do this by



dividing this last chapter into three sections. In the first section I address the research questions and findings of this research, linking these findings to the significance of the thesis, thus outlining the journey of this thesis. In the second section I revisit my own associated personal journey. The third section states how I see the current situation of women in a more general sense; in other words, where to from here in turning equity from hope into happening. I begin the following section by returning to the research question set out in Chapter One as the starting point of the journey of this thesis.

## **7.1 The journey of this thesis**

Specific avenues were explored at the start of this thesis including: policy documents; particular texts associated with MU; selected literature concerning women, workplaces and universities; formal and informal discourses and practices within MU; and the narratives of four women — Alice, Madonna, Veronica and Tamaly — who generously gave of their time, experiences, thoughts and passion. Without this I would not have been able to present an answer to the research question set out in Chapter One: to what extent is MU inclusive of academic women? I now turn to the findings of this thesis that address this question.

### **7.1.1 To what extent is MU inclusive of academic women?**

Chapter Four focused on three main areas: one, gender reform and the hope that feminists envisaged; two, the approaches to gender equity adopted by MU during the 1990s; and three, the resultant MU policies designed to resist discriminatory and patriarchal discourses. The underlying hope of gender reform was to enable women to enter the

workplace on more equitable terms without the accompanying sexism or prejudice. It was about creating a social conscience and ridding the world of sexism and prejudice based on sex (Brooks, 2003, p. 17). Discourses around gender reform associated with second wave activism can be seen as ambiguous and contradictory in the way that legislative reform firstly constructs women as 'disadvantaged' in the workplace and then uses this legislation in an attempt to 'dismantle' this 'disadvantage'.

But, because of co-option of EO discourses within a masculinist framework, EO can be read, alternatively, as a strategy of marginalization, restricting the entry of academic women to MU by requiring the same kinds of qualifications and experiences as academic men. I argued that what was actually happening here was a continuation of men's "advantage" (Eveline, 1994). This 'advantage' is maintained at MU through a dominant discourse of EO that implies that gender equity has been achieved. The pervasiveness of that dominant discourse is reflected in the statement by Currie *et al.* (2002, p. 4) that "what is surprising is how many people working in universities are in a state of denial about how women are treated in most universities".

My evidence demonstrated that what was happening in this context was an increasing intensity of a 'corporate masculine' culture where only certain men, and some women, can be 'successful' and where the discourses constructing the 'good academic' mirrored the discourses of the business/corporate world. This culture is maintained under the guise of EO promoting/constructing a gender-neutral workplace, where an EEO focus on merit

legitimated the assumption that merit is a neutral and unambiguous term, rather than being something produced by those in powerful positions (Blackmore, 1999, p. 103).

During the late 1980s and 1990s substantial shifts in political ideologies influenced the academic workplace where there was a change to economic rationalist approaches. At the same time EO legislation and policy development were being implemented; as a result there were marginal increases in women in leadership positions (Blackmore, 1999, p. 87). At MU this was experienced in two ways: firstly through the development of equity related policies and initiatives signalling what women, employed at this university, could hope for; and secondly, through the appointment of a female Vice-Chancellor, demonstrating what can be interpreted as a token gesture happening in the senior management ranks.

Managing diversity became a key discourse of the 1990s and early 2000s and it constituted a management response to the structural and cultural change noted above, coupled with the desire to maintain productivity (Morrison, 1992; cited in Blackmore, 1999, p. 101). Currently at MU there is a strong diversity discourse relating only to international full fee paying students, illustrating here the on-going gap between theory and practice among the various cultural groups that form MU. Therefore MU can be seen as a “cultural space” as well as “a site of oppression and a site of resistance, opening a space of contradiction”. (Brooks, 1997a ,1997b)

In Chapter Five I engaged with institutional discourses that constructed the 'good academic', highlighting what was happening for these women in their workplace. While I argued the entry of academic women challenged the traditional representation of the 'academic', the use of universalizing terms such as 'academic' masked the male construct of this subject positioning. At MU teaching is a business activity and becomes valued when associated with entrepreneurial activities; while there is also a desire to attain a high research profile, MU cannot compete with the larger 'sandstone' universities.

Instead MU can be seen to be working towards niche marketing of technologized teaching packages and the attraction of international students to supplement revenue. It also has a primary emphasis on vocational courses as opposed to philosophical courses; these vocational courses are directly tied to industry partnerships through both training and research. Taken together dominant discourses associated with the university's directions create the 'good academic', a construction that is more likely to fit a male body and to consolidate a 'masculine' culture that is not readily inclusive of academic women.

I have argued that, in an era of globalization, increasing economic rationalism and corresponding intensity of the 'masculine' culture, academic women are seen as 'out of place' (McDowell, 1999) except where they complement male academics in gendered roles associated with traditional 'women's work' such as 'caring' and 'teaching', thereby confirming the phallogentric nature of the MU workplace. This means that, while MU can be considered as a site that is not readily inclusive of difference, women are still present, but only on precise terms or conditions.

Coupled with the micro-politics of gendered academic bodies, an economic rationalist discourse and the increasing casualization of the workforce that enhances insecurity and competition, it is possible to argue that the ‘granting’ of access to those who never really expected it can always work to silence voices of resistance — some are so grateful that they do not speak out against any injustice (Rowan, 2000, p. 164), or they work to accommodate institutional demands, as any failure is interpreted as indicative of personal, rather than systemic, shortcomings. In Chapter Six I examined entrenched male hegemony and the micro-politics around teaching and technology through an analysis of the women’s negotiations of their workplace.

The women’s negotiations of specific discourses were and continue to be ‘read’ through their bodies, resulting in differences being addressed in particular ways:

- If difference is acknowledged then women are seen as ‘different’ from men;
- Differences among women are often ignored;
- Multiplicities or ‘multiple mes’ are completely ignored.

This means that performances by the women are always tied to their bodies; clear and precise messages about gender expectations are attached to bodies; and this embodiment has consequences when bodies ‘do’ the ‘wrong’ performance (Lucal, 1999). This has led to specific kinds of performances at MU that made the mapping of — let alone engagement in — transformative processes difficult. This shows the gap between hope that feminists have and what is happening for women, and in particular, the gap between private and public transformation.

### 7.1.2 The gap between private and public transformation

Reviewing literature around the notion of transformation elaborated a gap in this literature between private and public transformation; the uncovering of this gap within the academic workplace became the work of this thesis. This gap meant that, while I could map out potentially transformative practices by the women at the micro-social level of subjectivity, I could not map transformative processes at the macro-social or workplace level.

I have argued that the women in this project can be read against the broad concepts of transformative figurations — and here Braidotti (1994) was helpful. The example of the ‘nomadic subject’ (Braidotti, 1994) is a useful ‘political fiction’ or device for feminists to demonstrate the complexities and differences among academic women. The different performances demonstrate that the notion of ‘Woman’ can be read as a historical construct (Gatens, 1992) and as a cultural fiction; by changing this fiction to a model it can be used to demonstrate moves towards transformation by the women (Braidotti, 1994, p. 164).

The subject positioning ‘academic woman’ is a site to explore feminist desires for cultural transformation (Hills, 1998, p. 127). The academic women in this study can be seen as a contradictory, fragmented representation — both a ‘good woman’ and not a ‘good woman’ and both a ‘good academic’ and not a ‘good academic’ — thus demonstrating the potentially transformative nature of this discursive construction. ‘This meant that, while carefully mapping women’s negative experiences of a university

context, I wanted to seek out the women's stories of any transgressive engagements or counternarratives. This offered both a critical and a creative edge to my analysis whilst continuing to ensure that my exploration of the discourses was anchored in the lived and negotiated worlds of the women participating in the research.

This thesis can be read as a limited counternarrative or act of resistance because it gives women a discursive space to reconcile, interrogate and resist dominant ways of thinking while giving a 'voice' to these women and their knowledges/experiences. It also demonstrated that women are not always able to enact/sustain the kind of transformation that contemporary theorizing on resistance/transformation that had been expected. What this thesis shows is evidence of transformative beginnings, but not so much in the way of transformative results. In the following sub-section I discuss the significance of these findings.

### 7.1.3 Significance of exposing the gaps

This sub-section highlights the significance of exposing the gaps between the broad hope that feminists have and the realities happening for the women in this study. I begin this sub-section by expressing caution when representing academic women as nomadic subjects, because the discursive space associated with this figuration is both risky and ambiguous. The discursive fields in which academic women are located are multiple and contradictory, but this does not suggest that these women are necessarily able to resist and transform these fields, even though they acknowledge dissonance between dominant hegemonic discourses and their own desires. While there is evidence to suggest that the

academic women in this project can be read as nomadic subjects (Braidotti, 1994) — their performances as women indicate the *potential* for transformation — performances as academic women do not entirely, or in many respects even closely, imitate more transformative figurations (see Chapter Six).

As I suggested in Chapter Six, if one follows the logic that informs much contemporary feminist theory it would be reasonable to expect that these performances — as women and as academic women entering non-traditional spaces — would increase in number, gain significance or be present in ways that they would be considered as transformative. I contend that this is not happening. There have been many academic women entering the university workplace for many years now, thus challenging the representation of the academic as a male figuration, but this has not had the effect of transforming the public space of the academic workplace. While counternarratives can be identified in the ways that these academic women engage, resist and transform their personal contexts as women, any transformation of their public contexts is constrained by the powerful dominant hegemonic discourses circulating at MU.

Therefore the complexity of representations around academic women must be acknowledged and, as suggested in Chapter Two, the necessity of carefully and comprehensively unpacking these representations is *precisely because* of women moving into non-traditional spaces such as the university. Moving into non-traditional areas does not automatically equate to transformation of these spaces. I have argued that the academic women on this study are constrained by dominant discourses such as economic



rationalism, patriarchy and embodiment that come together in a regional academic environment. This points to what I have referred to earlier as a kind of phallogentric smog, or as a kind of political fiction, where this smog is the culmination of a 'masculine culture' that intertwines with dominant traditional and essentialist discourses and that works towards inhibiting the transformation of a gendered organization such as MU.

Within this discursive field of the university workplace, academic women are still being positioned in relation to both academic men and institutional demands that see women in traditional gendered relations regardless of how the academic women view their own performances. As detailed in Chapter Two, this positioning has material consequences, resulting in academic women being:

- continually overly represented in the lower ranks;
- on short term or fixed term contracts;
- either overlooked for, or progressing more slowly in terms of, promotion;
- continually under-represented in senior continuing positions (Allen and Castleman, 1995,2001; Burton, 1997).

There is some evidence of the beginnings of transformative practice among the four academic women portrayed in this thesis; however at an institutional level there are various barriers that inhibit conversations around and experiences of cultural transformation. The issue here perhaps revolves around praxis among academic feminism, feminist politics and intellectual space where open and accessible dialogue

between women and men can be made possible in a forum such as the university. As Braidotti (1994) discloses:

It was not until I found some stability and sense of partial belonging, supported by a permanent job and happy relationship that I could actually start thinking adequately about nomadism. Which is not to say that the act of thinking about it actually spelled out its end as a ruling existential habit of mine, but rather this notion became visible and consequently expressible only when I was situated enough to grasp it. (p. 35)

Significantly Braidotti (1994, p. 35) feels the security of a permanent job enables the expression of dissatisfaction and dissonance between her own subjectivity and the traditional discourses of 'Woman'. This spells disturbing implications for those academic women who find their options limited to casual or contract employment; at the same time a permanent job does not always signal security. These implications include:

- a continuation of the systemic discrimination embedded within university procedures and policies from the recruitment stage;
- women who do not conform to a narrow and limiting construction of 'Woman' are discriminated against in subtle ways;
- differences among women and/or men are not recognized;
- a strong workplace discourse of economic rationalism retains a narrow gendered configuration of what a 'good academic' does;

- many women have stepped out of the mould of the ‘good woman’ for the past twenty-five years and entered non-traditional environments but this hasn’t changed the nature of their environment significantly.

This thesis is significant because it shows that not much has changed for women, either at home or in the workplace, and therefore it contests the ‘alleged’ transformative power of women to change their workplace culture. The thesis has drawn attention to the consequences for women of phallogentric discourses such as economic rationalism, patriarchy, globalization and corporatism. More significantly, this thesis has demonstrated that the continuation of sex-based disadvantage is the reality for many women, both despite and because of the enactment and current interpretation of various gender reform interventions such as EO and AA. As such, transformation of the ‘public’, as understood in current feminist post-structural theorizing, is difficult both to enact and to sustain.

Therefore my argument remains that the dominant discourses of MU are more powerful and limiting than is currently fashionable to argue, and, when coupled with the fact that there has been insufficient space for women academics at MU to undo or deconstruct these phallogentric discourses, the transformative process is extremely difficult to map in this environment. What this means for me is that, while some may argue that women may be post-feminist (Hills, 1998; Brooks, 1997b), the context is not post-patriarchy. In the following section I briefly map out my own potentially transformative journey in this thesis.

## **7.2 Revisiting my own personal journey**

In this section I reflect on the way in which this thesis has impacted on my identity as a researcher, a worker, a wife and a woman. This journey has not always been smooth, straightforward or even linear. After finishing an Honours year, I applied to do a PhD in the same faculty with the same supervisor. Although my application was accepted I was then informed that owing to restructuring I could not pursue my area of interest with my supervisor of choice. I had knowledge of downsizing and economic rationalist approaches in organizations such as hospitals and Health Departments in other countries through being employed as a nuclear medicine technologist, but because I worked in a specialized and small profession where people like me were scarce I had never experienced the issue of job insecurity. When the situation of restructuring the faculty was used to exclude me from pursuing my particular research pathway, it was the first time that this kind of workplace change had actually touched me personally. At the same time I felt restructuring had been used as a convenient excuse and that there were micro-politics moving in mysterious ways within the faculty.

I put my candidature on hold and reviewed my options. It was important to me to be immersed in a 'university culture', whatever that may have meant: at that time it was primarily access to the library, other like-minded people and a 'learning space' that connected me to a world where I could be recognized as 'this PhD student'. I guess it was the development of my own critical thinking that became a passion, along with the exploration of ideas; here was a tool to unmask the subtle camouflage of injustice that I could see but not yet explain. While I was looking for a new supervisor I worked with the

Equity Officer on the response to the Review of the AA Legislation. The focus groups provided food for thought about the positioning of women generally and academic women in particular.

I eventually found a supervisor, picked up the PhD and waded through countless topics and areas of interest — all of which were appealing — before committing to a specific issue. While this may sound fairly straightforward and smooth, in reality there are hundreds of hours spent agonizing over the choices that one makes; thousands of articles read that never ended up in the reference list; gallons of tears spilled over the ‘this is too hard’ moments and there are many of those. My epistemological and ontological position signaled a particular pathway of research — that of a post-structural feminist research process — and the values underpinning that process were set out in Chapter Three.

The chapters of this thesis provided a plan of the pathway taken through my research; my negotiations with the women emerged from what Suchman (1987) refers to as “situated action”, where responses can lead into both familiar and unfamiliar spaces. As Rowan (1998, p. 22) reveals, for her “situated action emerges from a specific context and thus can never have the reassuring familiarity of a plan”. Indeed my own journey through this PhD process has been one of unpredictability, uncertainty and dynamic flows.

The subject positioning ‘Teresa’ combines many discursive fields and ventured into many unfamiliar spaces. As Braidotti (1994, p. 5) asserts, “[S]ome of the greatest trips can take place without physically moving from one’s habitat”. I have also had the

privilege of travelling from my habitat. Both within and outside this thesis, I entered spaces that were ‘foreign’ and ‘alien’ and have met people whom I would never have met unless my desire for knowledge, understanding and travel had led me there. This experience showed me the realities for many women were vastly different from my own realities and certainly influenced the ways that I came to see the world of women living in the same geographical space.

Interviewing the women in this research highlighted these differences again. It is also important to acknowledge that women, and men, are embodied creatures who live, work and play with others. This means there are good days and bad days, special days and ordinary days, that all impact on the ways that people do business with one another and the demands that are placed on one another. If I were to write the companion guide to this thesis it would be titled “Five funerals and a wedding” with a postscript entitled “the birth of twins”. These are the kinds of things that remind me that journeys take unexpected turns and that the potholes of life can be climbed.

Throughout this process I have spent time both reflecting on and reconciling my own position in relation to others connected to this thesis, finding this “situated action” (Suchman, 1987) adding another dimension of richness to the analysis of women’s lives. Thus I can say that the research process interweaved both theory and practice and that I, along with the women in this study, have become part of the text. I acknowledge also the use of my ‘self’ as the research instrument, data collection tool and analytical device; this had consequences for the research direction, process and analysis presented. In the

following section I conclude this thesis by drawing attention to possible new directions when researching women, their workplaces and transformation.

### **7.3 Where does this leave women?**

My thesis challenges the feminist suggestion that transformation occurs when phallogentric discourses are made visible and resisted; clearly, from research presented in this thesis, the process is not as simple as that. I argue that what is needed to achieve this transformation is on-going critique of the phallogentric discourses and practices that are deeply entrenched within all layers of Australian society. This involves what Braidotti (1994) refers to as “metabolic consumption” — where issues concerning women’s positioning have to be engaged with, interrogated and consumed — and involves also investigation into the on-going attitudes around those ‘others’ who are seen as different from so-called ‘mainstream’ society. While much of the early feminist research indicated the need for state intervention, via legislative means, to alter messages of sexism and prejudice, later research has shown legislation does not alter cultural attitudes. This early work by feminists was both valuable and important but merely the beginning of the long process of transformation.

I conclude this thesis by contending that the journey towards transformation is both varied and different for each participant at a personal level, and that a similarly varied path lies ahead for workplace transformation. The answer to women’s exclusion is not simply to get more women in — the answer lies in changing the gendered norms and

representations around real women who make up part of these organizations. As Wajcman (1998, p. 160) asserts:

To achieve positions of power women must accommodate themselves to the organization, not the other way around .... Men too find themselves constrained by idealized male constructs and are acutely aware of other men's scrutiny. Not all men endorse or aspire to the dominant male model.

Indicated here is the negotiation of contested terrains among the constructed representation of hegemonic masculinity, men and women working in organizations, and the power of organizations to correct inappropriate norms (Gatens, 1998). It also points to the possibility of transformation as the gap between the ideal and the real, for both men and women, is exposed. At the same time, Wajcman (1998, p. 160) goes on to say: "Organizational re-structuring is having a major impact ... on the nature of the employment relationship itself'. This also points to possibilities of transformation as both men and women negotiate what it means to be a worker in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The changing nature of the workplace offers continued opportunities for research, especially that which explores women entering this sphere and the decisions they need to make about how they engage with the public sphere and negotiate family responsibilities. More significantly, Wajcman (1998) states that:

Women are not responding to the demands of full time work by re-negotiating the 'sexual contract' of marriage. Indeed that option is clearly one that women are backing away from .... Men's refusal to play an equal part in



all forms of domestic labour is one of the key mechanisms through which gender inequalities are reproduced. (p. 164)

This is evident in the ways that some middle class women are contracting out domestic work — such as shopping, cleaning, sending out laundry, the hiring of a nanny and after school care — rather than confronting male power in the home. In other words these women are adopting a male style of ‘work’. For those women not in a position to do this, there are not a lot of ‘choices’. Negotiating the competing and ambiguous discourses around domesticity, motherhood and paid work (Aveling, 2002; Probert, 2002) often results in women putting their careers on hold to accommodate the society in which they live. This signals the continuing need for much more open and vocal debate and research within Australian society about embodiment, identity and positioning in the private and public spheres of both men and women. This means talking about men’s contribution to the home and about issues of men’s domesticity and caring for family members. While some workplaces are embracing the contribution of women, others are yet to follow, showing the need for on-going critique and unmasking of phallocentric discourses. This suggests further research concerning the gap between hope for transformation and the realities happening in Australian society.

I have one last story to tell before ending this thesis. I call this story “The Ecstasy and the Irony” and it concerns my own encounter with phallocentric smog at MU. As I bring this thesis to a close I have begun to think about where to from here for Teresa. I responded to an advertisement (at MU) for a Senior Equity Officer position. The job description was

so perfect I felt it had my name on it. I carefully and comprehensively attended to the selection criteria, asked three key people if they would act as referees and proceeded to put in the application. A month passed and I had not heard anything from the institution. Then suddenly on the Wednesday I had a call from the appointments officer, who said that I had been short listed for the job and asked if I would be available for an interview the following week. I was so excited and apprehensive at the same time — the Ecstasy. This was my first job interview in an academic institution and of course I wanted to be well prepared. I had been told who would be on my interview panel and I was comfortable with the people selected.

On the Friday afternoon I received a curious e-mail from the Director of Staff and Student Services stating:

As a result of discussions yesterday between the University's Senior Managers, it has been decided to make a number of strategic adjustments to our operations across the University. As a result of this decision, it has been decided not to fill the position of Senior Equity and Diversity Officer at this time. Should the University decide to proceed with this position in the future, we would welcome an application from you. Thank you for your interest in the above position and the time and energy you have invested in the process. We apologize for having had to make this decision and for the lateness of the decision. (Director, Staff and Student Services)

I was stunned; this raised the question why was the job axed? On the following Monday afternoon the Director of Equity and Diversity contacted me and in our conversation she stated the reason that the position would not be filled was purely financial — the division had to make a 10% cut to its budget which meant axing the Senior position and converting a lower Equity Officer position to a twelve month contract position — was I interested in this other position? I thought about this situation overnight. It raised two significant issues around women and work and this particular workplace.

The first issue concerned the expectations around the second position; would this job actually end up being the senior job but with less money? From anecdotal evidence many academic women at MU have extraordinarily high workloads, as do many of the men. There seems to be an informal and unofficial expectation that women, for some reason, need to work like slaves in order to show that they are not ‘lacking’ in any way (and this has nothing to do with comparison with male work norms).

The second point concerns the position of staff equity. In order not to lose both positions the Equity and Diversity Office chose to focus on students before staff, a position much more palatable for the university — the Irony. This means that the inequitable positioning of those who ‘educate’ these students and act as role models will continue and possibly become worse. This is likely to become an issue during future enterprise bargaining.

Obviously from the axing of the Senior Equity Officer position senior management at MU perceives that gender is not an issue within its workplace. Conversely the university

chooses to deny the dreadful behaviour towards many of the women academics on staff. This thesis and the stories within it have shown how the *discourses of the everyday* circulating within MU construct and reproduce the continued phallocentric positioning of four academic women. As stated earlier, this signals that women can be read as post-feminist but that post-patriarchy is yet to be achieved. Unmasking the normalizing discursive constructions of both formal and informal institutional discourses makes visible the mechanisms of how women continue to be systematically subordinated and this, in turn, works towards decreasing the gap between the hope and happening in the workplace.

My own moment of resistance to the phallocentric smog at MU was in refusing to be positioned in that kind of job with all its attendant compromises. It is my hope that mapping these and other acts will lead to a heightened awareness of the prevalence of smog in the workplace. This smog needs to be cleared before universities can become smog-free zones where the air is safe and healthy, resulting in a productive rather than destructive cultural space, and in so doing, close the gap between personal and public transformation, enabling a sustainable equitable workplace.

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## **APPENDX ONE: Ethical clearance**



Central Queensland  
UNIVERSITY

## ***HUMAN ETHICS RESEARCH REVIEW PANEL***

### ***CERTIFICATION STATEMENT***


The Human Ethics Research Review Panel is an approved institutional ethics committee constituted in accord with guidelines formulated by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) and governed by policies and procedures consistent with principles as contained in publications such as the joint Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and NHMRC *Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice*.

The Panel has considered the project described in a Request for Ethical Clearance and as detailed in this Statement, and is pleased to grant ethical clearance for the nominated period of certification.

<i>First-Named Chief Investigator:</i>	Dr L Rowan
<i>Title:</i>	Negotiating skills: self image...
<i>Clearance Number:</i>	99/9-97
<i>Period of Certification (see note below):</i>	15.9.99 – 30.9.01

#### ***NOTES:***

- (1) This statement remains current for the period of certification on the condition that the research techniques and procedures as described in the approved *Request for Ethical Clearance* and attendant documentation remain unchanged. **Any** revisions or amendments must be brought to the attention of the Panel which will determine whether ethical clearance should continue.
- (2) A further *Request for Ethical Clearance* must be considered and approved by the Panel in order for the project to continue after the end-date noted above. Where research is conducted without a current certification statement, an investigator will be in breach of the University's *Code of Conduct for Research* and the subject of allegations of research misconduct.

*for*   
 Assoc Prof Robert Ho  
 Chair, Human Ethics Research Review Panel  
 Date: 14.9.99

*Any written information provided to a participant or subject must contain the statement, "Please contact Central Queensland University's Research Services Office (tel 07 4930 9828) should there be any concerns about the nature and/or conduct of this research project."*

**NOTE:** Add to the Consent Form, that observation forms part of the study and participants should agree to that observation.