

# ***Chapter Three***

## ***The Context of Gender Equity***

Over the last twenty years, a number of social changes have occurred that provide a particular social context within which processes of gender equity are practiced. The values, norms and practices senior management women hold towards gender equity are situated within the same social context. This chapter will discuss the following factors that may effect the way in which senior management women perceive gender equity: the inherited biases and contradictions within and between gender equity programs such as Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action, the ‘sameness versus difference’ debate within feminist philosophy, the ‘backlash’ against gains made by women, the increasing ‘economic rationalisation’ of both private and public sector organisations, and the lack of ‘shared understanding’ about equity programs. These social and philosophical factors are seen as a precursors to the discussion of values, norms and practices pertaining to gender equity.

Various forms of public policy have been implemented in order to address the problem of gender equity in organisations. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Affirmative Action, and Sex Discrimination legislation have different purposes and are tailored to differing problematic aspects of gender inequity and organisational types. In order to understand the social structural context in which senior management women reflect on gender equity it is important to document both the changes that have brought about the broad strategies implemented to address gender inequity in the workplace and the current practices of those strategies. This will provide a reference point from which senior management women can speak about their experiences with these policies.

Australian legislative initiatives instigated to address gender inequality, such as the Sex Discrimination Act, Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action, arose from the ideology of the women’s movement and were originally developed by feminists, or ‘femocrats’ working in the Commonwealth public service (Yeatmann, 1990a). The policies set out in Affirmative Action appear to contradict the ‘merit principle’ which is part of the philosophical basis of the liberal-judicial idea of ‘free enterprise’. Because this philosophy underpins the operation of most private sector organisations, a ‘backlash’ mentality against Affirmative Action

has arisen in reaction to the philosophical conflict (Faludi, 1992). At the same time as this 'backlash' was occurring, a fragmentation in the philosophy of the women's movement into the dual perspectives of 'sameness versus difference' had the effect of confusing the goals and purposes of feminism (Bacchi, 1990). These changes have all taken place within the framework of an increasing trend towards 'economic rationalism', particularly in the regulated environment of the public service sector of the economy (Pusey, 1991).

Therefore, a combination of the following social changes has occurred that could effect the values, norms and practices of senior management women towards gender equity.

- The inherent contradiction embedded within the liberal-judicial philosophy of the merit principle with regard to gender equity programs.
- Inconsistencies and contradictions between legislation implemented to bring about gender equity, such as the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, the Affirmative Action Act, and the Sex Discrimination Act.
- The divisions within the feminist movement based upon the 'sameness/ difference' debate.
- The 'economic rationalism' inherent in private sector organisational practices and on the increase in public sector organisations.

### ***3.1: The Inherited Bias of Gender Equity Programs***

The historical antecedents of gender equity programs such as Sex Discrimination, Equal Employment Opportunity, and Affirmative Action have ramifications for their effectiveness. Programs implemented to address gender equity are based upon liberal-judicial ideological assumptions whose philosophical roots arose from the era of the Enlightenment. Until the emergence of the suffrage movement in the late 19th century, issues of equality for women under the law were largely ignored. However, the philosophical foundations laid by the Enlightenment era spawned both the suffrage movement and the ability for women to inherit property. As the ideological forerunner to equity principles, the philosophical roots of the period of the Enlightenment run deep in the collective consciousness of Western democracies (Burton, 1991).

Since the Second World War, however, developments in feminist thought have debated the efficacy of the liberal-judicial principles of equity for their ability to counter persistent gender, race and minority group discrimination (Burton, 1988; Pateman, 1988). French feminist de Beauvoir (1974) was the first to conceptualise women as the 'other' in a male world stage in her seminal work 'The Second Sex'. De Beauvoir's theory was further developed upon by 'second

wave' feminists such as Firestone (1970) and Millet (1970). The challenge these feminists posed to the ideology of the Enlightenment was that of a separate and different women's experience that pre-dated the era of the Enlightenment.

The inherent difficulty with equity principles and their application to gender equity programs, then, has been the gender biased basis of their central principle: that of merit. Situated in the debates arising from the period of the Enlightenment, principles of merit, justice and equality were based on the elaboration of a masculinised 'norm' or standard that reinforced sex inequality. According to Burton, the merit principle is not only inherently biased towards a stereotypical masculine standard but is a principle that both women and men have internalised (Burton, 1991, p21).

The prominence of a masculine standard of merit has had the practical effect of placing many women in the position of experiencing a double-work-day burden of both career and domestic duties. Importantly for this study, any access to equity for women is divided along class lines. For example, there are fewer barriers to equality in education and employment for middle-class women with the money to enable them to find an individual solution to the problems of child care and domestic labour than for working class women. For working-class and ethnic minority women who do not have these resources, individual solutions are not available (Charles, 1993, p234). The diverse class-based 'interests' of women is a major reason why the women's movement is so divided and increasingly lacking in support.

Like Burton, Pateman (1988) documents the fact that contemporary notions of the individual, and by extension, of free contract, express a masculine presumption that treats the body as separable from the self. One implication of this is that when feminists contest previous theories of what is appropriate to men, they must be wary of the concepts they bring to their aid. Most importantly, they should resist the impulse towards denying that sex matters. Sexual differentiation is already writ large in political theory, in a manner that has so far served men. The solution, according to Pateman, is not to eliminate all such references, but to recast the story with both sexes on stage. Human identity is sexually differentiated, and exists in a bodily form. Those who seek to deny the body, who deal only in the abstraction of 'the individual' or 'the citizen', who think it should make no difference whether these individuals are women or men, will be writing in one sex alone as their standard. Women can be encompassed on an equality with men only if sexual difference is first of all acknowledged (Pateman, 1988, cited in Barrett & Phillips, 1992, p12).

Other feminist theorists dispute the acknowledgment of gender difference on philosophical grounds. (Collins, 1991, p237; Kennedy & Mendus, 1987; Ramazanoglu, 1989, p61) They assert that the liberal-judicial assumption that the individual subject is the source of self-knowledge, can serve as a justification for existing social relations and mask the reality of diversity that exists in everyday relations for each individual. Consequently, the domination of women as a group is masked behind the belief that if I as rational sovereign subject freely choose my way of life on the basis of my individual rational consciousness which gives me knowledge of the world, then I am not dominated. Oppression is ultimately reduced to a subjective psychological state, that of, 'feeling oppressed'.

The difficulty with theories based on women's essential difference from men is that they are locked within a dichotomous form of thinking that characterises Western liberalism. Far from challenging stereotypical imagery of masculinity and femininity the celebration of women's difference accepts the dichotomies of Western liberal thought which the women's movement was originally seeking to transcend. According to Weedon (1987, p84), it is necessary to begin to deconstruct the terms of liberal-judicial discourse in order to see what it takes for granted, what it excludes, and how we might offer an alternative theorisation of subjectivity and language which is more open to radical change.

The liberal-judicial answer to the question of how we form our ideas about ourselves is from experience. Experience is prior to language but requires language in order to be communicated to other people. Experience is also seen as authentic because it is guaranteed by the full weight of the individual's subjectivity. Weedon (1987) uses the example of consciousness-raising, a communication technique used by feminists, to show that, contrary to liberal-judicial belief, experience is not something which language always reflects. In so far as it is meaningful, experience is constituted in language. Language offers a range of ways of interpreting our lives that imply different versions of experience. In consciousness-raising it is possible to interpret difficulties, problems and inadequacies not as the effect of individual, personal failings, but as the result of socially produced structures. Such structures maintain a division of labour by sex and, together with particular norms of femininity and masculinity, subordinate most women and minority groups to white, heterosexual, Anglo-Saxon men. By recognising that experience is open to contradictory and conflicting interpretations, the idea that language is transparent and expresses already fixed meanings is called into question.

Similarly, Mills (1989, p44) suggests that organisational change should be addressed through, among other things, a raising of people's consciousness about the kind of discriminatory reality construction they are involved in. However, this should be done without losing sight of the overall need for social change. The reflexivity of individual thought processes required to bring about fundamental organisational change suggests that methods based on both the individual and the organisation are required. In the next chapter I will discuss theoretical paradigms that encompass the importance of reflexive thought as central to the explanation of an individual's ability to bring about social change.

Because equity principles are based upon the philosophical foundations of liberalism, they find themselves in the quandary of attempting to redefine a system using the existing 'flawed' systems. The difficulty in changing the existing social structure to bring about increased gender equity is the fundamental meaning underlying the philosophy of equity. Meanings based upon the rights of the 'free-thinking individual', a concept that predominantly refers to a stereotypical masculine standard, exclude many women. The ideology of the rights of the 'free-thinking individual' is also the basis for the ideology behind free enterprise late capitalism. Therefore, the two paradigms form a tight ideological bind arising out of both late capitalism and patriarchy simultaneously that is most pervasive at senior management levels of society.

Liberal feminists largely attempt to alter or reform the structure of their workplaces from within through individualistic means such as mentor systems or networking instead of undertaking the larger task of challenging the ways in which the current systems and practices operate. Yeatman (1990) points out that liberal feminism was often a voice for change in the past because it made claims for women's right to participate in established public life. For example, to vote, own property, or to work outside the home. These activities challenged the society's entrenched definition of woman as a domestic being and as patriarchal property. Now, however, when most of the legal barriers to women's public activity have been successfully challenged, and when entry into public life has come to mean acceptance of the rules of the game of bureaucratic discourse, this is no longer true. Yeatman points out that liberal feminism (or equality feminism) used to be a voice raised against the dominant discourse. However, it has now largely become a voice subservient to that discourse. Yeatman concludes that the utility of various liberal reforms should be evaluated on the basis of their ability to challenge, not simply to extend, the language and the practice of bureaucratic capitalism (Yeatman, 1990).

The ideological underpinnings of liberal principles not only do not possess the revolutionary potential to challenge existing power hierarchies, they also allow for binary opposites to develop. Liberal individualism denies difference by positing the self as a solid, self-sufficient unity, not defined by or in need of anything or anyone other than itself. Its formalistic ethic of rights denies difference by levelling all such separated individuals under a common measure of rights (Young in Nicholson, 1990, p15). This type of theorising from the 'wrong' to the 'right' ideal type of society reinforces binary opposite thinking and denies diversity. Dobson describes the polarising tendency of liberal democratic processes: 'The dominant set of modes and practices needs an opposition against which to define itself and with respect to which to judge itself. In this sense the polarity that opposition sets up can help to sustain and reproduce that which it opposes' (Dobson, 1990, p147).

Dichotomous polarities such as the debate between equality and difference within feminism are self-defeating because they emerge as reactions to the dominant (patriarchal) set of modes and practices and can therefore reinforce those dominant structures. The debate between equality versus difference, discussed in the next sub-heading, is centred in binary thinking and therefore poses an inherent philosophical problem for the practical application of women's diverse needs.

The underlying foundations of the principles of merit and equal opportunity are inherently flawed. Based upon a masculine standard of the 'unencumbered' individual imbued with equal rights and privileges enshrined in law, the ideal of the 'free thinking' individual is outside of the everyday experience of many women. Solutions to gender inequity that concentrate on the need to change the behaviour of individual women in order to fit this 'biased' model of equality subject women to gender role conflicts, based on the 'difficulties' associated with being female, and cannot adequately address the different and specific needs of women.

Kanter (1977) also documents how an emphasis upon the individual model of change in organisations reproduces male advantage. The emphasis placed upon the 'individual agent' has the effect of deflecting blame for organisational failure or ineffectiveness onto individuals within the organisation and not on the inherently dysfunctional structures, mainly hierarchical and bureaucratic, which make up the organisation. Kanter eschews individual models of change in favour of a critical look at the way systems of work are organised. By concentrating on the underlying causes of organisational behaviour it is easier to uncover the way organisations systematically make some people 'look good' and others 'look bad.'

Use of versions of the individual model inevitably leads to the conclusion that 'women are different' and serves to reinforce the present structure of organisations and the one-down position of women within them. Individual model-thinking leads women to believe that the problem lies in their own psychology, and it gives organisations a set of excuses for the slow pace of change. But responses to work are a function of basic structural issues, such as the constraints imposed by roles and the effects of opportunity, power, and numbers. Attention to these issues would require organisations and not people to change (Kanter, 1977, p261).

Like Kanter, Ferguson (1984) critiques legislation such as Affirmative Action and Equal Employment Opportunity as reforms that often benefit individual women, but that do little to challenge the larger system or to make further change likely. Liberalism, she says, upholds an argument that 'equal rights entail equal responsibilities' for all citizens which is grounded in the abstract conceptual categories of judicial-legal discourse. However, the actual public domain within which these rights and responsibilities take their meaning is a barren bureaucratic realm, where there are few genuine opportunities for the collective, public activity that is properly called citizenship. Furthermore, if liberal principles of equality are taken to the extreme she suggests that women should be in equal numbers to men in the military. This form of thinking is destructive, claims Ferguson, because it does not attempt to 'debunk and demystify the claims of the dominant discourse but perpetuates them by collaborating in their pretensions' (Ferguson, 1984, p193-196).

As we saw in Chapter Two, research on organisations reveals the entrenched practices of organisations that reproduce gender inequity. Hunter suggests that:

It is now well recognised that structural discrimination arises from the fact that organisational norms, rules and procedures, used to determine the allocation of positions and benefits, have generally been designed, whether deliberately or unreflectively, around the behaviour patterns and attributes of the historically dominant group in public life (Anglo-Australian, able-bodied, heterosexual males) (Hunter, 1992, p5).

Marshall (1995b) also points out that often-espoused change in organisations is superficial in its effects because organisational cultures are 'multi-layered'. This means that surface layers of visible symbols, artefacts and behaviours are underpinned by values that are, in turn, underpinned by basic assumptions about the nature of truth, reality, human relationships and so

on. Furthermore, whilst the influence of these values are profound they are not readily available to conscious reflection. Consequently, organisational cultures can be very resilient and accommodate major challenges without significant movement. In fact, the complexity of an organisation protects it from change and hence traditional, linear, organisational development models of change are woefully inadequate. What is required are complex and subtle theories of organisational and social change that are appreciative of resilience, systemic dynamics and covert and overt power processes.

### ***3.2: The 'Sameness' versus 'Difference' Debate***

My initial research question was: who composes the elite women in Australia and what kind of policies do they pursue? A similar question was posed by Chafetz (1988, p228), within the epilogue to her theory on gender equity, as an important question for any research on gender equity to address. Chafetz proposes that for the sake of gender equity, women must constitute their fair share, about half, of those who occupy elite roles. 'For the sake of the future of our species and planet, traditional feminine values must be incorporated into the policies pursued by elites' (Chafetz, 1988, p228). A large body of feminist writing arising from the second wave of feminism in the early 1970's in the USA, claims that women, by their very nature, are more caring and considerate than men (Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Frieze *et al.*, 1978; MacKinnon, 1982). According to these writers, an increased and equal participation of women at the highest levels within society will make a difference in the quality of decision-making in the world. (Gordon, 1991).

Gilligan's (1982) work is renowned for positing a fundamental difference between the sexes. Conclusions from her research showed that a normative moral justification is typical of boys behaviour and that this is contrasted with the individualised, more contextual moral justification of girls. Di Stefano (1990) highlights the ambiguities that are accepted as part of the feminist position within contemporary Western feminism.

At issue are a linked set of theoretical and strategic questions concerning the enterprise of feminist theory and the kinds of political demands and activities that feminists should pursue on behalf of women. Those who believe that gender differences are significantly basic (in the modernist sense that they are strong conventions which help to constitute men and women as incommensurably different subjects) are more likely to pursue a politics of difference which can speak to women's alienated (with respect to dominant, male-stream culture) but also potentially critical identity and be employed on behalf of a

reconstituted, non-masculinist social order. Those who do not see gender as basic in this deep and constitutive sense are more likely to argue for a politics of equality based on some presumption of eventual, attainable, and desirable androgyny; that is, on the basis of an identity which transcends gender difference (Di Stefano, 1990, p65).

Bacchi (1990, p248) also identifies two distinct positions of feminists, one she identifies as the position of 'sameness' or equality with men, and the other as the position of 'difference' from men. Bacchi suggests the two different positions have divided the political strategy of the movement. Criticising the 'women as superior construct' as primarily a metaphor for a political alternative that remains poorly defined, Bacchi believes this position represents disillusionment with the world as it is today and offers an inadequate program for social change based upon a vague hope that women will make a difference. Bacchi uses the example of the Sears discrimination case in the US to show deleterious effect of the essentialist nature of the 'difference' perspective. Charged with inequities in their pay scales for women and unequal ratios of women within certain areas of the company, Sears lawyers evoked the 'natural difference' debate in court proceedings and managed to overturn the charges of discrimination against the firm.

Bacchi makes the point that describing women's difference from men as a viable alternative to providing real answers to the social problem of gender inequity undermines the political analysis of social arrangements that is a necessary function of social change. She also criticises the 'difference' perspective for investing false hope in the concept of 'women' conceptualised as a single pan-cultural, trans-historical identity. The concerns related to the 'difference' perspective are the way in which it homogenises women's diverse experiences and the fact that it offers no clear program for change. Wolf has criticised the 'difference' perspective for undermining a women's right to feel comfortable in powerful positions.

The female psyche still harbours great ambivalence about claiming power. Often women's fears are legitimate: they come from seeing power used harmfully.

Women must understand what leads them to view power, as a taboo, unfeminine substance. Women can't change their world until they feel at ease with using power, and with understanding how powerful they already are. Self-esteem is not limited to feeling confident about oneself. The step past that is feeling confident to change the world (Wolf, 1993, pp249-250).

The most potentially damaging negative effect of the 'difference' perspective, however, is the potential of the position to be used against women as in the example of the Sears case already discussed. Segal warns that,

The real problem with the 'new feminism' which sees women as essentially virtuous and men as essentially vicious is that it serves the forces of reaction as surely as it serves the forces of progress and it remains imprisoned within the ideas of sexual polarity which feminism originally aimed to challenge (Segal, 1987, cited in Charles, 1993, p237).

In attempting to offer an alternative for future feminist analyses Bacchi (1990, p251) suggests increasing our political understanding by focusing upon the varieties of masculinity and femininity, the ways in which they are expressed, and the political uses they serve. She also warns that unless we find ways to challenge and change the masculine behavioural norm, women will face the options of mimicking it or abandoning the places where it regulates behaviour.

In an attempt to show the inadequacy of a focus upon the individual model of change to bring about gender equity, feminist debates have fragmented into plural discourses that leave themselves open to mis-understanding and continual challenge. These changes have shaped the social environment from within which senior management women discuss their values, norms and practices towards gender equity and feminism. Combined with the inherited bias towards male advantage within equity principles and the divisions within feminist thought, the confusing and contradictory practices of EEO and Affirmative Action legislation can also cause uncertainty regarding the social context of gender equity.

### ***3.3: Background to the Introduction of Gender Equity Legislation***

The current Sex Discrimination, Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action policies in Australia arose from a larger international agenda of equity. Inequities in pay scales between men and women became more obvious in the post war period with the changing role of women in the workforce both in Australia and overseas. The International Labour Organisation (ILO) developed a number of conventions on equality of opportunity with its first Article posted as early as 1953. In 1975 the United Nations attempted to redress the problem of discrimination in its Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

There have been obvious differences in the intent and implementation of anti-discrimination, Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action legislation. In 1975 the Commonwealth Public Service Board adopted Equal Employment Opportunity policies and an EEO Bureau was established to assist with *voluntary* implementation of EEO principles in Commonwealth government departments. At the same time as changes were being made within public sector organisations, a policy discussion paper of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet of 1984 recommended that 'extra measures' were required to improve the status of women in private sector organisations. Recommendations for change were brought about because even though the principle of equal employment opportunity appeared to have widespread acceptance by the early 1980s, voluntary implementation of EEO programs was considered disappointing by the Australian government. Hunter (1992) argues that the basic problem with EEO legislation is the inherent acceptance of homogeneity written into the legislation. If everyone is measured against dominant norms, those norms will tend to favour members of the dominant group and to disadvantage members of 'outsider' groups.

The strict equal treatment model does not question dominant norms so long as they do not make overt distinctions between different groups. Where existing policies and practices appear 'neutral', it simply defines equal treatment by reference to them. The only way that outsiders can effectively compete in this situation is to try to discard their differences and behave more like members of the dominant group. This is why some critics argue that equal opportunity laws based solely on the strict equal treatment model of equality are 'assimilationist' (Hunter, 1992, p5).

This 'assimilationist' character of EEO programs has ramifications for the individualistic types of change inherent within organisations. Companies have attempted to get more women into senior management positions by encouraging them to have higher aspirations, greater levels of commitment, to work harder, and be prepared to accept more responsibility, attributes that have traditionally been associated with male career progression. Concentration on these attributes ignores the need to question promotion pre-requisites, or to devise proposals for compensating career time lost on maternity leave, or to institute child-care arrangements, or to explore ways of making management a more attractive proposition for women. In many cases employers have too readily assumed that only the existing ways of doing things can satisfy their needs and the inevitability of existing structures have rarely been subject to re-examination and rethinking' (Hunter, 1992, p5).

Burton (1991) and Faludi (1991) have documented the 'backlash' that occurs when these entrenched practices are challenged. The backlash effectively undermines the redefinition of complex and institutionalised discriminatory workplace practices. Burton describes the backlash against EEO as fear based. Not fear of more competition from women for jobs and promotional opportunities, but fear that the aspects of the job from which men gain most satisfaction such as, wheeling and dealing, feeling powerful and important from the accumulation of the experiences of exerting influence, will be those that change the most with effective EEO programs. This suggests that occupational segregation is less a matter of women's preferences and choices as a reflection of the power and status relationships between men and women (Burton, 1991, p6).

The initial intent of Affirmative Action legislation was 'to begin the slow process of dismantling deeply embedded discriminatory barriers to provide increased opportunities for women at work' instead of dealing with individual cases of discrimination brought before the courts under the Sex Discrimination Act (Davis, 1990, p4). However, no one could foresee the difficulties in implementing the 'extra measures' proposed by the government of the day.

### ***3.4: Effectiveness of EEO and Affirmative Action Programs***

Concern over the introduction of the Affirmative Action policy was expressed by groups such as the Business Council of Australia who saw the legislation as extra work for their organisations and increased State control of their freedom to 'hire and fire'. In a controversial monograph, 'Affirmative Action: The New Discrimination' (1985), Sydney law academic Dr Gabriel Moens argued that Affirmative Action was really reverse discrimination, aiming for equal results not equal opportunity. The goals and targets written into the legislation, argued Moens, were indistinguishable from quotas because of administrators' keen interest in statistical outcomes. The more surprising resistance to Affirmative Action policy came from EEO coordinators and practitioners who opposed the legislation because they thought it undermined the rationale they had been using to convince organisations to accept and implement EEO policies. Overall, the resistance towards Affirmative Action programs in private sector organisations was vocal and effective. One consequence of this has been a much greater success rate of women gaining senior executive positions in the public service than those in the private sector as we have seen from statistics quoted in Chapter One.

Research undertaken to measure the effectiveness of EEO and Affirmative Action has been sparse and complicated by the complexity of the sampling methods required. In 1990 the then

Director of the Affirmative Action Agency commissioned a broad review of the program. Three research studies were undertaken from 1990 to 1992 in Australian organisations to ascertain the knowledge of and attitudes towards, Affirmative Action and equal employment opportunity.

The findings showed that, compared to men, women had more positive attitudes towards Affirmative Action. Managers, however, did not have significantly more positive attitudes than non-managers. The researchers concluded that the low level of non-management awareness of Affirmative Action meant that there had been little attempt by companies to disseminate the information to all employees. Overall, these findings raise the question of whether we can have confidence that the reports from companies are providing a true and correct picture of the nature of the Affirmative Action program.

The findings of this survey would give us serious reason to doubt that this is the case. What emerged from the review process was that although there was generally a high compliance with the reporting requirements of the Act, little was known about the quality and effectiveness of programs developed and implemented at the organisational level (Employment Research Group, 1992, p20).

Cockburn (1991) demonstrates how the achievement of gender equity is affected by short and long term views of the broad and comprehensive agenda. Short term views focus on non-discriminatory recruitment in employee selection while longer term views relate to structural organisational change away from hierarchies. Cockburn's approach seeks to dismantle the dichotomy as to whether EEO serves the interests of women and of management by showing that men often saw EEO in terms of the limited agenda, while women tended to see EEO as being about more fundamental and long term change. Cockburn concludes that it is necessary to secure support from senior managers (irrespective of the limited agenda they see) and to form networks supportive of a more transformative agenda (Cockburn, 1991, cited in Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b, p60).

Marshall (1995b, pp4-5) highlights the compromised position of EEO initiatives in organisations. She points out that they are much less likely to be linked to valued organisational goals, be adequately funded, be championed, and be supported through widespread communication and training. This view is supported by interviews conducted by Sinclair (1994) with male Australian CEO's. Their attitudes varied between being willing to bring about fundamental and

far-reaching change to address gender equity or to doing the very least required of them to satisfy the legislative initiatives.

The success of EEO and Affirmative Action programs is also undermined by the fact that the responsibility of the programs is 'devolved' to (mostly female) coordinators outside of critical cost center areas of organisations. Ferguson (1984, pp193-196) highlights how this has the effect of rendering EEO and Affirmative Action programs powerless within the organisational structure. 'EEO and Affirmative Action offices have become a bureaucratic safety valve for organisations, a place where women and minority groups fight over the crumbs'. Crosby (1994, p13) suggests that, apart from the difficulties that arise from the lack of knowledge and awareness of Affirmative Action programs, there are three major reasons why Affirmative Action initiatives are problematic. Firstly, they focus upon deficiencies, second, the policies disturb expectations, and thirdly, they pose a threat to individualism, interfering with self-congratulations. Likewise Bacchi (1996, p17) believes the main reason why Affirmative Action programs languish in organisations is that they are a response to the inadequacies of anti-discrimination legislation and therefore suffer from being situated in an anti-discrimination discourse and the limitations of that discourse. Poiner and Wills (1991, pp59-64) document the complexity of the entrenched resistance to Affirmative Action by describing seven different possible types of resistance, none of which are openly acknowledged.

After reviewing the Affirmative Action program in 1992 the Lavarch Committee inquiry into Equal Opportunity for Women concluded that the Affirmative Action Agency was under-funded, that companies with forty employees or more ought to be covered by the legislation, and that sanctions should be strengthened through the introduction of contract compliance (Bacchi, 1993, p36). As a result of this review, the Affirmative Action Agency and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission made changes to the Affirmative Action Act and the Sex Discrimination Act to *extend and clarify* the roles and responsibilities of employers under the Affirmative Action Act. The changes introduced dealt with issues of coverage, contract, flexibility of reporting for those organisations that have a good record of Affirmative Action, and the raising of the status of the Affirmative Action agency to a statutory authority. Changes to the Sex Discrimination Act took the following form: an extension of the Act to cover new industrial awards, the prohibition of dismissal on the grounds of family responsibilities, a sexual harassment complainant need no longer demonstrate disadvantage, victimisation complaints could now be dealt with by conciliation rather than as criminal offences, group complaints could now be brought forward, and registration of determinations made under the Sex Discrimination

Act can now be filed with the Federal court. (Affirmative Action Agency and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1992) These changes were introduced to combat the individualistic method of addressing gender equity inherent in the Sex Discrimination Act and the related lack of success such legislation has in changing the systemic nature of limited opportunities for women in organisations. In comparison with the Sex Discrimination Act, however, the Affirmative Action Act is an attempt at a systemic and structural correction of gender bias on a continuing program basis rather than an individualistic solution (Crosby, 1994, p24).

The most recent review of the Affirmative Action Act in 1997 instigated by the Liberal/ National Coalition federal government in Australia has reversed these changes. The objectives of this review were designed to investigate and remove the 'pressures' on business as a result of the legislative requirements (Affirmative Action Agency, 1999b, p1). The subsequent government response to the review provided an outcome specifically tailored to the needs of business rather than the structural changes required to bring about gender equity. The recommendations clearly diminish the powers and reporting requirements of the legislation (Affirmative Action Agency, 1999c, pp1-6). The Australian government's response is contrary to the research and literature which suggests that the Act has not achieved what it was designed to achieve and that stronger measures be introduced. The Australian government has ignored this research.

The methods formally implemented by Affirmative Action legislation and Equal Employment Opportunity legislation have been legislative and policy driven rather than outcome driven in their approach. Both the Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action legislation have attempted to correct any gross gender imbalance with an emphasis upon merit based selection methods of employment within organisations. Apart from the modicum of success that these programs have enjoyed they have major drawbacks. Firstly, they have only focused upon organisations with more than 100 employees and, secondly, their broad agenda and legislative nature have been institutionalised (and in some cases even marginalised) within organisations, becoming a vehicle of the bureaucratic process rather than active programs of change (Burton, 1991, p30). Consequently, the term 'Affirmative Action' has become rhetoric that is widely viewed as a form of positive discrimination for women. However, the terms of reference for the program are loose and provide little indication as to how change is to come about. In fact, along with its loose terms of reference, the program has the unintended consequence of suggesting that the methods for addressing structural restraints which discriminate against women in the workforce, such as child care, maternity/paternal leave, permanent part-time employment and

'special' training courses for women, are added bonuses for women. In fact, they should be considered part of an employee's normal work conditions (Bacchi,1993, p37).

Due to the fact that organisational structures embody existing distributions of value and power through hierarchies in how work is organised, they have the effect of channelling communication and access to resources, knowledge, clients, personnel and decision-making. Understanding the barriers to EEO and developing strategies to address them requires communication across existing channels. However, research conducted by the Affirmative Action Agency indicates dissatisfaction with consultation processes with employees and unions and little discussion of EEO among managers (Affirmative Action Agency, 1992b, p60). Burton (1988) notes that:

Current organisational practices are based on a range of perceptions, evaluations and decisions which provide women with less access to opportunities than men, and leave them with less 'merit' or capacity to advance. A reassessment of organisational traditions, values and structural arrangements which disadvantage women, combined with a reassessment of the application of the merit principle, are required as positive steps towards the promotion of women's employment opportunities (Burton, 1988, p12).

The difficulty with legislating for the increased representation of women at senior management levels of organisations is that 'merit' is not the only criteria of importance for selecting senior managers. In fact 'merit' is the price of entry into senior management ranks but by no means a sufficient condition for entry into its ranks. As we have seen in Chapter Two, Kanter's (1977) concept of 'homosociability' is as important as a candidate's meritorious background in the selection of senior management staff. The translation of merit into selection procedures means that those on a selection panel must exercise judgement and make subjective assessments of candidates when looking at 'personal qualities' and 'potential for career development'. Although it is unlikely that subjective elements will ever be completely eliminated, one purpose of Affirmative Action is to minimise the effect of stereotypic attitudes in selection procedures.

The Affirmative Action Agency's annual report for 1995-96 reported that there was slow improvement in the number of companies complying with the reporting requirements and that the programs reported as being implemented are improving (Affirmative Action Agency Annual Report, 1995-96). However, Hunter (1992, p289) points out that the reporting rate provides little indication of the extent to which real change has occurred. The problem is that neither the quality, adequacy or implementation of each employer's Affirmative Action program is

expressly under review. A detailed comparison of the terminology used in EEO and Affirmative Action legislation shows the problems that organisations and individuals may encounter in interpreting and implementing the legislation.

### ***3.5: A Comparison of EEO and Affirmative Action Legislation***

Australian gender equity legislation differs according to Federal and State interpretations. The implementation of programs also differs according to the type of organisation in which it operates and the way in which it is implemented in each organisation. Hunter outlines the inconsistencies inherent within EEO legislation.

The patchwork structure of Australian equal opportunity laws can be confusing. With a plethora of legal provisions in different jurisdictions, covering different employers and different grounds of discrimination, imposing different, and sometimes conflicting, requirements, it is easy to get lost in the maze. The complexity of this area reflects traditionally-hallowed divisions in the regulation of employment relations - between public and private sector employment (Hunter 1992, p29).

If inconsistencies do arise from a clash between Commonwealth and State legislation it is usual that the Commonwealth legislation will prevail (Hunter, 1992, p116). This has the effect of allowing Affirmative Action legislation to prevail over anti-discrimination legislation within each State. For example, if a male or group of males was to litigate against any advantages that a woman received for circumstances surrounding her pregnancy, the Commonwealth law pertaining to EEO and Affirmative Action could revoke their objections to women's 'special privileges'. There have been cases in Australia where men have attempted to use anti-discrimination laws to appeal against what they saw as unfair advantages for women. According to Bacchi (1996, p96), the concerns about men's health and the education of boys in Australia have been examples of ways in which existing gender-neutral sex discrimination laws allow men to invoke them against women. The resolution of these cases, one of which was bought before the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, was possible due to the Affirmative Action exemption to sex discrimination. Section 33 states that it is not unlawful to do an act, if its purpose is to provide 'equal opportunities' for specified groups (Ronalds, 1987, cited in Bacchi, 1996, p96). What these cases show is that anti-discrimination law is perceived, and can be used, to challenge laws that specifically attempt to positively redress women's unequal representation at management levels.

Appendix 1 consists of a comparison of the terminology within both the Equal Employment Opportunity legislation for Australian federal government public service employees, and the Affirmative Action legislation that applies to private sector organisations of 100 or more employees. The comparison of the two pieces of legislation highlights the following differences.

Firstly, there are differences in the language used in the two pieces of legislation. The term 'Affirmative Action' itself denotes a type of positive discrimination measure. The Affirmative Action legislation also uses the term 'forward estimates' to suggest targets for private enterprise organisations in an endeavour to increase the number of women in areas where they are few in number.

Second, there is a difference in coverage between the two legislations. The EEO public sector legislation covers workplaces with more than 30 employees, whereas the Affirmative Action private sector legislation covers workplaces with more than 100 employees. Consequently, there is a much broader coverage of the legislation in the public sector.

Third, the reporting lines for the outcomes from both pieces of legislation are different. The reporting requirements are much more stringent for the public sector than they are for private sector organisations. For example, in the public sector reports are presented annually to parliament by each respective Minister on completion. Special reports may be requested by the Public Sector Board or the Minister at any time and the Public Sector Board must report to the Prime Minister on the operation of the provision of the Act. Finally, the Minister or the Board cannot waive the reporting requirements for any Commonwealth Authority. Whereas, the Affirmative Action Agency can waive certain reporting requirements if an employer has established a satisfactory Affirmative Action program or has complied with the other requirements of the Act for three years. The differences between the two pieces of legislation show that their implementation has difficulties that are not being addressed. However, even a highly effective implementation of Affirmative Action legislation may not dramatically increase the proportion of women in senior management due to the highly complex and diverse causes of the 'Glass Ceiling'. The practices relating to EEO or Affirmative Action policy are undertaken within the broader context of public or private sector organisational types. There are different

constraints within each organisational type that contextualise the values, norms and practices of senior management women towards gender equity.

### ***3.6: Bureaucracy, Rationality and Patriarchy***

Weber (1968, p975) refers to bureaucracies as being highly regulated organisations whose forms of regulation are processes of rationalisation that are contradictory to the full and creative development of the society and the individual and thus have a 'dehumanising' effect. There is an inherent contradiction or dilemma in the process of rationalisation within organisations.

Rationalisation is at once enervating disenchantment and enlightening empowerment. It has led to increased freedom and at the same time facilitated internal and external domination on an unprecedented scale. This ambiguity is intended. Rationalisation is at once a terrible situation, the worst evil, and the only human path for liberation (Alexander, 1987, p187).

It is the ambiguous quality to the process of rationalisation that gives bureaucratic organisations the appearance of neutral arbitrators while at the same time they limit informal individual freedoms. Individual needs within bureaucracies are both enabled and at the same time constrained by deeply institutionalised mechanisms of domination. Weber (1968, p957) highlights the importance of hierarchical subordination to the effective control of individuals in a bureaucratic organisation. Functionalists such as Parsons (1960, p181) conceptualise a hierarchical structure as a functional part of an organisation employed 'to get things done in the interest of collective goals'. Weber's conceptualisation of hierarchies as instruments of domination and social control explains the relationship between women and masculine dominated hierarchical control in organisations more accurately.

Although Weber does not separate men and women's experiences of rationality, he clearly points out that the nature and origin of patriarchal domination is more profound than bureaucratisation because it predates the capitalist mode of production (CMP) and is a major factor in its constitution. Weber describes patriarchal domination as 'the formally most consistent authority structure that is sanctified by tradition', and further, '(patriarchal power) is a condition that has always been connected with the oldest typical division of labour, the division between the sexes' (Weber, 1968, p1009). The

study of sexuality in organisations shows how gender can be institutionalized into the hierarchy of an organisation. For example,

Typically, men's sexuality in organisations is a shifting combination of an easily accessible homosociability and an hierarchic, and often explicitly oppressive, heterosexuality. Organisations provide for men available pools of other men to join and become part of, often preferring the company of their own gender, yet also heterosexist in ideology and culture. Alongside this social bonding is the near ubiquity of the association of hierarchy and heterosexuality. (As already noted,) heterosexuality in this society and culture is predominantly hierarchical. The hierarchy of organisations is the most frequent and visible form that hierarchy takes in the public domain (Hearn, 1987, p157).

Weber's theoretical position has been reviewed in the context of modern feminism. Sydie notes that Weber's action framework and definition of power are sex neutral. However, the ideal type model of patriarchy formed a perceived 'natural' structure of male dominance at the base of the other ideal types of domination he identified, including bureaucracy (Sydie, 1987, cited in Palmer, 1996, p184).

Weber's explanation of the ideal 'rational' organisation was that it is devoid of the destabilising effects of indeterminate, uncertain and chaotic events. However, the stereotyping of women's roles situate women 'naturally' outside the social sphere of rationality and consequently unfit for the rigours of organisational life, especially at the decision-making levels of organisations. Kanter's (1977) concept of 'homosociability' shows how much value male managers place on employees with similar values to themselves. Women, however, are placed in the category of the 'incomprehensible' and 'unpredictable', their presence eliciting feelings of uncertainty in male managers (Burton, 1986, p295).

As discussed in Chapter Two, this stereotyping of women's behaviour partly explains the difficulty women have in being accepted into the top levels of management. Therefore, the way in which rationality is stereotypically connected to male behaviour, inherently required by organisations at management level, and reproduced over time, is a major contributing factor in precluding woman from senior management ranks.

In addition to the concept of rationality, Weber also theorised that the social structure of bureaucracy is a specific form of rationalised patriarchy.

Bureaucratic and patriarchal structures are antagonistic in many ways, yet they have in common a most important peculiarity: permanence. In this respect they are both institutions of daily routine. The patriarch is the 'natural leader' of the daily routine. And in this respect, the bureaucratic structure is only the counter-image of patriarchalism transposed into rationality (Weber, 1948, p245).

The State is implicated in the institutionalisation of patriarchal hegemony by virtue of being a regulator of capital. Weber's logic suggests that the patriarchal practices reproduced in private enterprise due to the CMP are similarly reproduced in the public sector. Pringle's research on the dominant/ subordinate relationship between secretaries and bosses supports Weber's claims.

It can be argued that the rational-legal or bureaucratic form, while it presents itself as gender neutral, in fact constitutes a new kind of patriarchal structure. The apparent neutrality of rules and goals disguises the class and gender interests served by them (Pringle, 1989, p88).

Comparing the values and experiences of senior management women working in private sector and public sector organisations will assist in revealing the ways in which gender may be implicated in the rationalisation of patriarchal hegemony in either sector.

### ***3.7: Shared Understandings of Equity Legislation***

Extending Weber's critique of rationalisation, Habermas (1984a) developed the concept of 'communicative rationality' to describe the way in which people are preoccupied with reaching an understanding when they interact. Habermas critiqued Weber's concept of rationality, which he saw as too one-dimensional and hence limited in its view of the operation of reason. Habermas stressed that any adequate theory of society must take into account the fact that action is also based on the achievement of shared understanding (Layder, 1994, p189).

The concept of a shared understanding about gender equity is important to the effectiveness of EEO and Affirmative Action programs. As already discussed, there are generally two ways in which EEO and Affirmative Action programs are viewed. The first, especially in the case of Affirmative Action, is that they appear to run counter to the principle of merit, which is a major

tenet underlying the philosophy of equity. Second, due to the mere existence of these programs it can be mistakenly believed that gender equity has been addressed and further discussion about programs is not required. The lack of knowledge of the details of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action leads to a breakdown in 'shared understandings' and hence a concurrent discontinuation of interaction about the programs. However, as already discussed, dominant cultural practices easily reproduce themselves and require constant effort and communication if embedded discriminatory practices within the culture of organisations are to be successfully challenged.

Connell (1987, pp127-129) sees the State as deeply implicated in the social relations of gender. He describes four arguments that may lead to an understanding of the connections between gender relations and the State. The first is liberal theory that views the State as a neutral arbiter, when in practice it can be captured by interest groups. However, the merit principle upheld in both private and public sector organisations is also implicated in the stalling of progress towards gender equity. Second, the State is mainly an apparatus of regulation and soft domination working through dominant discourses as much as through force. However, this approach does not account for the constitution of interests in sexual politics. Connell's third approach does this by defining the State as a class state producing effects on sex and gender in pursuit of class interests.

However, none of the previous approaches explain why gender effects in particular are essential for the reproduction of capitalism or the maintenance of profit. Connell's fourth approach tackles this by arguing that the State is from the start a patriarchal institution much in the same way as Weber's approach sees it as 'the counter-image of patriarchy transposed into rationality' discussed earlier.

Connell's four approaches explain how gender relations are constituted and reproduced by the CMP in the public sector in a similar fashion as in the private sector. However, in the public sector the presence of the regulatory frameworks to control capital allow for reform mechanisms such as EEO to be implemented and more widely accepted. These reform mechanisms institutionalise the formal right for women to hold power but do not cultivate the sufficient conditions for the informal development of that power.

The informal development of power in bureaucratic organisations is mediated by the fact that the predefined obligations inherent in the bureaucrat's functions relieve them of all personal responsibility and decision-making and enable them to meet any protest with the reply, 'We haven't chosen to do this. We're only enforcing orders'. Whose orders? Whose regulations? One could go back indefinitely up the hierarchy and it would still be impossible to find anyone else to say, 'mine'' (Gorz, 1982, cited in Sayer, 1984, p85).

Statistics outlined in Chapter One show that there is a higher proportion of women at senior management level of the public service than at the same level in private sector organisations. In Australia, equity legislation at both federal and state levels has been implemented to redress the gender imbalance in both the private and the public sphere. However, the legislation on its own has not achieved the widespread changes that were expected in either sector (Braithwaite, 1993). Weber and Connell's theories explain why mechanisms within the bureaucratic apparatus will never be significantly more inclined than those in private enterprise towards setting up the conditions for gender equity. However, the bureaucratic style of management with less personal responsibility placed on individual decision-making allows structural change mechanisms such as EEO to escape the personal agendas of private enterprise power-brokers.

Due to the fact that the practices of gender inequity are deeply embedded in both public and private sector organisations, the changes required to effectively bring about gender equity in senior management have to profoundly challenge the foundations of the CMP. Changes such as tax deductions for child-care, freely available child care and quotas to increase the numbers of women in management are examples of reforms that challenge the economic and philosophical foundations of the CMP, reforms that have not been adopted in Australia. Programs such as Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action, based upon the merit principle, have not succeeded because they attempt to bring about change by reforming and not profoundly challenging or changing the existing system.

The profound barriers to gender equity require stronger measures than those currently being practiced. Hearn (1992, pp6-7) offers a number of 'radical' solutions to the

problem of gender inequity in management. First, there needs to be fewer men in management. Second, there is a need to ensure a 'critical mass' of women. Third, men need to be challenged about 'dominant models of masculinity' as modes of behaviour for managers. Fourth, different 'types' of men should be included in equal opportunity policies. Fifth, men should be moved 'temporarily' from management positions to free up positions for women. Hearn suggests that these issues should be incorporated into policy agendas in all organisations. Recommendations for stronger policies also came from the Karpin Report, 'Enterprising Nation', in 1995. The report recommended:

- Merit based appointment methods to ensure compliance with sex-discrimination law. This recommendation highlights the need for greater emphasis upon anti-discrimination law in the hiring of employees. It recommends that the Commissioner be given powers to inquire into and make determinations with respect to company practices.
- New role for the Affirmative Action Agency. Extra powers are also recommended for the Director of the Affirmative Action Agency in order that they may specify certain reporting requirements beyond the existing program's eight steps. Those companies that do not comply with requirements to alter their discriminatory practices should then be referred to the Sex Discrimination Commissioner.
- National body for management and leadership skills formation. The list of functions for such a body would be: assistance with setting targets for more women on boards and in senior management and executive positions, organisational policy development be linked with anti-discrimination and EEO/AA laws, extra support for women student in business programs, public education through presentations to CEO's and senior managers, meet twice yearly with heads of women's bodies. (Burton & Ryall, 1995, pp33-34)

Peitchinis (1989, p69) also suggests that progress of the integration of women into high-level jobs requires radical solutions if the process is to be sped up. The positions in the organisational structure where work experience relevant for promotions to the executive suite is gained are occupied largely by men, and the required work experience is unstructured and undefined. When a requirement is unstructured it is open to variations to accommodate the experiences of those favoured for elevation. This puts the incumbents in a position of advantage that cannot be easily challenged. Progress with integration must begin with the reduction in discretionary powers, which as a first step requires some indication of the nature and extent of experience that is expected of candidates for elevation to senior executive positions.

Zweigenhaft (1987, pp59-60) suggests that even if pressure from external bodies like the Affirmative Action agency is systematically implemented there are forces beyond our control that will continue to prevent women from gaining management positions. Citing a study of Stanford MBAs , in which the ‘life goals’ and ‘expectations’ of the women differ from those of the men, Zweigenhaft makes four major conclusions. First, if the beliefs and values of women are in fact different than those of white men in power, then discrimination will occur. Second, even if the beliefs and values of women are similar to those of white men in corporate power, if they are perceived as different, then there will be discrimination. Third, the closer the personal relationships among those few at the top of these large corporations, the greater the likelihood that discrimination will occur based on race, ethnicity, and gender. Fourth, there are a great many people aspiring to the few positions at the top of the corporate pyramid. Therefore, as long as there are more than enough applicants who are similar in terms of race, sex, beliefs and values, to fill these positions, there is no reason to believe women or minority groups will ever be properly represented in these positions.

Zweigenhaft concludes that external pressure from government bodies is the only way to ensure that some sort of pressure be brought to bear on corporations to include women and minority groups at senior management level. However, as already discussed on page 77, the Australian government’s review of the Affirmative Action Act is moving away from stronger policies towards more ‘flexible’ policies that lessen the responsibility for systemic practices of inequality from private sector organisations.

### ***3.8: Summary***

The inherent contradictions that ultimately appear as competing paradigms within equity legislation are unintended constraining factors on the individuals who implement the policies. These competing paradigms work against gender equity at two levels. Firstly, at the institutional level, through the ‘patchy’ and non-committed implementation of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action in most Australian organisations. Secondly, at the level of values in the socio-psychological need for pure equity and merit principles based upon liberal-judicial philosophical models that translate in practice into a dependence upon individual achievement. Both levels mask

and uphold the status quo that reproduces male advantage, particularly at senior management levels in society.

Legislation such as Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action are based upon the merit principle defined by masculine norms and as such develop the necessary but not sufficient conditions for women to break through into the top management levels of the corporate world. The literature on reasons why women are not gaining powerful positions highlights the inequities of power that exist when any person attempts to enter elite circles of power. Circles of power are immune to the reformist policies of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action. It is in elite circles that equity becomes a misnomer and bias based upon sex, race, class and personal attributes predominates. In order for an individual to break into these circles, experience, knowledge and education are prices of entry but not guarantees of success.

The current practices of selection for senior management positions do not wholly rest on individual merit or competence but on perceptions, evaluations and decisions already based on a set of arrangements and understandings which provide women with less access to opportunities than men. This is especially the case at senior management levels of organisations because, as we have seen in Chapter Two, there are idiosyncratic, highly personal, non-routinised, gender specific selection of senior management staff due to the process of 'homosociability'. The liberal-judicial concept of merit also stands in contradiction to the concept of 'forward estimates' required by the Affirmative Action legislation and is not able to be practically applied at the senior management level of organisations.

A major concern with regard to the application of Affirmative Action, however, is the confused and contradictory terminology that exists between Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action law. The principles underlying EEO and Sex discrimination law are accepted as adding to the increasing 'rationality' of organisations. However, the concept of Affirmative Action poses a particular problem as it is outside the paradigm of rationality by appearing to challenge the merit principle. Even though the policy clearly states its intent to uphold the merit principle it is widely perceived that the policy can be extended to override the merit principle.

The institutional practices of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action have failed to substantially increase the proportion of women in senior management. Although the proportion of middle management women has increased in direct proportion to the number of women entering the workforce over the last twenty years, this change cannot be directly

attributed to Equal Employment Opportunity or Affirmative Action programs. The difficulties associated with measuring the productive outcome of such programs highlights the diffuse nature of the problem of gender inequity.

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the broad social structural practices that may or may not effect the progress towards gender equity in organisations. Comparing the terminology used in EEO and Affirmative Action legislation highlighted that the wording in the Affirmative Action legislation in the private sector is more pro-active than that in the EEO public sector policy. However, these differences have not brought about substantive changes at senior management levels of Australian organisations. The higher proportion of women at the senior executive level of the public sector is partly due to the more regulatory mechanisms or systems that were already in place before mandatory legislation that allowed the legislative changes an easier passage within the more rational organisational context of the public service. However, in the private sector the highly idiosyncratic, personalised, and gendered, methods for promotion and selection of senior management personnel are highly resistant to Affirmative Action programs. Therefore, organisational type is an important intervening factor in the success of exogenous change mechanisms such as EEO and Affirmative Action in increasing the numbers of women at senior management level.

The confusion and uncertainty which surrounds Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action stems not only from the inconsistencies which exist between the policies. The broader social phenomenon of a fragmentation of the principles behind the women's movement has also effected the viability of Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action. The concept of 'shared understanding' is important when it comes to the goals of the women's movement and their realisation in a practical sense. The philosophical divide between 'sameness and difference' within feminism is also a factor that could effect the support of feminist agendas and is part of the broader social phenomenon that can impact upon the ways in which senior management women view their roles as agents of social change. The ways in which individual women are conceptualised in relation to power and authority will be discussed in the next chapter.

# ***Chapter Four***

## ***Theoretical Paradigm***

The research and literature discussed in Chapter Two does not explore the values, norms and practices of senior management women in relation to issues of gender equity. Individual senior management women undertake the practices of their positions within a specific social and historical context. Therefore, in the exploration of their values, norms and practices concerning gender equity the adequacy of a theoretical paradigm will depend upon the integration of historical aspects of that social context and the cultural meanings specific to the organisation in which they work. The characteristics of the power and gender relations within their organisations, the implementation of Affirmative Action or discussions about quota systems, and the ways in which they are perceived and treated as senior managers are important issues in exploring the position of senior management women.

Stereotypical gender differences are reinforced by the exercise of power and embedded in the particular culture operating within the organisations in which women are located. The particular culture of any organisation is in turn directed and reinforced by the values and beliefs of those at the senior level of an organisation. In this chapter I critique the effectiveness of normative and individualistic theoretical positions to explain the social location of senior management women. I argue for the effectiveness of a critical feminist perspective, incorporating the 'masculine gender system' (Waters, 1990) and the 'gendered culture of organisations' (Itzin, 1995) as central conceptual themes to explain the particular position of women in senior management and inform the research design of the thesis.

The managerial and organisational context in which senior management women are located is of central importance to claims of them being labelled a 'special group' to study. I will argue that the individual work practices of such women can be both constrained and enabled by the implicit rules and practices of the gendered culture of their organisations. It is their acceptance or rejection of these rules and practices that reveal their individual behaviour in relation to change within their organisations, change that may or may not assist other women into positions of authority within that workplace.

The concepts of power and gender will be explored theoretically in this chapter, particularly in relation to their construction within organisations. It is my contention that the constraining or enabling forces related to gender and power display unique characteristics at the senior management level. Furthermore, it will be shown that the social rules of acceptance and rejection relating to the construction of gender and power in senior management require a specific and different form of social behaviour from women compared to men.

The logic behind the theoretical framework incorporates the interplay of meanings, norms and power that shape the values and experiences of senior management women and their ability to bring about change for women in their workplaces. Giddens' (1993, p169) concept of structuration is used to inquire into how both constraining and enabling forces are constituted through action, and reciprocally how action is constituted structurally. Addressing the interplay between meanings, norms and power is important because, as we have seen in Chapter Two, the position in which women find themselves in male dominated organisations is ambiguous and multi-factorial.

The unique way in which the constraining or enabling forces of gender and power operate in each organisation partly explains the slow pace of change documented by a number of writers (Burton, 1991; Ronalds, 1990; Sawer, 1986; Wieneke & Durham, 1990) who have studied the implementation of policies such as EEO and Affirmative Action. The effects of different organisational types on progress towards gender equity is witnessed most obviously in the different proportions of women at the senior management levels of the public and private sectors of the economy. The unique character of bureaucracy as a form of social organisation is well documented (Weber, 1947), as well as the capacity of bureaucracy to institutionalise gender divisions (Ferguson, 1984). The research design will incorporate a comparison between the values and experiences of women in the private and public sectors in order to explore the differences and similarities between their values and experiences with gender equity.

The theoretical paradigm combines aspects from feminist theories with aspects from sociological theories that assist in explaining the construction and use of both gender and power through meanings and norms in an organisational context. The broad purpose of the theory is to address the research objectives and at the same time generate new insights about the research objectives

after the collection of the data, at the same time avoiding a collapse into theoretical eclecticism. I concur with the position that for a theory to be effective,

It is important to distinguish between general theories which are closed and intolerant of evidence and ideas which they cannot easily absorb or explain, and those which are open to the possibility of new modes of thinking, and to revision in the light of new empirical evidence (Layder, 1994, p223).

Consequently, there is both an inductive and deductive character to the research method I have employed. The relationship between the inductive and deductive method employed is central to the reflexivity required by the theoretical position of the thesis.

My theoretical contribution to the study of women in senior management sets up an interactive relationship between theory and method. It does this by treating the theoretical aspects of historical, biographical, and social-structural importance to the research questions as instructional to the research design, thereby both inducing and deducing research outcomes. I am not proposing that my theoretical position renders a definitive method for researching women in senior management. However, I do propose that the theoretical position reveals the interplay between the meanings, norms and power dynamics of gender equity experienced by senior management women in the context of their organisations. In this chapter I discuss the need to take into account the unique reflexive and dialectical relationship between social structures and women when designing research on women in senior management.

I take the definition of social structure from Layder (1985, p132): it refers to (reproduced) social relations which have an ongoing and relatively enduring quality to them. This definition encompasses the ways in which social relations between and within a social group, in this case senior management women, are patterned at any given point in time. This is not meant to convey that these social relations are a 'frozen' pattern of functional interdependencies but that they are subject to forces of change. Nevertheless, at the same time certain social relations experienced by senior management women do possess relatively stable and enduring qualities, for example, gender stereotypical roles. Most importantly the definition of social structure used in this thesis integrates the notion of a power differential between the sexes since the relative power of social groups defines the pattern of ongoing reproduced relations. In other words, the ways in which individual senior management women interact with other social groups defines the ways in which social relations for senior management women are reproduced over time. This reflexive

dialectical relationship between social relations and power enables or constrains the practices relating to the experience of enduring social relations such as gender relations.

#### **4.1: The Study of Elites and Gender**

Ever since its inception, the study of sociology has been concerned with the differential power relations arising from the stratification of society. One of Marx's (1959,1976) major concerns was to highlight the practices of the ruling elite, practices that define the ideas that reproduce society (Anderson, 1974). Weber (1947,1968) was concerned with showing the interplay between Class, Status and Party as vehicles for the concentration of social power and the ways in which the organisation of society was reflected in varying types of authority structures. Parsons (1951, 1960) was also concerned with studying the practices of elites as a functional imperative of social organisation and Mills (1959) concentrated specifically on the ways in which elites increasingly monopolised their use of power. The analytical basis of these perspectives is 'structural' in terms of the characteristics of the structural concepts that are finite, interlinked and teleological. The philosophical bases of the theories vary widely, however, with Parson's functionalist paradigm accepting the power differentials within society as unproblematic and a manifestation of the needs of a social system. Marx, Weber and Mills, on the other hand, viewed the increasing power of elites as highly problematic and as an instrument of social control and domination. The theoretical paradigm of this study is centred in the Weberian notion of elite power as problematic for reasons that will be discussed throughout this chapter.

The concept of elites is not a substitute for the concept of class but an addition to it which is a necessary part of the conceptual apparatus for examining the structure of inequality in modern industrial societies. Consequently, ideological differences between elites are an important source of sociological information about the general social structure and the processes of social interaction. (Encel, 1970, p39) For reasons of space, the intersection between studies of stratification (largely informed by Wright, 1985, 1989, 1994) and authority are beyond the scope of this thesis.

Weber's (1947) sociological conception of organised groups begins with his concept of 'Verband' or 'corporate group', to which he ascribed authoritarian structures as fundamental. A distinguishing feature of the authority in the 'corporate group' is the internal differentiation of roles. Together with the legitimacy of those in authority, the 'corporate group' assures the social

order. According to Weber, legitimacy is of three types: rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic. The claim to rational-legal authority is based on the status of the position or office held by the individual. Traditional authority is exemplified by the claim of patriarchy in that the system of order has always existed and been binding. Charismatic authority is a certain quality of an individual personality that sets them (him) apart from ordinary people (men) and endows them (him) with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities (Weber, 1947, p358). Women were excluded from these categories when they were developed by Weber. However, even today the stereotypes of male and female would exclude women's characteristics from the boundaries of at least two of the three types, traditional authority and charismatic authority. In terms of traditional authority the facts of history preclude women from the patriarchal system that has 'always existed and been binding'. In terms of charismatic authority the examples Weber uses as illustrations are exclusively male: 'the men who, according to conventional judgements, are the greatest heroes, prophets, and saviours' (Weber, 1947, p359). Weber conceptualised these 'types' of authority figures as forces of social control to ensure the order of society is established and reinforced.

In the management literature, there are similar conceptions of the types of authority an individual can possess. Bacharach and Lawler (1980, pp34-36) delineate four sources of power: position power, personal power, expert power, and opportunity power. These types of power do not include Weber's 'Traditional' type which is largely characterised by the patriarch's unquestioned right to rule. Position power, expert power and opportunity power are all similar to Weber's 'rational-legal' form of authority. Personal power aligns itself with Weber's notion of 'charismatic' authority. The major difference between the two conceptions of authority is that the Bacharach and Lawler conception does not question the legitimacy of management authority per se and hence is more normative and functional than Weber's, which is based upon the control of conflict inherent in the capitalist mode of production. These differences divide the epistemological basis of much of the management literature from that of sociological literature. The prescriptive character of much of management literature arises from the underlying principle that the exercise of authority and power within management is unproblematic.

In this thesis, the particular values, norms and beliefs held by elites (senior management women) are seen as being able to give insights into how management and hence organisational norms are constantly constructed and reconstructed. Whether the values, norms and beliefs of these women

benefit other women will be discussed in terms of their understanding of the type of power and authority relations they are personally and continually constructing.

Historically, the study of elites in sociology has, by virtue of necessity, been predominantly the study of males. The recognition of gender as an intervening factor in the study of stratification was not fully developed until the writings of Marxist feminists such as Barrett (1980, p211). Barrett explained the oppression of women not only in terms of their location within the family-household system, but more importantly in terms of the family-household system as a central organising principle of the capitalist relations of production. The cultural representations of women in the household reinforced and upheld the material constraints placed on women to remain 'homemakers'. Cultural feminists such as Frieden (1974) had foreshadowed these material constraints by documenting the force of culture in convincing American women to return to their household duties after the second world war. French feminist Simone de Beauvoir (1974) also documented the philosophical location of women as 'the other' in comparison to men. In this perspective, women were not only set apart from men as different creatures but were creatures located lower on the social scale.

The practical interrelationship between class and gender was expressed in detail by Eisenstein (1979,1981) and Hartmann (1982) who both conceptualised an idea of a 'dual labour market' for women. Based upon the separation of commodity production, undertaken outside of the home and mainly based on the paid labour of men, and social reproduction, undertaken inside the home and based on the free labour of women, the concept of the private-public dichotomy was seen as instrumental in relegating women to the 'secondary labour market'. Pakulski and Waters (1996, p94) argue that the materialist and biological explanation offered by Brenner and Ramas (1984) is more convincing. They suggest that there was no alternative to the establishment of the differentiated household and its attached division of labour because the organisation of work into factories threatened the possibilities for reproduction. The sexual division of labour was simply a practical response to a combination of the inability of the market to provide low-cost prepared food, child-care, laundry services, etc., and the severe biological constraints of gestation and lactation experienced by women. Pakulski and Waters (1996) argue that this explanation is the one that most easily opens itself to the historical changes that have occurred, such as the exponential increase of women in the workforce over the last thirty years and a decline in the visible signs of social class. The social status of senior management women, however, is an

unusual one in that the gender and class restrictions prescribed by existing theories of gender and class may not necessarily apply. The social location of senior management women will be discussed in terms of their relationship to the power dynamics in an organisational context and the unique interplay between gender and power in the organisational context.

#### ***4.2: Power in an Organisational Context***

The differential ability of people to command the obedience of others, to influence them, or to secure a high proportion of the resources of society is the outcome of a position of power. The differentiation in the uses of power has been an enduring element in human history (McCord & McCord, 1977). The differential access to resources is a central feature of the social location of women (and minority groups) in society (Chafetz, 1990, p11). As we have seen from the statistics in Chapter One, the women in this study represent a small proportion of society's elites. However, the difference between elites, whether they be male or female, and others within society is their ability to control and access resources. The concept of power is central to this ability.

The exercise of power can be understood as a structural component of social life or as an individual component of social life. Weber (1968, p926) conceptualised the use of power as a two-way exercise between those who exercised power and those who had power exercised over them. According to Lukes (1974, p24), however, power is three-dimensional and can be exercised without the visible signs of any action. This is particularly pertinent to the exercise of power inherent in gender relations because of the inherent stereotypical expectations placed on male and female behaviour that is experienced as 'normal' practice. It is rare to see displays of overt force or coercion in the management context, or in relations between the sexes at work. Consequently, it is not obvious that power is present. The ways in which power is exercised can be both covert (indirect) and overt (direct). However, with the increasing 'economic rationalisation' of practices within organisations, particularly bureaucratic organisations (Pusey, 1991), the power exercised is increasingly covert in the form of indirect sexual discrimination (Hunter, 1992).

Lukes' model has a particular application to the study of gender relations in organisations due to his focus upon the critique of individualistic and normative models of the processes of power. Much of the literature and research reviewed in Chapter Two is based upon the one-dimensional

view of power, thereby omitting an important aspect of power, that of the uncontested potential issues relating to power. An example of the uncontested potential of the power held by managers, is that potential issues for organisational and social change can be consciously omitted by individuals in positions of authority if they believe these issues will negatively effect their ambitions to 'get ahead' in an organisation. If Lukes' idea of potential power is applied to the research objective of this thesis it would mean that silence or a neutral stance on the part of senior management women to issues of gender equity would signify their cooperation with the dominant forces that support gender inequity.

Giddens's (1979) concept of structuration is also relevant to the position of senior management women in that it focuses on the ways in which social systems both constrain and enable the individuals within them.

The concept of structuration involves that of the duality of structure, which relates to the fundamentally recursive character of social life, and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency. By the duality of structure I mean that the structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems. The theory of structuration, thus formulated, rejects any differentiation of synchrony and diachrony or statics and dynamics. The identification of structure with constraint is also rejected: structure is both enabling and constraining, and it is one of the specific tasks of social theory to study the conditions in the organisation of social systems that govern the interconnections between the two (Giddens, 1979, pp69-70).

Giddens's (1982) 'structuration' theory is explicitly non-teleological, and rejects the functionalist notion developed by Parsons (1951) that social systems have needs. Instead Giddens argues that production and reproduction occur by way of human actors. 'The organisation of social practices is fundamentally recursive. Structure is both the medium and the outcome of practices it recursively organises' (Giddens, 1982, p10).

In the case of this thesis the functional perspective would propose that senior management women have reached a 'consensus' about how management should operate based on the needs of the managerial 'system' (Parsons, 1951). Conversely, applying Giddens's structuration theory, senior management women would not have consensually agreed on the needs of the system but

instead be constantly experiencing the enabling and constraining context of their organisations. However, the outcome of their practices (whether for or against change that assists other women) is recursively organised between their individual practices and the repeated practices (or culture) of the organisation.

Using the construct of constraining and enabling forces experienced by individuals within organisations incorporates the concept of the power differential between the sexes more effectively into a theory explaining the social location of senior management women. It would also allow the theory to explore the repeated practices within organisations, or the 'culture' of organisations, that govern the interconnections between the constraining and enabling forces. In this way both the overt and covert practices relating to power will be explored by the research design.

According to Connell (1987, p94), the balance formulated by Giddens as the duality of structure is, of all current frameworks for social theory, the closest to the requirements of a theory of gender. Giddens's (1984) theory of structuration locks structure and practice tightly together theorising that human practice always presupposes social structure in the sense that practice necessarily calls into play social rules or resources. Structure emerges from practice and is constituted by it. Neither is conceivable without the other. At the same time, Connell critiques Giddens theory for placing too much emphasis upon making the link between structure and practice a logical matter, a general requirement of social analysis, and thereby ignoring the historical context of the links between structure and practice. Connell suggests that dualist theoretical models need an opening towards history due to the fact that the consequence of practice is a transformed situation which is the object of new practice, 'structure' specifies the way practice over time constrains practice. A practical example of the ability for practice to constrain practice is the social 'backlash' against programs of social reform relating to gender equity such as the Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action legislation. The 'backlash' that has been documented (Faludi, 1992) against these practices of social reform is evidence of how the duality of structure and practice can be transformed over time.

As well as the need for an historical context for the analysis of the duality of structure, practice and structure exhibit different properties in relation to social change. This is important to the

research design because of the need to develop alternatives to the current social practices and programs of reform addressing gender equity. For example, human action can involve free invention and human knowledge can be reflexive and in this way practice can be turned against what restrains it and structure can be the object of practice. However, practice cannot break free of structure for social actors are obliged to reckon with the constraints of history. The social situation of women at different points in time attests to this fact. For example, the personal freedom that women experience in society today is very different to the lack of personal freedom they experienced 100 years earlier (Connell, 1987, p95). The reflexive capacity of senior management women will be explored in the study with particular reference to the possibilities for social change in the context of gender equity in senior management.

Clegg (1979, p59) proposes that the work of both Lukes and Giddens fails to adequately explain the way power operates within the structure of an organisation because the epistemological bases of their analyses derives from false claims made about knowledge developed initially by Hobbes. Clegg believes Hobbes' knowledge claims to be false because they are derived from a 'fictional means of resolving the myth of order.'

The 'intentions' or 'wants' of the actor cannot be assumed to be a secure basis for the presumption of analysis into power, because they cannot be constituted independently of broader, structural aspects of power phenomena – such as domination – unless one makes the mistake of theorising these as conceptually generated from this level in the first place (Clegg, 1979, p72).

Lukes (1974, p47) somewhat acknowledges these difficulties in the development of his own theory on power when he concludes that justifying the relevant counterfactual argument for an individual to do otherwise when faced with a dilemma about power is sometimes extraordinarily difficult. He poses the question 'Can we always assume that the victims of injustice and inequality would, but for the exercise of power, strive for justice and equality?'

Foucault (cited in Kritzman, 1988) presents power as a ubiquitous feature of human interaction. The major divide between the analyses of power developed by critical theorists and that developed by Foucault is that critical theory presents the practice of power in a negative light. Foucault critiques analyses of power that view power as negative for being based upon the false

premise of the validity of sovereign power as opposed to disciplinary power. Foucault describes the impotence of analyses of power based upon the foundations of sovereignty in the following way.

This type of power (sovereign) is in every aspect the antithesis of that mechanism of power which the theory of sovereignty described or sought to transcribe. The latter is linked to a form of power that is exercised over the Earth and its products, much more than over human bodies and their operations. The theory of sovereignty is something which refers to the displacement and appropriation on the part of power, not of time and labour, but of goods and wealth. It allows discontinuous obligations distributed over time to be given legal expression but it does not allow for the codification of a continuous surveillance. It enables power to be founded in the physical existence of the sovereign, but not in continuous and permanent systems of surveillance. The theory of sovereignty permits the foundation of an absolute power in the absolute expenditure of power. It does not allow for a calculation of power in terms of the minimum expenditure for the maximum return (Foucault, 1986a, p239).

Foucault also critiques critical theorists for defining the quality of power as a quantitative capacity, for example, the ability of an individual to 'make a difference' (Giddens, 1984, cited in Hindess, 1996, p26). Foucault separates the concepts of power and domination by suggesting that domination is the unwanted outcome of power relations that we should attempt to diminish.

Relations of power are not something bad in themselves, from which one must free one's self. The problem is not of trying to dissolve them in the utopia of a perfectly transparent communication, but to give one's self the rules of law, the techniques of management, and also the ethics, the ethos, the practice of self which would allow these games of power to be played with a minimum of domination (Foucault, 1988, cited in Hindess, 1996, p153).

Hindess (1996, p154-156) critiques Foucault for separating the practices of power and domination saying they are interdependent and cannot be separated. Furthermore, that in prescribing the limitation of domination Foucault is subscribing the same moral teleological path as the meta-theories he eschews. Foucault's focus on domination is similar to the importance that Weber places on the power imbalance built into the bureaucratic mode of organising. Foucault

does make reference to the areas of social change that he believes are important and gender relations is one of those areas.

I prefer the very specific transformations that have proved to be possible in the last twenty years in a certain number of areas that concern our ways of being and thinking, relations to authority, relations between the sexes, the way in which we perceive insanity or illness (Foucault, 1986, cited in Hindess, 1996, p152).

Of the 'specific transformations' outlined by Foucault, two are combined when exploring the social location of senior management women: the relations to authority and the relations between the sexes. As such the study of senior management women becomes less 'specific' and more general in its orientation. Hartsock (1990, p165) makes the point that because Foucault does not account for individual or systemic forms of unequal power relations as domination and subordination his theories are inadequate for exploring the social location of women.

Some feminist theorists (Nicholson, 1990; Smith, 1987, 1990; Young, 1982) also critique the philosophical foundations upon which knowledge claims are made, however, they critique the knowledge claims that have led to the subjugation of the stereotypical concept of 'woman'. The stereotyping of gender categories tends to imbue them with immutable characteristics. This effect compounds in an organisational setting with the inherent attribution of power to one category over another.

Both gender and sexuality are processes of construction and attribution of meaning rather than static properties. The meaningfulness of both gender and sexuality is profoundly embedded in the ongoing process of social construction and self-definition and cannot be understood apart from an analysis of power (Sheppard, 1989, p140).

Gender inequality then becomes institutionalised through the sexual division of labour in the organisational setting and reinforced materially by unequal economic rewards. The hierarchical structure and 'masculine' stereotype of management in organisations further reinforces and reproduces this social structural model of gender inequality.

Chafetz (1990, p102) disputes any normative view of women's relationship to power and points out that because the psychological and social psychological attributes that people bring to situations set the outer boundaries of their behavioural repertoire, gender identity undoubtedly

contributes to setting those boundaries. These gender boundaries mean that although women attain the same outcomes as males in many cases, they may use different methods in attaining them. An exploration of the differences and similarities between male and female management styles will be included in the research design to discover how women might be constrained or enabled by any difference or similarities. The purpose of including an exploration of management styles is not an attempt to definitively define or describe specific differences or similarities between male and female managers.

The use of the term power in this thesis relates to both the type of organisation in which senior management women work and the type of personal authority invested in the management within those organisations. Each organisation has its own unique culture that is difficult to quantify. The ways in which women use power and are perceived to 'make things happen' in management positions within organisations is contingent upon the multiple enabling and constraining forces specific to each organisational culture.

The focus of analysis in critical theory it is not on the relationship between the meanings individuals impute to their social world and the positivistic or scientific truth of that world. Rather, it is the ability of an individual to be reflexive about their experience of that objectified world. Clegg (1979) describes the object of critical sociology as,

Criticality and reflexivity cannot be within the 'transcendent framework'.

Conventionally, substantive sociological discourse has been within it. Thus, in distinction to this discourse, critical sociology seeks its standard of truth neither in correspondence with what is (as positive science does) nor in terms of its internal coherence with what it allows to be (as hermeneutic science and relativist epistemologies must do). It neither deals with an immutable object domain nor aspires to an immutable knowledge domain. Both are capable of transformation through the dialogue which is its theoretical practice (Clegg, 1979, pp22-23).

Clegg's emphasis on the importance of dialogue suggests that both the practices we study and the ways in which we study those practices can be viewed by social actors unreflexively and therefore become unquestioned immutable phenomena such as gender stereotypes. Contested phenomena such as the 'manager equals male' stereotype, 'homosociability', 'the glass ceiling', the merit principle, and forms of positive discrimination to redress gender inequity, come under

this rubric. Their relationship to the central research question of the thesis is whether senior management women are coopted into the dominant 'culture' of their organisations or personally and actively set out to challenge the dominant culture by challenging the restrictive unquestioned phenomena that uphold male privilege at senior management level.

### ***4.3: Feminist Theories of Gender***

The research design was developed by combining aspects from the critique of power in sociology with the debate about the construction and use of the term gender in feminism. This was done in order to fully explain the social location of senior management women. Much of the debate within feminist theory highlights the need to place the individual meanings people impute to the world within their specific social context in order to understand and explain them. As has been discussed in Chapter One, a major reason why gender inequality still persists is the dependence of the late capitalist mode of production upon the sexual division of labour. The second wave of feminism highlighted the fact that women's experience differs from men's in terms of their domestic situation. Coining the phrase 'the personal is political', second wave feminists highlighted the fact that woman can either be constrained or enabled in their public life depending upon the specific circumstances of their private life.

Feminist theorists (Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 1992) have noted that meaning in relation to the question of power is often obscured or rendered invisible for subordinate groups like women. Very often they are excluded from areas of meaning shared by dominant groups and are required to learn the expectations of these dominant others. Tannen (1992) has also suggested that men and women use different conversational styles and are thus often prevented from understanding what each has to say. Consequently, coupled with the power differential between men and women, the use of different styles of communication tends to create worlds of mutually exclusive meaning (Layder, 1994, p73). These female and male worlds of exclusive meaning are largely unaddressed by classical sociological theories. Because most sociological theories are based on male experience, viriarchal structure and a masculine paradigm, women are 'fitted' into a theoretical model that developed without women's experiences as a framework or validation point.

The problem here is not a simple one, because liberal political theory and its empiricist epistemology, Marxism, critical theory, psychoanalysis, functionalism, structuralism, deconstructionism, hermeneutics, and other theoretical frameworks (we have explored) both do and do not apply to women and to gender relations. On the one hand, we have been able to use aspects or components of each of these discourses to illuminate our subject matters. On the other hand, it has never been women's experiences that have provided the grounding for any of these theories that we borrow. When we begin inquiries with women's experiences instead of men's we quickly encounter phenomena (such as emotional labour or the positive aspects of 'relational' personality structures) that were made invisible by the concepts and categories of these theories (Harding, 1986, cited in Ollenburger & Moore 1992, pp14-15).

In their discussions on the relevance of class to sociology today, Pakulski and Waters (1996) cite Parsons, Giddens, Parkin and Goldthorpe when outlining the overwhelming omission of an analysis of gender from sociological debate.

If sociology turned a blind eye to ethnicity then it must have turned two to gender. Gender inequalities and exploitations were obscured by the 'naturalism' of sex-role theory and the triumphalism of a modernization theory that stressed the adaptive superiority of the nuclear family (Pakulski & Waters, 1996, p42-43).

Pakulski and Waters go on to critique the many different ways in which the effect of gender upon class relations has been empirically measured. They point out that the difficulties in effectively measuring the fact that gender cuts across class demonstrates that the class paradigm has always been wrong in claiming pre-eminence as a structuring principle.

The development of a class structure was only possible in so far as it was based on the domestic division of labour that allowed men exclusively to construct a public sphere. In these terms we must consider the possibility that gender is primordial as the structural principle and that class is merely contingent. Certainly one could make a more convincing case that gender has always structured society than one that class has done so (Pakulski & Waters, 1996, p43).

Smith (1990, p13) also highlights two major social scientific problems that arise from the exclusion of women's experiences from classical sociological thought. The first discusses how

sociology is thought in terms of its methods, conceptual schemes, and theories which are based upon and built up within the male social universe. Smith argues that this has caused a 'disjunction' between how women experience the world and the concepts and theoretical schema by which society's self-consciousness is inscribed. Second, she maintains that the 'worlds' opened up by speaking from the standpoint of women have not been and are not on a basis of equality with the objectified bodies of knowledge that have constituted and expressed the standpoint of men.

Smith relates these two problems to one another in a specific way. The effect of the second problem, the dominance of male standpoints, interacts with the first problem, the inscription of 'maleness' upon sociological thought, and compels women to think their world in the concepts and terms in which men think theirs. Women are thus alienated from their own experience.

In order to correct this exclusion of women's specific position from social research, Smith (1987) draws from feminism, Marxism and ethnomethodology in the development of her research methods. Smith's 'project' is to participate in the construction of a 'sociology for women'. Here, feminist research practice would never lose sight of women as actively constructing and interpreting the social processes and social relations constituting their everyday realities. Smith describes the process whereby sociological epistemology has excluded and homogenised women's experience.

When we take up the standpoint of women, we take up a standpoint outside this frame (as an organisation of social consciousness). To begin from such a standpoint does not imply a common viewpoint among women. What we have in common is the organisation of social relations that has accomplished our exclusion. Taking up this position for the subjects of sociology, what is the critique? A critique is more than a negative statement. It is an attempt to define an alternative (Smith, 1987, p78).

Negating the alienating effect of classical sociological thought in the case of research on women requires the ability to challenge the assumptions of classical sociological perspectives, and the social organisation in which they are grounded, and then *define alternatives to those assumptions*.

Smith's particular form of sociological analysis has a political focus in that the outcomes of research must identify and appraise outcomes that can inform frameworks of action. Habermas (1984b) singles out the feminist movement from other social movements as the only social movement with emancipatory potential and concurs with Smith's view that women have a different set of values to males by virtue of their specific social location.

Only the feminist movement stands in the tradition of bourgeois-socialist liberation movements. The struggle against patriarchal oppression and for the redemption of a promise that has long been anchored in the acknowledged universalistic foundations of morality and law gives feminism the impetus of an offensive movement, whereas the other movements have a more defensive character. The emancipation of women means not only establishing formal equality and eliminating male privilege, but overturning concrete forms of life marked by male monopolies. Furthermore, the historical legacy of the sexual division of labour to which women were subjected in the bourgeois nuclear family has given them access to contrasting virtues, to a register of values complementary to those of the male world and opposed to a one-sidedly rationalised everyday practice (Habermas, 1984b, pp306-307).

I have incorporated Smith's method by beginning my research from the experiences and actualities of women's situation and by focusing on the practices of women in terms of their ability to define alternatives that would assist other women.

For then we locate our enterprises with knowers whose perspective is organised by exactly how they are located outside these structures, by how they are excluded from participation, and by their actual situation and its relation to the ruling apparatus of which sociology is a part. If we began from women's experience of the world, we would not find these assumptions built into its sociology, since they do not conform to the organisation of our experience (Smith 1987, p65).

Although I have incorporated Smith's approach into the research design it contains two basic problems for the study of senior management women in organisations. Firstly, Smith critiques 'macro-sociological theorising for being inherently unsympathetic to the notion of the active subject' when in reality there is nothing mutually exclusive about 'macro-analysis' and active subjects, depending upon the sociological theory chosen. As already discussed, Giddens' theory

of structuration is a case in point. Secondly, Smith's critique of 'macro-analyses' is hypocritical because her own analysis is based upon the (macro) premise of the organised nature of late capitalist society and patriarchal domination (Layder, 1994, p162). In this way Smith's theory fulfils some necessary but not sufficient conditions for my research purposes. It assists the development of my theory by placing central importance upon the values, norms and practices of the women I am researching but it detracts from the context of organisational imperatives which partly constrain and partly enable senior management women's views.

Consequently, I take those aspects of Smith's approach which assist in understanding the linkages between social structures relating to the research objectives (such as organisational cultures) and individual senior management women. One such aspect concerns how Smith raises the question of power as a dual system of domination based on class and gender. This encourages us to think of power and control in ever more complex terms, and raises the question of the extent to which power is linked to patriarchy.

However, I also take the position that when Smith severs links with forms of sociological analysis, such as those developed by Giddens (1979), Lukes (1974) and Clegg (1989), she ignores crucial theoretical and conceptual links that exist between social structures, such as organisations, and the experience of individuals, whether they be female or male. The critical theory developed by Giddens, Lukes and Clegg requires the researcher to delve under the surface of things in order to interrogate discourses for their rule of functioning, rather than locate their origin in the traces of some once-determinate presence in either 'reality' or 'discourse' as the postmodern method of genealogy does. Critical theory involves critically appraising all frameworks of analysis that appear as objective phenomena and upon which we base our theoretical discourse (Clegg, 1979, p24). This would include frameworks of analysis such as the 'Glass Ceiling', 'homosociability', 'Old Boys Networks', Affirmative Action, and quota systems that are based upon the objective phenomena of gender equity.

It is important to interpret the values, norms and practices of senior management women in light of the fact that structural and individual factors exist in symbiotic relation to one another. Giddens' (1984) theory of structuration will be applied to the research problem without placing undue emphasis on either the structure, which constrains or enables the individual, or the individual's ability, through reflexive thought, to change that structure. As Smith (1990)

suggests, I will be concentrating on the self reports of the senior management women in their own right. However, I will also be critically analysing those self-reports by placing an emphasis upon the constraining and enabling mechanisms effecting senior management women and their capacity to positively effect outcomes for increased gender equity.

#### **4.4: Gender Ideology**

As we have seen in Chapter Two, much of the existing research undertaken on women in management fails to theoretically engage with the complexity of power or gender in organisations. Here I will discuss a number of ideological factors that partly explain the social situation of women in senior management. Ideology is important because it subconsciously defines the limits to individual behaviour that reinforce our social situation through the repetition of everyday practices. Ideology can assist in explaining the 'gap' that sometimes appears to exist between what respondents say they value, and how they behave (or do not behave) in terms of those values, especially if there is a contradiction between the two.

Borrowing from Marx and Engels (1965), Giddens (1979, pp187-188) argues that ideology can be seen in two ways, either as a debate about how ideology can be contrasted to science or a debate about how sectional interests are polarised against ideology. It is in the second sense that Giddens sees the concept of ideology as most useful in a sociological sense, and as most useful in its application to gender relations. It is useful because when ideology is seen as a way in which sectional interests can be obscured, it becomes a critique of domination. This critique is central to understanding differences between what it is to be masculine or feminine.

In analysing the ideological aspects of symbolic orders, Giddens sets out to examine how *structures of signification* are mobilised to legitimate the sectional interests of hegemonic groups (in this case senior management men).

Some examples of the structures of signification important to the ideology of gender are:

- The cultural representations of women in the media,

- The philosophy of the liberal-judicial principle of merit that inadvertently obscures indirect forms of sex discrimination,
- The hierarchical structures of organisations that entrench male privilege by being directly linked to the primacy of heterosexuality.

Giddens(1979) shows that ideology operates through ‘modes’ in which domination is concealed. This is particularly the case on the level of institutional analysis and in the ways in which power is harnessed to conceal sectional interests on the level of strategic conduct. This does not imply different types of ideological elements, but two levels of ideological analysis connected via the duality of structure. He suggests three principal ideological forms.

Firstly, sectional interests are represented as universal interests. In the case of senior management women the sectional interests are male advantage at senior management level. The universal representation of these interests manifest themselves in occupational segregation according to sex, the sexual division of labour, the stereotype of manager equals male, the unquestioned acceptance of the merit principle, and the immutable character of gender categories (gender stereotypes).

Secondly, the denial or transmutation of contradictions. Giddens sees this applying to the primary contradiction between private appropriation and socialised production. In other words the political sphere is divided from the economic sphere so that class conflict cannot impinge on the operation of the latter. In the case of senior management women, the contradiction is manifest in the vilification of feminism as a valid political position (the ‘backlash’ against feminism), and the fact that gender politics is divided off from the economic operation of the institution. For example, males and females that cannot accept the presence of women in senior management positions vilify the behaviour of senior management women. The ‘damned if you do and damned if you don’t’ experience of management women (Still, 1993, p141), and the ‘dual consciousness’ of senior management women, are personally experienced by women as manifestations of this vilification.

Thirdly, the naturalisation of the present, or reification. Reification means that the preservation of the status quo is assured by the reinforcement of the interests of

dominant groups. Forms of signification which ‘naturalise’ the existing state of affairs, inhibiting recognition of the mutable, historical character of human society act to sustain the interests of dominant groups. This concept can be applied to the apparent immutable character of gender categories and how those stereotypes are reinforced to preserve the status quo at senior management levels. Two examples of practical outcomes of the reification of the male manager stereotype are the fact that a sizeable proportion of both males (21%) and females (10%) prefer to work for males rather than females (Wajcman, 1996, p341), and that woman managers experience ‘status levelling’ whereby they are routinely mistaken for administrative assistants to their male counterparts.

Mouffe (1979, p187) proposes that the domination of one gender group over another is underpinned by the active principle of ideology. Ideology is an active principle in the sense that it is a ‘practice producing subjects’. Such sets of ideological practices are historically persistent due to the reproduction of their attributes through ‘cultural’ work undertaken within organisations that is largely subconscious. For example, cultural work such as informal networking and mentoring (in some cases subconscious) that predominately benefits junior males, the sexual harassment of women, and the ‘backlash’ against feminism. Ideological concepts are directly linked to their historical location and therefore change over time. There are three ideological concepts that explain the persistence of male domination in late capitalism, ‘extended viriarchy’, ‘viriarchal hegemony’, and ‘dual consciousness’. I will briefly explain the importance of each concept to the research design.

#### **4.4.1:Extended Viriarchy**

A difficulty in countering gender inequality stems from the fact that it is constituted and reconstituted by everyday practices within society and therefore is neither historically nor culturally universal. The term extended viriarchy was developed by Waters (1989), and argues that the use of the single concept of patriarchy to describe all structures of gender inequality is misleading. Waters sets out a scheme of four types of masculine gender-systems (MGS) which analyses the relationship between the domestic and the public spheres in terms of two dimensions.

The first dimension describes the extent to which structures (and practices) are differentiated and has two ends. That is, one end of this dimension can be described as

patriarchal because it is a situation in which labour, power and cathectic attachments are fused so that they cannot be understood as separate by participants: there is then a single fused structure of kinship. At the opposite end of the dimension, political, economic, and family practices are regarded as differentiated into structures of government, production and family relations. Waters (1989) has labelled such systems viriarchal; a term derived from the Latin term for adult male (or husband) plus the suffix meaning rule. In a patriarchal MGS the senior male members of extended kinship systems have control; in a viriarchal MGS all adult males have control but not necessarily directly by virtue of their location in the kinship system.

A second dimension is the extent to which the form of the domestic sphere is contingent upon the form of the public sphere or independent of it. The first pole of the dimension, called direct masculine gender-systems, is when the organisation of the MGS in the public sphere is determined by its organisation in the domestic sphere. The opposite pole is rather more complex. Here the organisation of the MGS in the public sphere assumes independence, and its organisation in the domestic sphere is at least partially contingent. The relationship between the two arenas is one of reproduction, where women's low participation in the public sphere is reproduced by an unequal domestic distribution of labour. Masculine gender-systems organised in this way can be described as extended systems.

The intersection of these dimensions yields an analytic scheme of four types of MGS shown in Table 4.1.

	<b>Primacy</b>	<b>Differentiation</b>
<b>Domestic</b>	Direct patriarchy	Direct viriarchy
<b>Public</b>	Extended patriarchy	Extended viriarchy

**Table 4.1: Types of Masculine Gender-Systems (Waters, 1989, p204)**

Each of the four types has a specific relationship to particular historical locations. For the purpose of this thesis the last of these categories, extended viriarchy, is most applicable.

Extended viriarchy operates when economic and political structures are not only differentiated from domestic structures but are able to take control of them. An idealised notion of individual success (an achievement-orientation) replaces location in the kinship system as the basis for the distribution of labour power. Here a direct gender basis for these allocations is a contradiction, however, it obviously occurs. The contradiction can only be sustained where there is a developed system of cultural and social reproduction articulated between the domestic and public spheres. In this thesis, I have labelled this system 'male cultural work'.

The reproduction of male gender-systems operates along the following lines. Legal restrictions on domestic relations and female participation in the public sphere are waived and full and formal freedom of individual contract is institutionalised (a principle known as the 'merit' system and critiqued in detail by Burton (1991)). However control of the public sphere is monopolised by men. Three principle forms of practice reproduce this pattern. First, control of the material means of subsistence is used by men to control the domestic labour of women and to constrain women within domestic roles. Of course, most women are not physically constrained but constrained ideologically, as I shall discuss later in this chapter under the heading of viriarchal hegemony. Second, men are in control of cultural representations of gender, such as the recurring representations of slim, young female bodies in women's magazines. This phenomenon is documented by Wolf (1990) and French (1992). Last, covert forms of discrimination are practiced against women in public contexts. These may take the form of sexual harassment, sexual innuendo and lack of mentoring or networking opportunities for women in management due to their sex. These covert forms of discrimination are called 'indirect' forms of discrimination and have been documented by Hunter (1992).

The structural form of extended viriarchy is therefore constituted in a gender based domestic division of labour and power, and a segregated labour market in the public sphere. The definition of extended viriarchy then, is a masculine gender system (MGS) in which men control women by virtue of being husbands rather than by virtue of being fathers. A society characterised by extended viriarchy is also one where the power differential between men and women becomes institutionalised (Waters, 1989, p207).

#### **4.4.2: Viriarchal Hegemony**

Extending Waters' ideas, Cockburn (1991) combines the term 'hegemony' with the term viriarchy to describe the situation where most women's (and some men's) choices are severely restricted within society.

A term borrowed from Gramsci (1971), hegemony explains the way the ruling class were able to produce a social and cultural environment in which capitalist relations of exploitation appeared quite normal and acceptable to most people. Hegemony is a moral and philosophical leadership; an apparent right to govern accorded a dominant group by the active consent of the subordinate group. The hegemony of viriarchy is masculine sway exerted over women and men alike, not by legal coercion or economic compulsion but by cultural means, by force of ideas. These ideas are hegemonic in the sense that they appear as common sense truth to most men, and more significantly, to many women. Furthermore, it is exceedingly difficult to break away from hegemonic ideas and counter them with other thoughts because in doing so one is made to seem eccentric, extremist, or flying in the face of reality. Feminism has been represented as all these things (Cockburn 1991, pp164-170).

Hearn and Parkin (1987) also highlight the fact that the oppression women experience is not always recognised by them. 'The gender roles attributed to women by our society determine that the woman's experience is predominantly that of oppression though this is not recognised by all women or experienced uniformly' (Parkin, 1987, p161).

The use of the term 'viriarchal hegemony' challenges the voluntaristic and individualistic claim that the majority of women choose not to compete for managerial positions of their own volition. Viriarchal hegemony explains why, in many cases, women's 'choices' are not made in a condition of unencumbered individualistic or voluntarist social position but are the result of very limited sets of options. As discussed earlier, however, hegemony is not an automatic attribute of rule, but the achievement of political and cultural 'work'. In this way the rules of functioning relating to that cultural work are fundamental to the research design of this thesis because they reveal the constraining and enabling practices specifically with regard to gender equity.

Cockburn's (1991) research highlights the fact that gender relations are a struggle between hegemonic (viriarchal) and subversive (feminist) ideas. Women, feminists, and

equality activists appear to be refuting viriarchal common sense, and contradicting capitalist viriarchal power. Men (and women who subscribe to viriarchal hegemony) are obliged therefore to do more 'cultural work' to ensure the reproduction of this power. Therefore, women's experience with male cultural work that upholds viriarchal hegemony is also important to the research design. It is when these hegemonic practices and ideas become institutionalised through workplace practices that they become particularly restrictive for women.

Viriarchal hegemony operates through the common sense tenet that we have little choice, that masculine and feminine are given by nature, that 'gender is not negotiable' and that the sexes are already equal. It is this type of elevation of gender to an immutable category that suffocates feminist programs for change. Furthermore, it is what makes some radical feminist positions based upon the 'special' and 'feminine' differences attributed by them to women appear contradictory and self-defeating to the fair and equal treatment of women in society. My research design will include measures of the levels of support and commitment to the women's movement and feminism. These measures are important because a self-identification with feminism is a position that directly challenges the 'male cultural work' that upholds viriarchal hegemony. Therefore, the proportion of senior management women who identify with the feminist movement will give an indication as to their potential to challenge the dominant value system at senior management level.

The women who took part in this study were asked questions about their thoughts on feminism, and the type of activities they undertake at work that they consider to be feminist activities. In the research design I have also included measures of whether senior management women are cognisant of what form 'male cultural work' may take within their organisations, and also whether they are personally taking steps to counteract the reproduction of the male gender-system (MGS). The exact wording of these questions will be outlined in an explanation of the research method in Chapter Five.

#### **4.4.3: Dual Consciousness**

A possible outcome of the continued reproduction of viriarchal hegemony is the experience of 'dual consciousness' for women, particularly women in management. The

original sense of the term 'dual consciousness' was taken by Waters (1990, p114) from the Marxist concept of 'false consciousness'. Dual consciousness focuses on the material situation of the working class in order to show how their situation reproduces the social relations of production in capitalism. Reproduction of these social relations is accomplished in three ways:

1. A dominant ideology unites the middle and/or ruling classes in support of the status quo. This dominant ideology is proscriptive in character; it specifies formal freedom of action and non-interference, rather than prescribing a core set of moral positions to which all must adhere. Furthermore, the dominant ideology ensures that the members of that class will resist attempts to restructure society.
2. Continued commitment of labour power is achieved by the 'dull compulsion' of material constraint. In return for compensation, workers continue to commit their labour power to jobs that they have no desire to perform. Their orientation to the system is one of pragmatic role acceptance.
3. There is considerable evidence of manipulative socialisation that is manifested not as a commitment by workers to the form of their own exploitation but as a diversity of views on that process. The competitive and individuating consequences of schooling and its capacity to confirm family backgrounds is seen as being decisive in this regard.

Together with the reproductive features of capitalist social relations the ideology of dual consciousness maintains a firm division within the subordinate class which cements these social relations. Although the ruling/middle class exhibits a unified consciousness the subordinate working class exhibits a dual consciousness. On the one hand, the subordinate class accepts the legitimacy and constraints of the capitalist mode of production, but on the other hand they recognise that their own class has special interests which diverge from those of the ruling/middle class. This dual consciousness has the effect of 'divide and rule' as it becomes a source of expanded reproduction for capitalist social relations (Waters 1990, p114). These ideas can be translated into the divisions observed between women in the management, divisions that are the unintended consequences of an expanded reproduction of the capitalist mode of production.

Senior management women could be seen to exhibit both 'ruling class' (managers) and 'subordinate class' (women) status. Whereas the ruling (dominant) class (men) exhibits a unified consciousness (in management), the working (subordinate) class (women) exhibits a dual consciousness. The experience of dual consciousness means that on the one hand management women accept the legitimacy and constraints of the capitalist mode of production, but on the other, they recognise that their own gender has special interests which are divergent from those of men. Just as the concept of dual consciousness is a source of expanded reproduction for capitalist social relations it is also a source of expanded male reproduction (in management) for gender relations.

The expanded reproduction of the capitalist mode of production manifests itself in political and industrial actions that seek to place constraints on the operation of the capitalist labour market. Whereas, the expanded reproduction of gender inequity at management levels manifests itself in reforms to the capitalist mode of production through programs such as Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action. Unfortunately as we have already discussed, EEO and Affirmative Action are not always successful. In the case of Affirmative Action and EEO the legislation is in place but the practical implementation has been slow, inconsistent and largely ineffective particularly in the private sector (Bacchi, 1993; Braithwaite, 1993). The historical trajectory of these legislative initiatives and their relationship to the values, norms and practices of senior management women was discussed in Chapter Three.

The practices relating to the ideology of viriarchal hegemony can impose powerful constraints on individuals, constraints that are for the most part subconscious and unspoken. These practices sustain both late capitalist and extended viriarchal social reproduction and could manifest themselves through the experience of dual consciousness for women in management positions. Table 4.2, on the next page, shows how viriarchal hegemony and dual consciousness mediate the relationship between the institutionalised and individual factors that reproduce gender inequity and how 'male cultural work' is required to uphold the relationship.

<b>Institutionalised Factors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Economy</b> = Gender inequality structured into the capitalist mode of production (CMP).</li> <li>• <b>State</b> = Regulator for Capital, increasing economic rationalism marginalizes gender equity issues.</li> <li>• <b>Society</b> = Split in women's movement and feminism, 'backlash' against gains for women.</li> <li>• <b>Organisational Culture</b> = Hierarchy and heterosexuality institutionalised in organisations, increasing 'economic rationality' causes, 'downsizing', restructuring, corporate managerialism, 'best practice' management, and 'flatter' management structures.</li> </ul>
↑
<p><b>Power</b> = 'cultural work' (in this case male cultural work) mediates the relationship between the institutional and ideological factors.</p>
↓
<b>Ideological Factors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Extended Viriarchy</b> = Institutionalised through gender division of labour and occupational segregation according to sex.</li> <li>• <b>Viriarchal hegemony</b> = Men's right to rule not disputed widely and appears 'normal', feminism appears 'abnormal'.</li> <li>• <b>Dual Consciousness</b> = Women's consciousness divided between allegiance to class and allegiance to gender</li> </ul>
↑
<p><b>Power</b> = cultural work (in this case male cultural work) mediates the relationship between individual and ideological factors.</p>
↓
<b>Individual/Psychological Factors</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Family background</b> = Achievement-oriented upbringing, manipulative socialisation through education.</li> <li>• <b>Socialisation</b> = Sex-role stereotypes, gender identity.</li> <li>• <b>Values</b> = Liberal-judicial merit principle, retain and reform status quo.</li> </ul>

**Table 4.2: Contributing Factors to Gender Inequity at Senior Management Level**

Power is not represented in Table 4.2 as an entity in itself. However, power manifests itself differently in the intersections between the institutional and individual factors. Some examples of the ways in which power manifests itself in gender relations are:

- The way in which feminism is represented as ‘abnormal’ behaviour,
- The ways in which gender is seen as an immutable social category, leading to the ‘manager equals male’ stereotype.
- The feelings of guilt experienced by working mothers,
- Media generated images of women that are not representative of the majority of women’s bodies.

In summary, organisational practices that reproduce gender inequity are mediated by ideological factors that obscure the real operation of power between the broad institutional arrangements of an organisation and the individuals within the organisation. Ideological factors are largely unspoken and in many cases individuals are unaware of the effect of ideology on their values and practices. Another major feature of ideological factors is that they are historically located and hence subject to change over time. Ideological factors are the unintended consequences of the everyday practices entered into during the reproduction of capitalist relations of production. Even though ideology is an unintended consequence it is nevertheless real to those who suffer unequal treatment because of it.

Each workplace or organisation has a specific ‘culture’ that is constituted and reproduced by these ideological factors. Each individual’s awareness, and acceptance or rejection of the constraining and enabling forces within those ideological boundaries shape the observable practices of this ‘culture’. In the case of senior management women, the experience of dual consciousness, where they are not completely accepted as managers and not completely accepted as women, compounds this social situation.

The research objectives have been developed to explore the values, norms and practices of senior management women with the ways in which power manifests itself in their everyday practices in the workplace. The objectives will also explore whether senior management women attempt to engage with and/or change the power dynamics within organisations in order to assist other women.

The views of senior management women are important to the practices within Australian organisations because we cannot speak about this class of women as being empirically distinct from their organisations or vice versa. The values and views that they hold will effect the operation of their organisation and, conversely, the dominant values within the organisation will effect these women. Therefore, if on an analytical level we separate structural situations for organisations and the practices of actors within those organisations, we must realise these two categories are actually inseparable (Ramsay & Parker, 1992, p258). Consequently, the research design has incorporated the following factors relating to gender and power relations in organisations.

- The values inherent in organisations in the CMP are based upon increasing rationalisation which appears to individuals as both a way of formalising their freedom due to the preeminence of achievement-based models and at the same time constrains them with increasing levels of both formal and informal domination.
- The individuals in organisations are partially defined and partially define the values and direction within each organisation. Therefore, defining the values of the individuals that make up the management of each organisation allows us to gain insights into how that organisation operates with regard to the research objectives.
- The hierarchy of organisations is ‘gendered’ and consistent actions against the reproduction of gender inequalities must be undertaken to effectively counter it.
- The values of any organisation are effected by the larger societal environment in which they find themselves. In the case of Australian organisations these values are based upon the practices necessary for the capitalist mode of production, the liberal-judicial philosophy of the merit principle, and the value of rationality seen particularly in the bureaucracy. The social and organisational changes that have taken place relating to gender equity will be discussed in the next chapter.

#### **4.5: Summary**

The persistence and reproduction of the ‘male gender system’ at senior management levels of organisations relies upon the complex set of historical, social structural, and individual characteristics. In order to take all of these factors into account in the development of my research method I have argued that the use of ideological concepts such as viriarchal hegemony and dual consciousness best explain how subconscious factors reproduce the ‘male gender

system' and senior management women's position within that system. The critique of power relations developed by Giddens, Lukes, and Clegg explains the ways in which power operates within society between individuals and the institutions within which they operate. Their 'critical' approach to power requires researchers to delve beneath the frameworks of analysis used in the research objectives and discover both the active and passive ways in which those frameworks are constructed. I will be exploring the construction of, and meaning behind, the following 'frameworks of analysis' with senior management women: Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity, a Quota system, The Glass Ceiling, the Merit Principle, Feminism, Management Styles, what 'power' means to them, and what 'success' means to them.

Smith's (1990) ideas are incorporated into the research design in three ways. Firstly, by ensuring that any themes or concepts that arise out of the content analysis from the qualitative data reflect the self reported positions of the respondents. Secondly, that alternatives to the dominant culture of their organisations are sought as outcomes from the critique of the respondents values, beliefs and norms. Lastly, that any ideologies that might 'colonise' the respondents perspectives are identified directly from their dialogue. Smith's approach is applied to ensure that the phenomena researched are not already defined by pre-conceived ideas but investigated from the perspective of each individual respondent.

The theoretical framework for the study requires that both structural and individual social processes, the interplay between them, and the dominant culture within their organisational context, be taken into account. For example, the values, norms and beliefs of senior management should be contrasted against the institutional practices of their organisations. A major differentiation between organisational types is between private and public sector organisations. Comparing the values, norms and beliefs of women working in either sector explores any possible effects of differing institutional practices that might mediate the relationship between gender equity and senior management women.

Apart from the institutional practices constraining or enabling women within senior management positions, I will explore the possibility of whether the effects of gender ideology, constructed and reproduced by viriarchal hegemony, cause a type of dual consciousness to arise for senior management women. I propose that this is best achieved by exploring the views and experiences

of these women towards a range of issues that relate to women in organisations, their position in society, and any personal dilemmas, contradictions, or feelings of isolation they may experience.

The following factors are taken into account in the research design in order to contextualise the research objectives and explore the social location of senior management women and their relationship to gender equity.

- To place the values, norms and beliefs held by individual senior management women as pre-eminent in the research design,
- To focus on both the constraining and enabling aspects of their experiences with power relations
- To explore the possibility of the increasing rationality of organisations, and the importance of ‘communicative rationality’ and ‘shared understandings’ of gender equity.
- A reference to the nature and strength of any ‘male cultural work’ that might reinforce and reproduce viriarchal hegemony.
- To look for signs of the gendered nature of value rationality that may limit women’s full participation in the power circles within their organisations
- To look for any change mechanisms the respondents might be implementing that would assist the development of gender equity at senior management levels of their organisations.
- To search for feelings of contradiction or dilemma that may indicate an experience of ‘dual consciousness’ or alienation in terms of the respondent’s identification with both their gender and their class.

A discussion of the specific methodological techniques undertaken in order to address the research objectives in light of the theoretical position will be undertaken in the next chapter, Chapter Five.