

Chapter Five

Research Design and Technique

The research design and technique were designed to explore, interpret and confirm two major research objectives. Firstly, to explore and interpret senior management women's experiences of the constraining and enabling forces encountered in their own organisations. Secondly, to develop an understanding of how the views of senior management women may affect the culture of organisations in relation to gender equity programs. The exploratory phase of the research employs a qualitative method while the confirmatory phase of the research employs a quantitative method. Advantages and limitations of qualitative and quantitative methods will be discussed in relation to their individual merits and the merit of using them in the same study. Also, differences and similarities between sociological and feminist methods will be discussed along with the relationship of the method to the theoretical perspective. Much of the chapter is devoted to the technical reasoning behind the design of the research method.

In developing the research objectives, reference was made to the salient concepts identified from the literature review in Chapter Two and theoretical paradigm in Chapter Three. Qualitative data were analysed using both an inductive and deductive form of content analysis both within and between cases. The within-case analysis groups the responses into 'themes' containing verbatim quotes that relate to each theme and discusses the relevance of each theme to the research objectives. The between-case analysis revealed four broad categories, Conservatives, Moderates, Reluctant Feminists, and Definite Feminists, and the responses were categorised for the purpose of comparing the similarities and differences in the views of the women as a group. The categories were chosen according to whether the respondents were willing to assist other women in the workplace or not. The research questions chosen for the between-case analysis are discussed in detail later in the chapter. The categories resulting from the analysis of the qualitative material then formed the basis for subsequent exploration at a quantitative level. A contrast and comparison of the views of senior management women in the public and private

sectors was undertaken with the quantitative data using frequencies, cross-tabulations and cluster analysis.

5.1: Nature of Data Sought and Data Collection Methods

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected for the study. Qualitative data were collected first in order to explore and confirm the research objectives. Quantitative data were then collected for two major reasons. Firstly, to compare and contrast the views of senior management women in private and public sector organisations. Secondly, to compare and contrast the findings from the qualitative study with those from the quantitative study. My intention was to provide a methodological link between the experience of the individual and their specific social context. The method of qualitative analysis used is one whereby the enabling and constraining forces experienced by each individual woman is highlighted in terms of the impact of organisational and social structures. Hence the purpose of the qualitative data is to explore the lived experiences of the women in terms of the organisational and social practices in which they interact.

It is common practice in many social scientific studies for both qualitative and quantitative data to be collected in the same study. Qualitative and quantitative data complement one another because they involve differing strengths and weaknesses, and as such they can constitute different, but not mutually exclusive, strategies for research. Qualitative methods permit the researcher to study selected issues in depth and detail. The researcher can approach their fieldwork without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis and this contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry. Quantitative methods, on the other hand, require the use of standardised measures so that the varying views and experiences of people can be fit into a limited number of predetermined response categories to which numbers are assigned. The advantage of a quantitative approach is that it is possible to measure the reactions of a great many people to a limited set of questions, thus facilitating comparison and statistical aggregation of the data. This gives a broad, generalisable set of findings presented succinctly and parsimoniously. By contrast, qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases. This increases the understanding of the cases and situations studied but reduces generalisability (Patton, 1990, p13-14).

I sought qualitative data first in order to understand the research objectives from the perspectives of individual senior management women and to explore any new research objectives that might arise from the views and experiences of those women. Such data were collected by way of personal in-depth interviews with 43 senior management women in Sydney. The interview schedule (included as Appendix 3) was a standardised open-ended schedule and the interviews ranged between one and one and a half hours in length. A standardised open-ended interview schedule incorporates questions that have their exact wording and sequence pre-determined. All interviewees were asked the same basic questions in the same order. The questions were worded in a completely open-ended format. The strengths of this type of interview schedule are that because interviewees answer the same questions the comparability of responses is increased and data is complete for each person on the topics included in the interview. This type of schedule also facilitates organisation and analysis of the data. Comparability of results, complete data and standardised organisation and analysis of the qualitative data were all seen as crucial outcomes of the interview process. Because, as we shall see later in this chapter, the within case and between case method of data analysis relies upon comparability of results and complete data on salient issues. The weaknesses of this type of schedule can be the lack of flexibility in relating the interview to particular individuals and circumstances and the fact that standardised wording of questions may limit or constrain the naturalness and relevance of questions and answers (Patton, 1990, p289). These weaknesses were somewhat overcome by probing and by allowing the interviewees some scope in question interpretation.

The qualitative data collected fulfilled two main objectives. Firstly, it served as a tool of analytic induction that explored and identified the meanings behind each of the responses with reference to the research objectives. Analytic induction was undertaken using content analysis of each response by 'mining' the data for recurring themes, phrases and sayings. The data were both described and interpreted. The description of the data was grouped into themes that related to the 'sensitizing' concepts (Patton, 1990, p391) developed from the literature review and the theoretical paradigm. The content analysis was undertaken both within and between cases. In other words, a participant's response to each question was coded individually (within cases) and

then each theme or 'sensitizing concept' that arose from the individual responses was further interpreted by comparing those individual responses (between cases).

The qualitative data lent itself well to a 'reflexive' type of analysis: where individuals related conflicting stories about an issue, these stories were developed into themes in the discussion of results. When there appeared to be a discrepancy between the answer to an interview question and the experiences the women related about the topic, it was explored further to gain a greater understanding of the nature of the inconsistency. The results from the qualitative phase of the research are reported in the next chapter.

As well as understanding the research propositions from the perspective of the women interviewed, the qualitative data were also used to inform the development of a questionnaire for the quantitative phase of the study. Each question in the questionnaire for the quantitative phase was informed by the results from the qualitative data. For example, if an issue, such as the planning of career paths, was answered in the same or similar fashion by all of the respondents in the qualitative data it was not taken up as an important or interesting issue in the quantitative questionnaire. However, if the respondents were divided in their response to an interview question, then that question was retained for the quantitative questionnaire in order to confirm the salience of that issue with a representative sample.

The majority of respondents answered the questions from the interview schedule in the same order. However, not all respondents answered all of the questions. Certain questions towards the end of the interview schedule were not asked in some interviews because of the time constraints placed on the length of the interview by the respondent. This was discovered during the pilot interviews conducted in Armidale with six senior management women. Consequently, I constructed the interview schedule with the least important areas of interest at the end of the schedule and the most important areas towards the front or the middle of the schedule.

As already discussed, the interviews with senior management women were undertaken in order to explore their experiences with, and views about, the research objectives. The categories that

were developed from the qualitative data were developed as analytical devices to compare and contrast the views of the women interviewed. The categories were developed by grouping together the women who were responding in similar ways to the issues raised in the interviews. A detailed discussion of exactly how the categories were developed will be undertaken later in this chapter under the heading of data analysis. The interview schedule was piloted amongst six women from middle to senior management positions in Armidale, NSW. The piloting was undertaken to check the logical flow, interpretation of meaning, and level of difficulty in answering the interview questions.

The purpose of using a qualitative approach in phase one of the primary research was to collect 'rich' data that could capture the depth of meaning given by each respondent to the issues raised in the interview schedule. The interview method is widely used to elicit reasons, contexts, and illustrations from the respondents about their views on the research objectives. A second aim was to elicit an idea of their past and present behaviour with regard to the central issues of the study, and to project that behaviour into the future (Kidder, 1981, p158).

The interview setting also allows the researcher to be able to further explore the meanings behind the spontaneous and open responses of the respondents to certain issues which had arisen from the existing research and literature on the topic. The purpose of the qualitative phase was to analyse accounts of experiences without relying on preconceived assumptions as to how the respondents would answer the questions. The questions were asked in a particular order from the most objective questions, about personal career planning and ideas of success, to the most emotive questions about forms of positive discrimination. This was to avoid eliciting emotive responses too early in the interview process, as such responses could possibly distract the interviewee from covering all of the issues of importance in the interview schedule. The question sequence did not prevent two interviewees from wanting to avoid the interview schedule and relate their life story to me in their own words. Consequently, in these two cases in particular I allowed the interviewees to relate their stories without reference to the interview schedule. However, these two women spontaneously covered many of the important areas relating to the research objectives.

All interviews were recorded on tape, and no respondent refused to be interviewed as long as confidentiality was assured. The names of the interviewees were kept separate from the transcriptions of the interviews to assure the confidentiality of the data. The tapes were transcribed using a transcription machine and typed into a word-processing computer package. The transcriptions were then printed and each transcription was analysed individually by hand with reference to the hard copy of the transcription.

The quantitative study consisted of a twelve page questionnaire developed from the themes discovered as relevant to the women in the qualitative study. The quantitative questionnaire was piloted with the forty-three women in the qualitative study as a leave behind self-completion questionnaire. A full copy of the quantitative questionnaire appears as Appendix 5.

5.2: Sampling Procedure for the Qualitative Phase

The type of qualitative inquiry undertaken in the thesis is orientational (Patton, 1990, p86). Orientational inquiry begins with an explicit theoretical perspective, in this case a critical feminist perspective. Consequently, the theoretical perspective determines what variables and concepts are most important and how the findings will be interpreted. For example, the critical focus of the inquiry concentrates on the constraining and enabling forces experienced by senior management women in the context of their organisations. At the same time, the feminist focus of the study explores the personal strategies used by senior management and the alternatives they may propose to the 'masculinised' character of management roles.

Purposive sampling was used to collect the qualitative data. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling that is undertaken when strict levels of statistical reliability and validity are not required due to the fact that the research is exploratory in nature (Kidder, 1981, p427). A list of senior management women's names was taken from the *Who's Who of Business in Australia*, a publication consisting of the majority of all prominent senior executives in Australia. The exercise of getting names of women from this list was informative in itself. Of the 8,000 entries in the 1994 edition only 123 names of women could be found in Sydney, approximately 130 names in Melbourne and much fewer in the other capital cities.

As this was the exploratory phase of the research it was not the intention to use a representative random sample of senior management women. Consequently, Sydney was chosen over Melbourne for the qualitative interviews due to considerations such as greater ease of access from Armidale and cost of fieldwork.

5.3: Sampling Procedure for the Quantitative Phase

Lists of names and addresses of senior management women were purchased from a market research organisation in Sydney (The List Bank) in order to assure a large randomised and accurate sample for the quantitative phase. The lists were devised using women employed by organisations with more than 50 employees and having the title of at least Director. The names were selected using a computer randomised skip procedure. 1200 names were purchased. The sample was divided equally between the public and private sectors with 600 women from the private sector and 600 women from the public sector. The division of the sample along these lines was decided upon after a discovery from the qualitative study that showed obvious differences between the views of women working in the public sector compared to those working in the private sector. The equal division of the sample between private and public sector women would allow a more reliable comparison between the two groups than if the sample had been skewed.

5.4: Research Objectives

The research objectives developed for the qualitative phase are exploratory and arise out of the current literature and research discussed in Chapter Two and the theoretical paradigm discussed in Chapter Three. The research objectives of the quantitative study are confirmatory and were piloted and partly inducted from the qualitative study. The research process used in the thesis is a circular one whereby analysis and interpretation are not the final steps of a linear process. The linear research process begins with the generation of objectives, moves to the development of the research design and then progresses to the data collection. However, in this study I have taken up Kidder's (1981, p314) suggestion that analysis and interpretation serve to stimulate further propositions to be tested.

Based upon the review of current literature and research and the theoretical paradigm of the study the five major research objectives are:

- Senior management women's experiences with, and views of, the use of authority, and power in management.
- Their views on the need for more women in senior management in Australia and whether they think women bring different skills to management compared to men
- Their views on the enabling and constraining forces that they and other women experience in management positions
- Their views on forms of positive discrimination, feminism, and a willingness to help other women get promoted into management.
- Their experiences with, views of, and strategies to deal with, the dominant 'culture' of their workplace.

These five major objectives were then divided into detailed research objectives for the qualitative phase of the study, and aligned fairly closely with the questions in the interview schedule.

5.5: Objectives of the Qualitative Phase

The six specific objectives of the qualitative phase of the research were:

1. To develop an understanding of their backgrounds and career paths in terms of their role as a senior management woman.
2. To ascertain how they define "power", and whether they see themselves as powerful. Also to explore what they think about the exercise of authority at work, particularly in terms of their own use of authority.
3. To ascertain what personal experiences of sexism they have had at work, if any, and whether this has hindered their working lives. Also, what strategies they may have had to employ to deal with discrimination.
4. To find out what they know and think about the legislative initiatives of EEO and AA in their workplaces.
5. To discover what they think of feminism and whether they classify themselves as feminists.
6. To explore their management style and whether they would consider it to be different to males in senior management and why. Also to ascertain their experiences with and attitudes towards male cultural practices and the dominant culture of their workplace.

The following objectives were developed into a quantitative questionnaire to confirm their occurrence amongst a random sample of senior management women in both the private and public sectors throughout Australia.

5.6: Objectives of the Quantitative Phase

The specific objectives of the quantitative phase were:

1. Whether there are statistically valid differences in the views of senior management women working in the public sector compared to the private sector with regard to gender issues.
2. Whether there are statistically valid differences in the views of senior management women who call themselves feminists compared to those who do not with regard to gender issues.
3. Whether there is a recurring pattern to the background of senior management women based upon an the 'achievement-orientation' of their family.
4. Whether there is a low proportion of senior management women who perceive themselves as powerful individuals.
5. Whether approximately half of senior management women identify themselves as feminists.
6. Whether there is a correlation between an experience of sexual discrimination and a willingness to implement forms of positive discrimination to overcome that discrimination.
7. Whether there is a correlation between a self-identification with feminism and the likelihood to attribute male cultural barriers as the cause of women's inability to gain management positions.
8. The effect that independent variables such as, age, political affiliation, class of parents, whether they have children or not, educational level, income, and length of time in their position, have upon a senior management woman's willingness to assist other women in the workforce.
9. What proportion of senior management women believe women themselves are to blame for their low numbers in senior management positions.
10. The proportion of senior management women who are familiar with the Affirmative Action legislation and how it is practiced in the workplace, especially the fact that it is based upon the merit principle.

11. What proportion of senior management women are against increasing the forms of positive discrimination for women in the workplace, such as a quota system and why.
12. The proportion of senior management women who experience their management style to be different to their male colleagues.

5.7: Response Rates

The response rate for both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the research were well within acceptable limits. The monitoring of response rates is not as critical for the reliability of the data in the qualitative study as it is for a quantitative study because the representativeness of a qualitative study is not as crucial to the generalisability of the results. However, response bias can effect the reliability of quantitative studies if the sample includes only respondents positively inclined towards the study. The following is an account of the response rate for both the qualitative and quantitative phases of the study.

Attempts were made to contact all 123 of the women identified from the list in *The Who's Who of Business in Sydney*. However, because a high proportion of addresses and phone numbers had changed since the list was published only 60 women could be contacted at the published contact numbers. Of the 60 who could be contacted the refusal rate was extremely low, all but one respondent were willing to participate. For some women contacted, however, the timing was impossible because they were travelling over the next three to six months and it was not feasible for them to participate. Of the original list of 60 women who agreed to participate 43 women actually participated in the study. Although I deemed 43 interviews as being a sufficient number of interviews for the purposes of the study I actually reached a stage of 'convergence' between interview 33 and 35. 'Convergence' is a stage in collecting qualitative data where similar thematic patterns in responses begin to be anticipated by the researcher (Patton, 1990, p402). It is generally accepted that if similar thematic patterns begin to emerge from the interviewees discourse for each research issue then an 'empirically natural' sample size for that particular research problem has been reached. My sample size of 43 was more than ample for the qualitative study if the method of convergence is applied.

The response rate for the quantitative study was 51% which is slightly higher than the response rate of the majority of mail questionnaires (Miller, 1991, p155). Questionnaires were sent out to 1200 senior management women in two mailings. The questionnaire length was kept to a minimum in order to reduce non-response. The first mailing saw a 40% response rate and the second mailing returned an extra 11% making a total of 51%. The exact figures for the response rates are as follows:

- 1200 names on the original mailing list
- 610 final number of responses
- 30 rejected from the sample due to low salary, inappropriate title for senior management, or did not classify themselves as senior managers

Some reasons for non-response were as follows:

- 60 returned to sender (wrong address or no longer employed at the address)
- 12 gave no reason just chose not to participate
- 8 cited lack of time as a reason for not participating
- 5 found the questionnaire inappropriate or intrusive
- 4 were away from their place of work
- 4 cited that it was company policy not to fill out questionnaires

The number of questionnaires unaccounted for was 497 ($610 + 93 = 703$ from $1200 = 497$), therefore, the response rate was 51% (610 divided by $1200 = 51\%$). The total useable number of questionnaires was 580 as 30 respondents did not fit the sampling criteria.

5.8: Justification of the Method

As discussed in Chapter Three, I am making the claim that there is no single sociological perspective that can be applied to fully explain the position of senior management women in organisations. Sociological methods employ all of the currently practiced research methods that range across purely empirical studies, purely observational data, participant observation, in-depth interviewing, and most of the other widely practiced primary and secondary data collection methods. It is how the theoretical paradigm is applied to the research problem through the use of appropriate methods that makes this study distinctly sociological.

The research methods used in sociological studies are contentious in the ways they reconcile individual behaviour and meaning in terms of a common understanding. The reconciliation of voluntaristic patterns of individual behaviour, and the constitution and reproduction of this behaviour within the context of a society is a source of continuing debate within sociology. The theoretical conundrum brought about by this debate has produced arguments for and against a wide variety of research methods in the social sciences.

I have debated the advantages and disadvantages of various theoretical paradigms in Chapter Three and clearly set out my position as that of a critical feminist approach with a particular emphasis upon the dialectical character of social life. Here it is my intention to outline the linkages between my theoretical paradigm and the method I have chosen.

The method used in this study combines aspects from sociological methods with aspects from feminist methods although, as I will discuss, these two methods are not mutually exclusive. On designing the research method I have used sociological principles from Weber (1947, 1968, 1970), Giddens (1976, 1979, 1982, 1984, 1996) and Habermas (1986) and combined these with feminist principles from Harding (1987), Smith (1987, 1990), Sydie (1987), Reinharz (1992) and Stanley and Wise (1990).

Weber's concepts of value rationality and 'Verstehen' are a starting point for the justification of the method. In 'The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation' (1947) Weber critiques the scientific method by pointing out that even though we need to know what kind of action is functionally necessary for 'survival', as sociologists we need to understand the motives behind individual actions that maintain a cultural type with corresponding modes of social action.

The real empirical sociological investigation begins with the question: What motives determine and lead the individual members and participants in this socialistic community to behave in such a way that the community came into being in the first place and that it continues to exist? (Weber, 1947, p107).

For example, as far as gender equity in senior management is concerned, the kind of action that is functionally necessary to be a senior manager is a complex set of procedures and knowledge about 'best practice' management techniques. However, studying 'best practice' techniques does

not illuminate the ways in which the cultural mores and norms of management excludes certain individuals such as women and minority groups. As discussed in previous chapters, due to the fact that the cultural mores and norms for senior management have been 'masculinised' over time it is important to determine whether the values, norms and practices of women managers are in opposition to or a part of the dominant norm.

Weber's concept of *Verstehen* has been applied to the method in this thesis by emphasising a process of empathy and insight while the interpreting the qualitative data. *Verstehen* is based upon the idea that human beings have a unique type of consciousness and that the capacity for empathy is one of the major assets available for human inquiry into human affairs. The tradition of *Verstehen* has been contrasted by Taylor and Bogdan (in Patton, 1990, p57) with the methods of logical-positivism. The logical-positivist approach viewed social phenomena as 'facts' that were apart from the subjective states of individuals. In contrast, the *Verstehen* approach commits to understanding social phenomena from the actor's own perspective. The researcher examines how the world is experienced by the social actors under study and the important reality is what those actors perceive it to be.

I apply Weber's description of a sociological method to senior management women by investigating their motives in terms of their behaviour in senior management roles. I have investigated their motives by applying Weber's concept of 'erklärendes *Verstehen*' which is one of two ways in which Weber conceptualised *Verstehen*. The two ways Weber conceptualised *Verstehen* were, *aktuelles Verstehen* and *erklärendes Verstehen*. *Aktuelles Verstehen* is an observational type of understanding that imputes the meaning of someone's actions according to the observation of their behaviour. *Erklärendes Verstehen* is an explanatory type of understanding whereby an individual's motive is interpreted in terms of the meaning that individual attaches to their action. Weber (1947, p95) described this as 'the rational understanding of motivation, which consists in placing the act in an intelligible and more inclusive context of meaning'.

Erklärendes Verstehen is the type of understanding I have used in this study to interpret the qualitative data. The value of the process of Verstehen has been emphasised in the method of phenomenology, which is the basis for much of the qualitative inquiry undertaken in the discipline of sociology (Patton, 1990, p56).

One major limitation to the Verstehen method is that we can never entirely escape our own assumptions about the world and even in face-to-face contact with people we are not given knowledge that is necessarily beyond reasonable doubt. However, Hammersley (1992, p49) suggests that instead of dispensing with the foundations of the interpretive method because of these limitations we should simply rely on constructing propositions, assessing them against experience and modifying them where necessary. I have undertaken the construction of propositions based upon the literature review in Chapter Two and the theoretical position of Chapter Three. I set out to assess these propositions against the experiences that senior management women relay to me in an interview setting. Finally, I review and modify these stated experiences for the objectives of the quantitative phase of the study. In this way, both inductive and deductive approaches have been applied to the data analysis.

Qualitative research has been described as a purely interpretive method, a focus on meaning rather than a focus on behaviour (Dey, 1993). However, Hammersley (1992, p45) claims that most qualitative research does not restrict its focus this narrowly. It seeks to describe and explain both perspectives and behaviour, recognising that the latter does not merely flow from the former, and may even be discrepant with it. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches need to be applied in combination, especially where investigations are carried out on social groups whose material situations and perspectives have been under-represented or mis-represented in social research. I claim that this is the case with senior management women, whose material situation and perspectives have been under-represented in social research leading to the development of 'myths' such as the 'Queen Bee Syndrome'.

Moving back and forth from deduction to induction and vice versa is of central importance to my research method. Hammersley (1992, p48) supports the fact that in all research we move from

ideas to data as well as from data to ideas. Furthermore, studies that are primarily exploratory, being concerned with generating theoretical ideas, can be distinguished from those that are more concerned with testing hypotheses. However, these types of research are not alternatives as both types can be used to inform the other.

In keeping with the theoretical need to apply a dialectical analysis to the research data I have engaged Sylvan and Glassner's (1985) focus upon three features of dialectical thought. Firstly, dialectical theories engage in a 'double movement', from empirical phenomena to combinatory principles and the logic governing those principles, and then back again to empirical phenomena as being necessitated by those principles and their logic. If empiricists go from phenomena to abstraction, and rationalists in the reverse direction, dialectical theories combine both. By engaging in this double movement for numerous phenomena, one begins to link structure with context and similarities with differences, and in the process, uncovers alternations among appearances and realities. For example, respondents experiences with EEO and Affirmative Action programs as opposed to the organisational rhetoric frequently attached to the discourse concerning these programs.

Secondly, dialectical theories have a view of parts as not only contained in wholes, but as containing wholes. For empiricists, wholes are simply empirical resumes of parts. Conversely, for rationalists wholes are structures within which parts fit. In a dialectical theory, the linkages are far more intricate, and involve the simultaneous examination of similarities and differences throughout a structure.

Finally, dialectical theories emphasise contradictions. Highlighting the contradictions in a structure by focusing on the ties between those contradictions and empirical phenomena can be useful because one can intervene politically, in a specific historical context, to exploit and further those contradictions. In this sense, dialectical theories build on a concern with competent, interpreting actors, while doing so in a way which grounds those actors more deeply in their structural context (Sylvan & Glasner, 1985, pp155-156). The inductive/ deductive approach taken here succeeds in incorporating all three prescriptions by allowing the researcher to go back and forth between the findings from the empirical data and the theoretical concepts upon which the study has been developed. This process highlights any anomalies in the responses.

Together with the dialectical requirements of the method there is also a requirement to explore the 'shared understandings' of gender equity programs between senior management women. As discussed in Chapter Three, 'communicative rationality' is a concept developed by Habermas (1984a) to describe the way in which people interacting are preoccupied with reaching an understanding.

In the context of this thesis, the concept of a shared understanding between individuals in leadership positions is of great importance to the effectiveness of EEO and AA programs within the culture of organisations. Research shows (Poiner & Wills, 1991; Taylor, 1991) there are generally two ways in which individuals view EEO and AA programs. The first, particularly in the case of Affirmative Action, is that equity programs appear to run counter to the principle of merit, which is seen by many as a major tenet underlying the philosophy of equity. Consequently, there appears to be an inherent contradiction in the application of the programs. Second, due to the instigation of these programs many believe there is no need for further discussion or interaction about equal opportunity for women. Consequently, both the implementation and importance of these programs is misinterpreted and misrepresented. The lack of knowledge of the details of EEO and AA prevents the emergence of 'shared understandings' and hence a concurrent discontinuation of interaction about the programs. This could have had the effect of undermining the legitimation and reinforcement of the programs. As discussed in Chapter Three viriarchal practices reproduce themselves over time and therefore constant effort and communication is required in order to change the culture of organisations that are largely embedded with these practices.

Layder (1994, p203) criticises Habermas's theory for a 'gap' between lifeworld and system in terms of social activity. He suggests that if lifeworld is synonymous with social activity and system signifies things that are entirely different from social activity such as money and power, then Habermas's theory tends to reify system elements and speak of them as things rather than as social constructions. To take an example from management practice, the distinction between 'best practice' management practices, that could be considered as part of the lifeworld, and

practices such as homosociability that could be seen as a practice of the system in terms of reproducing the masculinised culture of management. Whereas Giddens theory of structuration would push the two domains together as if they were a single entity, Habermas's theory has the advantage of being able to clearly distinguish between the domains of system and lifeworld and therefore it becomes possible to get a clearer indication of the contribution that each domain makes in different circumstances.

It will be that 'gap' between the lifeworld and the systems that I will be exploring with the respondents in this study. I will focus primarily on any contradictions that exist at either the individual and institutional level which prevent or allow the subjects to take up actions and behaviour that might challenge the dominant culture of their organisations.

An important objective of the research in this study is to explore whether senior management women are engaged in discourse or reflexive thought about the phenomena implemented to change the system elements related to gender equity such as 'Glass Ceilings', Affirmative Action, or quota systems. Following the logic from Habermas's theory on communicative rationality, if senior management women are not engaged in discourse about gender equity in an organisation this can have direct consequences on an individual's ability to bring about change for women in the 'lifeworld'.

The research design sets out to reveal a sense of the reflexivity between the motives and meanings of senior management women. A qualitative method is best employed for this purpose as meanings can be probed and explained through the process of in-depth interviewing. Patton (1990, p25) supports the use of an interviewing process for gathering qualitative data by highlighting that the major way in which qualitative researchers seek to understand and interpret the perceptions, feelings, and knowledge of people is through in-depth, intensive interviewing. The first phase of my primary data collection is qualitative in order to explore the reflexivity and rules my research subjects apply to the phenomena discussed. Like the critical approach to research methods, feminist theory also highlights the need to place individual meanings within their specific context in order to understand and explain them.

5.9: Feminist Method

An emphasis upon empathy and insight in my method of inquiry addresses certain particular concerns of feminist theorists, such as Smith (1987). Smith emphasises that research methods should be designed to understand the position of the particular embodied identity of women on an individual and personal basis, a basis that begins with women's unique position in the world.

Feminist methodology also places importance on the value laden nature of research. Some feminist researchers argue for bringing values to consciousness and developing a value-sensitive science (O'Leary *et al.* 1985, cited in Reinharz, 1992, p62). According to Blau (1981) there are three areas where researchers will be influenced by values: first, in selecting the problems to be studied; second, in making decisions on how the research is to be carried out; and third, in interpreting the findings. Facts do not speak for themselves and must be interpreted; therefore, it is not only important but vital that the role of values in research be legitimated and recognised in the process (Reinharz, 1992, p62).

On the other hand there is no theoretical reason why feminism should be associated with only one type of research method (Brannen, 1992). Stanley and Wise (1983) concur that there is no one set of methods which should be seen as distinctly feminist; the more important issue is the investigation of sexism in society and the location of the researcher as feminist within the research process. The connection between the research project and the researcher's self frequently takes the form of 'starting with one's own experience', particularly when the study concerns a disturbing experience. 'Starting from one's own experience' is a way a researcher assures themselves that they are 'starting from the standpoint of women'. While some feminist social researchers have written full reports about their experiences as researchers of women, more commonly the researcher adds a preface or postscript that contains an explanation of her relation to the subject matter at hand. I was originally inspired to undertake the research after experiencing many barriers to my own career advancement at different levels of various organisations. I also observed many other female managers leave various organisations because of barriers to their advancement. Smith describes a feminist researcher's involvement as: 'The work of inquiry in which I am engaged proceeds by taking this experience of mine, this

experience of other women and asking how it is organised, how it is determined, what the social relations are which generate it.' Here Smith explicitly rejects the idea that inquiry begins with the concerns of her discipline. It must, instead, begin with her experience (Smith, 1979, cited in Reinharz, 1992, p259).

In those projects that involve interaction with people, feminist researchers frequently express a sense of connection to the actual people studied (as distinct from the subject matter being studied). In other forms of research, such as content analysis and experiments, interaction between 'subjects' and 'researcher' is not part of the data collection process and is thus irrelevant. (Reinharz, 1992, p263) In this study I underwent emotional turmoil after the six week interviewing process. At the time I did not realise the cause, however, it became clear after a number of counselling sessions that the effect of the life stories and situations of the 43 senior management women interviewed had had an effect on me personally. My own personal aspirations to become a senior management woman had been effected by the stories of difficulties that these women had faced and the courage and perseverance required to overcome harassment and discrimination. Other feminist researchers have described similar occurrences after their exposure to interviewees (Reinharz, 1992, pp34-36).

I have incorporated the concerns of certain specific prescriptions identified by feminist researchers as important when researching women and gender in organisations to ensure the research is not 'gender blind'. These are, firstly, that the research problem has the effect of 'starting with one's own experience' due to the fact that I have personally experienced being a woman in management roles. Secondly, even though the research focuses upon a specific group of women I have incorporated the full range of senior management women's experiences in the data analysis, by highlighting the responses of women of varying ethnic backgrounds, cultures, and classes. Thirdly, my research problem, the stereotyping of senior management women and its effects on gender inequity in organisations, is inseparable from the research outcomes. Lastly, that I am demographically similar to the research participants. In addition, I do not claim that my research is value-free. On the contrary, I claim that the value-laden nature of the research is a

central factor in my interest in the views of senior management women. The role of values in this thesis has been discussed in Chapter Three and incorporated into the research design.

To summarise, I have justified the design of the method by grounding it in the requirements of the theoretical paradigm outlined in Chapter Three. I have applied Weber's concept of 'Erklärendes Verstehen' in order to explore the motives that determine the views of senior management women to gender equity in the context of their organisations. The dialectical requirement of the theoretical paradigm has been addressed in three ways. Firstly, I have engaged in a 'double movement' back and forth from the theoretical principles that informed the research objectives to the empirical phenomena and vice versa. In this way I can more readily link structures (or systems) such as, equity policies, with context (or lifeworld). For example, how the individual philosophy of an achievement-based model can undermine the successful implementation of equity programs. Also I can more plausibly look at the effects of similarities and differences. For example, whether or not senior management women identify with a collective group of women such as feminists or women's networks thereby discovering the heterogeneity or homogeneity of senior management women as a group.

Secondly, I have simultaneously explored the similarities and differences throughout the management structure in which senior management women operate. I have done this by exploring the different ways in which senior management women interact with the existing culture of their organisations. Thirdly, I have emphasised any necessary contradictions that arise for senior management women within their organisational context. Finally, the shared understandings between senior management women about the methods applied to increase gender equity such as Equal Employment Opportunity, Affirmative Action and quotas have been explored.

5.10: Data Analysis

Pyke and Agnew (1991, p187) suggest that there are two kinds of statistics: descriptive statistics, which help describe a particular set of observations in an economical way by packaging data into neat bundles, and inferential statistics, which assist the making of educated predictions on the basis of a small sample of observations. The qualitative phase of the study will contain

descriptive statistics whereas the quantitative phase will contain both descriptive and inferential statistics.

The descriptive categories developed from the qualitative data will be used as a framework for inferential statistics by applying a chi-squared analysis to the quantitative data. Chi-squared has been chosen due to the fact that it is a non-parametric test rather than a parametric test. Non-parametric tests do not assume normalcy or variance equivalence (homogeneity) in populations, and so can be applied to a wide range of observations (Pyke & Agnew, 1991, p214).

A content analysis technique was applied to the transcriptions of the in-depth interviews. Similarities and differences between the respondents interviewed and contradictions within each individual's dialogue were analysed. The categories were developed from the qualitative data by grouping the similarities and differences between the individual respondents on the five measures outlined in the discussion on qualitative data analysis later in this chapter. Apart from chi-squared, the statistical procedures of frequencies and cross-tabulations were applied to the quantitative data to confirm or deny what had been found in the qualitative study. Significance testing has been applied to the comparison of all group responses, such as the comparison between women working in public and private organisations.

5.11: Qualitative Data Analysis

Patton (1990, p24) suggests that the task for the qualitative researcher is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their points of view about the world, or that part of the world about which they are talking.

The analysis of the qualitative data took the form of a content analysis of the interview schedules. The interviews were transcribed onto a word-processing package in a computer then printed up onto hardcopy transcriptions, the transcriptions were then analysed by hand. The content of the transcriptions was analysed in two broad ways. Firstly, the response to each question was analysed by looking for emotive and descriptive words and phrases, particularly ones that had been repeated by more than one respondent. This content analytical method was applied in a systematic manner to ascertain the existence of any patterns emerging from the responses. Both

the similarities and differences between the responses were focused upon, building up a detailed profile of some of the thoughts, ideas and beliefs of women in senior management, especially with regard to issues of social change effecting women in the workplace generally. Similarities between responses were collated for each question and then similarities in the responses of certain respondents were gathered together.

The responses to each question were coded according to their positive, negative, or neutral characteristics. The responses were then analysed according to the similarities and/or differences between the responses of each of the women interviewed. These two methods of qualitative content analysis are commonly known as comparisons 'between cases' and comparisons 'within cases'. In other words, the similarities and differences within cases focus upon the consistency and inconsistency within the individual responses of each of the women interviewed. On the other hand the comparisons between cases focus upon the similarities and differences when comparing the individual responses of each woman to every other woman in the study. The purpose of undertaking the analysis in these two ways is to explore, compare and contrast the conflicts and/or consistency within the individual accounts of senior management women and also to capture the conflicts and consistency that arise between senior management women as a group.

Women with similar responses emerged from the data and have been grouped into categories. These categories are not mutually exclusive but serve as a heuristic device to more easily compare and contrast the differences and similarities in the perspectives of the women interviewed. The categories also serve as a way of identifying which independent variables such as age, income, and organisation type might be correlated with the views of the women interviewed. In this way, structural issues were cross-referenced with attitudinal issues and vice-versa.

The content analysis method used proved a comprehensive method for those questions with a high degree of meaning convergence, but not so for others. The questions with highly diverse responses were treated as more interesting and requiring further analysis than those questions and

issues that offered more uniform responses. The diversity of responses to each question were such that almost every question in the qualitative phase was reproduced for the quantitative phase.

5.12: *Between Case Analysis*

After an analysis of the qualitative data for each question the respondents were then grouped into categories according to how positively or negatively each respondent answered questions in the interview schedule relating to the following four areas of research interest.

1. Whether or not the respondent considered herself to be a feminist or whether she had a positive or negative attitude towards feminism.
2. Whether or not the respondent agreed or disagreed with measures of positive discrimination to address gender imbalance in the workplace and why.
3. Whether the respondent attributed structural (e.g., organisational culture) or individual (e.g., women's own ability) issues as the major drawbacks for women trying to succeed in the corporate world.
4. Finally, their agreement or disagreement with the concept of the 'glass ceiling'.

These areas were chosen to gauge the willingness of the respondents to identify and act upon any barriers that women may face in their roles as senior managers. Respondents were grouped together on the basis of whether their responses to the research objectives were either for or against change that would assist other women in their roles as women managers. Four broad categories of women were discovered using this technique, Conservatives, Moderates, Reluctant Feminists, and Definite Feminists.

The results from these two methods of analysis are outlined in the next chapter. The first half of Chapter Five is devoted to the results of the analysis of individual respondent discourse, while the second half of the chapter is devoted to the results of comparing the individual responses of each woman with that of other women in the qualitative phase. The use and development of a framework was to show the extent of the similarities and differences between senior management women. The purpose of focusing upon the extent of the differences and similarities between

senior management women was to explore the stereotypical 'myth' of senior management women all being of one certain 'type' of person.

The use of classification systems as an analytical tool for developing general ideas is common practice in the social sciences. There are a number of different ways in which classification schemes are used. Classification schemes such as 'taxonomies' have been widely applied to the analysis of similarities and differences between people and things. Bailey (1994 in Kipnis, 1997, p205) observed that without classification there would be no theories, reasoning, data analysis, or, in fact, social science research. In other words, before relationships can be searched out, it is necessary first to classify what we wish to study. Only then can we ask about the extent to which these classified units are causally related. Bailey suggests that the rules guiding the classification of people and things are relatively simple. The main requirements are that the classes formed must be (a) exhaustive, that is, all cases can be described by one of the classes and (b) mutually exclusive, that is, no case can be a member of two classes. However, Kipnis (1997, p205 note 2) does point out that the mutual exclusivity cannot be met rigorously as dimensions isolated by factor and cluster analysis tend to overlap and share common variance. Similarly, the criterion of exhaustiveness cannot be met because there are always variables that are not classified as belonging to any of the identified dimensions.

Altman (1968 in Kipnis, 1997, p206) described five categories that the social sciences use to classify people and things. These include theoretical inferences (e.g., Weber's ideal types), content analysis of written material, behaviour observations, the organisation of research findings into classes or dimensions, and statistical procedures such as factor or cluster analyses. The classification scheme used in this study falls into two of the categories described by Altman. In the qualitative phase of the research 'the organisation of research findings into classes or dimensions' has been applied, while in the quantitative phase the statistical procedure of cluster analysis has been employed.

The classification scheme used in this study is not, as Weber (1947, 92) has suggested, the development of 'ideal' types, but operates as a way of placing the women interviewed in the

qualitative study at a particular point on a continuum to see if in fact they cluster in their views towards certain issues. This attitude or values continuum attempts to show the way senior management women deal with issues relating to other women in the workplace, especially issues concerning the assistance of women into positions of power. If the women interviewed do show specific groupings, dependent upon their willingness to assist other women, then other aspects of their backgrounds, such as, organisation type, income, age, or any other independent variable, can be measured to see there is a relationship between these variables. Hence the categories developed from the qualitative data become the dependent variables of the quantitative phase. These categories can be used to compare any differences or similarities that may occur between women who work in private or public sector organisations.

Bailey (1994, cited in Kipnis 1997, p206) suggested that the basic secret to successful classifications is the ability to ascertain the *fundamental characteristics* on which the classification is to be based. The system used in this study is based upon the five questions from the interview schedule outlined above. These categories were chosen for their ability to highlight the feelings, experiences and views of senior management women towards practices in the workplace that reflect a particular theoretical position about gender relations in organisations as outlined in Chapter Three. Examples are: practices that reflect the need for more women in senior positions, the experience of male domination through sexual harrassment or discrimination, views on Affirmative Action legislation, and views on the constraining and enabling forces women experience in the workplace.

Kipnis (1994, 206-207) highlights a number of difficulties with the classification schemes applied by social psychologists. One of the major difficulties is whether to apply a complex or simple set of dimensions to the scheme. For example, the argument for complex classificatory schemes is based upon the assertion that it is not possible to know in advance which variables are important. Consequently, the best strategy is to describe all the variables that the researcher believes have theoretical importance. The argument for simplicity, on the other hand, asserts that classification schemes with between two to six classes grouped along a single dimension stimulate more research than complex multi-dimensional classifications. In this study the

classificatory scheme developed arose from the views of senior management women to the five areas of theoretical importance listed on the previous page. Four relatively simple categories arose from those categories.

In writing up the analysis of the qualitative phase of the study verbatim quotes were used to illustrate the types of comments the respondents were making about each of the research objectives. Lofland (1971, cited in Patton, 1990, p24) explains that the first principle of qualitative analysis is to capture participants 'in their own terms'. To do this the researcher must learn their categories for rendering explicable and coherent the flux of raw reality.

The verbatim quotes were used in two ways. Firstly, to indicate types of responses that were broadly indicative of what the majority of respondents were saying. Secondly, to indicate the extremes of the range of views that individual women held about a particular research objective. The discussion of the qualitative results will indicate the way in which each verbatim quote is used in each particular case. Patton (1990, p24) highlights the fact that direct quotations are a basic source of raw data in qualitative inquiry, revealing respondents' depth of emotion, the ways they have organised their world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions.

5.13: Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative analysis seeks to confirm and extend the findings from the qualitative data. The confirmation of the themes from the qualitative data is undertaken by showing the proportion of senior management women who agree or disagree with the questions from the quantitative questionnaire (Appendix 5). The quantitative analysis extends the findings from the qualitative data by showing the statistically significant differences between the views of senior management women working in the public and private sectors. It also shows the strength of relationships between the data using multivariate techniques such as logistic regression and multiple regression.

Cross-tabulations and chi-squared analyses were undertaken on the quantitative data for comparing the differences, and the significance of those differences, between women working in

the private sector and those working in the public sector. Consequently, categorical variables are presented in Chapter Six as chi-squared scores with p values showing the significance of the chi-squared scores. Factor analysis was undertaken on the attitudinal scale on the last page of the quantitative questionnaire (Appendix 5, p19) to explore whether the variables could be grouped so that a linear regression analysis could be undertaken. The factor analysis revealed four statistically significant factors that were then placed into a regression analysis against a number of important independent variables. The significance of their combined effects was then discussed in light of the initial research objectives. Logistic regression was also undertaken to measure the combined effects of sixteen independent variables on five dependent variables relating to the behaviour of senior management women in terms of their willingness to assist other women in the workplace and programs such as Affirmative Action and quota systems.

5.14: Limitations

The limitations of the qualitative interview approach lie mainly in measuring how widespread the similarities may be in the total population of women in senior management positions. In other words, the similarities and differences in attitudes discovered amongst the group of women I have interviewed cannot be directly extrapolated to the views of all senior management women.

It is important to understand that the interpretive explanation of qualitative analysis does not yield knowledge in the same sense as quantitative explanation. The emphasis is on illumination, understanding, and extrapolation rather than causal determination, prediction, and generalisation (Patton, 1990, p424).

Another possible problem with the collection of reliable information from a qualitative study is that the collection and interpretation of results may be open to interviewer bias. The validity of qualitative methods is dependent upon the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork. The inquirer themselves are the instrument, and changes resulting from fatigue, shifts in knowledge, and cooptation, as well as variations resulting from differences in training, skill, and experience among different 'instruments', easily occur. But this loss in rigor is more than offset by the flexibility, insight, and ability to build on tacit knowledge that is the peculiar province of the human instrument (Guba & Lincoln in Patton, 1990, p14). In this study I was the only interviewer, therefore, questions of validity relating to training variations among

interviewers do not apply. However, I do recognise that interviewer bias can never be completely neutralised but is accepted as an inevitable compromise for the depth and richness achieved in an interview process.

External biases cannot be completely eradicated, however, and in this study I attempted to make as an objective an impression on respondents as possible. I went out of my way to appear neutral in the form of clothing and demeanour. My responses to individual responses from the respondents were kept to a minimum apart from the probing required for clarification of the issues. As little as possible extraneous communication was entered into during the interviews. Any of my comments which may have biased the responses were kept until the final stages of the interview unless the respondent required the clarification of a question or a response from the interviewer. Responses which followed any lengthy intervention by the interviewer were disregarded at the analysis stage.

The data in both the qualitative and quantitative study are cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. The major disadvantage of cross-sectional data is that extraneous factors that may impact upon the data cannot be controlled for. For example, factors resulting from the idiosyncracies of specific industries and individual corporations can neither be controlled for nor adequately identified in the analysis. Therefore, suggesting a causal relationship between variables is not appropriate (Foster & Orser, 1994, p342). The findings from the qualitative data are presented in the context of the design constraints and the exploratory nature of the study.

There are unintended consequences of interviewer intervention that may change the views and perspectives of the participants under study. There are also problems with observing and describing dynamic, constantly changing phenomena without imposing a static structure by the very boundaries we impose in seeking to define and understand. This is particularly the case with regard to the categories developed from the qualitative research. These categories and the proportion of women that could be classified within them would be constantly changing. The use of these categories in this study was, as discussed earlier in this chapter, for analytical purposes only (Patton, 1990, p83).

There are also a number of limitations to the quantitative study. Although results from the quantitative data can more easily be extrapolated to the larger population (in this case, however, I have surveyed almost all the population because of the small number of women in senior management), the removal of the information from its contextual setting can be problematic. In this case it is problematic due to the marked occupational segregation brought about by gender differences. Due to the effect of occupational segregation according to sex some women will suffer more discrimination in certain industries than others by virtue of the 'sex-typing' of their particular industry. For example, the relationship between being discriminated against in their career and being more willing to promote methods of positive discrimination to assist women is a strong positive one, as we shall see. Consequently, occupational type must be controlled for as a mitigating factor in these responses.

Another limitation of a quantitative study is the inability to explore and check the validity of the responses to certain questions. Many questions in the survey ask for a yes or no response then go on to ask the respondent to give an open-ended reason why they answered yes or no. Many respondents (more than half) chose not to explain their choice. Consequently, many of the open-ended responses from the quantitative survey are deficient in frequency compared to the closed ended responses. Therefore, the open-ended responses that did not offer a reliable response rate are simply grouped into positive versus negative responses. Lastly, the issue of non-response bias does not effect the results due to the fact that the response rate was large enough to ensure that those that did respond were representative of the sample population. This position is borne out by the consistency in the demographic statistics discussed and displayed in Chapter 7.

5.15: Summary

The thesis employs both qualitative and quantitative research methods to address the research objectives. The qualitative method was used first to explore and interpret the views of senior management women in order to understand the responses both within the context of each individual's story and categorise them within the context of senior management women as a distinctive group. The quantitative method was used to confirm the extent of the themes interpreted from senior management women's views and experiences in the qualitative data and

to compare and contrast the views and experiences of women working in the private sector and those working in the public sector. The effects of independent variables on the responses of senior management women are also explored using the quantitative data.

Qualitative data were collected using a semi-structured interview schedule with forty-three senior management women in Sydney. Using both a within-case and between-case method the content analysis focused upon the 'sensitizing concepts' from the research objectives and the ways in which respondents were self-reflexive about those concepts. The results of the qualitative data were reported in themes which arose from the within-case analysis and categories which arose from the between-case analysis. This method facilitates a display of the constraining and enabling forces experienced by senior management women both as individuals and as a group.

The quantitative data were collected using a structured survey approach. A twelve page questionnaire was sent to a random sample of 1200 senior management women half who worked in the private sector and half in the public sector. The response rate was 52% with the sample divided almost equally between private and public sector women. Cross-tabulations were undertaken to explore the differences between the private and public sector women on all of the variables pertaining to the research objectives. Chi-squared analysis was performed on the categorical variables to show the relationships between the variables and *p* values were reported on the significance of any differences between the two groups. Factor analysis was performed on the attitudinal scale to see if the categories could be reduced. Four categories were discovered. Multiple regression analysis was performed using the four factors and a set of independent variables to measure the combined effects. Logistic regression was also performed using five key dependent variables and the same set of independent variables to measure the combined effects. In the next chapter I report the findings from the qualitative phase of the research.

Chapter Six

Findings from the Qualitative Data

The analysis of the interview data took two forms, the within-case analysis exploring the enabling and constraining factors manifest in each woman's experience as a senior manager, and the between case analysis exploring the differences and similarities between the experiences and views of individual senior management women. The within-case analysis is presented first as six central themes: backgrounds, power and authority, experiences of discrimination, equity legislation, feminism, and organisational culture. These central themes were aligned with the research objectives for the qualitative phase of the thesis set out in Chapter Four. The between-case analysis is presented in the second half of the chapter and compares four broad categories of respondents, Conservatives, Moderates, Reluctant Feminists, and Definite Feminists.

The following six themes were discussed sequentially in the interviews and are analysed in this chapter in the same order.

1. Women's responses to factors such as their backgrounds, their career paths, and their personal idea of success.
2. Respondents' ideas about power and their use of authority in the workplace.
3. Respondents' views on, and experiences with gender inequality. This includes any resistance that they may have encountered to their authority, their views on the 'Glass Ceiling', and their experiences with sexual harassment and/or discrimination.
4. Views on the Affirmative Action legislation and the introduction of quota systems to increase female representation in senior management.
5. Views on feminism and the extent to which they personally identify with the women's movement.

6. Issues concerning their management style and experiences with the 'dominant' culture of their organisations.

Each area is treated as a broad conceptual 'theme' covering a number of questions in the interview schedule that relate to each research objective. As noted in Chapter Four, some questions in the semi-structured interview schedule were more structured, or closed, compared to others. The more closed-ended type of question followed more open-ended unstructured questions and were only asked if the respondent did not spontaneously discuss issues critical to the research objectives. The themes form a descriptive analysis of the data and are provided to allow the reader an insight into the thoughts and experiences of senior management women with the constraining and enabling factors present in their working lives. The categories of respondents, on the other hand, are based on an interpretation of the data derived from a comparison of the similarities and differences experienced by individual senior management women.

As discussed in the previous chapter, both the descriptive and interpretive analysis of the data can be described as 'sensitising' concepts. Sensitising concepts are concepts that an analyst brings to the data. In this thesis they are based on the research literature, theories, and evaluation issues that have been identified in the earlier chapters of the thesis. The inductive application of the sensitising concepts in this thesis is used to examine how each concept from the research objectives is manifest among senior management women as a group (Patton, 1990, p391).

The issues discussed will be analysed within each individual response and between each individual response. Both majority and minority views will be discussed. There will also be an analytical emphasis upon connections between the concepts discussed with the respondents, the spontaneous ideas which arise during the interview, and the 'themes' which are a conglomeration of these ideas.

The second section of the qualitative analysis is a 'between case' analysis of the responses. Each woman is categorised according to her views on the research themes covered. These categories are an analytical tool used to clearly show the level of heterogeneity or homogeneity amongst the group of senior management women interviewed.

6.1: Theme One: Backgrounds, Career Paths, and Ideas on Success.

6.1.1: Challenging Backgrounds

There was a diverse range of reasons cited regarding the background aspects that may have influenced each woman's success in senior management. A predominant issue emerged, however, namely the relationship between personal achievement and the respondents' parents or family philosophy. The references made to achievement were not only in the financial sense but also in terms of equality between men and women. The following three verbatim quotes show three typical responses to what aspects of their backgrounds contributed to their success in management.

'My parents have always been very supportive and expected me to do well, right from the very early days, they paid for me to go to a private prep school, in England, then it was going to be up to me after that but I was really encouraged and got a scholarship to a really good school and then to university. They didn't have a lot of money but decided to invest in my education. That support has always motivated me to do well. I got support from the teachers at school and it never occurred to me not to go to university nor to aim to do whatever I was capable of doing. I was brought up believing I would be a success and a successful female person. I went to an all girls' school. Although I was very interested in boys they were outside my academic world and there was never any thought of being subservient.' (Interview 17)

'I was always encouraged by parents and grandparents, stimulated to think and ask questions and provided with books. Did well at school and was rewarded for successes by being given a book or whatever. I think it is in one's nature. I was lucky enough to be selected to go to opportunity school when I was ten, spent two years there. That opportunity, as far as education, played a very important role. I was in the company of a small number selected on the basis of IQ. I realise it is not the be-all and end-all and not everybody who goes to opportunity school ends up being a leader but it does allow you to get experience and get a very good background, broadening you with a much more rounded education, which is very valuable'. (Interview 19)

'A strong family background, my parents are both high achievers, involved in many different areas both work, sport, very community minded, a very active family with a busy family life, role models for achieving excellence'. (Interview 20)

In many cases the emphasis upon gender equity within their family of origin was heavily influenced by the fact that the mothers of ten respondents worked outside of the home. Considering that the majority of the women interviewed were over 45 years of age this would have made their mothers unusual in an era when a high proportion of women did not work outside of the home.

The question of equal opportunity between men and women was somewhat taken for granted within many of these women's family of origin. Most respondents talked about how both their mothers and fathers believed women should be able to pursue whatever career they wanted. Stories were also related about how their fathers pushed them to do 'better at everything', and how both they and their parents were high achievers at school. Four of the women interviewed considered academic achievement to be as important to their success as a family of origin that was achievement oriented.

The positive influence of educational achievement was mixed with the type of education the respondents received. A catholic education, a private school education, or an education at an all girl school were each seen as positive influences in their own specific ways. All of these factors were cited as important by senior management women in the varied mix of reasons they cited as contributing to their success.

Just as important as the more functional aspects of achievement, such as working mothers and parents who ran businesses, were the challenges experienced in achievement-oriented family situations. The perception of an achievement-oriented background was referred to in many different and varied contexts. Many women referred to tough working class backgrounds, large families in the country, or hard-working middle-class parents who inspired their personal achievement-orientation. An example of this is,

'I grew up in a rather tough industrial area it made me very accustomed to doing it tough, being minority, losing, having to cope and at the time I certainly didn't appreciate that it is much better winning than losing. The nature of politics is however that it did equip me better to cope with challenges'. (Interview 33)

Other women mentioned more personality-based or individualistic explanations for their success, such as the fact that they were an only child, the only girl in the family, or that they had demonstrated leadership qualities as children. A background that provided some sort of challenge was seen by many women as a necessary precursor to their success as senior management women.

' I personally believe you are born with leadership qualities. I was leading the charge at five years old, getting all the kids on the block to be my co-workers, and I was always the boss. I actually went to school with nuns, you'll find a common thread with us with a lot of women who are either catholic or went to school with nuns, it creates an incredible discipline and the nuns are very tough and when you grow up as a catholic or in a school that is like that you become rebellious but in a way you want to become successful as well make the world a better place by being successful and having people become successful with you. I came from a middle to poor class family with five kids and there was no opportunities for scholarships so it kind of made you grit your teeth and say I'm going to make it despite all this'. (Interview 29)

'I come from a lower middle class family made good, I was the first in the family ever to go to university. My father he was an architect and he trained while I was alive, went to night school. My sister and brother also run their own businesses. I am an asthmatic, spend an enormous amount of time on my own which makes you self-reliant. I'd say that has had a major influence, missing long periods of school so you are never really one of the crowd, having to live in your mind a lot'. (Interview 40)

'I came from a very male dominated background, not purposefully but in number balance, two brothers, younger and older, a prominent and successful

father. My father was a very hard worker heading the milk industry and running a property, which mother really ran. A sense of achievement and reward and as children we worked together and put a degree of emphasis on achievement and success. Parents wanted to ensure I had equal opportunity with my brothers they never saw me as anything different'. (Interview 46)

The few women who did not mention achievement-oriented families mentioned other 'special' aspects of their background as being crucial to their success. One woman, originally from Romania, talked about the fact that it was common practice in communist countries for women to be on the same levels as men in what Australians might regard as male dominated professions such as engineering or science. According to her, the constraining factors working against women in certain occupations were striking when comparing Australia to Romania or Israel in the 1960s.

'I was brought up in Romania and being a communist country there was absolutely no sex discrimination between jobs that were available to men and women in the sciences. My father was a chemist and that was my role model. I then spent a couple of years in Israel and there too I didn't detect any of that thinking that girls don't do science. I came to Australia and virtually immediately I was inundated with the ideology, at that girl's school in the 1960's that girls don't do science'. (Interview 12)

Another woman mentioned the fact that she considered herself a 'rebel' and said she thought that '*something in your biological or sociological make-up enabled you to resist conditioning*' (Interview 11). In other words this woman believed she was atypical of most of the women in her generation who generally did not challenge the gender stereotypes of their era.

Although the achievement-oriented model was the most mentioned reason for their success, many women had a range of diverse reasons that they attributed to their success. A minority (5) could not attribute any reason from their background for their

success. The overwhelming majority (38) offered up 'special' reasons for their success.

To summarise, the women interviewed identified the following combination of enabling factors (in order of importance) as influencing their motivation to aspire to senior management positions.

1. A family background which emphasised achievement (both educationally and in an enterprise sense), discipline, working parents mainly in private enterprise.
2. A mother who worked in voluntary or paid employment outside of the home.
3. A family atmosphere that fostered equality between genders in that there was no overt or implied difference between the abilities of males or females. In fact, in most cases the girls were encouraged as much if not more than the boys in the family.

Precursors to success, then, are to be found in those aspects of their backgrounds that posed challenges to them as individuals. These challenging backgrounds were mixed with a number of unusual practical circumstances such as being born in a communist country, being an only child or the only female child in the family, and coming from a tough working class, rural, or privileged background. Many of these responses highlighted an unusual or 'different' upbringing.

6.1.2: Thematic Summary of Factors Contributing to Success

1. Working Mother (10)
2. Achievement Oriented Family with No Discrimination Between Sexes (7)
3. Working class/Country/Large family (6)
4. No background influences (5)
5. Father role model (4)
6. Private school privileged education (4)
7. Born leaders (3)

8. Eldest child in family (2)
9. Catholic (nuns) education (2)
10. Miscellaneous (1 each) (teachers want to be leaders, family business, different cultural background, only child)

6.1.3: Male Supporters and Unstructured Careers

In contrast to the many and varied reasons perceived by these women as being precursors to their success hardly any (3) of the women interviewed had planned their careers at all. Most (35) of them described ways in which they had ‘fallen’ into their careers sometimes by accident. A small number (4) mentioned a vague subconscious plan but not a specific strategy or detailed plan.

In the case of about half of the respondents their careers were associated with informal help mostly from male mentors or supporters.

‘One person where I first started as a graduate and he used to make a point of having a half hour interview with each new graduate each year regardless of professional direction (i.e. architect or engineer, etc.) because there were very few female cadets I guess he was fascinated with why did I do a six year degree, aspire to have a career, today he is still one of our closest family friends, now 72, he took a great interest in my career development and recognised my capabilities.’ (Interview 46)

These predominantly male ‘mentors’ had been ‘influential’ in the furthering of the career of many women in the study. The overwhelming majority of these were described as ‘male bosses’. None of the women interviewed described a formally planned mentor process and over half of the respondents had no assistance through informal mentoring of any kind. The pattern that was emerging from the interviews was one of sporadic, unstructured working relationships based mainly upon work needs rather than the needs of the advancement of the individual.

One respondent mentioned the fact that she thought other women saw her as a mentor or role model in her workplace. This was not a formal relationship but just something she ‘thought’ was happening. Most of the women interviewed did not spontaneously

mention being mentors for other women or participating in the development of mentor programs for other men or women in their workplaces.

The unstructured nature of their careers seemed to be a constraining factor within this group of women as the overwhelming majority did not have predetermined goals or career paths. The assistance of male mentors was definitely described as an enabling factor, although only half of the women in the study had benefited from mentors.

6.1.4: Success with No Compromise

When discussing their views on the possibility of personal compromise to get ahead in their careers, many women (31) went out of their way to stress that they had not compromised in any way to get ahead. The idea of personal compromise was almost repugnant to most of them. Many also said that they thought this is one reason why they had not gone as far, or as fast, as many men because they were not willing to compromise their personal beliefs.

'No (I have never compromised my personal beliefs). I've never been particularly good at the politics of life and I think if I had been I may have been more senior.' (Interview 47)

In contradiction to this perspective, a few women said that the fact they had not compromised is why they had been successful. These women believed that a high moral ground had propelled them into the limelight and made them stand out from men who did compromise their beliefs.

'No, (I have not compromised my personal beliefs) because I wouldn't. There is one club in Sydney that makes men and women enter through different doors. I have always said that if they have meetings or dinners there I wasn't going because it offended me and so they never have had them there. I'm usually placid and amenable but if there are things I really object to I say so. Because you are a woman it is easier because men don't know how to put you in an orderly peck, then you actually have access at a much higher level than men in the same job would have. Earlier I had CEOs who had come to give a talk chat me up, or very important ones just pop in to say hello because they were passing by.' (Interview 41)

In other words, some women saw their uncompromising natures as an enabling factor in their career whilst others saw it as a constraining factor.

An interesting aspect on the subject of personal compromise was that the women who were more likely to call themselves feminists were also more likely to admit that they have had to compromise their personal beliefs to get ahead. There appeared to be a conceptual link between perceiving the workplace as male dominated and admitting that they had compromised their personal beliefs to get ahead in management. This aligns itself with other discoveries from the qualitative data that showed that women who had experienced sexual discrimination in their careers had a greater awareness of this type of discrimination and consequently were more likely to identify with feminism. This highlights the relationship between the experiencing of constraints and the reflexive thought processes that then 'know' these constraints to be true. An individual does not question whether the constraining phenomena of gender inequity, such as sexual discrimination or the 'Glass Ceiling', are true if they themselves have experienced these constraining phenomena.

When discussing their idea of success, many women talked about 'balancing' both work and home life. Although they generally had trouble describing what they thought of as success in their own lives, many upon reflection talked about personal satisfaction at work. Some went on to say that their idea of personal satisfaction related to status amongst their peers. Very few spontaneously mentioned monetary rewards in their overall idea of success.

Most respondents referred to success in relation to, or in combination with, other factors.

'(Success is) a combination of all things that make you happy in your personal life. I get a lot of satisfaction at completing a task well and from staff as well. If my staff are happy I find that a job well done. Over the years my relationship with staff is one of the key things that I have tried to build. Monetary aspects do make the whole thing worthwhile.' (Interview 6)

There was also a tendency for many women to speak of success apart from monetary and status rewards. Quite a few respondents mentioned 'recognition' as part of

success. Most respondents mentioned money as being secondary to other more salient factors such as job satisfaction, or a balance between public and private life.

An interesting aspect of the different definitions of success was that there appeared to be those who related measures of success simply to their own life and those who related to success as being a measure that required them to compare themselves to others. Those who related to the self when talking about success talked of a ‘balanced’ life between personal and business considerations, a lifestyle as you want it, a personal definition. Those who related to others talked about being an equal to their peers or having a good relationship with their staff.

A few women related to achievement as a measure of success in terms of the recognition of a task well done. Personal job satisfaction also rated highly when talking about success. For example, some mentioned a ‘*change initiated by me*’ as being important. The most infrequently mentioned reasons offered as definitions of success were purely rational reasons such as, doing a good job, contributing, working hard, and monetary rewards befitting their position. The following diagram is a summary of the responses to theme one in order of importance and representation of the relationships between the responses within each group of responses.

6.1.5: Thematic Summary of Theme One

Challenging Backgrounds

1. Family ‘philosophy’ of achievement (links to upholding the merit principle) (15)
 - └ Parents in business (5)
 - └ Fathers pushed them (4)
 - └ Miscellaneous:
 - Upbringing in a communist country, personality factors (6)
2. Focus on education (13)
 - └ No difference between the sexes
3. Mother worked (10)

Unstructured Careers

1. Half had male mentors half had no mentors

Ideas of success

1. 'Balancing' private and public spheres (18)

└Two perspectives

1. A personal self-definition (18)
2. In relation to others (11)

6.2: Theme Two: Views on Personal Power and Authority

6.2.1: Influential Rather than Powerful

When discussing their ideas on the use of power in the workplace, many women described functional or practical aspects of power first. For example, achievement figured highly in the responses when it related to 'a job well done'. This type of response was similar to the first question, where many of the respondents referred to achievement-oriented backgrounds as precursors to their success.

A number of respondents (6) mentioned two different definitions of the term power, a first where power is both negative and inner directed and a second where it is both positive and outer directed.

'I don't like the word power, it's more influence, someone who can exert influence in a positive direction and get people's commitment to that and see results.' (Interview 45)

The women interviewed also divided their examples of powerful people into two different types. The first was an authoritarian type of powerful person who had power by virtue of their position but did not really deserve it, the second type could influence situations and motivate people to bring about positive change. The influential, or positive type, of powerful person would use a form of staff empowerment to motivate staff and promote teamwork. At times when they were discussing powerful people the respondents would refer to the 'ideal' leader in these terms.

'Depends on whether you're looking inwards or outwards. Outwards I suppose powerful means how much control you have over how many people. Inwardly it's more an aspect of self-knowledge understanding of institutions, structures and power structures. You need to not only understand but be on

*the chain of command where you can **influence** things. Its important to distinguish between the power one has by virtue of a position in an organisation and personal power. Many women and men make the mistake of thinking they have the power when it is really that of the position. That is a huge difference that became evident to me when I had a reasonably influential position with state government. I had a sense of power and people relented to me in that regard, if I could help them, they certainly gained out if it. When I left I noticed that people no longer thought they needed to 'chat me up', the power went with the position, it wasn't personally mine.'* (Interview 12)

*'There are lots of different powerful people, I work with two very powerful men here, one in the overt sense, the other in a totally different way, he knows people and gets things done through people, doesn't have to grandstand and parade, he knows exactly where he has to go to target people and things to achieve an objective. He sets his objectives and achieves them by knowing what to do. Another is powerful in the sense that he has a high profile and gathers people about him and does a lot of things and people respect him. Another was powerful in a kind of insidious way, he was a good communicator and tended to imply that he had the call over your future so you should do what you were told, that sort of power, and that is a frightening type of power. The men here I don't have a problem with, I've assessed and understand their power, but could never learn how to deal with the other sort, a **selfish power**, here they are achieving things, not dominating (me).'* (Interview 43)

*'It can be so many different things, people can be powerful because they have political nous, others who don't like politics can be powerful because they are intelligent and logical and so what they say makes sense and in that way they **influence**. Other people who aren't particularly intelligent can be powerful because they are articulate and I see people selling themselves so often because they are articulate although they aren't very smart.'* (Interview 41)

'Theoretically there is perceived power and real power. You perceive some people have power, assume some do and there is real power. In an overall

*industry sense perceived power is more important than real power, the media has a lot to answer for, the heads of large companies get all the play and what they say is perceived to be true, right and therefore they have **influence**. On the ground floor level where it is actually happening, as a group women are extraordinarily powerful, the only power we have is as a group, that is the power that men have, it's a shame we don't pursue that. (There are) men that are dead beats that have lost their jobs and get other jobs because the fellows think they should look after a fellow mate. Women should also have networks that promote you.'* (Interview 40)

Some respondents described power in terms of what they thought did not constitute a powerful person. For example, personal characteristics such as arrogance, being opinionated, or 'lording' it over other people. Even if respondents gave a short succinct description of what they thought was a powerful person, for example, referring to them as having 'the demeanour of authority', they qualified their answer by adding statements like 'whether they deserve it or not is another thing'. This suggests that they perceive the ability to command a legitimate use of power as being an important aspect of a powerful person.

When discussing whether they saw themselves as powerful the group was almost equally divided between those who said a direct yes, that they thought they were powerful, and those who said no, they did not think they were powerful. Of those women who did think they were powerful many added caveats to their answer. The caveats were expressed as feelings of reservation such as; '*powerful within a confined sphere*', '*personally powerful but not publicly powerful*', '*other people view me as such*', '*I think so*' or '*I guess so*'. Most women were reluctant to categorise themselves as powerful per se.

A similar response pattern was found amongst those who said they did not think they were powerful. Only a small proportion of women believed they were definitely not powerful and, like those who said they thought they were powerful, most added caveats to their answer. Some said the word power conjured up negative connotations and that they didn't see themselves that way. Some said they thought they were 'influential' but not powerful and one said she was not powerful because her power

was limited to her working environment. A few respondents thought that they were not powerful personally but did hold some power through their position. Others were quite equivocal about their feelings of power saying they thought they might be powerful but only to an extent, or *'they didn't know'*, and *'I guess so'*.

Some of those who said that they did not think they were powerful in an equivocal way began upon reflection to recount situations at work where staff would defer to them and how they would be surprised at how they might be viewed by others as powerful. After reflecting on the concept of what a powerful person was some changed their mind and said they thought they were powerful but only within their own limited work environment.

When discussing examples of powerful people most women referred to politicians, Chief Executive Officers, or Managing Directors of large corporations in which they had worked.

6.2.2: Introspective Use of Authority

When they saw the need, most women felt comfortable with having to exercise their authority at work.

'Personally I'm quite comfortable with it because generally I would have done sufficient research into the problem or issue surrounding the situation in which I am using it. In a way using it is just decision-making and I am quite comfortable with that.' (Interview 6)

Many women said having to retrench staff was a very traumatic experience. However, once they had decided to exercise their authority the overwhelming majority said they acted quickly and did not 'shirk' what they saw as their responsibility.

When discussing their own use of authority in the workplace many women said that they felt their use of authority was a practical, rational application of their job. It was clear from their discussions about power that most women were somewhat ambivalent about their use of power. Some managed their feelings of ambivalence by stressing the importance of judiciously weighing up all the information before proceeding with their use of authority. This gave the impression that many women preferred to be introspective before using their authority.

*'Yes, a problem with the word power depicts 'beating over the head' type influence. If you have whatever it takes to get things done and get people behind you for a constructive end point, have the **capacity to influence** (my emphasis), the strength to see things through. I don't seek a position to use authority for the sake of authority, I would rather use my influence to get things done in the direction I want them to go. In terms of direct authority I have a lot of authority in the terms of recruiting people and policies in the firm'. (Interview 45)*

*'I'm conscious of the fact that for most people work is an important part of their life and it affects them not only financially but how they feel about things, whether their life is happy or not, and I feel a lot of responsibility in that I have the power to spoil someone's day, or life even, so I feel that as a **personal responsibility** (my emphasis).' (Interview 44)*

Other ways in which these women managed their use of authority was by using a consensus approach. Some described it as *'just part of the job'*, or *'no problems as long as fair judgement is used'*. A minority said they did not particularly like the use of authority and that they would rather use a consensus approach at all times. Whilst another minority referred to positive feelings of their use of authority saying things like; *'I feel I'm being me, contributing'*, or *'I like doing that, people then know what is happening'*.

6.2.3: Thematic Summary of Theme Two

- ⇒ They used authority introspectively (34)
- ⇒ Most did not see themselves as powerful (27)
- ⇒ Power equals influence not domination (16)

6.3: Theme Three: Experiences with Gender Inequality

6.3.1: Sex Discrimination and the 'Glass Ceiling'

Most respondents had experienced some form of resistance to their authority, and that resistance came mostly from men, predominantly older men. A few women said they

thought that in most cases this was due to the fact that they were in a new senior position and not because they were a woman. One woman who had worked in the public sector highlighted the very stark contrasts between the public and private sector with regard to sex discrimination. The respondent also highlights the male dominated culture of her organisation labelling it 'the male mentality of the site'.

'Not (sex discrimination) in the public sector. The prejudices and barriers I found in the property and construction industry and private sector. Within two weeks of joining I was told that the role of women was in the bedroom and the kitchen, never had been a woman at that level in the male chauvinist, engineering driven organisation there was a great deal of uncomfortableness and the men didn't know how to cope with it, they had run a book on me (before I arrived) and the best odds I'd been given were lasting three months (in 1988), (they) said that I didn't have a hope in hell of succeeding because I was a women, an architect and I'd come from government. All (this was) said a bit in jest but (they) were attempting to say that the culture of (the organisation) was not ready for women in senior positions and it still isn't it's typical of the industry, the male mentality of the site (my emphasis).'

(Interview 46)

Some women who initially answered that they had never experienced resistance to their authority immediately afterwards began recounting stories of resistance to their authority. To these women the encounters they had had with employees who had resisted their authority were, in their minds, not very significant events.

'In relation to staff not really. A few years ago it may have been difficult if I was supervising people who were older than I, however, I've always been able to sort the problems out. I guess the approach I take tends to ease a lot of those sort of problems, most people find it unusual to have a female boss, although it is more common now some people like it and some people don't. In the end if you have someone who is determined to make trouble because they don't like having a female boss they either have to move out or into someone else's area because you have to maintain discipline and cannot afford to have people who are going to be disruptive for whatever reason.'

(Interview 9)

'No not generally (resistance to authority). I do have one specific case where the guy has in fact been in the position, he was probably promoted to a position he wasn't suited for, he's now back in a role that is better suited to him but he sees me as the interventionist and he resists advice. Nothing to do with me being a female. He's had this position of authority over quite a large organisation, the fact is that he had it for twelve months, before he lost that position. I believe that the board that dismissed him were right, their wrong decision was to put him there in the first place.' (Interview 7)

Only a small proportion of women could not recall experiencing any resistance to their authority.

Most women did not have many other women at their level in the organisation or in their industry and some had none at all. Therefore, those women were in the position of being classified as a 'token' female senior manager according to Kanter's (1977) definition. A large proportion (32) said this posed a problem for networking and sharing information and a small proportion (6) said they used this to their advantage in business because they were more visible and therefore more easily remembered in meetings and conferences. The following comment describes the dilemma that token women face through highlighting the enabling as well as the constraining factors at play. The respondent discusses how on balance the position of the token is more of a constraining factor than an enabling one.

'It is important to have a critical mass in terms of women within an organisation. If you are out there on your own, the only female at management level, you can feel very isolated, whether or not it is accurate, you can have a perception that you have to try harder to be 'one of the boys', prove yourself more because you are the odd one out people automatically pay more attention to you, and that can be good to a certain extent in that you have a problem where they think that everything that you do is wonderful or alternatively so much attention is on you that if you make a mistake it is amplified to the extent that if one of the men makes the same mistake no one notices because there is thirty of them and only one of you. If there is too small a number too much attention is focused on that small group of people and

whatever attributes that person has gets spread to the women as a group, for example if one gets pregnant and leaves, all women will do that. You are constantly aware that you have to create a good impression because if you don't it will damage others coming along behind you, that is a real problem.'
(Interview 9)

There were differing views amongst the women in terms of their experiences with sexual harassment or discrimination in the workplace. Of the women who had experienced some form of sexual harassment many said it had occurred early in their careers, when they were young, or in the 1970s. Of those who said they had not encountered any sexual discrimination in the workplace, some had had to deal with the harassment of other staff as a manager, and some thought they were immune from it because they were viewed as the boss and therefore in a position of power. A minority of women said they had picked up certain attitudes as being discriminatory but had overlooked or ignored those attitudes.

Many women had heard of the concept of the 'Glass Ceiling' and believed that it existed. However, the overwhelming majority of women in this study had not personally experienced it or seen it in operation in their workplace. A minority said they thought it was almost a mythical term. There was a definite gap between the belief many of these women had in the existence of the 'Glass Ceiling' and their own experience with the concept.

'The legal profession is notorious for it (a glass ceiling). It is usually senior associateship that is the glass ceiling with women never getting past it into partnership, a senior associateship is just a senior form of employee not involved in the management of the firm. You can pick the glass ceilings in the law firms because of what is going on, the men are being promoted through to partnership. There is what I call the bubble underneath the glass ceiling of the growing number of senior associates and in some firms the number of senior associates is 70% women and is growing because the men are coming up through but the women are being held back. There are a huge number of women senior associates but in the last five years they may not have appointed a woman partner. It is a very graphic example of the glass ceiling. Statistics

show that there was actually a higher proportion of women partners in 1969 than there is now.’ (Interview 9)

A number of women discussed the ways in which they had been victimised by males for attaining positions on boards or in senior management. One woman described the overt discrimination and victimisation she experienced in the media industry as in terms of a ‘game’.

*‘ That glass ceiling thing is true, even if it is not a personal thing which I don’t think it is a lot of the time, (woman are) frustrated about the way things are done. There is one deliberate attempt to get women in their place by those boys. All of the big publishers, very powerful group that control, 2 women got voted on the board (I was one of them). (Not long after) it was going around that there was a feminist block vote and (the interviewees name) must have organised it. I couldn’t believe it but they actually did (victimise me) because **that is the way they play it** (my emphasis), (they) couldn’t believe that it (women voted for) could just happen naturally, (they thought) we women must have planned it. They were totally paranoid and stacked the election this year. Some of the worst offenders are actually the nicest of men because when you actually say to them to stop it they do, it is the ones who say they are for feminism that are the worst. They have learnt to **play the game** (my emphasis) and get away with it, they are very threatened.’ (Interview 40)*

Explanations given by the respondents for the existence of a glass ceiling were highly diverse. Some of these were: no mentors, male culture, no networks, tokenism, lack of female resource pool, pregnancy, generation change required, occupational segregation, family responsibilities, ‘clubbiness’ of boardroom, women to blame, women want to do other things, women pose ‘fear’ factor to male board members, deep seated prejudices, hard for women to gain credibility. A minority of women said they thought the ‘Glass Ceiling’ did not exist and a few said they were unsure. Those who were equivocal about the existence of a glass ceiling tended to attribute the lack of women at senior management level to a function of women’s own choice and not to any constraining factors.

‘I’ve heard that term (glass ceiling) but again it is difficult for me from my own personal experience because I am the one who puts me where I am, it’s

my own business. I would like to think that we don't have a glass ceiling anywhere we are working. Some of the women I work with will sometimes say 'well you haven't got a woman station manager' or anyone in any key executive positions, and that's true, so I guess it would be better to say why is that so, do I have a glass ceiling in my own company? I don't believe that to be the case. In most instances the women that have worked for us haven't been terribly career motivators. Though they have been there and in many cases done the work quite satisfactorily but they are certainly not looking to proceed beyond that. Generally do it for 2-3 years then leave, stay at home, change around, so that there's not been those with us who are looking for a career. There is one ambitious young lady at the moment who is the program director at one of the radio stations and she is the first one. That is because she clearly wants to get on.' (Interview 7)

On the other hand, some women describe sexual discrimination as a powerful constraining factor related to stereotypical imagery associated with women's bodies and age.

'While you are young and attractive it is nice to have you on the board, something nice to look at. But when you get older then you are thought of as causing trouble, sexual stuff, there is a real thing about the young lady in the mini-suit, showing her legs they (men) love it. When you get to my age they think you are a nuisance. The worst ones are the ones that just roll their eyes and turn away, or the little smirks, the ones that argue are at least taking you seriously.' (Interview 40)

In summary, most of the women in the study agreed that sexual discrimination and the concept of the glass ceiling was correct. Even if they themselves had not experienced it, they had seen other women who had. There was reluctance on the part of only a small number of women to either agree to the concept of a glass ceiling or the existence of sexual discrimination. Although some women talked of an enabling factor (being visible) associated with being a token woman at senior management level the overwhelming majority saw the experience of 'tokenism' as a personally constraining factor.

6.3.2: Thematic Summary of Theme Three

1. Had not personally experienced the 'Glass Ceiling' (35)
2. Dilemmas in the position of 'token' women (32)
3. Agreed that the 'Glass Ceiling' existed (30)
4. Had experienced resistance to their authority (20)

6.4: Theme Four: Affirmative Action and Quota Systems

Most of the women in the study agreed that there should be a larger representation of women in powerful positions in Australia. However, a small proportion said they either did not think it was an important goal or that they were unsure whether it was an important goal.

Most of those who were positive about the need for more women in positions of power appealed to the need for change from the perspective of a general liberal principle of equity. An example of this was:

'I think so. Women are probably over half the population, they certainly make up the numbers in universities, uneven treatment needs to be addressed in all fields of Australian life.' (Interview 31)

Those who did not agree with the need for more women in positions of power usually spontaneously referred to the structural mechanisms in place, such as Affirmative Action or quota systems which may favour women, as being unfair.

'I don't agree with Affirmative Action in that sense (I) read in the paper that an Australian university was reserving two out of five professorships for women, men could apply for only three positions, women for all five but two who would be reserved for them alone, I think that is disgusting.' (Interview 38)

There were a number of women who were undecided on how they felt about affirmative action. These women tended to dislike structural change mechanisms and focused upon individual women themselves as the cause of the problem. One said,

'Really mixed on this point. I would hate to see any quota system being taken up because I think it is false positioning. How do you change attitudes that is

the bigger question, it does come back to the women themselves not positioning themselves as women but doing a job.’ (Interview 20)

The purpose of exploring the views of senior management women towards legislative initiatives such as Affirmative Action and quota systems was to gauge their willingness to support the more structural change mechanisms, as well as the more individualistic change mechanisms, such as mentor programs and networking. The aversion amongst the women interviewed to legislative methods such as Affirmative Action and Quotas became obvious in their discussions about the programs.

‘ I graduated in 1973 and it wasn’t long before that women in the public service had to leave when getting married, fortunately that had changed. I went with the commonwealth because I won a cadetship there were many impediments to women’s success and expectations, just huge barriers really. I felt that there was far less bias in the commonwealth at that time than in the private sector. During my time there (public sector) I experienced no prejudice as a woman. At times as I progressed I was a bit worried I would be put into jobs because I was a woman. At the time I got into the senior executive service there was only 5 women in it throughout Australia. I had stated that I would resign out of principle if I was ever put in a position because I was a woman because it would not do any woman in the country any good at all. A woman was put in as head of a department prematurely and then there was a ten year barrier imposed that didn’t do the case of women any good at all.’ (Interview 46)

So whilst programs such as Affirmative Action were sometimes seen as enabling women to counter the overt biases against them they were also seen as having some constraining effects with regard to their effectiveness in organisations.

There was a general feeling amongst many of the women that the Affirmative Action program had so far been ineffective in bringing about the profound social change that many saw as required to increase the numbers of women in senior management positions in Australian organisations. Furthermore, their understanding of the Affirmative Action program was somewhat confused and varied from the way in which the Affirmative Action Agency drafted the legislation and promotes the program. Many were under the impression that an Affirmative Action program

equated to a program of positive discrimination when in fact the legislation holds employers to a strict merit based employment program. Also, their discussions about Affirmative Action were divided into three quite evenly distributed groups. One third of the women interviewed agreed with the program, one third disagreed with the program, and another third were undecided.

The women who did not believe in the program said that for them it tended to suggest that *'standards are going to be lowered to increase the proportion of half of the population'* and that that *'didn't seem right to them'*.

Those who did believe in the program thought that it was necessary because *'you have to force things to change'* and that *'things that have changed in society wouldn't have done so without legislation or encouragement'*.

Those who were undecided on how they felt about affirmative action said that they hadn't paid a whole lot of attention to what it means or how it would effect them, although they did express frustration at the fact that there seemed to be *'a whole lot of theory and not enough practical things to help women in business'*. One woman expressed her frustration and ambivalence about what she saw as a problem saying *'there seems to be a lot of talking, misinformation and misrepresentation that gives women a bad name, someone has got it wrong somewhere.'*

When talking about the Affirmative Action program, the women's views became stronger and more animated in comparison to the discussions about Equal Employment Opportunity. However, when asked their thoughts on the possibility of a quota system being introduced to redress the gender imbalance in senior management ranks the negative reactions from the respondents were much more marked. An overwhelming majority of women expressed a definite no to the subject of quotas, a minority were undecided, and an even smaller minority agreed with the possibility of quotas if the numbers of women in senior positions did not improve soon. However, even the small minority who did (reluctantly) agree with a quota system did so with great reservation saying it would have to be handled *'sensitively'* and with caution so as not to be of detriment to women rather than benefit. These women expressed a

definite fear of a reactionary backlash on the part of men, a backlash that may prove even more detrimental to women than the current situation.

Those who were averse to quotas were quite definite about why quotas should not be adopted. Many said comments such as, *'quotas move away from having the best person for the job. You just have someone there for the sake of it, it becomes a token.'*

Those who had mixed feelings about a quota system felt that a 'backlash' could be mounted against the system which would see women worse off not better off. An example of this view was:

'I have mixed views about that. It has a place in politics and I support what the Labor party is trying to do¹. I think it is a bit difficult outside that, as long as you can be assured that appointments are merit based and nothing else, care has to be taken as it can generate a backlash, I wouldn't go so far as to say that I'm opposed to it but it does have problems and I would be very cautious about it.' (Interview 24)

This quote was typical of many of the responses in terms of highlighting both the enabling and constraining factors that operate when forms of positive discrimination are implemented to redress gender inequity.

The few women that were positive about a quota system expressed their anger and frustration at the slow pace of change when it came to gender equity in senior management.

'Without taking measures like that I don't ever think we'll get near equality for women. If we just wait for it to happen it will take two thousand years, steps have to be taken.' (Interview 39)

Many of those who were positive about a quota system qualified their positive views by highlighting the possible negative aspects of the system. These women focused on the possibility of a backlash against the women who are promoted on grounds other than merit because men may be disadvantaged. It was only after elaborating on these

¹ In 1994 the Australian Labour Party suggested implementing a quota system with targets to increase the numbers of women in their party seats and overriding the normal electoral process.

initial concerns that these respondents conceded to the possible positive aspects of quotas.

The number of different concerns that women had about the quota system can be divided into two main areas. Firstly, those who thought that it would be counterproductive for women to be placed into a position of power without any credibility or support, and that there may be a “backlash” against women who are promoted through a quota system. Secondly, those that thought you would not get the right person for the job if you promoted women because of the need to satisfy a quota. These two differing concerns both highlight the constraints of a quota system. However, the difference between the two concerns shows the ways in which women relate to the position of other women in the workplace.

The first concern, that women will lack support in the workplace if promoted through a quota system, tends to suggest that women who believe this are concerned for other women’s welfare when placed in the already difficult position of being a ‘token’ women in management. The second concern suggests that women who hold this view are unconcerned about the difficulties of individual women and more concerned about the processes of merit involved in hiring new staff within organisations.

6.4.1: Thematic Summary of Theme Four

- Most agreed we need more women in positions of power (29)
- Divided on their views of Affirmative Action (15 for, 15 against, 13 undecided)
- Mostly against quota systems (29)

6.5: Theme Five: Feminism

Exploring senior management women’s responses to feminism and the women’s movement has the purpose of covering two areas of concern to the research objectives of the study. Firstly, it uncovers any potentially ‘counter-militant’ feelings that these women may have towards the feminist movement and the subsequent mindset that accompanies such feelings of ‘counter-militancy’. Secondly, it explores the propensity of the existing women in senior management to view social change for women from either a collectivist or individualist perspective.

The women were asked a group of questions relating to feminism. Firstly, did they consider themselves feminists? Secondly, if so then what sort of feminist? Thirdly, did they voice feminist principles at work? Finally, did they feel any conflict between loyalty to feminist principles and loyalty to organisational principles?

Many women (20) were happy to call themselves feminists and had a strong personal sense of what feminism meant to them.

'Men always thought that the women's movement was just anti-men, which it wasn't. Feminism means a process of self-discovery for women, however, it has developed as a dirty word. A lot of women don't want to be called a feminist, all it means is that women are capable of doing whatever they want to do, it is a simple thing, why aren't they for it? A lot think it is anti-men, lesbian stuff, most women who are feminists are in heterosexual relationships, not tough or rejecting men, no different from any other women.' (Interview 40)

Although many were happy to call themselves feminists, there were just as many that were confused, and at times highly contradictory, in their response to the question of what they thought about feminism. Many respondents were uninformed about the feminist movement generally.

'Because I don't know what it is and I don't know what the general public conceives as the meaning I possibly wouldn't call myself one. If I think women are important, yes, I think there should be more education of women and doors opened and I try to help younger people achieve things but I don't see myself as some militant feminist.' (Interview 41)

'If asked if I was a feminist I'd say categorically no because my understanding now of what a feminist is is something quite ugly and militant and I don't want to know about that.' (Interview 38)

The tone of many of the responses suggest that they do not follow the debates going on within the feminist movement, and that a high proportion have a negative response to feminism. The negative responses characterise the movement as fragmented, no

longer relevant, and useful only in the “early days” as a precursor to change which has provided a certain amount of equality of opportunity for women today.

‘Largely had its day (feminism), certainly here. I don’t support tax deductions. They’re trying to get feminists here supporting child care tax deductions, I wouldn’t, never heard them mention migrant women who have to work in factories or domestic work to earn enough to keep their households together. A word of sympathy for the real underdogs in society. It’s an educated women’s movement exploiting their own positions.’ (Interview 42)

Even many of those who spontaneously declared they were feminists could not elaborate on their understanding of the current debates or complexities within the feminist movement and were not active within feminist organisations. Like many other issues on which they were interviewed senior management women’s responses on the question of feminism were extremely diverse.

When asked if they would call themselves feminists the question evoked confusion and hesitancy from many respondents. There were many equivocal responses to this question. A good proportion (13) said they would definitely regard themselves as feminists while just as many said they thought they were feminists but were slightly equivocal in their response. I defined a response as equivocal when the respondent either had difficulty in answering the question directly or when they had difficulty defining the term.

‘Depends on your definition of feminist. I consider myself a feminist but out there they may say no because I’m not the hard line. My definition is equality for women and a fair chance and I’ll promote that as much as I can and give women every opportunity that I can but I don’t agree with the crash through attitude and women given a job simply because they are women. Again the best person for the job.’ (Interview 37)

Other respondents said they were definitely not feminists, or they thought they were not feminists but were slightly unsure or were undecided whether they were feminists or not.

Of those who called themselves feminists, the majority (12) said they did voice feminist principles at work, five said they did not voice feminist principles at work and two were undecided.

When asked had they felt they had been discriminated against for voicing feminist principles the majority said they felt they had not. However, six said they had experienced some discrimination and those that had been discriminated against related the following stories about their experiences:

'Ridiculed more than discriminated against - I deliberately do not use the (feminist) terminology in certain places any more.' (Interview 8)

'But I am also guilty of discrimination thinking that certain roles are male or female.' (Interview 17)

'Everyone wants to characterise every feminist as a separatist lesbian dog.' (Interview 27)

One respondent told a story of being nominated for position on a music industry board. Years after she had given up hope of being elected 'the men' decided it was time. (Interview 29)

Another respondent said that because she was pregnant her boss worried about the time she would take off. He then suggested that they discriminate against the employee hired to fill in for her because she was of child-bearing age. She responded by saying *'I exploded, they have children and they were denying me the opportunity to have one.'* (Interview 32)

Another respondent said she was used to being discriminated against for voicing feminist principles.

'The story of my life (being discriminated against for voicing feminist principles) - some people find feminism threatening as a dangerous aversive philosophy that is going to do them out of some of their privileges.' (Interview 39)

Most of those who said they had not been discriminated against for voicing feminist principles in the workplace could recall incidents where other people had been adversely 'labelled' feminists. These women had experienced being a feminist as a constraining factor in their careers.

'But I am only voicing feminist principles to other women or junior women.'
(Interview 14)

'How many times can you bring up the problem of sexist language in a meeting (without losing your credibility) the language is in male terms.'
(Interview 35)

'I've seen others make value judgements or decisions about that person, which are hard for them to outgrow.' (Interview 36)

'Not here but at home I have, I've learnt not to discuss it with my family, they are extremely conservative and are scared of the word feminist, they would most likely agree with everything I say but it goes against the grain to say so.'
(Interview 37)

One woman who admitted not speaking up about her feminist leanings because when she had done so it had immediate negative ramifications for her career describes the constraints placed on women for voicing feminist principles.

'I present things in a way that they do not create conflict but fit in naturally with the environment. Probably in my much earlier years as a manager I remember speaking out but it was to do with harassment of myself and colleagues (and) that got me into trouble.' (Interview 45)

When asked whether they had ever experienced conflict between loyalty to feminist principles and organisational principles most respondents (nine out of sixteen) said they had never experienced conflict between feminist principles and organisational principles. Six said they had experienced a clash between these principles. One

respondent felt that it could be the case, *'I'm sure I have made decisions that would not have been all that popular with feminist women, a lot of stuff is perceptual.'* (Interview 28)

Of those who said they had not experienced a clash between the two principles some quoted incidents of personal abuse from within their profession and stories of other women who were too intimidated to speak out.

'The greatest conflict arises because I do speak out about what goes on in the legal profession, other members of the profession outside the firm become very hostile, I get abusive phone calls because I speak publicly about what the problems are and that they need to be addressed and thought about, there is a conflict about what goes on in the profession but not in the partnership so much. I have seen, many women partners (in Sydney) feel intimidated by the fact that they are outnumbered by the men and will not support even basic things like parental leave within a firm because they are frightened that to be supportive of women's issues will mean that they will not be taken seriously or will act against them in the firm. It is important (to speak out) so I am willing to 'wear' the results of my outspokenness.' (Interview 9)

When asked whether they belonged to any women's groups or network, approximately half of the respondents answered in the affirmative. Most of those who did participate in women's networks were either in an occupationally related network such as 'Chief Executive Women' or a politically oriented network such as the 'Women's Electoral Lobby'. One respondent highlighted the importance of networking in the following way.

' Women don't have support networks. Because of the backlash maybe a lot are reporting it as it's fine but it really isn't. The networking is terribly important your hear a lot of women say 'I got here on my own so should other women'. If they got there by being the token and then brought the other women up then it would be fine but they aren't going to they are going to sit there and say I did it on my own. I can understand why they do that. I know a woman who's on the board of 20 companies she's fabulous but one of those women (Queen Bee). The women who get there have to be the ones

championing women's rights, challenging the guys, some of them do but a lot of them don't. (Interview 40)

6.5.1: Thematic Summary of Theme Five

The following displays the varied ways in which the women responded to questions on feminism.

1. Happy to call themselves feminists (11)
2. Feminism was hard to define (8)
3. Gave contradictory responses (8)
4. Described themselves as committed feminists (6)
5. Didn't understand what feminism meant (6)
6. Said they were disappointed in those who say they are not feminists (4)
7. Didn't want to call themselves feminists but went on to expound liberal feminist principles as their goals and motivation (4)

Table 6.1 divides the responses to feminism into the specific positive and negative comments.

Table 6.1: Responses to Feminism

Positive responses	Negative responses
Equality (7)	Bra burning (6)
Opportunity (6)	Lesbian/Radicals (4)
Worthwhile movement (6)	Not relevant to working class or mothers (3)
Necessary extreme (5)	Ugly / militant (2)
Positive ideology (3)	Hate or Anti-men (2)
Networking (2)	Complaining / raving (1)
Increased Choice (1)	Sensible shoes / comfortable dress (1)
Increased information (1)	Movement has de-railed itself (1)

6.6: Theme Six: Management Styles and Organisational Culture

This theme explores the strategies used by senior management women to manage the constraining and enabling factors in their workplace. The last nine questions in the interview schedule (21-29) are analysed in this theme. The subjects covered in those questions are: experiences with an 'old boys network', personal sacrifices made for their career, ideas on operating their organisation differently, description of their management style, ideas about differences displayed by males and females at work, the issue of dress for women in the workplace, the domestic division of labour, and the major drawbacks to women's success in management. Each of these areas will be discussed separately. Due to the fact that these questions were at the end of the interview process some questions have a high degree of non-response. In some cases I had to omit certain questions because many women had a finite amount of time to complete the schedule.

Approximately half of the respondents were experiencing the existence of an 'old boys network' in their organisations. These women described such networks as constraining factors.

'There is a network of men that run our society, they are basically at the top of our society and I don't think there are any women in that network, they are not there in the elite, it is a network and I think men are more comfortable relating to one another than they are to women. I don't know of any women who approximate to the key people. The women who get to a certain position like me quite regularly I feel more like an observer than a participant and I think that is part of the glass ceiling because I'm in a mainstream portfolio area but I wouldn't feel this way if I was the leader.' (Interview 28)

'Yes, I would be at meetings, but the real decisions weren't made at the meetings, the real decisions would be made somewhere else, and I wouldn't have been somewhere else. So I would have been seeking to get issues resolved in the meetings and that isn't where the real issues were being

resolved, not where the deals were being cut and I think that happens a lot in business, where they were being cut would be if some of the men were friends and they all went to have a drink together or if they all went down to the gym and I don't go to the gym. They talk about things as they walk down or in the lift. Things would just be decided and brought to meetings as a fait accompli.' (Interview 10)

Some of those who said they were experiencing an 'old boy's network' discussed how these networks were breaking down, or how they were in a position to influence these networks, or that they were learning to forge relationships within these networks.

'Yes, there is an old boys network and I'm excluded. It is probably only three people in the organisation. So and so is in with the in-crowd. The politics is definitely important, you have to play the politics. I do play the politics and I know where the power group is. I've sat for the last twelve months and observed and worked out the power base. I have a pretty good idea of how to do it now.' (Interview 30)

Consequently, although old boy's networks were seen by some as constraining factors many women were either not experiencing them at all or managing the constraints by learning to play the politics themselves.

The majority of women discussed having to sacrifice home life, time with their family, or leisure interests for their career.

'Anybody at an executive level, whether male or female, has to make sacrifices, work long hours, give up things, the organisation has my allegiance so that is it I'm committed to the organisation for which I work. I'm probably at times too much so and should say enough is enough and go on holidays or whatever. I've learnt to do that more and more but I've probably erred on the side of giving rather than taking.' (Interview 19)

'I have definitely made sacrifices. I have a little boy who is five next week, I would have liked to have a second child (but I won't). There is no question

about the sacrifices, there has to be. You are torn when you have a family should you leave him with a nanny or a childcare centre if he is sick, you worry. Rightly or wrongly I think I put the business first, you shouldn't you should put your child first but I seem to worry about this place more.'

(Interview 30)

On the subject of the culture of their organisation the women interviewed were asked whether they had ever thought their organisation would operate more effectively if it was organised differently. The majority of women answered that they do have a vision to change the way their organisation operates. About half of these respondents mentioned changes to do with staff, like better communication or teamwork, or a need to break down the rigid hierarchical structure within the organisation.

'What I take pride in is that people have moved their roles here quite dramatically because I have given them enough rope to say find out what you are really good at, given them the chance to work it out.' (Interview 20)

However, there was a great diversity in the range of ways suggested to change organisations. Some respondents suggested that more formality or structure was required in their organisation, others said they would increase teamwork, or cut out the enormous amounts of paperwork required.

When asked how they would describe their management style the response was highly diverse. Many women answered this question with more than one description of their style. As can be seen from the following table women used words such as, consensual, consultative, collaborative, people-oriented, to describe their management style. Only a small number of respondents mentioned words such as, tough or aggressive. A sizeable number of respondents (9) mentioned a combination of consultative or inclusive approach to managing together with a firm, decision-making, authoritarian attitude.

Some women talked of changing their working patterns to suit their lifestyles.

'I've made some dramatic changes in my life, I only come in two days a week (moved to the country) working 2 days here and three days there by phone, it has only been four weeks, its to improve my life, to re-establish a more

balanced life (my emphasis). I go overseas twice a year and next year she's (daughter) coming with me they'll just have to put up with it, her in the meeting, she won't behave badly, I'm sick of it, the men are saying who will be in charge (when I've gone) then all you women will tear each other apart if she's not here to control you. They are really getting at them they are competent capable women who don't tear each other apart and are capable of working together, this attitude men have, stirring up trouble.' (Interview 40)

'My aspiration had really been to head a commonwealth department and I was on that track, was on a list for such and had acted as a deputy secretary on a number of occasions before leaving the public service. However, because my husband's career changed and he was commuting to Melbourne and then Sydney, and the children were still young, I decided life was about my family and when offered a chief executive position at (large corporate property organisation) I moved to Sydney.' (Interview 46)

Women who had had bad experiences of the dominant male culture in their organisations discussed scenarios that showed the constraining forces at work against them.

'When I was at (a large private sector media organisation) there seemed to be a competition about who would work the latest and you were never able to say you had a sick child, no one ever talked about that it didn't exist. And the wonderful game of calling meetings at seven thirty in the morning when my daughter was about three months old I was invited to go on a committee fighting sales tax and they would always call meetings at 5.30pm and I'd have to leave about 6-6.30pm to collect my daughter from care and I was told that if I couldn't commit myself to things I shouldn't continue to come. She's 11 now. Women have tried to fit in so left their poor children standing on street corners in order to do what we have to do. We have to change the ways of work and ensure they are looked after. They (men) push and push to see how far she is willing to go how much of her life she'll sacrifice. Eventually she is going to crack and then they can say she's not doing the job.' (Interview 40)

On the subject of women operating differently to men in the workplace many women spoke of the personal strengths of women in comparison to men.

'I am all for moving women forward into more roles of responsibility. I think that women have an enormous amount to offer in balancing out the attitudes, we add another dimension to things. We look at things in different ways and I think that is a healthy position and it is for us to make men realise the benefits of women. I'm not in favour of forcing the issue, we most likely need more networking, women helping each other. Women are people oriented, a lot more sensitive to the people issues. And that directly relates to management roles. It tells you immediately that women are probably best equipped to take on senior management roles where the management of people as your resource is your greatest asset if that is ill managed it could be the difference between success or not. We are able to juggle a number of different things at a one time and that again is a management issue.' (Interview 20)

A large proportion of women (20) talked about differences between the way men and women operate in the workplace. However, similar to many other responses the types of differences cited were diverse. Examples of responses were, that women don't play games, that the value of child rearing changes women, women are a little more conscious of staff, women talk more openly whilst males let their ego get in the way. Most comments displayed women in a positive light and males in a negative light, although the comments did not highlight whether the 'female' traits were more enabling or constraining. Quite a number of women (11) answered in the negative or were equivocal about there being any differences between men and women at all.

When asked whether there were issues of dress that arose for women in the workplace the respondents were evenly divided saying either that it was difficult for women to know how to dress or that the issue of dress was really just a practical issue of a tidy neat appearance. Many thought that the issue of appropriate dress at work applied to males as much as it applied to females.

On the subject of family commitments the sample was almost equally divided between those who had children and those who didn't. The women who had children felt they had more family commitments than the males in their organisation whilst those who

did not have children felt they had fewer family commitments than males with children. Those who had experienced pregnancy and young children in their organisations spoke of the discrimination they faced during those times. Many women referred to the enabling factor of many men who have wives at home.

Finally, the drawbacks that women attributed to women's success in management can be divided into three main areas. First, that women are their own worst enemies. Comments in this area of response cited issues relating to women not letting it be known that they are anxious to progress, women's lack of self-confidence and relevant experience, their unwillingness to relocate, that women get sick of trying and have the luxury of pulling out, and that women need to be more committed and make sacrifices. Second, structural barriers such as inadequate childcare, and the burden of the double workday were cited as drawbacks to their success. Finally, men's attitudes and the sexual stereotyping of managers as male were also cited as drawbacks. Those who attributed the male gender system as the major drawback to women's success cited reasons such as the attitude of men towards women in powerful positions, the stereotype of the manager equals male, and the 'backlash' from males.

6.6.1: Thematic Summary of Theme Six

Management Styles

- Consensual, team oriented, or collaborative (11).
 - consultative (3)
 - people oriented (3)
 - empowering staff (4)
 - an 'open door policy' (4)
 - described a 'hands on' approach (3)
 - democratic (1)
- Combination of consultative and authoritarian (9)
 - Learned from management courses (2)
 - Aggressive/autocratic (2)
 - Straight/decision-making (1)
 - Task oriented (1)
 - Highly idiosyncratic (1)

Drawbacks to Women's Success

1. Women are their own worst enemies (17)
2. Structural issues such as childcare and the double workday burden (14)
3. Male gender-system (9)

6.7: Summary of Findings from the Within-case Analysis

The six themes analysed for the within-case analysis of the qualitative data show the extent of the diverse experiences and views of each individual senior management woman with regard to the research objectives. The first theme explores senior management women's backgrounds, career paths and ideas of success. When talking about their backgrounds in relation to their career success many senior management women referred to a personal philosophy of achievement as an enabling factor. The majority of women attributed this to the philosophy of their parents which was supported by a good education. Working mothers were cited by many as role models that had a positive influence on their career aspirations. However, the picture of a challenging background brought about by an achievement-oriented family predominates in the accounts of most of the respondents. Some respondents mentioned a tough, strict, or working class background that had given them the strength of character to overcome any adversity in the business world. The emphasis on the achievement-orientation as an enabling factor is, I suggest, related to their positive views on a merit system and their reluctance to advocate forms of positive discrimination to redress the gender imbalance in senior management.

As far as assistance in the form of mentors, half of the women interviewed mentioned informal assistance of some kind from male superiors. Therefore, mentor relationships had proved an enabling factor for approximately half of the women interviewed. Many women also saw the establishment of women's networks as an enabling factor for women in management. However, these networks were not being actively pursued by the majority of women interviewed.

Many women spoke of how they had achieved their success with no personal compromise. Those that insisted they had made no compromises were quite adamant about the fact that they had not compromised. A small proportion believed that a woman could not get to senior management without making compromises. The outcome of a non-compromising position, however, was seen in two different ways. Some women saw their non-compromising attitude as having improved their career because they stood out from the men and therefore, gained visibility and a higher profile. Alternatively, some saw their non-compromising position as a drawback to the speed with which they should have been promoted into senior positions.

When discussing their ideas on a successful career most women described a 'balanced' idea of life that encompassed fulfilment both at work and at home. Many women talked about a combination of personal lifestyle factors in relation to their idea of success. There also appeared to be a difference between those who saw success in terms of a personal definition and those who saw success in terms of relationships with others.

The second theme explores the experiences and views of senior management women to the use of power and authority. Power was seen by most women as the amount of influence an individual had on the behaviour of others. Domination and power exercised through status was not seen as legitimate as the ability to make others do what you wanted through influencing their behaviour. Most women did not see themselves as powerful in this sense. The use of authority was seen as a practical aspect of their positions and many said they used authority responsibly after much deliberation about the issues involved.

Theme three explored experiences with gender inequality such as sexual harassment and discrimination. About half of the women interviewed could recall having been constrained by sexual harassment or discriminated in their careers while half had not experienced such constraints. Of those who had been harassed many said they had had these experiences in the 1970s or early in their careers before they had reached a senior position in management. Once they had reached a senior position many women said they felt few constraints as far as their gender was concerned. Some women referred to the Australian culture, or the male dominated character of their occupation as continuing contributing factors to sexual discrimination. The ways in which

women handled these constraints ranged from leaving organisations to set up their own organisations or by becoming as autonomous as possible within their existing organisations. Many agreed with the phenomenon of the glass ceiling for women trying to get into senior management but very few had actually experienced a glass ceiling themselves.

Theme four explores the experiences and views of senior management women to legislative measures and forms of positive discrimination suggested to redress the gender imbalance at senior management level. While the overwhelming majority of women agreed that a larger representation of women were needed at senior management level, that did not automatically transfer into support for legislative measures such as Affirmative Action or quota systems. The women were divided on the question of legislation and quotas. While half of the women thought Affirmative Action had to be implemented they had little faith in it being able to counteract the constraining effects preventing women from reaching senior management positions. Most women felt that quota systems would not be an enabling but a constraining factor on women entering senior management as the 'backlash' against them would render the legitimate power of their position ineffective.

Theme five explored the views and experiences of women towards feminism. The women were extremely divided on this issue. Those who were happy to call themselves feminists could not understand why the term was so contentious. These women saw feminism as a necessary social movement that had liberated women in order to improve their choices and opportunities in life. Many women, however, were confused as to the meaning of feminism and some were scathing in their comments about feminism evoking stereotypical images of bra burning lesbians as reasons for why they could not identify with feminism. The positive and negative responses on the question of feminism were almost equally distributed suggesting that half of the women interviewed saw feminism as an enabling factor and half saw it as a constraining factor.

Theme six explored the organisational culture in which the women worked and their personal management styles. Like the questions on feminism and sexual harassment approximately half of the women experience an 'old boys network' as a constraining factor in their organisation. Many of the women who were experiencing 'old boys

networks' described how these networks were declining or that they had found ways in which to influence these networks suggesting that such networks were losing their power as a constraining factor. Two strategies described to deal with 'old boys networks' ranged from learning how to play the politics game or leaving the organisation and setting up in competition. Many women had visions of changing the culture of their organisations in terms of better communication with staff or a need to break down rigid hierarchies. The management styles preferred by most women were also related to consensual, communicative or collaborative imagery. Many women agreed that there were differences between males and females at work but the women attributed a wide variety of different characteristics to these differences. Finally the drawbacks attributed to women's success in senior management ranged from the assertion that women were their own worst enemies in terms of not putting themselves forward for promotion, to the structural issues such as child care and the double workday burden to the intransigence of male attitudes.

6.8: Categories of Senior Management Women

Groups of women with similar responses began to emerge out of the analysis of the transcriptions. The categorisation of the individual responses represents a between – case analysis of the qualitative data. Although the following categories are not completely distinct (because some women's ideas overlap into two or more categories) group patterns to certain responses can be identified. These patterns were interesting in that they related to other life experiences and background factors common to some women. Exploring the total group of women interviewed according to their respective categories allowed for easier cross-referencing of demographic, and life experience factors that may have shaped the social orientation of the respondents.

For example, a large number of those labelled 'Definite Feminists' had either worked or were currently working in the public service. The category labelled 'Conservatives' were an older age cohort. The categories also allowed an overall view to emerge of the broad range of social orientations held by the senior management women studied. The views and orientations of the women ranged from what I have labelled 'Conservative' (i.e., those respondents who did not subscribe to the view that women are discriminated against at all) to what I have labelled a more 'Definite Feminist'

view or orientation (i.e., that positive discrimination policies must be enforced to bring about a greater gender balance in the workforce).

The categories were chosen according to their responses to the following set of variables.

1. Whether or nor the respondent considered themselves to be a feminist and whether they had a positive or negative attitude towards feminism.
2. Whether or not the respondent agreed or disagreed with measures of positive discrimination to address gender imbalance in the workplace and why.
3. Whether the respondent attributed structural (e.g., organisational culture) or individual (e.g., women's own ability) issues as the major drawbacks for women trying to succeed in the corporate world.
4. The respondents' agreement or disagreement with the concept of the 'Glass Ceiling'.

There are other variables of interest, such as the way these women described their management styles and the ways in which they viewed power and handled their authority with staff. The way in which they viewed other women, however, was deemed the most interesting and fruitful way of grouping the respondents with regard to the overall research question. Other demographic information and attitudinal information was then cross-referenced with the different categories to gauge whether it reinforced the categories or rendered them less discrete. The object of the exercise was to lay the ground work for the quantitative research where the existence of these categories amongst a representative sample of senior management women could be either confirmed or disputed. If confirmed, the different categories could then be compared and contrasted with independent variables such as, age, organisation type and size.

Four categories of women have been identified from the content analysis of the interview data; Conservatives, Moderates, Reluctant Feminists, and Definite Feminists. Table 6.2 shows the relative proportions of these categories. The proportions show that senior management women were a diverse group with regard to

their views on assisting other women and that the majority of senior management women regarded themselves as feminists.

Table 6.2: Categories of senior management women interviewed

Category	Number of women	Percentage of total
Conservatives	4	9%
Moderates	8	19%
Reluctant Feminists	11	26%
Definite Feminists	20	46%
Total	43	100%

Although most women in the study were not actually undertaking any practical programs to assist other women in the workplace, most of them agreed that there needed to be change. I now look at each category in detail to explain more fully how I have interpreted their position.

6.8.1: Category One: Conservatives

Conservatives were the smallest category with only four respondents. (Respondents number: 7,38,42,47)

Conservatives are mainly characterised by their complete aversion to collective identification with other women. These women definitely did not want to be personally associated with feminism in any way. Some maligned feminism for being counter-productive for women. They believed in the principle that everyone should achieve on their own merits and that society should not be interfered with but allowed to take its own course. Therefore, they uphold the individual model of change and the merit principle in the very strict and literal sense of the word. Consequently, they disavow any forms of positive discrimination in order to assist women or minority groups overcome any historical forms of discrimination that they may have suffered. In fact some of these women firmly believe that women have not suffered any discrimination and it has been their own fault if they have not achieved their desired status. Most of these women had either overlooked any sexual discrimination they

may have experienced in their workplaces or stated they had not experienced any sexual discrimination.

Conservatives did not believe there were barriers that prevented women from reaching senior management. According to this group any barriers perceived to exist were those that the women themselves had invented. Consequently, Conservatives did not see the need to assist other women at all in their quest to reach senior management positions. Conservatives were the group most likely to represent 'Queen Bees' but they were also the oldest cohort and soon to be leaving the ranks of management. One Conservative was particularly critical of offering assistance of any kind to women. On the subject of 'glass ceilings' she commented,

'It represents women being able to see something but not being able to get it, the child in the sweet shop, what does it tell you, do they want to be at the top, can't get to the top, or is it an excuse?'(Interview 42)

Conservatives were against the larger representation of women at senior levels of management and Affirmative Action programs.

'Tends to suggest the standards are going to be lowered to increase the proportion of half of the population and that doesn't seem right to me.'
(Interview 47)

When talking about feminism conservatives were highly critical.

'It has fairly bad press, tends to conjure up pictures of women in sensible shoes, comfortable looking, lots of emotional arguments, it is a movement, controlled, governed or projected by people one doesn't particularly want living next door.' (Interview 47)

To summarise the position of conservatives they;

- saw no need to assist other women aspiring for management positions
- disavowed 'social engineering' to bring about changes in society
- ignored sex discrimination as an aberration
- made a joke of feminism
- saw any barriers to women entering management ranks as those that women brought on themselves

6.8.2: Category Two: Moderates

Moderates were the third largest category with eight respondents. (Respondents number: 10,16,19,20,25,26,41,44)

Moderates were characterised by the fact that they did not want to call themselves feminists but agreed, to differing degrees, that women need to be represented in larger numbers in powerful positions. They did not, however, subscribe to policies of positive discrimination to bring this about but instead believed that it was happening “naturally” and that there was no need to quicken the pace of change. This group was more likely to say that women were different to men and highlight these differences in their discussions. They believed in individual methods to bring about change, such as role models for younger women and women’s networks, and disavowed collectivist models such as feminism and the women’s movement. Many did not believe they had experienced what they would describe as discrimination in their careers and considered that the major drawbacks for women were their own individual shortcomings. Some agreed with the concept of glass ceilings and some did not. Some even agreed with Affirmative Action initiatives, although many did not know the details of the policy and did not want to ‘force’ change. There were some anomalies in this group, one respondent (Interview 10) was not a feminist but could see the sense in Affirmative Action and quotas systems in some industries.

Moderates mostly advocated a strict equity model that should be applied to both males and females to assure that you get the ‘right person for the job’. Consequently, many in this group did not advocate the use of forms of positive discrimination to balance the numbers of males and females in senior management. Many Moderates did not know about the existence or content of the current gender equity legislation in Australia. Although many did concede to the possibility of recurring barriers to women’s advancement into senior management they generally believed that as a woman you ‘control your own destiny’. This group believed that change would come about naturally and therefore there was no need to force change. A typical response from a Moderate on the question of a ‘Glass Ceiling’ for women was,

‘I think its fictitious and don’t support it, but that’s because I don’t think I’ve been in the position of being stopped just because I was a female. A lot (of

women) are putting their minds to how to get around it instead of automatically thinking they should go through it.' (Interview 19)

Although some women in this category conceded that there was a 'Glass Ceiling' they had not experienced it themselves and believed their personal achievements overruled any structural barriers;

'I haven't personally seen it, (but) I know its out there, and I suppose I'd call myself fortunate in not having to deal with it. Again people have recognised what I have achieved and through those achievements I have been given the recognition of my position, I haven't had to ask, I've deserved it.' (Interview 20)

On the question of Affirmative Action the same respondent said,

'Really mixed on this point. I would hate to see any quota system being taken up because I think it is false positioning. How do you change attitudes that is the bigger question, it does come back to the women themselves not positioning themselves as women but doing a job.' (Interview 20)

Moderates were very ambivalent on the subject of quotas.

'Very mixed feelings, because, bluntly, if you have made it yourself and are in management part of me says you should always pick the best person for the job, and part says you shouldn't positively discriminate, I feel it very strongly so deep down in my heart I'm not in favour of positive discrimination.' (Interview 44)

Although some Moderates criticised the feminist movement they also highlighted the benefits it has brought to women. Therefore this group cannot strictly be classified as 'countermilitants', as in the case of Conservatives, because they do believe in some aspects of the feminist movement. However, the benefits of feminism focused on by Moderates are the strict equity principles and not the redressing of the persistent gender imbalance. On the subject of feminism on one Moderate said,

'I've never had to burn a bra or anything, I recognise I am biologically different. I'm just middle of the road, I believe women aren't getting a fair go, that is clear. I don't think that going out and demanding rights is going to do anything for me or the next generation. You have to demonstrate that you are worthy rather than go out and demand the right.' (Interview 16)

To summarise the views of Moderates,

- they were more likely than Conservatives to concede that barriers do exist for women attempting to get into management positions
- they uphold strict equity principles which prevent them from assisting women over men
- they do not regard themselves as feminists
- they do not agree with Affirmative Action programs or quota systems to redress the gender imbalance in management
- they believe that women are ‘their own worst enemies’ when it comes to succeeding in management

6.8.3: Category Three: Reluctant Feminists

Reluctant Feminists were the second largest category consisting of eleven respondents. (Respondents number: 6,13,15,17,23,30,32,34,36,37,43)

The difference between Reluctant Feminists and Moderate Feminists is marginal but I have separated the two by trying to group together here those women who are a little more positive about feminism than those who are a little less positive about the movement. Sometimes the women in this category contradicted themselves as to whether they were feminists or not. Some women were and some were not active in the movement. They were generally unsure of what the feminist movement stood for today but were quite sure that it was needed to make things better for women. They see the drawbacks to women’s success as a combination of either structural or individual constraints. These women are positive about the Affirmative Action program, but they are unsure about the introduction of quota systems.

Reluctant Feminists are sure that something needs to be done to assist other women into senior management but are unsure of exactly what should be done. Although many of these respondents would like to think they were feminists they were unsure of what the term currently meant. Reluctant Feminists were not undertaking any practical steps or programs to help other women in the workplace. Like Moderates, Reluctant Feminists believed that the major drawback for women was their own lack of

ambition and drive. Reluctant Feminists relayed stories about being discriminated against for voicing feminist views.

'I present things in a way that they do not create conflict but fit in naturally with the environment. Probably in my much earlier years as a manager I remember speaking out but it was to do with harassment of myself and colleagues, that got me into trouble.' (Interview 45)

On the subject of feminism, Reluctant Feminists were confused as to the meaning and significance of the movement;

'I don't really know what the word means, and it has change so many times over the generations. To the extent that the feminist movement has created more opportunities for women then it probably has been a good thing.' (Interview 21)

A typical response from a Reluctant Feminist when asked about the Affirmative Action program was more positive than negative;

'I believe in Affirmative Action because you have to force things to change. Things that have changed in society wouldn't have done so without legislation or encouragement.' (Interview 17)

To summarise the views of Reluctant Feminists:

- They recognised the dominant male culture or organisations as being a large barrier for women aspiring to senior management
- They thought they were feminists but displayed a certain amount of confusion when it came to talking about what feminism means
- They were generally supportive of Affirmative Action but not of quota systems
- They were frustrated by knowing that something needed to be done to assist women in management positions but were not sure of what actions should be taken

6.8.4: Category Four: Definite Feminists

Definite Feminists were the biggest category with twenty respondents, almost half of the women interviewed. (Respondents number: 8, 9,11,12,18, 24, 27, 28, 35, 39, 40, 14, 21, 22, 29, 31, 39, 45, 46, 48)

These women were sure they were feminists even though their individual definitions of what feminism meant to them differed. Most women in this group believed Affirmative Action programs were a positive and effective means to address gender inequality in Australian organisations. Some were equivocal about the introduction of a quota system, however, many more than in any other category said quota systems were the next obvious step in addressing gender inequality, or that they may have become a 'necessary evil'.

These women saw the drawbacks to women's success as being either male gender systems or structural reasons such as child-care. Many had public service backgrounds or are now working in the public service, some were well-versed or specifically educated in women's issues. Some had either opted out of large organisations and started their own businesses or had manoeuvred themselves into fairly autonomous positions in their organisations because of the male gender systems they saw as obstacles to their own progress. Some worked in new, 'flatly' structured, small organisations that had purposefully avoided an overtly hierarchical organisational structure. Two women in this category were brought up in communist countries where they remarked that occupational segregation according to sex was not as marked as in Australia.

Although not all Definite Feminists were supportive of a quota system, they were all supportive of legislative initiatives which attempted to dismantle the dominant male culture of organisations which they saw as the predominant barrier to women's progress into senior management. These women easily identified themselves as feminists and displayed a personal willingness to assist other women. Definite Feminists told many stories of the resistance they had encountered to their views in their organisations and the strategies they used to overcome them.

'The way the game is played is vital. Those are the struts that hold the ceiling up and to undermine them you have to be an exceptional person or be assisted upwards, or you just have to be one of the boys.' (Interview 8)

Definite Feminists also had a different view of equality than the other groups. This view encompassed a redressing of the discrimination which women have faced through the generations and acknowledged the complexities involved in bringing about a change in gender stereotyping in society.

'If you want women of our generation to really be at the top you'd better change the rules of the game. By the straight rules of the game many of us can't make it, we've taken time off, slowed down, made the wrong choices, that kind of thing. We don't compare well, the only way it can be changed is by not comparing on our old criteria. For example, no gaps in the CV, when that is removed as a comparative basis then women can do better.' (Interview 12)

Definite Feminists were the most likely of all categories to voice feminist principles at work.

'Yes, I do. I'll challenge people, depending on my mood, even if it was in jest telling them that it wasn't really funny. I also try and actively encourage women to go beyond what they are employed to do in the organisation. I challenge the harassment of women.' (Interview 31)

Definite Feminists identified cultural barriers when asked whether they voiced feminist principles at work.

'I try to (voice feminist principles), (but I) don't always succeed, mind you because the cultural resistance can be quite strong.' (Interview 8)

When asked whether they were discriminated against for voicing feminist principles many Definite Feminists said they had been.

'Yes, the story of my life, attitudes towards you by people who feel very threatened by the women's movement and feminism, who don't understand what it is. (They think) that it is a dangerous aversive philosophy, that it is going to do them out of some of their privileges, extremists.' (Interview 39)

As seen previously in this chapter, some Reluctant Feminists have been silenced by the reactions to their voicing of feminist principles. But in the case of Definite Feminists they are unafraid to speak out about women's issues at work. The respondent who described her outspokenness and the fear and reluctance of women to speak out about women's issues in a legal firm (quotation cited on page 182 of this chapter) is an example of how definite these women are about their views.

An issue that arises quite frequently with Definite Feminists is that a reasonable proportion of them 'opt out' of the system to overcome the male dominated culture of

their workplace. On the subject of the glass ceiling many Definite Feminists responded like this,

'Yes, very correct, no question about it, the only way out of it is to get the hell out of those corporations and set up your own business, be competition and take away their business.' (Interview 11)

Quite a number of other Definite Feminists had expressed their frustration with the dominant male culture by either leaving their organisations to set up business on their own or attempting to make themselves autonomous within their existing organisation.

Definite Feminists were much more predisposed than any other category to support legislative initiatives to bring about gender equity in the workplace. A typical response from a Definite Feminist on the subject of Affirmative Action was,

'You want to have equality and you want the best person for the position, of course, but my argument is that it hasn't worked that way before, if you reverse it around, what is the difference, have women getting ahead of men for awhile and eventually it will level itself out.'
(Interview 40)

Some Definite Feminists believed that putting numbers or quotas on the number of women in certain workplaces could further limit their representation.

'I don't think it makes sense to put numbers on things. It depends, as in some industries and occupations there are more than 50% women, fewer women in those positions? If it is to mirror the proportion in the population then it would need to be more than 50%, because women are 51 -52% of the population. I'd prefer to express it in terms of women being able to do whatever they want to do with no barriers, rather than a numerical target.' (Interview 18)

Definite Feminists also recognise that a redefinition of merit is required to redress the gender imbalance.

'Men often say that people should only be promoted on merit but what they are actually saying is that men should be promoted because only men have merit.'
(Interview 9)

A positive response from this group on the subject of quota systems was,

'I'm very much for quotas, they are the only way that it can be overcome. If you want them (women) there then you have to change the rules by which you judge. That doesn't mean that you are going to get stupid people what you do is compensate for what went wrong in ideology and upbringing and in choices.'
(Interview 12)

However, some Definite Feminists were cautious about developing quotas for putting women into positions of power.

'I had stated that I would resign out of principle if I was ever put in a position because I was a woman, because it would not do any woman in the country any good at all. A woman was put in as head of a department prematurely and then there was a ten year barrier imposed that didn't do the case of women any good at all.' (Interview 46)

To summarise the views of Definite Feminists,

- they personally identify themselves as feminists
- they relate stories of the constraints placed on them by the dominant male culture within their organisations
- they identify organisational cultures and structures as barriers to women's progress into management rather than women's own personal inadequacies
- they believe in the need for Affirmative Action and, if necessary, quotas to increase the number of women in senior management
- they tend to leave and start up their own businesses or make themselves autonomous within their current organisations in order to circumvent the dominant male culture of organisations at senior management level

6.9: Summary of Findings from the Between-Case Analysis

The between-case analysis of responses showed that there is a broad range of views held by senior management women to the issues of gender equity and feminism. The diverse responses showed that senior management women cannot be stereotyped into a certain category of woman who is unwilling to assist other women in the workplace. In fact, only a small minority of the women interviewed displayed attitudes that could

be described as aligning themselves with the 'Queen Bee' syndrome as discussed in Chapter Two.

The largest category was the self-identified feminist group, the Definite Feminists, who represented approximately half of the women interviewed. The women in this category understood and had experienced the dominant male culture within organisations as the most constraining barrier to women's progress in management. Definite Feminists were also the most likely to speak out about women's issues in the workplace. However, at the same time a reasonable proportion of this group was also the most likely to be 'opting out' of large corporations to set up their own businesses in response to the strong barriers they had faced in their careers. Conservatives, Moderates, and Reluctant Feminists were a lot less likely than Definite Feminists to speak up about women's rights in their workplaces. Conservatives were the category that most closely fitted the description of 'Queen Bees'. However, as already mentioned, they represented only a very small proportion of senior management women and were the older cohort of the sample. Reluctant and Definite Feminists spoke of ways in which the dominant male culture still reproduces itself in management by vilifying women who speak up on women's issues. Definite Feminists were the only category who saw the need to change the 'rules of the game' in order to allow women an easier path into positions of power. However, as many of the women in the Definite Feminist category had left large organisations the effect of their influence on the dominant structures of organisations was somewhat dissipated.

It was mostly only the Definite Feminists who discussed the male gender-system within their workplaces as a problem and cited different ways that they had attempted to deal with the dominant culture. One Definite Feminist said she distanced herself from the elite core of her organisation and was semi-autonomous, purposely making her section of the organisation a separate arm of the corporation. Some made distinct statements about how to overcome male dominated systems. Many of these statements were ways to escape the male culture of organisations. An architect said 'go out and be competition that's the only way to beat them at their own game'. A book editor who once owned her own company but had to sell it to a large media conglomerate told of the problems she had had with the dominant masculine culture. Another

woman who had been in a very senior management position in a construction company said she had to leave and become a consultant to circumvent the constraining effects of the dominant masculine culture.

The women who were in the Definite Feminist category tended to either be in, or have worked in the public sector arena. On the other hand the women in the Conservative category tended to work in private enterprise. There were anomalies within and between these groups, however, and overlapping tendencies do occur. This suggests that although the categories are not discrete, they are used as a broad way of categorising the different types of 'consciousness' possessed by senior management women in Australia today.

6.10: Summary of the Qualitative Phase

The forty-three women interviewed displayed more heterogeneity than homogeneity as a group of senior managers. The within-case analysis of responses shows that senior management women had diverse views on most of the research objectives. The diversity of these views was accompanied by an equally diverse attribution of either constraining or enabling forces to their experiences as senior managers. The enabling factors of their backgrounds such as the achievement-orientation of their parents and the fact that their mothers engaged in employment outside the home tended to influence their insistence upon the merit principle. Only half of the women interviewed had benefited from the enabling encouragement of mostly male mentors. The use of authority was described as introspective by many who thought they were not powerful per se in their senior management roles. The view of power as the ability to influence was a consistent theme.

The constraining factor of the 'Glass Ceiling' phenomenon, although conceded to by many, was not actually experienced by many women. The women were divided almost equally in their responses to experiences of sexual discrimination, feminism, and the discussion of 'old boys networks'. Half had experienced sex discrimination, about half described themselves as feminists and half felt that 'old boys networks' still existed. The divisions between the women on questions relating to legislative initiatives and forms of positive discrimination to increase the numbers of women in

senior management were more marked than any other group of issues explored in the research. A larger proportion of women were equivocal about programs that might appear to force change.

Those women who had experienced sexual discrimination were more willing, than those who had not, to identify themselves as feminists. Also, those who identified themselves as feminists were much more likely to advocate forms of positive discrimination to redress the gender imbalance at senior management level. These 'self-identified feminists' said they were more willing to assist other women in their efforts to gain senior management positions and more likely to attribute the intransigence of male attitudes as the major drawback to women's success in management. On the other hand, those who had not experienced sexual discrimination were less likely to call themselves feminists, less likely to agree with forms of positive discrimination to redress the gender imbalance, and more likely to attribute women's own inadequacies as the major drawback to their success. Whether the consistency in these views suggests a causal link between them will be further investigated in the quantitative phase of the research that follows in the next chapter.

The between-case analysis showed that as a social group senior management women were almost evenly divided between those who are willing to assist other women and those who are equivocal or unwilling to assist other women. The four categories identified are a heuristic device to highlight the differences and similarities between senior management women as a group. The categories showed that only the minority category of Conservatives could be categorised as similar to the description of a 'Queen Bee' with the largest group, the Definite Feminists, dominating the categories. Definite Feminists were very willing to implement programs of Affirmative Action and some were supportive of quota systems to assist women into senior management positions. The relationship between a self-identification with feminism and a willingness to implement quota systems to redress the gender imbalance at senior management level will be discussed in the next chapter.

Any discussion about gender equity principles is substantially lacking amongst the senior management women interviewed in this study. The reports from the qualitative study show that the principles and details of the Equal Employment Opportunity and Affirmative Action legislation are not well known or discussed amongst senior management women generally. There was a small group of women in the qualitative phase who were in the 'Chiefs of Enterprises' network who loosely discussed mentor programs for women in middle management and sponsored the occasional female student for an MBA degree. Although, as has been discussed in Chapter Three, these methods of organisational change are voluntaristic and based upon the individual model of change and will not bring about the lasting change required to raise the number of women in powerful positions significantly.

Many women interviewed tended to take for granted the issues of equality of access and did not question or challenge the hierarchical structure of their organisations to any great extent. Those few who did challenge the broader structure of their organisations at the very highest levels spoke of the personal vilification they had experienced because of it and the reluctance of many women to undertake that sort of behaviour and possibly subject themselves to personal vilification.

A discussion of the results of the qualitative phase of the study indicate an area of concern with regard to the potential of Australian senior management women to hasten the pace of change towards increased numbers of women in executive positions. The many that apparently endorse the dominant value system based on an inherently biased merit principle undermine efforts to change those dominant systems of gender bias. This is evidenced by the fact that the majority of the senior management women studied were not undertaking practical programs to assist other women in their aspirations into senior management. Further research is required amongst a random representative sample of senior management women to accurately measure the numbers of executive women whose attitudes fit this profile.

As a group the respondents revealed a low level of knowledge and commitment to effective exogenous and endogenous mechanisms of change which could be used to improve the gender imbalance at senior levels of Australian organisations. Most women interviewed saw exogenous changes as a threat to merit based principles of employee selection and feared a resultant backlash against any further legislative

measures such as quotas. Even though many of the respondents had benefited from mentors during their careers hardly any had acted in that capacity themselves.

Women's networks were utilised by less than half of the group. Furthermore, the majority of these women were either hesitant in outlining their understanding of feminism or clearly confused and sometimes even contradictory in their response.

The qualitative research revealed that senior management women cannot be stereotyped into the myth of the 'Queen Bee' and in fact as a group they are highly heterogeneous. Even though a large proportion of the women interviewed were happy to call themselves feminists they were divided on the question of how to address gender inequity at senior management levels. The achievement-oriented backgrounds of the women in the study was a large contributing factor to their reluctance to use measures such as quota systems to challenge the status quo and hasten the pace of change towards gender equity. In the next chapter an analysis of the quantitative data will set out to confirm or deny the validity of these findings with a representative sample of senior management and explore them within the context of the public and private sectors.