FASHIONING THE EXECUTIVE (LOOK):

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN, FASHION
AND THE RISE OF THE NEW WORK ORDER

Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

Angela Thomas-Jones
05/06/2006
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# List of Contents

Declaration ............................................................................................................. ii
Copyright ................................................................................................................ iii
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................... iv
List of Contents ...................................................................................................... v
Illustrations ............................................................................................................ vi
Tables ....................................................................................................................... x
Publications ............................................................................................................ xi
Abstract ................................................................................................................ xii

Introduction
Is it worth it? Let me Work it .................................................................................. 1

Chapter One
Chewing the fat: The body, self-help and the state of contemporary feminism ........ 18

Chapter Two
The way we never were: Is fashion smarter than we think? .................................. 53

Chapter Three
Good Clothes Open All Doors’: The fit, the function and the fashionista’s role in finding workplace clothing .............................................................................. 97

Chapter Four
The New Economy and the Popular Cultural Workplace ...................................... 130

Chapter Five
Being Brave: The public body in private industry .................................................. 170

Chapter Six
Moving on Out: Women’s bodies in government institutions .................................. 198

Chapter Seven
The New Work Order: Education, mentoring and the compartmentalization of the Australian workforce ................................................................. 224

Chapter Eight
It’s a long way to the top: Working women and the creative industries ................ 249

Chapter Nine
Dissonant Literacies: The pedagogy of the working body .................................... 292

Conclusion
I’m too Sexy for this Office ................................................................................... 322

Bibliography .......................................................................................................... 333
ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure i Harris in the Office, Cartoon Stock. Photograph by J. Morris.


Figure 1.1 Cover of girlosophy: a soul survival kit. girlosophy: a soul survival kit. By Anthea Paul, photography by Chris L. Jones.

Figure 2 Maxwell Smart (Don Adams), Grudge Match. http://www.grudge-match.com/Images/smart.jpg, [accessed 10.4.2006].

Figure 2.1 Australian Sun, duel bronzing cream, Australian Gold. http://www.australiangold.com/products/australian_sun.asp, [accessed 17.1.2006].

Figure 2.2 Vichy Whitening Cream Advertisement, Vichy. http://www.vichy.com/gb/biwhite/, [accessed 17.1.2006].

Figure 2.3 Jackie Kennedy Onassis wearing Chanel, Jackie Kennedy. http://www.angelfire.com/wa/AandEsAvenue/Jackie.html, [accessed 20.2.2006].

Figure 2.4 Dr Fiona Wood, Scoop. December 2002 to February 2003.

Figure 2.5 Lisa Ho, Scoop. December 2002 to February 2003.

Figure 2.6 Scoop Contributors, Scoop. December 2002 to February 2003.

Figure 2.7 Good Grief Image, Mixmag. January 2003.

Figure 2.8 Daredevil Lift Out, Rolling Stone. March 2003.

Figure 2.9 Slimming experts, Slimming. March 2003.

Figure 2.10 Photograph accompanying a quiz, Good Medicine. March 2003.

Figure 2.11 Antonia Kidman, Good Medicine. March 2003.

Figure 2.12 Rockman’s ‘Working Wardrobe’, The Australian Women’s Weekly. February 2003.

Figure 2.13 Woman’s Weekly ‘Work Wear’, The Australian Women’s Weekly. February 2003.
Figure 2.14 Advertisement ColorStay Makeup, *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS*. March 2003.

Figure 2.15 Advertisement Howard Showers Suit, *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS*. March 2003.

Figure 2.16 Women on Top Article, *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS*. March 2003.

Figure 2.17 Advertisement for handbags *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS*. March 2003.

Figure 2.18 Editor, *Marie Claire*. February 2003.

Figure 2.19 Violence against woman photography spread, *Marie Claire*. February 2003.

Figure 2.20 Chloe Sevigny, *Who*. March 2003.

Figure 2.21 Sarah Jessica Parker, *Who*. March 2003.

Figure 2.22 100 for under $150, *New Woman*, June 2004.


Figure 3 *Working Wardrobe* Banner, *Working Wardrobe*. http://workingwardrobe.org/, [accessed 10.3.2006].

Figure 3.1 Ezibuy catalogue image and fabric swatch, *Ezibuy Catalogue*. Autumn 2005

Figure 3.2a and b Ezibuy catalogue images and fabric swatch, *Ezibuy Catalogue*. Autumn 2005.


Figure 3.4 Collette Dinnigan Autumn Winter 2004 Collection, *Collette Dinnigan*. http://www.collettedinnigan.com.au/, [accessed 25.9 2004].


Figure 4 Carrie Bradshaw’s bedroom, *Sex and the City* Official Website.  

Figure 4.1 *Sex and the City* season 4 episode 59 ‘Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda.’ *Sex and the City* Official Website.  

Figure 4.2 *Sex and the City* season 4 episode 59 ‘Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda.’ *Sex and the City* Official Website.  

Figure 4. 3 *Sex and the City* Carrie in Barnes and Noble, *Sex and the City* Official Website.  

Figure 5 Bridget Jones (Renee Zellwegger), *Gothamist*.  

Figure 6 The Ladder, *Utbildningscentrum*.  

Figure 8 *QUT Creative Industries*.  

Figure 8.1 Portmans Summer Collection 2005, *Portmans*.  

Figure 8.2 Witchery Summer Collection 2005, *Witchery*.  

Figure 8.3 Myer Summer Collection 2005, *Myer*.  

Figure 8.4 Cue Summer Campaign 2005, *Cue*.  

Figure 8.5 Sportsgirl Summer Collection 2005, *Sportsgirl*.  

Figure 8.6 Esprit Summer Collection 2005, *Esprit*.  

Figure 8. 7 Abigail Scuito *NCIS* (Pauley Perrette) *Jaghm*.  
Figure 9 ‘Cover’, *Vive Working Women’s Directory 2006*.

Figure 10 David Brent (Ricky Gervais) *The Office*.  
Tables


Table 2.1 Genre of magazines.

Table 3.1 Designer clothes and fabric.

Table 8.1 Faculty of Creative Industries QUT course list, *QUT Creative Industries*. http://www.creativeindustries.qut.edu.au, [accessed 10.3.2006].

Table 8.2 Faculty of Creative Industries QUT career list, *QUT Creative Industries*. http://www.creativeindustries.qut.edu.au, [accessed 10.3.2006].

Publications


Abstract

Fashion is not essential to completing an effective and productive day’s work. Suits, shoulder pads and power dressing are images and phrases that encircle working women and are too often relegated to the empty cubicles of 1980s and 1990s history. The proliferation of internet-mediated commerce meant – in fictional narratives at least - women swapped their Claiborne for geek chic and ‘up all night’ hair, the preferential wear for New Economy employees.¹ In the 2000s, the Australian employment industry - fractured, non-standard and fluid - is promoting a new ‘creative’ work order. What are the consequences of this transformation of ideology and iconography for workplace dressing and the bodies of the women who wear it?

This doctoral thesis examines the relationship between fashion, clothes, women and work. The goal and methodology of this thesis is the alignment of work theory, with discourses of clothing and fashion, oral history, policy documents and popular culture. Such a research project requires interdisciplinary scholarship that activates debates about women’s bodies, the state of the contemporary working environment and the dissonance in literacies between body and workplace. Through the application of semiotic and cultural studies, as well as drawing on theories of media, gender, labour, leisure, literacy and fashion, I investigate the position of women and their bodies within the contemporary Australian workplace.

This thesis deploys oral histories to illuminate how women function in the changing Australian workplace. I have compiled these oral sources in order to capture specific experiences and portray the successes and struggles that are faced by the women employed in these sectors. The function of these histories in this thesis is to provide a memory of, to and for working women, revealing many of the unspoken assumptions and characteristics of the contemporary Australian workforce, such as the New Economy, an increasing non-standard workforce, the myth of ‘work/life balance,’ lifestyle, dissonant bodies in the workplace, and the compartmentalization of work from other social function including family life.

Within the nine chapters of this thesis, the research objective is to explore how women’s bodies are located within and negotiate the contemporary Australian workforce. It begins with an examination of the conflation between ‘self-help’ and feminist texts, to map the troubled relationship between gender, power and the female body. The disparate functions of dress and bodies are important focuses in this research. The use of oral history, popular memory theory and the textual analysis of magazines is a way to interrogate the role of women’s bodies and fashion in history. The use of oral and popular cultural sources is intentional. The goal is to develop an alternative system for remembering bodies and clothing, with the aim of transforming their historical relevance. The focal point of this thesis is assessing women’s bodies and fashion in the workplace. By evaluating contemporary trends in women’s work attire, I expose the disparity in the work clothes market in relation to quality, accessibility, functionality and price.
This doctoral thesis deploys work theory and the ideologies of the ‘New’ and ‘Old’ Economy. Throughout this project, I trace the differences in workplace customs and representations. The purpose of the thesis – and indeed the original contribution to knowledge – is to demonstrate that women and men must be literate in not only the workplace, but also in workplace clothing. Only when moving from everyday to reflexive literacies can relevant models of discrimination and oppression within the ‘New Economy’ be revealed and addressed.

While presenting the voices and views of working women, this research proposes a strategy for a change in education and the requirement of mentoring in relation to careers and the ‘new’ work order. The latter chapters are focussed on tracing working life in the new knowledge economy within Australia. They explore the notion of ‘supplementary’ work in relation to ‘lifestyle’ change and investigates the creative industries, the creative class and ponders the dilemma of the creative industries in Australia. The objective of this thesis is to not only to critique, but also to gather and deploy the words of women in the contemporary workplace, as both inspiration and model for the strategies required to instigate change. The final chapters capture a proactive desire to not only discuss difference, but make a difference. The probing of dissonant literacies in the workplace opens the tight and troubling relationship between women and bodies.
Is it worth it? Let me work it.¹

"May I make a wardrobe suggestion, Harris."

Figure i Harris in the office²

We live as far as clothes are concerned a triple ambiguity: the ambiguity of capitalism itself with its great wealth and great squalor, its capacity to create and its dreadful wastefulness; the ambiguity of out identity, of the relation of self to body and self to the world; and the ambiguity of art, its purpose and meaning.

Fashion is one of the most accessible and one of the most flexible means by which we express these ambiguities. Fashion is modernist irony. ¹

Elizabeth Wilson

When I began gathering my thoughts to commence the introduction of this doctoral thesis, I took a trip to the local shopping centre to purchase women’s magazines. I walked out of the newsagency with three: The Australian Women’s Weekly, VOGUE AUSTRALIA and Marie Claire Australia. I did not look at the contents, only the cover to confirm they were Australian. When I browsed through the magazines, I discovered a number of attributes and characteristics. Firstly, VOGUE AUSTRALIA magazine had a separate mini-magazine attached to it entitled VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS. Secondly, the articles and advertisements within this magazine and the Australian Women’s Business Magazine Vive were aimed at ‘executive’ women and (yet) were fixated by clothes and make-up. The other magazines were filled with images of thin women, celebrities, skin products, accessories and what has been labelled as ‘the cult of vintage.’ This ‘cult’ refers to the components of popular culture, including music and fashion, which have been branded with the ideologies of nostalgia or ‘retro.’ It was within the Australian fashion magazine RUSSH that I found Dan Jones’s critique of this ‘cult.’

Nostalgia is not for just those who are desperate to reconnect with their youth, it’s for those who wish they had experienced it but can now buy into its safely homogenised form. But re-edited and re-released, nothing really is quite the same. To constantly reanimate the past leaves the present lacking. Jones is correct in his summary of this cult’s audience and intent. What is lacking in the present plays a major role in this fascination with vintage life and adornment. In Australia, digitized technologies continue to develop and enmesh social practices. Life transforms into lifestyle. Work has become door-to-door contract knocking, call centres and casualized contracts. As Australian policy makers align digitized technology, progress and neo-liberal ideologies, popular culture captures and performs the shards of a discontented Australia. This fascination with vintage popular culture is an indicator of a disquieted nation searching the past for the unattainable in the present. Particularly for women ‘managing’ the contemporary social, political and economic environment, any arch to the past requires monitoring and discussion.

*Fashioning the Executive (Look)* examines the relationship between fashion, clothes, women and work. The title is derived from the assumption that there is ‘a look’ which encapsulates an ideology of an ‘executive’, or professional and it is based on dress rather than success. This research necessitates the investigation and amalgamation of several topics and fields, such as the politics of women’s bodies, the state of contemporary workplace and the dissonance in literacies agitating in the space between body and workplace. The methodological approach within this thesis aligns oral histories of working women, with an examination of clothing and fashion discourses and policy

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documents. Through the application of semiotic and cultural studies, as well as drawing on theories of gender, workplace, literacy and fashion which underpin the thesis, I track the position of women and their bodies within the contemporary Australian workplace. Grey boxes have been used throughout this thesis and contain my personal experiences as a working woman. These anecdotes have been separated from both the thesis and the oral histories in order to maintain the objectivity throughout the work. The thesis is structured into nine chapters. Two of these chapters enfold oral histories of working women in government and private industries.

Chapter one surveys ‘self-help’ and feminist texts, mapping the troubled relationship between gender, power and the female body. Through examining theoretical debates detailing how the female body is judged and evaluated, this chapter queries the difference between feminist and self-help texts. This chapter explores such self-help books as Fat is A Feminist Issue and Its Sequel and girlosophy: a soul survival kit to reveal their strategies for ‘empowerment.’ My research also utilizes feminist writing such as Who’s afraid of women’s studies?, Catfight and Volatile bodies: towards a corporeal feminism. Chapter one, through its discussion of self-help and feminism, lays a theoretical foundation for this thesis, in regards to how women’s bodies are read, presented and critiqued in popular culture.

Chapter two provides a space to interrogate the role of women’s bodies and fashion in history. It is split into two sections: section one discusses women’s bodies in a historical context. Through the execution of oral histories and the employment of the concept of popular memory, an alternative system of remembering bodies, clothing and their historical relevance is developed. I utilize magazines in order to illustrate how the language of fashion varies and converges with, or disconnects from, oral histories. I selected The *Australian Women’s Weekly*, *Woman’s Day*, *Slimming*, *New Idea*, *New Woman*, *Marie Claire*, *VOGUE AUSTRALIA*, *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS* and *Vive* from January 2003 to January 2006 as the source material for this study. Other genres of magazines such as music texts *Mixmag* and *Rolling Stone* were used comparatively in order to define the genre of the material examined. I demonstrate how, through history, fashion has been deployed to codify women’s bodies. I use Michel Foucault’s theory of the panopticon in order to display the pedagogic function of magazines and self-surveillance over women and their bodies.

Building on section one’s discussion of resistance and self-surveillance, section two applies these terms to prise open the relationship and politics between fashion and women in contemporary Australia. The focus is on the ‘executive look’ and the ‘executive’ woman. The function of chapter two is to present a historical context for fashion, women and body gazing. For source material, the chapter deploys magazines to show how textual illustrations of women affect, frame and limit the standards of dress, particularly work attire.
Chapter three investigates the relationship between clothing and fashion. It explores the origins of ‘power dressing’ and exhibits its presence in contemporary Australian workplaces. This chapter also exposes the incongruity of fashion in the workplace. I examine contemporary trends in the Australian fashion industry and reveal their affects on clothing size, fabric, design and accessibility. I assess the politics of sizing and its influence on women’s work wear. By evaluating contemporary trends, I expose the disparity in the work clothes market in relation to quality, accessibility, functionality and price. The role of chapter three in this thesis is to locate and position often de-contextualized theories of fashion in the workplace.

Chapter four journeys through the realm of work theory and investigates Fordism, Post-Fordism and ideologies of the ‘New’ and ‘Old’ Economy. Through this examination, I trace differentiations in workplace customs and representations. This chapter investigates technological change. It also determines how the New Economic canon has modified meanings of work, work ethic and professionalism in ‘Old’ Economic workplaces. In doing so, I consider the repercussions of the changing ideologies of work on body politics, using fashion as a medium and source to track the changes. I deploy Foucault’s theory of sex, power and family to discuss women’s role as a ‘body’. The rationale for the application of such theories is to demonstrate how gender and ideologies of the body affect women and men and their participation in a non-standard working environment. The role of chapter four is to present the ideas of the New Economy, popular cultural workplace and non-standard workforce. This section theorizes these new ideas of work in relation to dress, sexuality, and both women’s successes and challenges in these new
working environments. It also illuminates the aesthetic, rather than structural, distinctions between the Old and New Economy. I confirm that there is no rupture between ‘the old’ and ‘the new.’ Both occupy the same space.

Chapters five and six extend the exploration of work by researching how women function in these changing workplace environments. It explores three main areas of the working environment. These are the structure of the workplace and both New and Old Economic influences. I examine the relationship between women and ‘success’ and notions of the glass ceiling/boy’s club hindering women employed in government and private workplaces. I also examine the relationship between women’s bodies and the workplace, and consider its involvement in ‘success’. I reveal the function of clothing and how it affects the respect, careers and professionalism of women within government and private sectors. These chapters are based on interviews conducted with women from multiple government and private industries. This oral history captures specific experiences and portrays the successes and struggles that are faced by the women employed in these Australian sectors. The positioning of these two chapters in this thesis is chosen to provide accounts of working women in order to reveal many of the unspoken assumptions and characteristics of the contemporary Australian workforce. These include ideologies of the New Economy, an increasing non-standard workforce, the ‘work/life

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11 I am using capitals for New and Old Economy to highlight and problematize the clean demarcation between these two definitions and also shake up the cliché of the ‘New Economy’. Charles Leadbeater suggests,

Our growing and systematic capacity to produce change drives our societies forward. But it also creates our most troubling dilemmas. Change and innovation brings with them upheaval. New ideas and technologies drive out the old. But people, institutions and cultures change far more slowly than ideas, technologies and products. That is why we find it so difficult to cope.

balance,’ lifestyle, dissonant bodies within the workplace and the compartmentalization of work from the other areas of life. These interview-based chapters reveal insights into the nexus of women/body/work.

Chapter seven evaluates the theory of the changing Australian workplace introduced in chapter three and applies this research to the oral history. The richness of the interviews has necessitated a close and respectful engagement with their words, lives and idea of the women who contributed. Of particular interest and focus are the interviewees’ relationships to the ideologies of a New Economic working environment. Throughout this discussion, I highlight theories of post work\textsuperscript{12} and the compartmentalized/segmented workforce. Recognizing the struggles revealed by working women in chapters five and six, the following chapter proposes a strategy for a change in education and the requirement of mentoring in relation to careers and new work order. The role of chapter seven is to investigate women’s role in the contemporary workforce, approaching the idea of work/life balance and ‘non-standard’ working.\textsuperscript{13}


Chapter eight is focused on tracing working life in the new knowledge economy within Australia. I begin by examining the phrase ‘life style’ and its transformation into ‘lifestyle’, which then feeds into the notion of supplementary work in relation to ‘lifestyle’ change. I investigate the creative industries, the creative class and ponder the dilemma of the creative industries in Australia. Utilising both the Australian fashion industry and a study of cultural industries in the UK, I articulate how women are positioned in this field. I also ponder the concept of social capital and evaluate if the new knowledge economy and growth of the creative industries represents the birth of a new work order. The position of chapter eight within this thesis is intentional. The aim is to gather the theories and assumptions about the ‘New Economy’ throughout the thesis, aligning this phrase with not only the rise of the creative industries, but also the notion of a contemporary Australian lifestyle. It explores these topics in relation to work place, time, clothing and women’s role in these arenas.

The purpose of this thesis is not only to critique, but also to gather and deploy the words of women in the contemporary workplace as both an inspiration and a model for the strategies required to instigate change. Chapter nine encapsulates a proactive desire to not only discuss difference, but to make a difference. The ambition is to investigate dissonant literacies in the workplace through opening out the tight and troubling

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relationship between women and bodies. This connection is confirmed through probing the notion of a learned and learning body. I also trace the problems that can occur when body literacy (of the self) and external literacies of the body merge. This chapter concentrates on the coded body and body literacy within the workplace. I explore pregnancy and sexual harassment in order to exemplify the dissonance within workplace environments. The presentation of these dissonant literacies enables the development of strategies to confront oppression and exploitation, and manage difference. This thesis does not only track the recurring ideology of women’s (working) body as ‘a problem,’ but develops theories of dissonant literacies to strategize pedagogic solutions.

**Oral Histories**

Who decides what material is positioned within the capital ‘H’ of history? Such a question has initiated a tense tug of war between cultural studies theorists and historians. This struggle emerges through intense debates about the ranking of the sources considered to be quality historical evidence. Richard Johnson et.al. believe ‘we must include *all* the ways in which a sense of the past is constructed in our society’. In agreeing with Johnson’s remarks, the seemingly trivial and banal can be revelatory when moved into a different context or intellectual paradigm. These memories and stories should not be disregarded simply because historians deem them ‘factually’ flawed, unimportant or illegitimate historical sources. Tara Brabazon writes,

> Every moment that passes sees the destruction of alternative views, trajectories and source material. The notion that historians make a past built

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on factual evidence is delusional at best, and politically blind at worst. The
disappearances of history, the source material that does not survive through
time, result in a profound narrowing of past realities. To not acknowledge
such losses is either complacent or complicit.\textsuperscript{18}

Utilizing oral histories as legitimate research material has been contested for reasons such
as bias on the part of the interviewer, in terms of the questions asked or the method of
interpretation.\textsuperscript{19} A problematic relationship is said to exist between the interviewer and
interviewee in terms of the manner in which questions are asked and answered.\textsuperscript{20} For
example, is the interviewer leading the subject to the answer or is the subject telling the
interviewee what she/he thinks they want to hear? This shifting relationship between the
subjectivity of the interviewee and interviewer is a concern when deploying oral history.
Yet all source material presents analytical, theoretical and methodological difficulties.
The strength of oral history is that the subjectivity, bias and interpretation must be overtly
discussed. Oral history triggers productive intellectual difficulties. There will always be
bias in relation to the content and sources left in or out of research, whether it is oral

\textsuperscript{18} T. Brabazon, \textit{From revolution to revelation: generation x, popular memory and cultural studies.}
\textsuperscript{19} The deployment of oral histories activates contested methodologies. This research framework is fraught
with debates over the reliability of the memory of the interviewee. Eric Hobsbawm writes, ‘most oral
history today is personal memory which is a remarkably slippery medium for preserving facts’. In
reference to memory David Lowenthal suggests,

Memory feels no less residual than history. However voluminous our recollections, we know
they are mere glimpses of what was once a whole living realm. No matter how vividly
recalled or reproduced, the past progressively becomes more shadowy, bereft of sensation,
effaced by oblivion.

This lack of memory trustworthiness and its detriment over time is one criticism of oral testimony another
is the power of the interviewer and interviewee relationship. To view a discussion of this issue, please see,
is a Foreign Country}. Cambridge: CUP, 1985, p. 192., P. Summerfield, ‘Culture and Composure: Creating
volume 1, issue 1, pp. 65 – 93. ProQuest 791318581.
\textsuperscript{20} In reference to Hobbsawm’s comment and other critics problems with memory. Penny Summerfield
relates it to their belief that, ‘interviewees are prone to misremembering and exaggeration, that the presence
of the interviewer may stimulate such flaws, and that oral history is ‘anecdotal’ and unrepresentative of
anyone beyond the individual’. Summerfield, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 66.
histories, journals, newspapers, documentaries or monographs. When there are silences in all other forms of research, oral histories allow a space for new evidence to be discovered and shaped. Richard Johnson et.al. assert that, 

What is interesting about the forms of oral-historical witness or autobiography are not just the nuggets of ‘fact’ about the past, but the whole way in which popular memories are constructed and reconstructed as a part of contemporary consciousness.

The tether of intellectual interest in this thesis is the relationship between oral history and popular culture. Specifically, theories of popular memory are important to track and trace how the images in magazines, television and film move into women’s minds and identity. Popular memories, which evolve out of the social and political frameworks and institutions of the time, also mould individual lives and private memories. In theoretical terms, popular memory is an important phrase and theory to research gender, workplace and fashion studies. In regards to women’s working lives, there is much ‘theoretical’ debate which crosses the borders of cleanly separated academic disciplines.

I am not ‘representing’ all women or capturing the Master Narratives of patriarchal oppression as it exists through history. My project is small, delicate and precise. I focus on women in different sectors of the Australian economy who are active in the workplace, but troubled in terms of how they present their exteriority to the world. Diversity, confusion and dissonant literacies have been words and phrases that pepper these pages. Oral testimony and popular culture provide effective sources to monitor and

23 Johnson et. al., op. cit., p. 219.
24 ibid., p. 207.
‘manage’ these ideas and concepts. While not ‘celebrating’ women, I remain inspired by women who are achieving space, identity and success, often against the odds. There is also attention to the spaces where change is not occurring. Women’s (his)tory is riddled with gaps. Brabazon writes, ‘women, as much as indigenous, black communities, gays and lesbians, the working class and youth, have been sliced from time, space and historical evidence.’

Oral testimonial allows for these ‘alternative trajectories’ to be traced – however nonfactual or irrelevant they may seem within dominant discourses of the market, progress and technological change. Oral histories allow some awareness and consciousness of ‘life’ experience of individual women. The ‘statistic’ or cliché of an era – the university student, the single mother, the manager, the administrator – is given a space to ‘tell it like she sees it’. These lives, when meshed with political and social (dis)content, create tears, struggles and successes that are often relegated to the lounge room, lunch room or coffee shop of history. It is for this reason that I chose to deploy oral histories within my thesis. These voices and views were collected via personal, phone and e-interviews. I did have concerns prior to the commencement of the project that the e-interviews may reduce the length of the answers or the responses may be survey-like, but I found that these responses, while succinct, did divulge specific examples of situations that these women faced. The telephone interview answers were longer, and the respondents often provided multiple examples of their experiences. Objectivity in during research such as this can be difficult to maintain. That is why I chose to ask only those prepared questions to both those interviewed by phone and email. It is also why I put all of the interviews into this thesis. I did not pick and choose answers. All the responses

25 T. Brabazon, op. cit., p. 49.
26 ibid., p. 47.
that were provided to me I put into this thesis. I wanted to allow for these histories to be told and provide a pragmatic insight into the situations currently facing women in the Australian workforce. Although the scale of these views and voices may seem small, they provide not only an historical corrective, but a vision of women’s lives which otherwise may have never been heard. Being representative of all women – through space and time - was not my aim. Instead, I wanted to create an inter-textual, mixed media matrix of material, to explore how the professional woman is constructed, and how the professional woman constructs herself in response to this ideology and iconography.

My use of interviews, and the gathering of oral histories was a challenging experience, with both successes and failures. The aim was to obtain random interview subjects from varying industries Australia-wide. My tool of operation was the internet. Having worked within the School of Psychology at Murdoch University as a Research Assistant with interview and survey subjects, I knew the anguish of using materials such as phone books or electoral rolls. I was also more focused in my interview targets: I was looking for women in the paid work force. While I am of the opinion that stay at home mothers or carers are a part of the workforce, I was specifically focusing on women who were employed in workplaces outside of the home. As respondents were chosen randomly, I did not declare any prerequisites as to whether the employment was full or part-time. All the respondents however were full-time employees. This may have been linked to the definitions of ‘success’ at work that circulate within contemporary Australia. My assumption was that email is a less intrusive form of contact, rather than utilising the telephone or sending a letter. This assumption was correct. In terms of finding subjects,
this was a challenging task. I split the subjects into those employed in the government or private sector. I then sub-divided the government into education, local, state and federal government, searching websites throughout Australia to locate working women.\textsuperscript{27} I approached private industry in a similar manner, but as women within the private sector are more difficult to locate and contact than in the government sector, I utilized national business network search engines to find the women working in varying positions within different industries. I contacted them using the links to their employee’s websites and the email addresses supplied. I randomly selected women working at various levels of seniority and sent them an email asking if they would like to participate in an interview via email, phone or in person. I offered three choices to encourage those who prefer one form of communication over another, or required a particular medium to fit into their working schedules.

These interviews are important as they provide insight into the working lives of Australian women. The problems with the interviews are that they are not of the number I had original planned, or hoped.\textsuperscript{28} There are many reasons for the size of the interview cohort. Perhaps the most interesting cause is that the women contacted were reluctant to label themselves – even implicitly – as successful. Thus I received a cohort of mostly

\textsuperscript{27} Five politicians (federal and state) all declined an interview for this thesis and their support staff all supplied almost identical responses. One example was, ‘the Minister would have been pleased to accept your invitation, however due to her parliamentary, portfolio and electorate commitments, I am currently unable to set aside the time in the Minister’s schedule for her to adequately prepare her response. Please accept my apologies for being unable to assist in this instance, and please also feel welcome to contact me again if there are further matters you would like the Minister to consider.’ Name withheld (a), \textit{Ministerial Interview Response}. 2 August 2004.

\textsuperscript{28} I originally contacted sixty women to be involved in this study, with the hope that I would be able to gather a cohort of approximately forty to fifty respondents. Only ten women were willing to tell their stories. Yet because I was deploying oral history methods, I was able to gear the smaller cohort of interviews to reveal life histories – of qualitative interest – rather than generic interviews – of quantitative relevance.
university-educated women. In hindsight I would not have used the word ‘successful’ in my initial approach to prospective interviewees, as I may have received a larger and more mixed class cohort.\textsuperscript{29} The result or scale of the interviews does not affect the value of these stories and narratives. They offer nuanced presentations, discussions of ambition, choice and disappointment. A second round of interviews in the future will be constructive, in order to trace the working trajectory of the younger interviewees, something that could not have been achieved in the time frame of this thesis. Therefore, these interviews were not intended to be ‘representative’ of women in the workforce. My goal was to discover alternative voices and views that productively dialogued with not only the popular cultural workplace but ideologies of the New Economy.

**Contribution to Knowledge**

The truth is, balance is bunk. The quest for balance between work and life, as we’ve come to think of it, isn’t just a losing proposition; it’s a hurtful and destructive one. This is not, of course, what many of us want to believe. In the last generation, balance has won huge cultural resonance. No longer mere cocktail conversation fodder, it has become something like a new inalienable right: self-actualisation and quality time for all!\textsuperscript{30}

Keith Hammond

What is work? What is balance? These two questions plague the contemporary Australian workforce. This doctoral thesis diagnoses such problems for women in the midst of a changing working environment. Haunted by clothing and body politics, women have a tumultuous relationship with work – and now the shape of work is morphing. This thesis seeks to translate the codes and practices of fashion, bodies and

\textsuperscript{29} I note that there is an important research project that will follow this research, investigating the relationship between Australian women, class, education and interpretations of ‘success.’

workplace inequality. It applies cultural studies and media studies theories - and methodologies of fashion, feminism, body and workplace - to new workplace practices and the working experiences of Australian women. This research discloses the struggles and successes of women and their bodies within the workplace.

Through this research I trace – and problematize - the trajectory of the workforce, focussing on ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Economic elements, and outline the emergence and impact of the creative industries. This thesis reveals the conceptual problems within the clichés of work/life balance and lifestyle for workers – especially women. The research highlights the journey of women entering and seeking ‘success’ in the contemporary Australian workforce. Through the use of texts and phrases such as the ‘executive look’ I examine the rubric by which women in the workforce are labelled and understood. Comprehending the ‘executive look’ is necessary to understanding the role of ‘working women’ in Australia. In doing so I conceptualize the relationship between women, work, fashion and bodies. In Australian workplaces, workers often do not ‘wear’ the clothes. Fashion is wearing women.

31 The ‘executive look’ is a phrase that defines the image of professional women that is projected in the media. Fashion, accessories, age and body shape are all defining characteristics of the ‘executive look’. This thesis is focussed on the space between the ‘executive’ or professional woman and the ‘executive look’.
CHAPTER ONE
CHewing the fat: the body, self-help and the state of contemporary feminism.

Figure 1 Fiona Falkiner from the Australia’s The Biggest Loser series one

Now I’d like you to close your eyes, get as comfortable as you can, follow your breathing, in and out, and relax. I’d like you to imagine that you are at a party….This can be either a real party or an imaginary one…It might be a dancing party, a talking party, a small intimate party….Set the scene and notice how you are feeling….What are you wearing?…How do you feel in these clothes?…Try and feel yourself in your body….Now notice your behaviour at this party. Are you an observer?…Are you actively mixing with other people; do you feel withdrawn?…As you observe yourself at this party, I’d like you to imagine that you are getting fatter….You are now quite large….How do you feel at this size?

Susie Orbach

The female body is objectified, pathologized, scrutinized and individualized. Susie Orbach’s bestselling book(s) *Fat is a Feminist Issue* and *Its Sequel,* are self help texts comprising of psychological exercises such as the one commencing this chapter, and confronting the ‘issues’ that surround compulsive eating such as food and emotional hunger and body image. The titles of Orbach’s books suggest that these are texts that confront fat from the perspective of feminist thought or theory. These texts fail to link the two subjects convincingly. Rather than collectivize the problem of fat, the texts work to itemize it in terms of the individual woman. Fat is a symptom for Orbach, but of the wrong problem. The books finish where they should begin, leaving the reader feeling like an empty compulsive eater. After initially recognising the individualistic nature of fat and the female body, the text(s) require the realization that fat is a collective issue, a female issue and not just a feminist issue. These texts, like many others in their genre, display a circular argument, working to reinforce the problem of body rather than circumvent it. The dilemma does not lie in the fat or the thin. It lies in the difficulty of control over the collective female body, a control that is both internal and external.

*Now I’d like you to close your eyes...Imagine yourself in a library...What are you wearing? ...What is everyone else wearing? ...Do you like your body? ... You pick up a self-book...Do you feel at ease reading it? ...You pick up a feminist text...Do you feel comfortable reading that? ...*

This chapter explores the problematic nature of power and control over of the female body as it is expressed in self-help and feminist texts. Through an examination of the various

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3 *ibid.*
4 *ibid.*, pp. 151-153.
5 It should be recognised that the body is not a recent issue in feminist texts. It has been been the subject for theorization from very early feminism and such debates have included the dualism between mind and body,
positions inscribed for and on female bodies, this research explores the question: How do feminist and self-help texts differ? This chapter approaches such self-help books as *Fat is A Feminist Issue and Its Sequel (i and ii)* and *girlosophy: a soul survival kit*. It also focuses on a number of feminist works such as *Who’s afraid of women’s studies?*, *Catfight* and *Volatile bodies: towards a corporeal feminism*. These texts were chosen in the context of their representation of feminism, self-help and their relationship to women’s bodies in the 2000s.

Feminist texts read the female body in terms of its social, ideological and behavioural posture. Theorists place the body in a historical and social context and critique how the body is utilized. Body-centred feminism is similar to self-help in the way that it deals with the body as a text. Both genres deal with cultural subordination that is illustrated through sexual discrimination, biological determinism and largely the binary relationship and difference between men and women. For examples see:

10 Angela McRobbie writes

> Feminist research which has concentrated on living human subjects has thought to subvert this academicism. Instead we have thought to treat our ‘subjects’ with respect and equality. We have studiously avoided entering ‘their’ culture, savouring it and then presenting it to the outside world as a subject for speculation. Feminism forces us to locate our own autobiographies and our experience inside the questions we might want to ask, so that we continually feel with the women we are studying.


rhetoric such as race and age. Theorists such as Elizabeth Grosz and Wendy Parkins et. al. trace female bodies as historical and cultural formations. In *Volatile bodies: toward a corporeal feminism* Grosz writes, ‘the various theorists discussed and sometimes criticized here have helped make explicit claim that the body, as much as the psyche or the subject, can be regarded as a cultural and historical product’. Grosz addresses such subjects, intellectual frameworks and issues as psychoanalysis, body image and lived bodies. She presents concerns regarding how body images are constructed and circulate through the semiosphere.

Even when the subject’s body image is an affect in part of its relations to others, the effects others have on the body image is more far-reaching: appersonization involves the transfer of the meaning which other people’s body parts have for them onto a subject’s own body image, resulting in the treatment of one’s body as an outside object.

The subject of body image is widely discussed within feminist research. Such a topic is relevant and important because it not only explores the way in which women control their body image but also examines how social relations, etiquette and politics shaped the female body and perceptions of it – outside of the body simply operating as a womb. Similar to Grosz, the body is displayed as a lived text.

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12 In *Fashioning the body politic: dress, gender, citizenship*, W. Parkins (ed), *Fashioning the body politic: dress, gender, citizenship*. Oxford: Berg, 2002. Wendy Parkins et. al., trace the cultural formation of the female body. From this text the historical positioning(s) of the female body in private and public are examined. It displays how the role of social relations, etiquette and politics shaped the female body and perceptions of it – outside of the body simply operating as a womb. Similar to Grosz, the body is displayed as a lived text.

13 Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, op. cit.

14 *ibid.*, p. 187.

15 *ibid.*, p. 84.

16 For examples of research regarding feminism and the body see:

bodies and are controlled, but also places body politics in a context. In *Who’s afraid of women’s studies?* Rogers and Garrett study how female bodies have been used as ‘cultural currency’. They remark that,

Some women do concede that their partners or lovers prefer the look they cultivate through their body regimen; some say the like compliments or looking great in the latest styles…But many other women, especially those attuned to feminism, downplay Other-oriented motives for complying with the codes of feminine attractiveness. They often revert to just-for-me assertions like those at the beginning of the chapter. What “I” speaks such words? How did she come to feel better wearing makeup or to have more confidence when slim?

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17 Rogers & Garrett, *op. cit.*

18 ibid., p 2.
Rogers and Garrett ask the question, why do women feel better after augmenting their bodies? They also approach the feminist-savvy woman who use “I” phrases in relation to body choices. Feminism is constantly critiquing and reassessing its own research and readership. One of the major areas of feminist re-evaluation is recognized is in discussions of race.

Race, bodies and feminism jostle into an awkward alignment. Through reviews of the second and third wave, it has been inferred by bell hooks and other theorists that feminism in its formation was a ‘white, middle class, woman’s movement’. Such theorists’ judgement does not infer an absence of feminists of colour or that feminism has not attempted to make it an inclusive movement. Parminder Bhachu writes,

We need to develop a new feminist cultural politics that will centrally include the agenda of women of colour. This will recover the voices of British Black and Asian women, which have emerged from landscapes that are very different from those underpinning hegemonic feminism.

This important critique - that modes of feminist thought present a white face - does not mean that feminists have not tried to address racial issues. Feminists such as Naomi Wolf have

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19 Theorists such as bell hooks, Jane Mansfield, Barbara Smith and Wini Breines articulate that the feminism was a white movement. They also argue that there were separate white and black movements. Breines’s research goes further to examine if there were racist motives behind the feminist movement being structured as white.


attempted to address race within their work. Similarly, evocative research on the
relationship between race and domestic violence has been constructed. The overarching
concern remains that some moments in feminist history have not highlighted particular
cultural differences when trying to ‘solve’ perceived social ills. In her book *Aint I a woman: black women and feminism*, bell hooks writes,

> Instead, the hierarchical pattern of race and sex relationships already established in American society took a different form under “feminism”: the form of women being classed as an oppressed group under affirmative action programs further perpetrating the myth that the social status of all women in America is the same; the form of women’s studies programs being established with all-white faculty teaching literature almost exclusively by white women about white women and frequently from racist perspectives; the form of white women writing books that purport to be about the experience of American women when in fact they concentrate solely on the experience of white women’ and finally the form of endless argument and debate as to whether or not racism was a feminist issue.

No single group, political organization or community can concurrently address all socio-economic inequalities of race, age, sexuality and dis/ability. Although the adaptation of feminist politics to include multiple races has been difficult and complex, the ideologies of the various groups have not always been opposing. Body shape and the abuse of women remains a pivotal item on the political agenda.

Feminist literature, when focussing on the body, works to de-pathologize and celebrate, rather than critique its form. Self-help, contradictory to its title, promotes bodily

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22 Madalaine Adelman writes,

> One of the more innovative components of the women’s rights as human rights concept is the revitalization of state responsibility and accountability for all human rights violations. This means, for example, that states are instructed to consider and regulation between family members. M. Adelman, ‘Domestic Violence’ in P. Essed, D. T. Goldberg & A. Kobayashi (eds), *A Companion to Gender Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005, p. 196.

For an exploration of race-based violence, see Mazur, *op. cit.*
23 *hooks, Ain’t I a Woman, op. cit.*
24 *ibid.*, pp. 121 -122.
augmentation and ‘detoxification.’ *Fat is a Feminist Issue and Its Sequel (i and ii)*\(^{25}\) are highly structured and use self-help and medical terminology.\(^{26}\) The books are split into such chapters as. ‘What is Fat About for the Compulsive Eaters’, ‘Self-Starvation-Anorexia Nervosa’, ‘Self-help’, and ‘Medical Issues’.\(^{27}\) The books take the reader on a journey from explaining and recognising the identity of a compulsive eater, to providing psychological exercises and lessons, and finally creating and running a self-help group. It is a handbook to psychologically ‘manage’ self-diagnosed fat ‘problems’. If the reader did not have ‘a fat problem’ before reading this book then they would probably have one at its completion. This result is caused because self-help texts are focussed on providing the reader with a negative body image, to transform women’s bodies into sites of hate, ridicule and deep personal conflict. For example, within the psychological exercises, found at the end of the second book, there is one fantasy entitled ‘The Ideal Kitchen’\(^{28}\). This fantasy places the reader on holiday with a kitchen filled with all their favourite foods. It asks such questions like, ‘How does seeing all this food make you feel? … Perhaps you sigh contentedly, perhaps you feel overwhelmed, perhaps you feel safe…’\(^{29}\) Perhaps ‘you’ do not think anything at all. That answer is not an option. The notion that food may be separated from emotion is not an available alternative within the discourse of the text. The reader of this book is automatically classified as dysfunctional and lacking control. The lack of options and alternatives present within the self-help genre are why texts such as this are self-destructive. Women in a patriarchal society lack not only self-esteem, but a lack of thinking space for alternative

\(^{25}\)Orbach, *op. cit.*  
\(^{26}\)The fact that self-help capitalises on medical findings can be linked to use of ‘expert knowledge’ to support the texts protestations and make the discourse of self-help medically sound.  
\(^{27}\)*ibid.*, p. 3.  
\(^{28}\)*ibid.*, pp. 265 - 267.  
\(^{29}\)*ibid.*, 265.
views and ideas. The book does not allow a positive diagnosis of body image and by playing on (and up) female insecurities, it perpetuates the purchase and use of self-help. The premise of self-help books is selling more self-help books. By mobilizing such phobias as fat and feminism, the book draws in a predominantly female readership. To sustain its audience, the text must convincingly vend a number of social problems, with ambiguous symptoms and step-by-step solutions. The reader can feel comfortable in the knowledge that once they have read the book - an inexpensive alternative to therapy – they will have the knowledge the combat their social ill. The body is the illness. As body size and body fitness is ever changing self-help has found a permanent audience.

_Girlosophy: a soul survival kit_[^30], published in 2000, deviates from the traditional self-help format. It is set out in a colourful layout of affirmations, questions, definitions, statements, 12 step plans and scantily clad, toned, tanned twenty somethings. The issues pertaining to this text begin on the first two pages. The cover, shown in figure 1.1, presents the title, the author and a tanned, toned, female mid-rift.

[^30]: Paul, _girlosophy(1), op. cit._
The semi naked, disembodied, hairless, airbrushed female form is displayed with ‘girlosophy: a soul survival kit’ sprawled across it. Before opening the book, the reader is introduced to the books philosophy on surviving as a girl (figure 1.1). A girl with a good soul equals a girl with a good body. The problems with this text are continued on the second page of the book.

The brief on the inside cover expresses,

Finally, a handbook that tells it like it could be … girlosophy – a soul survival kit is a blueprint for life for all young women that urges each to find their own individual truth.\(^{32}\)

This summation is problematic. The first word in the title of this book ‘girlosophy’ suggests that this is a book directed at girls. The definition of a ‘girl’ is a prepubescent age bracket and informally it is a term used to describe women acting in an immature or ‘young’ manner.\(^{33}\) The author uses the term informally. In her brief, Paul states that

\(^{31}\) *ibid.*, cover.

\(^{32}\) *ibid.*, p. inside cover.

\(^{33}\) The dictionary definition of a girl is firstly a ‘female child’
this book is aimed at young women. In her definition of girl - ‘A young person; a
female child; a young woman; source of the feminine spirit’ – she takes the dictionary
definition and has added ‘source of the feminine spirit’. The blueprint presented within
this book is fraught with contradictions.

Within twenty pages (106-125) the reader is bombarded with such slogans as displayed
in the tables below.

Table 1.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page No.</th>
<th>Slogan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>106-107</td>
<td>Whatever happened to natural?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and a child is ‘between birth and puberty.
In their book A Teen Girls Guide to Feminism, Ricki Weisberg and Angela Mitchell Write.

For the purpose of this book, we have chosen to use the word “girl” instead of “woman” or
“young woman” when referring to adolescent females. While many women find the term “girl”
offensive because it is often used in a demeaning way, we personally feel the term “young
woman” can be too preachy in the context of our pre-teen and teenage readers. We can only
remember being called “young women” when we were getting in trouble! We considered
ourselves “girls” when we were in our teen years, so we feel it is appropriate to address our
readers as such.

http://home.gwu.edu/~elizrunk/teengirlfeminism.html, [accessed 12.2.2006].

Paul, girlosophy(1), op. cit., p. 2.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Text</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>108</td>
<td>Real natural beauty never goes out of fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112</td>
<td>Wake up – why make up?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>114-115</td>
<td>Know your own beauty, love and accept yourself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>118-119</td>
<td>Work with what you have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Page</td>
<td>Text</td>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120</td>
<td>Mirror mirror…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>121</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>122</td>
<td>Develop a hobby that allows you to create beauty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These slogans present an affirmative - be yourself - ideology. Pictures of flowers and gardens accompany positive ‘be natural’ affirmations. Within these pages, a different mode of slogan is deployed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Number</th>
<th>Slogan</th>
<th>Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>110-111</td>
<td>Protect your self-image don’t believe the hype!</td>
<td><img src="self-image.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>116-117</td>
<td>You can wear a paper bag (or flower) if you have good shoes, a good haircut and a good attitude</td>
<td><img src="paper-bag.jpg" alt="Image" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The pictures that accompany these slogans feature youthful, tanned, thin, clear skinned, naked bodies. Race is not problematized within the pages of this text. Anglo Saxon, Asian and African bodies are aligned through the juxtaposition of spiritual and exotic images of Buddha, temples, tropical flowers and glowing skin. Such self-augmenting slogans, when meshed with the be-natural slogans, create a text that seems to portray a simple and affirmative ideology of femininity, nature and beauty. Such a matrix positions the reader in a
‘mirror mirror on the wall’ quandary. If ‘girls’ do not wear make-up but have good hair, then they are natural and beautiful. If ‘girls’ wear make-up and do not have good hair, then they are deemed unnatural and lack ‘inner’ beauty. In an American study on thinness, the media and women J. Robyn Goodman writes,

The women’s discourses about their and their family’s battles with weight and society’s images of them support the contention that beauty – and thus thinness – is rewarded in women. Such weight-based judgements in this culture are often based on American values of self-help, self-denial, and self-control. 35

The simplicity of these cause and effect scenarios pepper this book. By using such phrases as ‘soul survival’ and ‘feminine spirit,’ these texts often bypass self-help and are located within the new age section on bookstore shelves. This text, like other self-help, 36 utilizes issues of youth, fat, fashion, beauty and fitness.

Concepts and words such as youth, fat, fashion, beauty and fitness that are circulated in the media of magazines and television are poached and reinscribed in self-help for several ideological reasons. There is nothing ‘natural’ about these affiliations. For example ‘youth’ activates such binaries as young versus old, immature versus mature, attractive versus unattractive. Self-help, depending on the market, can work with either side of the binaries. For example, texts such as the girlosophy: a soul survival kit 37 series are aimed at celebrating youthfulness whereas texts such as Frederick Matzke’s Ageing Gracefully: A Practical

37 Paul, girlosophy(I), op. cit.
Guide to Facing the Challenges of Growing Old, deal with the process of ageing. Due to this wide coverage, readers can choose between texts that will be a ‘quick fix’ to their current ‘problem’. I can be young by celebrating my ‘inner beauty’ or can grow old gracefully by ‘coming to terms with my age’. Self-help is a temporary pain reliever for the immediate problems of the individual. Kylie Murphy suggests, ‘self-help professes to offer simple solutions: it insists that there are ‘simple and achievable steps’ to changing a life/style. This assumption rests on your problems resulting from your inner flaws. By perpetuating individual problems rather than wider awareness and consciousness of social concerns, self-help divides rather than unites communities. Or as Wendy Simonds remarks,

It positions readers as solitary travellers stumbling toward the nirvana of self knowledge that will presumably solve all relational riddles, even though others – especially men – may not be engaged in the same quest.

Social issues remain unresolved, disempowered groups continue to be subordinate and the circle of self-help persists. The problem now is that self-help – with its easy answers to difficult questions – has permeated definitions, determinations and categorizations of feminism.

Within the genre of feminist literature, there are two distinct forms: texts that configure a historicized and contextualized feminist argument, and dehistoricized and decontextualized self-help. Obviously such a separation is simplistic, but greater attention is required in

39 In reference to their relationship between self-help texts and the individual Kylie Murphy writes, ‘If changing yourself can change your world, then your world is already a result of yourself. This is the circular reasoning that fuels the sense of empowerment the self-help reader articulates.’ K. Murphy, ‘What does John Gray have to Say to Feminism?’, Continuum: Journal of media & Cultural Studies, 2001, volume 15, number 2, p. 164.
40 ibid., p. 164.
disentangling self-help from feminism. Texts with feminist commentary are written in a self-help format and authors of generic self-help call themselves ‘feminists’. Wendy Simonds writes,

    Readers may be surprised that authors like Steinem (1992) and hooks (1993), who have become well known political activists, follow a conventional self-help formula. Perhaps they have turned to the form of the self-help book precisely because they feel their ideas will gain a larger audience than in monographs they marginalized as “women’s studies.”

As Simonds remarks, feminism requires the self-help ideology to retain and regain a wider audience. There has been a stigma attached to buying gender studies and feminist texts. Feminism has been an undermined ideology within neoliberal and neoconservative ideologies, and those connected with the political and theoretical movement are often decentred or demeaned. In such a context, self-help can be nurturing, enriching and empowering. Certainly, the feminist movement’s convergence with self-help is an initiative toward educating a wider audience. A symbiotic relationship exists between these two genres.

Self-help utilizes feminist language. For example the word ‘feminism’ is used in the title, chapters or in the proclamation of the author of a text. Buzz-words and fragmented theory are dispersed intermittently in order to give texts a ‘girl power’ narrative. Such an example is in contemporary ‘feminist’ text Catfight. From its title and opening chapters it is constructed as a feminist text. It then slips into the subject of beauty and fashion as ‘natural’ sites for the ‘celebration’ of feminism. Leona Tanenbaum writes,

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42 ibid., p. 16.
44 Tanenbaum, op. cit.
Yes, the beauty standards of our time are oppressive; yes, they take their toll on the self-esteem of countless women. But at the same time, beauty rituals can bring us together to supportively appraise one another as we experiment with colours and styles.45

I agree with Tanenbaum that buying beauty products and fashion is fun – for some. But beauty rituals will never be a uniting force between women. This is a facile belief as beauty products are medication for self-help. By using the positive language of feminism, self-help is provided with a strong, almost positive edge. It lulls the readership into feeling semi-radical and empowered while affirming that some oppression – ‘supportively’ appraising one another – is tolerable and welcomed. To relanguage this ideology, this ‘appraisal’ can spill into judgement, ridicule and disrespect. There is a strange ideological dance between a theoretical marking of oppression while also celebrating the rituals of beauty and fashion as building a consciousness between women. Self-help profits from reader insecurities. The positive body image characteristic to feminist critiques is being misused in the dangerous form of self-help texts.46

The amalgamation of these genres presents feminism with a number of political repercussions. Feminism requires a collective force that is united in a common goal. Self-help is focussed upon the individual. For example, it approaches body image as an individual, rather than, a collective problem.47 This divides rather than unites women. It also ignores the social aspects, such as diet, lifestyle, media, culture, which may trigger the

45 ibid., p 87.
47 For example Orbach states, ‘The compulsive eater often experiences her eating as chaotic, out of control, self-destructive and an example of her lack of will power’. Orbach, op. cit., p. 35.
reader’s problem. Self-help becomes a distraction. While women are focussed on their ‘selves’, they remain complacent about their place in society. This complacency, which is often enfolded into the label of third wave feminism, is a trigger for anger from the second wave.\textsuperscript{48} Pam Casellas’s article, “Paying the price of feminism,” states:

> There is some anecdotal evidence that, having considered the options, the third wave feminists are beginning to say, no thanks, we’ve been in the workforce, we’ve discovered it isn’t all its’ cracked up to be and now we’re going to stay home and be mum’s.\textsuperscript{49}

Articles such as Casellas’s suggest feminism – or particular modes of this now complex and diverse paradigm - has failed.\textsuperscript{50} The feminist movement gave women more choice and opportunity at a time when few were presented. What ‘old school’ and ‘new school’ feminists must now negotiate is the size, complexity and dense challenges of this project, and that feminism is not the movement in which they were involved. It has become the butter that is spread thinly over too much bread.\textsuperscript{51} It is not enough. Murphy writes,

> Feminism is in the process of being incorporated into the self-help genre. The consequences of this confluence are multitude yet feminism does not appear to be mounting the comprehensive multifaceted response this situation demands. Disturbingly, much of the rhetoric to be found ensconced upon the self-help shelf is strongly anti-feminist: it reifies constructions of gender that second-wave feminism fought against…Feminists need to ask themselves how closely do they want to be tied to the self-help movement, what aspects do they want to critique or remove?\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{48} There has been much debate between the waves of feminism as to whether third wave feminists have continued the fight for gender equality or whether they have become complacent with what has been achieved by their predecessors. See: A. Johnson, ‘Seeking sisterhood: A voice from the third wave’, \textit{Off Our backs}. September - October 2003, volume 33, issue 9/10, pp. 22 – 25., P. Kamen, \textit{Feminist Fatale}. New York: Donald Fine, 1991., L. Segal, \textit{Why Feminism?}. Oxford: Blackwell, 1999.

\textsuperscript{49} P. Casellas, ‘Paying the Price of Feminism’, \textit{The West Australian Newspaper: Weekend Extra}. October 4 2003, p. 4.


\textsuperscript{51} P. Jackson (dir) \textit{Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring}.

\textsuperscript{52} Murphy, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 159.
The word ‘feminism’ is used frivolously in the self-help context. In the recent past, it has been linked with the girl power attitudes of scantly clad songstresses *The Spice Girls*. Yet young women attending University or climbing the corporate ladder disassociate themselves from the word, relating it to hairy armed, male hating, lesbians.

Feminism, like self-help, often raises individual problems rather than concrete community-building strategies. Women now have diverse versions of feminism that connects to their social situation. For example work, family, body, lifestyle, race relations and environment can all be attributed with a woman’s ‘personal’ feminism. It has become a part of a female’s ethos, and sits alongside an individual’s political and religious beliefs. This is good and positive function for women. However choosing and adapting feminism to suit various ‘lifestyles’ has meant political objectives that require collectivism have been disbanded or displaced. Not every female, including the ‘youth of today’, has been brought up in surroundings in which feminism exists. Amy Johnson was raised in an intensely religious American environment. She suggests,

> Why have definitions of the third wave conveniently ignored the fact that many of us did not grow up with feminism as a part of our daily lives? After all, if this

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54 In the *Feminist Fatale*, Paula Kamen writes,

> I asked them, and they answered, with some slight variations:
> “What do you associate with the word ‘feminist’”?  

Kamen, op. cit., p. 23.
was the case, the fight would be over because we would all be feminists already and everything would be right with the world. And if the fight were over, there would not exist hostility toward feminism as I have encountered in my day-to-day experience.  

Johnson is correct. There is a hostility that exists towards feminism. It seems to be a combination of fear and anger that the movement has changed before ‘equality’ has been achieved. This is a sentiment that is directed by women, towards women.

There is memory and nostalgia that is linked with feminism. For those who were involved in different stages of the movement, there are powerful memories of women fighting for rights and gender equality. For those who now have the right to vote, go to work and attend university, the idea of feminism and angry women seems too radical. Women do not want to fight. Maybe they are afraid of losing what they already have. Feminism has not failed, but it has nodes and points of dysfunction and rupture. Young women (and men), in privileged circumstances, educate themselves so they can go to TAFE/university and are told they have choice and opportunity. Yet the social and economic condition in which this

55 Johnson, op. cit., p. 25.
56 In the text, Why Feminism? Lynne Segal tackles the disruption and struggle between generational feminist ideologies. Segal, op. cit., 1997.
57 Anne Oakley writes, Segal’s own nostalgia leads her back to a past of socialist feminism, when feminism’s clear project was the removal of material and therefore ideological barriers to women’s unequal treatment. Like Lasch, though with a different objective in sight. She tries to recreate this nobler political past as objectively true rather than as simply validating what she wants to argue about the faults of feminism now.
58 Segal, op. cit., p. 4.
59 Cornelius F Murphy cites an alternative reason and suggests that, Some are convinced that the full attainment of equality will provide women with the opportunity to demonstrate that their own cognitive abilities and moral conceptions are substantially the same as those of men. Others see a danger in such an approach, because they fear it would deprive women of the uniqueness of their feminine perceptions.
60 See the following websites for promotional material and mission statements:
‘choice’ takes place is disconnected from questions of wages, promotion and consumerism.

Noy Thrupkaew, when researching feminism in America, writes,

“I would not call myself a feminist,” says Natalie, a University of Michigan junior. “I’m experiencing a lot of advantages that feminists worked to achieve, and I’m thankful. …But I don’t know that women are still that much uneven from men, especially in the workplace.” Told that on average a woman today makes only 76 cents to a man’s dollar, Natalie is shocked. “I don’t understand how that could be fair or even possible,” she says.61

A similar situation exists within contemporary Australia, both in terms of young women’s opinions on feminism and in terms of gender wage levels. A revitalized feminism or new gender project must have a pedagogic function and be able to educate young women that they do not have the equality in which they believe. Books such as *girlosophy: a soul survival kit*,62 and its subsequent series,63 suggest that if its readers ‘be themselves’ and try hard they can be whatever they want to be. This meritocratic illusion is inaccurate. Women are not equal to men.64 There is not equal pay for equal work.65 There are not the equivalent number of male CEOs as female, nor is there equal amounts of males and females in parliament - and yet there are more females than males in the world.

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61 N. Thrupkaew, ‘Daughters of the revolution: today’s young women have profited from feminism, but will they defend it?’, *The American Prospect*. Oct 2003, volume 14, number 9, p. A14.
62 Paul, *girlosophy(1)*, *op. cit.*.
64 This is not ignoring the fact that men are not all equal and that there are a number of race, class and masculinity issues that surround men in the workplace, but this thesis is focussed on the problems that women face within the workplace.
65 In her report on the unequal levels of pay in Australia, Anna Chapman writes, The latest figures from the ABS reflect the continuing nature of this problem. In August 2003, women workers earned 65 cents for every dollar earned by male employees. Looking at full-time adult employees only, women’s total weekly earnings were 81 cents for every male dollar, while women’s ordinary time weekly earnings were 85 cents in the male dollar. A. Chapman, ‘Equal pay in Australia: recent trends and evidence’, *Keeping Good Companies*. Oct 2004, volume 56, number 9, p. 544, Informit 200410865.
Women in leadership and management positions still raise eyebrows. In the last ten to fifteen years in Australia we have seen the first female Chief Executive Office of a state education department, the first female Vice Chancellor of a major university, the first female State Premier, the first female President of the ACTU, the first female Police Commissioner, the first female Director of Public Prosecutions, the first female Chairman (yes, the official title is Chairman!) of the board of a major company and the first female Aboriginal minister. The list of firsts is still growing. Being the first, or even one of the first handful of individuals to negotiate new territory, demands talent, resilience and courage. Being first is being visible. For women, climbing the career ladder in a traditional, male dominate, corporate culture is like climbing an unknown mountain without a guide. Tall poppies stand out and tall poppies risk being cut down. In Australia, women in leadership and management positions are recognised as tall poppies not only because they are women ‘climbing mountains’ and working in unchartered territory but because they possess the ability and the potential that makes these breakthroughs possible.  

Feminism, and its relationship to women achieving gender equality, carries much political baggage, but is still necessary as Australia continues to expand this ‘list of firsts’. In order to renew, feminism will need to be reconfigured for current transformations in work, leisure and politics.

What contemporary women need is for feminism to be marked with a clear trajectory and agenda, in order to reveal the existing state of the movement. Laura Hyun Yi Kang writes, ‘Gender Studies benefits substantially from the way feminism has changed the very nature of perceiving knowledge. The term “feminist epistemology” has been widely invoked, but there is no consensus on what it exactly constitutes.’ A clear recognition of feminism’s aspirations, trajectory and agenda is required in order to enable it to perform a pedagogic function. Students could be educated on the history of the feminist movement, which would

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67 Segal, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

mean its achievements and failures could be read within an evolving and changing context.

Placing it within a historical framework allows younger women to learn: what women did/did not achieve by this movement, how feminism did (not) fail and where women and men are currently placed. Susan Franzway suggests that women’s movement politics in Australia is recognized as, ‘a limited project’ or what Franzway and Ien Ang refers to as a ‘politics of partiality’. In Australia, while feminist ‘waves’ continue, women will also persist in disassociating themselves from gender equality and remain complacent. Ang proposes that,

Feminism must stop conceiving itself as a nation, a ‘natural’ political destination for all women, not matter how multi-cultural. Rather than adopting a politics of inclusion (which is always ultimately based on a notion of commonality and community); it will have to develop a self-conscious politics of partiality, and imagine itself as a limited political home, which does not absorb difference within a pre-given and predefined space but leaves room for ambivalence and ambiguity. In the uneven conjectural terrain so created, white/Western feminists too will have to detotalise their feminist identities and be compelled to say: ‘I’m a feminist, but…’

Women require unity to obtain expansive social goals, but as Ang suggests maybe it is the politically inclusive nature of feminism and its location as the ‘natural destination’ for women, that makes such an objective unachievable. Collectivity between women will not occur while feminism is still trying to revive itself as the ‘natural destination.’ Feminism, as an ideological framework, is now too large to provide ample tools for individual grievances. A specific example is the workforce, which is still dominated by men, the clichés of ‘a boy’s club’ and ‘jobs for the boys’ are fully operational. Yet in response to these threats and

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71 Ang, *op. cit.*, pp. 57 – 58.
72 ibid., 57.
systematic problems, there is no solidarity amongst women. If women actually worked
together as a unified group, then successes in the workplace as well as other environments
would increase. For this aspiration to be achieved, the trajectory of feminism and the
relationship of women with women must be discussed. If this was to occur, a movement
with new goals that are fitting to women’s place in contemporary gender relations could be attempted.

A difficulty in establishing this new mode and form of feminism is that we lack a detailed,
precise and dynamic determination of the historical transformations of ‘patriarchy’.
Although specific feminists would argue that men are still repressing women, the post-work
environment demands a more complex and intricate theory of power. Women are implicated
in their own disempowerment. Women ‘appraise’ other women. Women judge other
women. In the office, at university, on the street and in the shopping centres they are
competing to look better, be smarter and be more successful. Tanenbaum, in her text
*Catfight: Why women compete with each other*, confirms the assumption that:

‘I’d rather work for a man than a woman.’ Many professional women,
particularly in fields traditionally dominated by men, confess they prefer male
rather than female supervisors. They complain that women at work refuse to
share power, or withhold information, or are too concerned about receiving credit
for every little things they accomplish, or are cold toward underlings (male and
female alike).

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74 It must be noted that the category of ‘men’ historically has been related to ideologies of power, but these
power relations are changing and there are also many different kinds of ‘men’ and forms of masculinity.
Michael Kaufman writes, ‘if gender is about power, then as actual relations of power between men and women,
and between different groups of men (such as straight and gay men or Black and white men) start to shift, then
our experiences of gender and our gender definitions must also begin to change’.
M. Kaufman, ‘Men, Feminism and Men’s Contradictory Experiences of Power’ in J. A. Kupyers (ed), *Men and
75 *ibid.*, p. 138.
76 *op. cit.*
I would like to argue that Tanenbaum is incorrect – but she is not. I held a position as a junior administrative assistant at a University for four years and found her assumptions and meta-sexism to be the case. I wish it was not the case.

As I was an impartial underling, I witnessed constant bitching from the senior administrative assistants about other senior administrative assistants. I was also amazed at the way they clung to any power they could possibly claim. Such an example is one woman’s obsession regarding the allocation of rooms. She would almost arrange an investigative sub-committee and have a nervous breakdown any time a room was allocated without her permission.

In a patriarchal society with few women in positions of power, small debates and power struggles become much more important than they actually are. There is an underlying envy or what could be considered a competitive streak between women and this is recognizable through the lack of a ‘sisterhood’ within such areas as workplace. Laura Tracy writes.

Historically, women were forced to compete with each other, but we did so mainly in domestic arenas, locating our competition between mothers and daughters, between wives and other “women.”

Competing at home, we learned that if our competition was obvious, other women would abandon us. We learned to compete in ways designed to elicit support and reassurance from precisely the other women with whom we were competing.

We learned to deny our own ambitions. We discovered that our ambition provoked envy from other women, and we identified that envy with the resentment we sensed our mothers felt for and hid from us. We believed that if another woman knew what we had, she would take it away.77

The competitiveness that theorists such as Tracy illuminate, shows that women believe that if they do not constantly justify themselves as more capable (than other women) that they will lose their position (to another woman). Female competition may stem from the historical

nature of accentuating bodily attributes in order to get a man.\textsuperscript{78} In the workplace, the currency is not only the body but also intelligence, and while protesting that other women should get work (as opposed to being a ‘stay-at-home mum’ ‘housewife’ or ‘homemaker’) or climb the corporate ladder, they are trying to pull each other down.\textsuperscript{79} This mistreatment of women by women is not restricted to the employment sector, but is a part of daily life.

\textsuperscript{78} Negrin also links the accentuation of bodily attributes to fluctuating changes in female clothing shape throughout history and writes,

...while in men, the libido has been more definitely concentrated upon the genital zone, in women, the whole body has been eroticised. As a result, we find that in different periods in history, different parts of the female anatomy have been focussed upon as a source of erotic interest. This explains why the ideal body shape of women has fluctuated much more that that of men in the history of clothing. The ideal of feminine beauty in the nineteenth century was the hourglass figure in which the backside was accentuated through the wearing of the bustle and the breasts were thrust upwards and forward by the corset which also produced a very thin waist. Veblen, in his \textit{Theory of Leisure Class} argued that the high degree of discomfort undergone by women in the nineteenth century was indicative of their economic subservience to men.


\textsuperscript{79} In the text \textit{The Feminine Mystique} Betty Friedan makes bold claims about women’s ability to achieve careers and identity, and how these affect mothering and marriage.

It is not that easy for a woman who had defined herself wholly as a wife and mother for ten or fifteen or twenty years to find a new identity at thirty-five or forty or fifty. The ones who are able to do it are, quite frankly, the ones who made serious commitments to their earlier education, the ones who wanted and once worked at careers, the ones who bring to marriage and motherhood a sense of their own identity – not those who somehow hope to acquire it later on.

While Friedan may be trying to inspire ‘housewives’ to aspire to more she is criticising them if they have children early and do not begin a career first.

Motherhood\textsuperscript{80} and fitness\textsuperscript{81} are another two issues of debate and conflict. One of feminism’s greatest purposes was the desire for women to obtain equality in the workforce.\textsuperscript{82} At its basic level, this means the right to choose any job or career, and receive equal pay for equal work regardless of gender. Feminists such as Betty Friedan affirmed that undertaking (only) the role of motherhood was an identity crushing decision.\textsuperscript{83} There is still much debate amongst women as to the choices in life, work and leisure. For example, do ‘you’ have children, have children then start a career, or establish a career and then have children?\textsuperscript{84} The alternative is to choose to never have children.\textsuperscript{85} Recognition is given to stay at home mothers as having a ‘full time job’. This must mean that women with full time jobs and children have two full

\textsuperscript{80} Susan Shapiro Barash writes,

Women compete in all aspects of this charged issue. First, their sense of womanhood is at stake: who want to be judged in her role as mother or to face the stigma of admitting that she doesn’t want children? Second, mothering in our culture is a classic example of “not enough pie”: not enough support either for choosing to be a mother or for deciding not be one.

S.S. Barash, \textit{Tripping the Prom Queen: the truth about women and rivalry (advance uncorrected proofs)}. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2006, p. 133.

\textsuperscript{81} Belinda Wheaton, in her work regarding the wind surfing subculture, shows this female participation divide is also based on the level of involvement in the sport. She writes,

The identities of ‘real women’, or ‘core’ women, were embedded in ‘being a windsurfer’ foremost. These women saw themselves as different from the windsurfing widows and, in some cases, actively differentiated themselves from them, particularly the ‘girlies’, whose identity they saw as based around ‘emphasised femininity’ (Connell 1995). The windsurfing widows had a lower status in the subculture based on their low commitment to the windsurfing activity, and thus were a subordinated femininity.


\textsuperscript{82} This movement began in the late 1880s when working-class and middle-class women developed the ‘movement for the welfare of industrial women’.


\textsuperscript{83} Friedan, \textit{op. cit}.

\textsuperscript{84} In a study on women, motherhood and careers Kathleen Gerson writes,

Reluctant mothers confronted different constraints and brought different resources to bear on the decision to have a child than did their childless counterparts. They were more likely to find themselves in relationships that would be seriously jeopardized by childlessness. They were also in a better position to minimize the negative impact children threatened to have on their lives.


\textsuperscript{85} On childlessness Gerson writes, ‘Those who ultimately chose childlessness lacked both the resources and the pressures to opt for motherhood.’ \textit{ibid.}, p. 184.
time jobs.\textsuperscript{86} Even the most ambitious woman would find it difficult to complete two jobs at once. In debates regarding women and working, this ‘two job’ theory is often lost. Those who decide to raise a family are named housewives and homemakers.\textsuperscript{87} This labelling also works in reverse. People who want children become angry with nullipara women who dedicate their lives to a career or another lifestyle. Shari Thurer writes

\begin{quote}
Thirty years after Friedan, many women are on the edge of a huge generational divide, and they are experiencing vertigo. We are the first cohort of women, who, whether by choice on necessity, work outside the home. We are the first generation of women among whom many dare to be ambitious. But there is no getting around the fact that ambition is not a maternal trait. Motherhood and ambition are still largely seen as opposing forces. More strongly expressed, a lack of ambition – or a professed lack of ambition, a sacrificial willingness to set personal ambition aside – is still the virtuous proof of good mothering.\textsuperscript{88}
\end{quote}

Women are quick to judge another simply based on their own situation, forgetting that the whole point of the fight for women in the workforce was to gain choice.\textsuperscript{89} There is an

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{86} Hochchold and Machung define this concept as the second shift. A. Hochschild & A. Machung, \textit{The Second Shift}. New York: Viking, 1989.
\item \textsuperscript{87} Wikipedia, the online ‘community’-based ‘encyclopaedia’ – collectively constructs a definition for both of these terms. A homemaker is a person whose prime occupation is to care for their family and/or home. Finding a term to describe the modern man or woman who has left the paid workforce to care for their family is problematic. The term homemaker is used in preference to either housewife or househusband (a tautology because "house" is derived from one of the Germanic elements of "husband") because it is inclusive, defines the role in terms of activities, rather than relation to another, and is independent of marital status. The terms (informal) stay-at-home mom, stay at home dad, or stay at home father are also used, particularly if the person views their central role as caring for children. All these terms fail to convey the diversity of activities any individual might choose to pursue, such as volunteer work, outdoor activities, education, spirituality, etc. Wikipedia - Homemaker. [accessed 14 January 2006]. While I am not citing Wikipedia as factual or theoretical evidence, it is significant how an online community has configured this consensual definition.
\item \textsuperscript{89} Betty Friedan’s self-help text \textit{The Feminist Mystique} has been critiqued for making such judgements. Simonds writes, ‘Many Women indicate that they see \textit{The Feminine Mystique} as an unjust attack upon housewives like themselves, who they assert, are happy doing what they are doing; are fulfilling God’s will or Nature’s plan; and are luck to be doing it.’ W. Simonds, \textit{Women and self-help culture: reading between the lines}. New Brunswick N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1992, p. 94.
\end{itemize}
environment of judgement and suspicion that encircles woman before she even becomes pregnant.

Pregnancy is a largely contested area largely due to pro choice and anti-abortion social movements. Besides these institutional pressures, there are other issues with which pregnant women must contend. These are issues relating to body image. I had personal experience with this early on in my PhD candidature.

Since the knowledge of my ‘condition’ infiltrated social surroundings my body became a lucrative topic available for comment upon by the general populus. It began with such one-liners as: ‘I wasn’t going to say anything but I thought you had eaten a few to many chocolates’. It then ranged from the two most common phrases, ‘Isn’t your stomach big/sticky out/fat’ and ‘Do I see an engagement ring on that finger’, to the peripheral body, ‘Well your hair and skin aren’t doing to badly’ and ‘You haven’t put much weight on anywhere else’. After my initial ill feeling towards these people, my critical thinking overwrote the emotion. What gave these people the right all of a sudden to comment about my body? These so called ‘sisters’ had made me feel ugly, self conscious and utterly paranoid. I did not want to come on campus for fear of being ridiculed. One minute I was educated and successful, on a scholarship and heading for a brilliant career. The next I was fat and unmarried.

I do not know why these women were verbally abusive, or even if they realized the inappropriateness of their actions. It was as if the physical signs of being pregnant had diagnosed my femininity and ultimately my personal feminism. Most of these women were mothers themselves. Tanenbaum writes,

90 Barash writes,

Clearly, many people do care about women’s weight gain during and after pregnancy, if the media frenzy around Gwyneth Paltrow’s 2004 delivery is any indication. The thirty-two year old Paltrow emerged from her pregnancy in such good shape that gossips suggested she’d stayed in the hospital a few extra weeks. A US Weekly article featured pictures of Paltrow one week after delivery, wearing two girdles at the same time – “All the Hollywood girls do it,” the actress told USA Today – as well as photos of the star in a low-cut dress. “How about those them apples!” a caption comments, with an arrow pointing to Paltrow’s swollen breasts.

Barash, op. cit., p. 94.
On the other hand, for every friendly inquiry, there is a competitive one. Are you breastfeeding? Are you still breastfeeding? Are you going back to work soon? Isn’t it time you went back to work? Motherhood does not automatically unify women. Other mothers look at a new mother and compare her parenting skills with their own.  

If a woman chooses to be pregnant, then they must pay the price of ridicule for their visibility. Conversely, there are records of the difficulties confronting ‘barren’ women or those who choose not to have children. Why do we care and judge the lives and bodies of other women? This trend is also recognized in terms of fitness.

When a man attends a gym, he is considered to be exercising for fitness or to become ‘buff’. When a female goes to the gym, it is to lose weight: that is what other women believe of them. This is linked to idea of female body types portrayed in the images of women in magazines discussed in chapter two. Fitness and health rarely enter the jibes and gossip when women discuss a female ‘friend’s’ new gym or exercise habits. Women have anger – against ‘the system’, economic injustice or overt sexual harassment - that is being released in unhealthy competition. Tracy writes about women who reveal their stories of competition at work,

The stories told by workplace Cinderellas are horrifying not only because the focus on betrayal and treachery, disaster and loss, but because they are closed – they make the listener want to leave the world they describe. They make a female listener vow never to trust another woman again. They are inflexible,

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92 Barash writes, It’s not surprising that a society that still considers mothering an integral part of female identity would encourage women to compete over children: fertile versus infertile, mothers versus childless women, working mothers versus soccer moms, mothers of high achieving kids versus mothers whose kids are average or troubled. Yet the very society that insists on measuring a woman by her children’s accomplishments also neglects a mother’s actual needs, failing to provide adequate day care, health care, and other vital resources to support the work of mothering. Barash, *op. cit.*, p. 133.
93 This is point that has been raised and examined within this thesis in the empirical research found in the interview chapters and also through the discussion of policy documents in chapter nine.
anxious, and single-minded stories because they teller is always and can only be a victim in their telling.

The real aim of these stories is to make the other woman responsible for the disaster. 94

Women such as these ‘Cinderellas’ dislike each other, but also instigate self harm. Such competition stems from the complacency in addressing the current social positioning of women. Women take the power they are ‘given’ and are unable to share it, as they believe they will not receive any more. They then maintain and negotiate power in denouncing other women and celebrating those that fail. Something is utterly wrong.

Feminism is meant to unify women not dislocate them. Tanenbaum writes, ‘women won the right to vote because women worked together town by town, state, and only lost momentum and passion when they became concerned about maintaining feminine conditioning and decorum.’ 95 A point has been reached where a new fight is needed. Women need to be united in a common objective. They/we need to rejuvenate a consciousness of women’s experiences, and how women are implicated in cycles of inequality and disempowerment.

Men’s studies taught that there is not one kind of man. 96 Women need to realize that there is

94 Tracy, op. cit., p. 165.
95 Tanenbaum, op. cit., p. 222.
96 For examples of theory on the men’s movement and masculinity studies see:
not one kind of woman and even though there maybe common aspirations, that each ‘lifestyle’ will not contain everyone. Women need to realize that by working and fighting together power can be achieved. Unity amongst one gender must be obtained before equality with another can be attempted. The self-help literature that is deployed to ‘solve’ these problems, actually works to intensify them. This thesis using interviews, textual analysis and policy documents works to explain and add knowledge in these space.

Chapter Two
The way we never were: Is fashion smarter than we think?

Figure 2 Maxwell Smart (Don Adams) and his shoe phone in *Get Smart*.¹

In the introduction to *Fashioning the body politic: dress, gender, citizenship*, Wendy Parkins relays a story of women making a ‘provocative’ fashion choice in parliament, at a protest against an Italian supreme court decision that women could not be raped in a pair of jeans. Parkins states,

> In these protests, jeans, possibly the most ubiquitous item of clothing in the Western world, became a site of semiotic contestation as the female legislators disputed the court’s interpretation signified compliance rather than assault. This item was also given a political significance, however, as women, who elected in their capacity as legislators represented the body politic, wore an item of everyday, casual clothing in a domain where such dress would usually be considered inappropriate.

The link between fashion, women and gender politics has been highly contested by cultural theorists and critics. Fashion has a resistive and trivial role in history. This chapter asks if the trivial is political and operates between these divergent spaces to trace the role of women’s bodies and fashion in history. Section one begins with a discussion of women’s bodies in a historical context. Through the implementation of oral histories and the paradigm of popular memory, I construct an alternative way of remembering bodies, clothing and their historical relevance. Through an analysis of magazines, I provide an examination of how the language of fashion within these cultural texts differs and conflates with that of the oral histories. I show how fashion has been utilized to codify women’s bodies and roles throughout history, continuing with a discussion of the pedagogic function of self-surveillance over women and their

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3 *ibid.*, p. 1.
4 *ibid.*.
bodies as active within contemporary magazines. The focal point of section two is an examination of the ‘executive look’ and/or the ‘executive’ or professional woman. This study is achieved through a textual analysis of what I have coined as the ‘executive look’ projected in magazines. Within the different genres of magazines, a myriad of trends are observed: the presence of the ‘executive look’ and the disembodiment of the executive/professional woman. The ‘executive’ - a noun - has been either disembodied or is absent from the magazines and replaced with the ‘executive look’, an adjective.

**Section One: Bodies, Fashion and Self-Surveillance**

The female body is a site of obsessional reading and re-reading. White, indigenous, ethnic bodies have all had their time under the voyeuristic microscope of historians and cultural critics. In the introduction of *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism*, Elizabeth Grosz traces different approaches to the female body such as egalitarian feminism and social constructionism. She states that,

> The specificity of bodies must be understood in its historical rather than simply its biological correctness. Indeed, there is no body as such: there are only bodies – male or female, black, brown, white, large or small – and the graduations in between. Bodies can be represented or understood not as entities in themselves or simply on a linear continuum with its polar extremes occupied by male and female bodies (with the various graduations of “intersexed” individuals in between) but as a field, a two-

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dimensional continuum in which race (and possible even class, caste or religion) form body specifications.\textsuperscript{10}

As Grosz suggests, the body itself is not only categorized by gender. It is also influenced by other factors such as class, race and religion.\textsuperscript{11} The affiliation between race and the body is often one of negativity and envy. Historically, the colour of skin alone allowed the owner to be designated with such attributes as physical competency, mental competency, criminality and social standing.\textsuperscript{12} A contemporary example of this mediated corporeal racism is the world-wide fear and aggression directed toward dark, bearded men in the aftermath of September 11. Innocent Muslim women, because of the colour of their skin and the clothes, such as the hijab or burka, were also, and continue to be, affected by this racism.\textsuperscript{13} Non-Muslims made bold claims that this clothing oppressed women and disregarded the other pretexts behind the garment, such as protections from the male gaze.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{10} ibid., p. 19.

\textsuperscript{11} The relationship of race and the body is a major focal point for discussion within this examination and religion, although it is not the main focus, will be discussed in its accompaniment to race.

\textsuperscript{12} Aileen Moreton-Robinson writes,

\begin{quote}
Australia has a history of preferring and privileging those people who have White skin. Indigenous people are conscious of how White skin privilege works because we have lived with the constraints of Whiteness. Living with Whiteness means being treated as less than white; not entitled to an equal share in Australian society and consciously knowing that White culture does not respect, value or view as legitimate our knowledge and rights.
\end{quote}


\textsuperscript{13} For example Darnell Cole and Shafiqa Ahmadi conducted a survey prior to the September 11 attacks in New York, of Muslim women who wore their veil on college campus, see:


Also see:


\textsuperscript{14} R. Seymour, ‘Unveiling the Hijab’ in \textit{Middle East}. March 2002, number 321, p. 48-50, ProQuest 109934661.
Skin colour is also a subject of envy and critique. In contemporary Australia, darker skin is achieved by a tanning lotion, tanning salons or tanning naturally in the sun (see figure 2.1). In places such as Asia, white skin is the sought after body colour and a ‘solution’ found in bleaching agents and whitening creams (see figure 2.2). Contemporary cultures suffer both bodily resentment and desire for something beautiful, exotic and different. This continuation of colonization through ‘beauty’ also forges disturbing connections between bodies and class.

Figure 2.1. Australian Sun, dual bronzing facial cream.

15 Susan Brownmiller remarks that, ‘a flawless shell-pink body was the romantic convention for female nudes in Western art, while earthier flesh tones portrayed masculine complexion.’ S. Brownmiller, Femininity. London: Paladin, 1986, p. 99.
16 Three advertisements for whitening cream were found on one page of this Mabuhay Beauty Pageant Site. http://www.mabuhaybeauties.com/g4/index.php?cat=0 [accessed 17.1.2006].
The body's relationship to class is confirmed through these fashion and beauty texts. Contemporary Australia is a consumerist society where fashion, beauty and the body shape are defining features of social standing and economic stability. A glance at children’s television programmes such as *Hi-5* show how this ideology is sold to children at a young age. This program features five attractive, fit and toned ‘twenty-somethings’ dancing athletically, in the latest label clothing, trainers and make-up,

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19 One area of the media that traces and perpetuates these practices is magazines. Frances Bonner comments that:

The trajectory through which the magazine-reading woman passes is well mapped out; the ideal ACP consumer moves from *Dolly* or *Girlfriend* to *Cosmo* or *Cleo* then to *She* or *Elle*, if she has reasonable disposable income or *New Weekly* if not, before coming to rest with *Woman’s Day* and the *Australian Women’s Weekly*. There are many additional magazines which can supplement this – bridal ones, for example – but the important aspect is that at each stage in the progress from a child to a mature woman and appropriate title is available to give advice, principally on matters of consumption.

teaching children to listen to jazz and cook pesto pasta with good pecorino cheese.\textsuperscript{20}

Ten minutes of a show such as this saturates the viewer in fashion, beauty, youth, fitness, food and culture. The social variable of age summons other characteristics, creating a framework of a ‘flawed body.’

The physicality of women has been objectified, commodified and theorized. Eileen Fairhurst asserts,

\begin{quote}
We do not need to look very far to recognise that a woman’s physical appearance may be used to sell newspapers or almost any commodity one cares to name. Nor can we quibble with the notion that society tends to define women in terms of their physical appearance. From this it is a short step to assert that a women’s physical appearance is the pivot of her identity \textit{qua} female.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

Australia, United Kingdom and the United States of America are contexts for the circulation of media texts featuring images of the female body that makes the step between body and identity a short one. Through the 19\textsuperscript{th} century, a particular mode of the beautified female body was linked to something of a male fetish. As Stratton has suggested, ‘the male experience of that fetishization was that the female body was, in itself desirable. It became a spectacle.’\textsuperscript{22} He conflates women’s bodily appearance in the public sector (women going to work and women shopping) with prostitution and commodification:

\begin{quote}
Women on the streets are associated with prostitution; as the fetishistic viewing of commodities spreads, so the streetwalker, whose body is
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Hi-5} channel 7, 2004.
\textsuperscript{21} E. Fairhurst, ‘‘Growing old gracefully’ as opposed to ‘mutton dressed as lamb’: the social construction of recognising older women’ in S. Nettleton \& J. Watson \textit{The body in everyday life}. London: Routledge, 1998, p. 259.
\textsuperscript{22} J. Stratton, \textit{The desirable body: cultural fetishism and the erotics of consumption}. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 87.
commodified and who attracts the gaze of men, is associated with the middle-class women who are shopping.'

During the 19th century, the link between middle-class women’s body, commodification, prostitution and male desire was extended by the economic necessity of defining a women’s social place by their appeal to men. Llewellyn Negrin asserts that in the nineteenth century,

Because a woman’s social standing and economic security depended on her marrying well, her physical appearance was important in attracting a suitable husband. Hence one of the primary functions of women’s clothing was to enhance a women’s erotic appeal to prospective suitors and once married, to maintain her husband’s interest in her.

During this period, the power of the male gaze upon the female body was not only accepted but encouraged. Through articles of clothing such as corsets, the female body could be moulded into a desired shape and prostituted to the voyeur. Fashion was used as a powerful device to fulfil male fetishes or desires as well as allowing women to position herself within society. Class and race also cut – awkwardly and jaggedly – through this debate. While race could determine economic status, monetary status determined the clothes that could be afforded. In turn, clothes defined the look of the body that could be prostituted to the hierarchy of male suitors. Even though times have changed, women are still required to sell their body for status. The restraints and focus upon fashioning women’s bodies remain. Women’s bodies are placed upon a pedestal and in the limelight to construct a historical imagining of women, rather than women’s actual and lived histories.

Fashion is a destructive force: it can trivialize the historical narratives and oppressions of women. When

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23 Stratton, op. cit., p. 92.
25 This cultural formation is documented through such media as magazines and film. Also see: Parkins (ed), op. cit., Stratton, op. cit.
a context, workplace or leisure environment is focussed on dressing ‘up’ the female body, then the status of women and their roles beyond ‘frocking up’ come into question.

These alternative narratives can be revealed through the use of oral histories and popular culture, particularly when assessed through popular memory theory. The bodies of women that caressed the pages of fashion magazines and the flicker of cinema do not singularly portray an era or the position of women and the body that existed during that time. Georganne Scheiner writes,

Even when Dee appeared to be conforming to conservative ideals of the period as the embodiment of the “girl next door,” her film characterizations reveal that there was an underside of American life and families in the 1950s. Dee’s story reminds us of “the way we never were” and also the way Dee never was either.26

In her piece, “Look at Me, I’m Sandra Dee: Beyond A White, Teen Icon,”27 Scheiner provides an account of the problematic nature of framing an era through the popular memory incubated in popular culture. Scheiner’s statement - ‘Dee’s story reminds us of “the way we never were”’28 - is reminiscent of the lyrics found in the Streisand classic The Way We Were29 and reminds the reader of the power of popular culture and its involvement in the formulation of a collective memory. In contemporary popular culture, female teen icons are readily available and easily disposable. These idols come mainly in the form of actresses and pop stars. Those who retain their popularity carry the nuances of historical icons. They are remembered for their looks, their sound, their genre of film and their clothing. Clothing, fashion, style, scent and body are the icon. Kylie’s bum can be purchased through her

26 G. Scheiner, ‘’Look at Me, I’m Sandra Dee’: Beyond a White, Teen Icon’, Frontiers. volume XXII, number 2, 2001, p. 102.
27 ibid.
28 ibid.
underwear collection, Meg Ryan’s hair can be bought at the hairdressers and J Lo’s scent bought in a department store. This branding of bodies also facilitates consumerism within popular culture. This is not a new ‘trend’. For years teenagers have tried to imitate the look of their idol or be clothed in the season’s fashion. Fashion, in a contemporary context, constructs and perpetuates a popular memory through the remnants of popular culture and is directed at an audience who was never there. Popular memory is not a radical history by nature, but it is in the use of seemingly empty signifiers of past eras that alternate histories can be reconstructed. It is in the gap between the popular memory of clothing and the transformation of this popular memory into current fashion trends the objectification of women’s bodies can be traced.

Popular culture is a conduit of popular memory. Through translation and transformation of a past sign system into a contemporary format, popular culture allows a survival of historical ideas and ideologies that may have otherwise been lost. Whether popular memory is one or many renderings of an event - it still is a rendering, a version, an interpretation. Popular memory is a representation of the past. It is a mechanism that allows the presentation of ideas, attitudes and ideologies. Pieces of popular culture hold a history that is mobilized for nostalgic purposes. Popular memory allows those histories and memories to live.

30 Angela McRobbie has looked at such trends in fashion. For examples see: McRobbie, In the Culture Society., op. cit., McRobbie, Postmodernism and Popular Culture., op. cit., A. McRobbie, Feminism and Youth Culture., op. cit.
Oral histories invoke a contested methodology. Although now more accepted by historians, it is fraught with debates over the power of the interviewer and the credibility of the memory of the interviewee,

The interviewee is certainly subject to the professional power of the interviewer who may take the initiative in seeking her out and questioning her. Of course, the problem may be solved rhetorically or at the level of personal relations: the historian may assert that he has ‘sat at the feet of the working class witnesses’…It is, however, he that produces the final account, he that provides the dominant interpretation, he that judges what is true and not true reliable or inauthentic.32

The interviewer does hold an amount of control over the final account when he/she is writing up an oral testimony. How is this any different from interpreting a written account from a history book? An oral history, like popular culture, is a historical shard and is as much an evidential base as written sources. There is also a relationship between popular culture and oral histories. Oral histories refer to popular culture when constructing popular memory. For this reason, I utilized oral histories within this chapter and through the remainder of this thesis.

The interviews took place in Perth Western Australia in April 2003. The first interviewee, ‘Robin’ is 26 years old, white, single, university educated, middle class, employed part time, with a medium to high range of disposable income.33 The second interviewee, ‘Evelyn’ is 56 years old, white, married, university educated, middle class, full time employed, with a high

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33 Robin’s level of disposable income is based on the amount of income she earns minus the amounts of bills she has to pay. She lives at home with her parents and does not pay for food or board, the only expenditure she has is her phone and petrol bill, the rest of her part-time income is at her disposal.
range of disposable income. Both are consumers of fashion. Clothing is a part of their daily lives. Work-wear, casual-wear, eveningwear and underwear are a few examples of how context melds into fashion. Every piece of clothing is not necessarily fashionable for the duration of the ownership. There are pieces that are labelled as timeless or classics and there are also pieces that are said to be of a certain time. I interviewed these two women about their definitions and opinions of hipsters, the suit and contemporary fashion. Hipster jeans entered into fashion in the late 1960s. They had a flared or bell bottom leg and sat on or just above the hip bone. I chose the hipster as a text for discussion as its appearance and popularity made a resurgence in the late 1990s and early 2000s. This is what each of the women expressed when asked about the design and history of the hipster and whether they would wear a pair to the office.

**Angela:** For you, what are hipsters?

**Robin:** By their name hipsters denote that they should sit on the hips not the pelvic region.

**Evelyn:** For me, a pair of hipsters are a pair of jeans and they were cut just below your waist sitting just above your hip bone.

**Angela:** What do they look like?

**Robin:** They are tight, flared jeans that are cut off at the top and the zip starts at the crotch. They start low down similar to guy’s jeans. We could stand and pee if we had the equipment.

**Evelyn:** They were flares, you didn’t have straight-legged hipsters, they were only flares and you wore wide belts, with huge buckles with them.

**Angela:** What is the history behind the hipsters?

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34 Evelyn’s disposable income was calculated in the same manner as Robin’s, the amount of income she earns minus the amounts of bills she has to pay. Her employment as a senior administrator provides her with a high full-time income. Evelyn owns her home and household is dual income, therefore the bills are halved and her disposable income is large.
Robin: I believe that they appeared around the sixties or seventies.

Evelyn: They came in 1969/1970 out of Carnaby Street in London and spread around the world quite quickly, I was travelling at the time. The market for hipsters were under twenties and evoked a different kind of fashion. They conjured up a freedom, if you wore hipsters you were cool. With them you wore 3/4 length vest that was sheepskin lined, a medallion or beads, long hair and a denim oversized train drivers hat. I had one, I should have kept it.

Angela: Would you wear a pair of current hipsters to an office job?

Robin: Yes, if I had a top that would cover my flesh. It depends on how low they were, if they were extremely low then no.

Evelyn: No.

Angela: Was there ever a time that you would have worn hipsters to an office job?

Robin: Yes when the waist of the hipsters sat on the hips.

Evelyn: No.

Although only five questions regarding hipsters was asked, two different histories of the pants are observed. Robin acknowledges the time frame of emergence of the 1960s hipsters but her description of the design is one of disbelief. It would seem, from her description of the 2000s hipster, that hipsters do not live up to their title, ‘By their name hipsters denote that they should sit on the hips not the pelvic region’. In her answer she provides no prior frame of reference to what a 1960s pair of hipsters looks like. Conversely, there is Evelyn’s description of hipsters. Evelyn provides the reader with a historical reference of time, origin, market and description. Her history of the 1960s hipster expresses more than just a description of style,

I was travelling at the time … They conjured up a freedom, if you wore hipsters you were cool. With them you wore 3/4 length vest that was sheepskin lined, a medallion or beads, long hair and a denim oversized train drivers hat. I had one, I should have kept it.
Along with the description came her memory of the time, what she was doing and also the message of ‘freedom’ as a reason behind wearing the hipsters. The interviewee responses on the surface appear to differ radically. There is a pattern emerging. After discussing the hipster, I asked the two women similar questions regarding the suit.

**Angela:** What is a woman’s suit comprised of?

**Robin:** It is made up of a jacket, pants or skirt a shirt and a nice pair of comfy shoes.

**Evelyn:** There are two kinds of suit, a jacket and a matching skirt and there is a jacket and matching trousers. They are usually the same colour or compliment each other in the fabric.

**Angela:** Do you know any history regarding the woman’s suit?

**Robin:** I would say that the history surrounding it probably has something to do with men wearing suits to work and women trying to imitate male attire. Maybe it has something to do with the eighties power – business suits.

**Evelyn:** Coco Chanel was very big in the sixties with the suit. Usually politician’s wives wore suits. Jackie Kennedy Onassis wore one the day her husband was shot. It was pink with a maroon collar and she has a pillbox hat to match. She was a perfectly dressed wife.

**Angela:** Would you wear a suit to an office?

**Robin:** It depends on the office

**Evelyn:** Yes.

**Angela:** If so what colour would it be?

**Robin:** Subdued colours that were not ‘show off colours’

**Evelyn:** Probably dark, black or grey, to a meeting where I wanted to get my own way.

**Angela:** Is there any occasion when this colour would differ?

**Robin:** If someone bought me a nice red, Chanel suit that was expensive and looked good regardless of colour.
Evelyn: If I was meeting and greeting people for a PR exercise I may wear a bright blouse or a white suit. But I would always wear high heels and definitely a shirt.

Angela: Is there any time in the past when you would have worn a different colour?

Robin: No

Evelyn: Yes back in the sixties I bought a suit it was a Donnegal tweed and bright colours were in. It was lime green and blue tweed and it was very expensive. It came from Marks Foys and I wore it knowing it was an expensive suit. I wore it to the office and to Church. It was when I was working in the city and had lots of money.

Once again, the responses to the questions differ. Robin can give a time of emergence to the woman’s suit of the 1980s and relates it to an imitation of the male suit. She would wear a suit to the office (depending on the type of office) and would wear dark colours, unless it was an expensive Chanel suit. Evelyn provides a time of reference, rather than emergence. She provides the reader with a time when the suit was big, a style of suit and who was wearing it, ‘Jackie Kennedy Onassis wore one the day her husband was shot.’ Evelyn provides a time when she wore a bright suit, where she bought it from, what she was doing, why she bought it, why she wore it and where she wore it.
It would seem that Evelyn’s answers provide the fashion with a lived context and history, whilst Robin’s answers seem to be of a critical and hypothetical nature. This would seem normal when questioning two people from different generations, when one was ‘there’ and one was not. It is not in the lack of information that Robin provides about the texts that requires examination. Why does Robin anguish with the name of the hipster? Why does she make reference to a Chanel suit? Robin provides a contemporary rendering and a record of a ‘current’ memory of the texts. She has no recollection of life without the hipster or where a dark suit was not the expected office uniform. These texts, as they have moved through time, have changed in style and definition. Popular cultural texts such as magazines, through advertisements for clothing and make-up, provide a readership with a time machine of changing clothing styles. With their change in style, they have also gained a change in wearers. The suit - a marker of power, class and economic status - has become culturally embedded as a ‘must have’ within the working wardrobe. Through the memories of the

36 Ginia Bellafante writes
wearers, the texts are not only allocated an historical context, but provide a history of the marking and control over the female body. This is observed in Robin’s ‘pelvic region’ definition of the 2000s hipster to Evelyn’s ‘above the hip bone’ definition of the 1960s hipster.

Robin’s ‘pelvic region’ definition provides a timely rendering of contemporary constraints over the female body. The ‘hipster 2000’ has become the modern day corset. However unlike the corset, not every body type can be hidden within its fastenings. Hips and bottoms are required but they cannot be too large otherwise unsightly and usually fat protrudes over the top of the jeans – colloquially known as ‘the muffin top’. The freedom and flattering of

Two months ago at the start of the fall season, the management at Coudert Brothers, an international law firm with 650 lawyers, issued a memo to its New York employees reminding them what was appropriate office wear, and what was not, in a firm of its pedigree.

As an indicator of just how far corporate dressing has devolved in early 21st-century New York, the memo is illuminating. Among the clothes the law firm's managers thought it necessary to cite as off limits were T-shirts, jeans, cargo pants, leggings, short skirts, tight skirts, halter and tube tops, and anything else that might register as "sloppy" or "unkempt."

In the past, when the dress code had been laid out in less specific terms, said Pamela Church, a partner at Coudert who is a member of the executive committee, "people came in clothing that did not represent a certain level of professionalism."

Of course the "people" who could potentially arrive at an office in leggings, mini-skirts or tube tops are women -- an enormous sector of the labor force often ignored in discussions of the swing toward casual business attire in the 1990's, and the current slow shift away from it.

While only a few major financial institutions, including Lehman Brothers and Bear Stearns, have reinstated formal dress codes, conventional wisdom has it that the fall of the tech-driven economy and its failed endorsement of an Aerosmith T-shirt workplace have returned many professional men to the world of tailored suits. But there is growing evidence that the more sober business climate has repatriated women there as well.


An Australian example of this is recognized in the Commonwealth’s Bank decision to issue a specific grooming guide in December 2005, which included such things as bra colour, stocking denier and cutting nasal hair. This controversial guide was met with an uproar from staff and the general public. The Commonwealth Bank would not supply me with this guide. Anonymous, ‘CBA apologises for grooming handbook’ The Age. http://www.theage.com.au/news/NATIONAL/CBA-apologises-for-grooming-handbook/2005/12/05/1133631190591.html, [accessed 1.04.2006].
the female form that surrounded the hipster of the 1960s has reached a degrading low in the 2000s. To wear a pair of hipster jeans is to also wear a mini g-string, Brazilian wax and a belt. Brabazon writes, ‘Women’s trousers are now so revealing that hipsters have become vaginasters. Brazilians are as compulsory to contemporary women’s fashions as text messaging is to David Beckham’.37 Producers of the hipster 2000 spruik such jean titles as Just Jeans38 ‘so low’, ‘barely legal’, ‘Brazilians’ and Levi’s born again 501s.39 Once again correlations between consumption and the female body and constraints and the female body are recognized. The point to ponder is why women, who are educated and recognize that these jeans as ill-fitting, still survey and change their bodies to fit the unnatural mould of the hipster 2000. The suit, like the hipster, is an article of clothing that has travelled through time it has changed in both style and wearer to the point where it has become a part of most peoples wardrobes be it male or female, working or upper class. The similarities between these two garments stems further than their ability to stand the test of fashion time. Although time and history, in its essence, plays a major role in the development of body and fashion augmentation.

In 1914, Coco Chanel simultaneously opened two fashion boutiques, one in Paris and one in Deauville. Coco, or Gabrielle, Chanel is famous for developing particular fashion trends.

This French designer, creator of the little black dress, can also take the credit for popularizing slacks, tailored suits, and short hairstyles in women's fashion. In short, any modern woman's style can, to some degree, be traced back to Coco Chanel's fashion philosophy.40

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Chanel, a fashion revolutionary for her time, strove for comfort and functionality in her clothing. Hence many of her styles borrowed from men’s trousers and suits. The jersey fabric she also first worked with was thought to be cheap and her styles a ‘glamorization of poverty’. Yet the style and fabric of Chanel’s designs rendered them popular in the long term. The Chanel suit, with its tailored lines and tweed fabric brought the female suit into the limelight. The female suit became stylish yet comfortable and practical to wear. In a contemporary climate, the notion of a Chanel suit being something practical and cheap seems almost an insult to its label. Angela McRobbie writes,

The ladies’ suit announced as the high fashion item of summer 1988 is a reworking of the early 1960s Chanel suit worn by Jackie Kennedy and other celebrities. A bouclé wool version in pink and orange can be found on the rails of Next this season, but it is not simply a 1980s revamp of the Chanel original, because it was in the late 1970s, as part of her challenge to conventional femininity, that Poly Styrene first wore this most ‘unflattering’ of outfits, the ladies’ two piece found in a jumble sale or ragmarket in abundance for 50p.

The female suit, which was once a resistive and empowering text for women, has now become a constraint and play of power over the female form. A number of examples can be found in magazines such as *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS* where firstly the cover picture is of a model dressed in a modern version of the tweed ‘Chanel Suit’, together with a low collared top and stiletto high heels which strap up to the lower calves. The female ‘executive look’ models within this magazines are dressed in the latest designer pant-suit, the pants featuring a low slung waistline and the jacket has no shirt, blouse or underwear beneath it, providing the onlooker with a death defying plunging neckline (see figures 2.14 and 2.15). An outfit, such as those pictured in these figures, would displace the majority of wearers (male or female) from their bodily comfort zones, and is

41 ibid.
43 *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS.* March 2003,
also inappropriate office attire. Once again, it is in the design of the garment rather than in the wearer that is the problem. The relationship between female bodies and constraining fashion trends can be located within the pages of magazines.

Do images in magazines engage and dialogue with the female bodies of readers, or impose a singular, disempowering vision of feminine ‘normality’? Magazines contain many images of women in different settings, selling different products and wearing different types of clothing such as evening wear, casual wear and work-wear. The relationship between clothing and consumerism, reader and wearer, is complex. Diana Crane writes, ‘the simplicity of contemporary clothing styles has the effect of highlighting the body and its perfections and imperfections. The body confers a kind of social status, revealing who has the time, money, and inclination to work on their bodies and perfect them’.\(^\text{44}\) In this way, fashion images do not talk to women. It is not the model, nor the reader that is the problem it is the design of the piece of fashion clothing. The 2000s, when reviewed for its fashion ‘innovations,’ may be defined as an era of the hipster. A glance at a magazine provides the reader with an array of different pieces of clothing the majority with a lowered waist-line. This includes skirts, jeans, pants, shorts, underwear and even suit pants. I say the majority, because clothing, without such a waistline can be purchased in a slim range of design and colours or for a high price tag (see table 3.1). Once again, class makes an emergence, allowing a consumer to remain in fashion and comfort for a price. The images within magazines capture the problematic nature of contemporary fashion trends. They represent the current stock in

department stores, the body types that can fit in them and the price, both economically and physically, to the consumer.

The relationship between women and magazines is not passive, as women choose to and must be able to afford to purchase and read such texts. I consider the connection of women’s bodies and magazines as a Panopticon of self-surveillance. Foucault writes of the Panopticon,

> We know the principle on which it was based: at the periphery, an annular building; at the centre a tower; this tower is pierced with wide windows that open onto the inner side of the ring; the peripheric building is divided into cells, each of which extends the whole width of the building; they have two windows, one on the inside, corresponding to the windows of the tower; the other, on the outside, allows the light to cross the cell from one end to the other.\(^{45}\)

The Panopticon can be related to the construction of a prison, where inmates are under the belief that they are constantly being surveyed. Foucault writes that, ‘the major effect of the Panopticon; to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power’.\(^{46}\) Magazines are pivotal in the self-surveillance of feminine bodies.\(^{47}\) Through the circulation of women’s magazines, the ideology of perpetual surveillance and judgement is constructed. The question to ask is what has caused, fused and intensified this alliance of women, bodies, self-surveillance and judgement? This intricate alliance can be explained by an examination into the intent and agency of magazines.

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\(^{46}\) *ibid.*, p. 201.

There are three ideologies constructed and perpetuated through magazines: sustaining patriarchy, increasing consumerism and denying history. Magazines - and its association with sustaining patriarchy and lifting consumerism – require women to judge and ridicule themselves, necessitating the purchase of one more product to create a valued and valuable femininity. We live in a contemporary climate where sexual harassment committees are in abundance. Yet it is too simple to configure a causal relationship between magazines and women’s eating disorders. Women are not a passive readership for the ‘male gaze’. Fetishization of the female body was associated with the naked female body and the removal of clothes. Stratton remarks,

The trajectory from the 1840s commercial tableau vivant to the 1920s striptease was one of increasing focus on that body. In striptease the woman is literally

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50 Hardin, Lynn & Walsdorf, op. cit., Zuckerman, op. cit.
51 Belinda Wheaton - in reference to sports and lifestyle magazines - suggests an alternative reading and space for such texts and gender identities. She writes, audiences actively interpret, draw on and create meanings that can vary and do differ from the preferred meaning offered by the texts. Although lifestyle sport magazines re-inscribe traditional hegemonic codes about masculinity, they simultaneously offer at least the potential for changes in gender relations and identities.
selling the visibility of her body. Unlike the streetwalker who, ultimately sells the physical sex act, striptease commodifies the scopophilic concern with the sight of the female body. In striptease the female body is consumed by men as spectacle.  

In the maintenance of patriarchy, dress had a role in enhancing the appeal of the naked body beneath the cloth, rather than the contemporary situation of making the body fit the clothes. Consumerism is not an adequate description or justification of a magazine’s intent. Women are consumers. Men are also consumers. It is the drive of women’s consumption patterns in the direction of bodily augmentation and fashion that is in concern. Finkelstein suggests, that ‘in the modern era, we treat the body as malleable and have developed the tools by which it can be continuously altered in appearance…We have fused together the capacity for conspicuous consumption with the presentation of personality’. Many assumptions are perpetuated through magazines, particularly with regard to the ‘normal’ behaviour of women’s bodies. Magazines do not even need to be read. Their presence in shopping centres, news agencies and in the permeation through television and ‘lifestyle’ programming encourages self-surveillance from women over their bodies.

A key purpose in the pervasiveness of this magazine Panopticon is to displace historical relativity, to suggest that the feminine normalities of the present are not changeable, but perpetual. Here the male gaze, sustainment of patriarchy and consumerism plays a historical part in requiring women to look and dress their bodies. This can be taken further and it could be argued that this is a trend towards the Synopticon instead. The synpoticon, unlike the self-surveillance of the panopticon, is where a large amount of people watch a few.

Bauman argues that the, ‘Panopticon forced people into a position where they could be watched. The Synopticon needs no coercion--it seduces people into watching’.\textsuperscript{56} Magazines could be seen as the conduit in this seductive relationship. I believe, however, that the relationship that women have with magazines, while clearly showing a trend towards the Synopticon, is based on the Panopticon and the belief that many are watching women’s bodies, so they must then survey their own. Women look, survey and judge. When questioned about their views on current fashion trends Robin and Evelyn remarked

\begin{quote}
\textbf{Robin}: I think that fashion caters to the prepubescent female body or the extremely rich. Current fashion no longer denotes the activity. I mean in the past you wore a jogging suit to go jogging. Everything surrounding current fashion has sexual overtones.

\textbf{Evelyn}: My opinion is that current fashion is aimed at size eight and is short, tight, small and synthetic. It is very broad and I sometimes have problems working out what goes with what. In the nineties fashion changed, not according to my taste. Fashion became more casual and fashion in the workplace became less defined. In the late nineties the dark suit for women became the known and expected corporate office wear. Suits are expected now. Before you didn’t know why you were wearing them. Now you know why and you do it and you know that they know why you do it.
\end{quote}

Through observing other female body types, women have become voyeurs and ridiculers of other women’s body dress, body shape and body power.\textsuperscript{57} Kevin Sessums comments that,

\begin{quote}
We’re moving toward clothing that acts as a kind of building – a moveable shelter – that protects against abuse, whether it be physical or psychological or even from the state. We are moving toward the Paranoiac Garment.”…As our clothes become smarter and smarter, they will not only communicate to others how we have chosen to live within the context of the twenty-first-century environment, but also how we have chosen to utilize that very environment to simplify - or magnify - our lives.\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

I agree with Sessums’s definition that clothing is heading towards the Paranoiac Garment. While Sessums’s argument configures clothing as a protection and sheltering device, I also recognize

through this research that contemporary clothing, although it can protect from difference and ridicule, also disempowers the body beneath it.

Magazines are texts that enable women to disengage, survey and judge their own bodies, view inadequacies in themselves and others, and gloat about bodily successes. An example of this tendency is the magazine *Slimming*. This magazine is dedicated to detailing how to lose weight and celebrating the loss of weight with ‘Real Life Success Stories’. These texts, the majority of which are written by females, are directed at women but the only ‘real women’ who are shown in full body are those which shine with youth, slimness, opulence and culture. The editors, experts and women who have made it are all head-shots and upper body photographs (see figure 2.9). Power is sold in fashion, not in action. Those women who have earned power through education and hard work remain disembodied within these texts. Is it because these women have power but do not fit into the power mould they are selling? A nineteenth century notion of women obtaining ultimate power and achievement through their beauty and clothing flows beneath the surface of magazines. It is the women who are body gazing and judging the social status of other women. The magazine panopticon does not only apply to fashion, women’s and style magazines. The disembodiment of women is displayed, constructed and configured in an array of magazines genres.

**Section Two: A Noun and an Adjective**

There are number of magazine genres which exist in contemporary Australia. This case study is focussed upon the construction and portrayal of the ‘executive look’, with
‘executive’ as an adjective to describe a mode of fashion, rather than as a noun, through a discussion of a real female executive. I use the term ‘executive’ as a label to signify seniority of employment. It is not deployed specifically in relation to a particular form of business. Some examples of ‘executives’ in this context are medical doctors, editors, co-ordinators, managers, designers, CEOs, writers and other women who are at the upper levels of employment within their field. I begin with a brief overview of the main magazines under examination and then approach a number of images within these texts. The genres and magazines under investigation are presented in a table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Magazine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Style</td>
<td>Scoop and Black and White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Fitness</td>
<td>Good Medicine and Slimming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Women</td>
<td>Australian Women’s Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>VOGUE AUSTRALIA and Marie Claire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrity</td>
<td>Who Magazine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Mixmag and Rolling Stone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These magazines that were selected over three years have been convey a range of popular culture, rather than for a specific presentation of the ‘executive look’ or ‘executive’ women. The goal is to observe how – through a wide range of genres – women in power are presented on the page. The presence or lack there of, of these images formulates a broad sketch of how magazines perpetuate disembodied notions of power.

Style magazines, as its title suggests, provide the readership with a style guide. They are distributed nationally and internationally but there also local magazines such as Perth’s Scoop
which provide a guide to life on fashion, restaurants, night clubs and holiday destinations.

Here are a number of images from *Scoop*.\(^{59}\)

![Dr Fiona Wood](image1.png)

![Lisa Ho](image2.png)

![Scoop Contributors](image3.png)

This magazine provided many images of ‘real’ working women and all of them are not full body shots. Dr Fiona Wood’s photograph was the only one in colour and although larger than the other shots, it was taken in profile, her arms across her chest. The contributors

\(^{59}\) *Scoop*. December 2002 to February 2003

\(^{60}\) *ibid.*, p. 46.

\(^{61}\) *ibid.*, p. 76.

\(^{62}\) *ibid.*, p. 16.
featured all black and white small head-shots and Lisa Ho, a prominent Australian fashion designer, only received a 3/4, black and white model shot. To put these pictures into perspective, the other photographs of ‘real’ women were small head-shots. Models were framed through the presentation of a full length presentation of their bodies. Indeed, their bodies were their business. The editors of these magazines who are shot both in full-body and head-shots framed their magazines as a ‘style’ guide for women.

Music magazines such as *Mixmag* and *Rolling Stone* provide the latest information regarding articles and reviews of current musical genres, bands, DJs, albums and events. Within these magazines, there is no real presence of the ‘executive look’ or the real ‘executive’ or professional woman. Female producers, agents and event co-ordinators are absent from these texts. Female celebrities are also in the minority in these texts. There are a number of advertisements, audience and fan photographs of scantily clad slender, young females.
Health and Fitness magazines approach such areas as beauty, alternative medicines, nutrition and fitness. They feature articles on celebrities, pregnancy and slimming. Here are a number of images from *Good Medicine* and *Slimming* magazines.

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64 *RollingStone*. March 2003, lifout.
The photographs of the *Slimming* experts, similar to the *Scoop* contributors, are small black and white photographs. The editor of these magazines who are shot both in full-body and head-shots framed their magazines as a ‘healthy’ guide for women. All the other pictures of ‘executives’ found within *Slimming* were headshots and the largest size was 2cm x

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67 *Slimming*. op. cit., p. 3
69 ibid., p. 28.
70 *Slimming*. op. cit.
71 *Scoop*. op. cit.
72 *Slimming*. op. cit.
2.5cm. The other photographs featured within this magazine were full-length photographs of young models exercising and eating. Also featured were full-length shots of real ‘successful’ women (none categorically ‘executive’ or professional) who had lost weight. The different shots, for different body types, affirms the relationship between women, body and competition that was addressed in chapter one. The image in figure 2.10 from Good Medicine\textsuperscript{73} accompanied a quiz testing the ‘literacy’ in feminine normalities of the reader. The quiz featured questions about relationships, clothing and the time and effort spent in employment. Figure 2.10 features both a male and a female, positioned next to each other. They are dressed in matching attire in a shirt, tie, trousers and slicked back hair. The woman is in the forefront, she sports a masculine-styled watch on her left hand and unbuttons a turned up cuff. She has also adopted the gaze of the male next to her. The question - Are you losing you Feminine Side? - is written across her lap. The image is a version of the ‘executive look’. The placement of the quiz’s title questions the femininity of this look. The questions in the accompanying questionnaire resonate with this image, by alluding to the notion that a woman who pays attention to her employment rather than relationships, and pants rather than skirts, is lacking in femininity.\textsuperscript{74} The conundrum that this image and accompanying quiz affirms – verifying the arguments in of the first chapter of this thesis – is that a problematic relationship exists between women, work, body and competition. It portrays the construction of difference – in terms of power, femininity and being a woman – between those women that dress and perform as executives.

\textsuperscript{73} Good Medicine. op. cit. p. 62.
\textsuperscript{74} ibid., pp. 62 – 64.
General Women’s magazines combine articles on celebrities, with fashion, beauty, health, living, fiction stories, cooking, gardens and children. The editor of these magazines who are shot both in full-body and head-shots framed their magazines as a ‘lifestyle’ guide for women. Here are some selected images from The *Australian Women’s Weekly*.

![Figure 2.12 Rockman’s ‘Working Wardrobe’](image)

Figure 2.12 Rockman’s ‘Working Wardrobe’

Figure 2.12 is an advertisement for Rockman’s new season of women’s working wardrobe, taken from the February edition of the 2003 *The Australian Women’s Weekly*. Within this advertisement, three variations of the same outfit are shown: a grey pant suit, with a high button white shirt, jacket done up; a grey pant suit, with a v-neck collard shirt, jacket off and an outfit of grey suit pants with a blue pinstriped shirt. The models stand in front of a plain background with no sign of a particular place in which they ‘work’. The model’s hair is slick at the front and tied back in a pony tail, which is shown in a side view by the centre model. This is an un-accessorized version of the ‘executive look’.

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76 *ibid.*, p. 74.
77 *ibid.*
Figure 2.13 The *Australian Women’s Weekly* ‘Work Wear’

Figure 2.13 is a work wear article from the style section of The *Australian Women’s Weekly*. This text is an example of an overtly styled and accessorized ‘executive look.’ It comes complete with a dialogue summarising the masculine influence of ‘smart tailoring, crisp pant suits and military detailing,’ teamed with the femme aspect of ‘chic pencil skirt, a sexy stiletto and a pretty pair of earrings.’ The woman in the picture is sitting on a table in what looks to be an entertainment area. She wears a skirt-suit, heels, has her hair slicked at the front but down around her shoulders, shows a pair of earrings and holds in her hand a bracelet. This look is a glamorized, feminized, accessorized ‘executive look’.

A fashion trend is observed in the depiction of the ‘executive look’. Such characteristics are the masculine styled suit, feminized accessories, the lack of a clearly contextualized

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78 ibid., p. 110.
79 ibid.
workplace or employment designation, the price of the look, and the body size, race and age of the models portraying this look. The women are predominantly white and aged in their late teens to early twenties. The ‘executive look’ is not only an image utilized to sell clothes, but other accessories such as make-up and handbags.

Fashion magazines capture and convey what their title suggests. They present articles with information to obtain certain ‘looks’ and styles. The majority of these magazines are based on advertisements of the latest make-up, handbags, shoes and hair styling products. They also advertise the latest celebrity styles, as well as fashion shows and commentary. Below are images of the ‘executive look’ present in *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS*.  

![Figure 2.14 Advertisement ColorStay Makeup in *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS*](image1)

![Figure 2.15 Advertisement Howard Showers Suit in *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS*](image2)

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80 *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS*. March 2003  
81 ibid., p. 5.  
82 ibid., p.15.
Figure 2.16 Women on Top Article in *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS*\(^8^3\)

Figure 2.17 Advertisement for handbags in *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS*\(^8^4\)

\(^8^3\) *ibid.*, p. 8.

\(^8^4\) *ibid.*, p. 21.
These fashion magazines provided an abundance of images of both the ‘executive look’ and the ‘real’ female ‘executive’. *VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS* magazine, which is a separate publication that is issued occasionally with the main *VOGUE AUSTRALIA*, is a supposed ‘guide for executive women’, with ‘executive’ still deployed as an adjective not a noun. Within its spread, a number of images similar to figures 2.14 and 2.15 are found. These are images of women dressed in both pant and skirt suits, minus underwear or shirt. Along with advertisements for the scantily clad ‘executive look’, are advertisements such as figure 2.17 selling handbags as the latest piece of business equipment and real ‘executives’ found in figure 2.16. These actual ‘executives’ hold high level positions such as the head of AMP, CEO of Telecom and one is a famous fashion designer. All these women are disembodied in some way in the 7cm x 10cm photographs. They are all dressed mainly in black two piece garments, with a white of light coloured top beneath and stand against a light coloured background. Two of the three women are dressed in suits.

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85 *Marie Claire*. February 2003, p. 10.
86 *ibid.*, p. 20.
Celebrity magazines deal with the ‘who’s who’ of popular culture. They provide details of celebrity gossip, along with pictures from film previews and award nights. I label the images found within *Who Magazine* as celebrity ‘executives’. They are women who are in high level positions, but they are also constantly in the spotlight and constantly scrutinized for their bodies and fashion. Such examples are observed in the images below.

![Figure 2.20 Chloe Sevigny](image1.png)  
![Figure 2.21 Sarah Jessica Parker](image2.png)

The image of Chloe Sevigny, photographed for New York Fashion week, is from the ‘startracks’ section of *Who*. Dressed in a grey jersey jumpsuit, fur jacket and black ‘ugg boot’ styled footwear, the ‘celebrity’ has been judged through the comment ‘Sevigny was on the look out for some fashion tips’. The image in figure 2.21 of Sarah Jessica Parker is one of eight other celebrity women such as Elizabeth Hurly and Cate Blanchett whose body shape from pregnancy size to post pregnancy size has been monitored. An article regarding how

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88 *ibid.*, p. 30.  
89 *ibid.*, p. 9.  
90 *ibid.*, p. 9.  

these women ‘bounce back into red-carpet shape’ accompanied these images. The photographs were full body shots of both during and after pregnancy. There were no other images of either the ‘executive look’ or real ‘executive’ women present within this magazine. The categories of ‘entertainment’ and ‘celebrity’ spill through work, leisure and lifestyle without clear differentiation of categories or behaviour. What is clear is that the celebrity magazine brings forth a provocative relationship between surveillance and the female form. Celebrities, especially models and actresses, because of their position, could be disqualified from the discussion of real ‘executive’ (women). Yet they are women, with highly mediated and constructed images and iconography. They play a role in developing the ‘executive look.’ The nature of their presence within the media is also a prime example of how the magazine – as a Panopticon - functions. These celebrity (women) should not be removed from the relationship between their own bodies, work and fashion, as they are ‘executives’. The nature of their celebrity status, illustrated through economic stability and a strong media presence, means that these women need to be categorized as celebrity ‘executives’. These workers adorned themselves, while also being purveyors of, the ‘executive look’. Their body is their business. With the presence of differing ‘executive’ images within magazines discussed, the relationship between the ‘executive look’, ‘executive’ woman and celebrity executive can be discussed.

The portrayal of the body is the focal point when examining these different groups. The ‘executive look’ body is slim, boyish, young, tall and is presented in half page to full-page colour close up shots, displaying the majority of the body. The skin is flawless, the hair is slick and the clothing is designer labels. If the ‘executive look’ body was flawed, then the
imperfections have been air brushed. This is recognized in the neck-line of the image featured in figure 2.14. The ‘executive look’ clothing is often revealing, featuring no shirts or cleavage revealing shirts, short skirts and high high-heals. The ‘executive look’ body is accessorized with products of opulence such as expensive watches, handbags and beauty products.

The photographs of real ‘executive’ women are either black and white bust or partial body shorts, or black and white long shots. These long shots fill approximately 1/6 of the page. The bodies of these women are older, curvier and less airbrushed. These women wear make-up but wrinkles and age lines are noticeable. The hair is worn in both down and up styles. Their clothing is neat and tailored and is usually black in colour. A suit, or part there of, is usually worn. The flesh is covered up by the wearer’s suit or stockings. Accessories such as jewellery and shoes are not a focal point within their projected images. The shoes are often not seen, as the bottom half of their bodies are often absent from the photograph. The celebrity ‘executive’ again differs from this image. The celebrity ‘executive’ is a fusion of the ‘executive look’ and the actual ‘executive’ woman. The celebrity ‘executive’ - when working - can be recognized as dressed in the way of the ‘executive look’: slim, youthful, designer clothing, make-up and airbrushed. It is when the celebrity is in the public arena that the celebrity ‘executive’ is scrutinized for looking like a real woman. The celebrification of fashion reduces divide between ‘celebrity’ and ‘real’. Graeme Turner writes,

It is not hard to recognise this in the current trend of women’s magazines to provide guides on where to buy either the exact garment worn by the pictured celebrity or its cheaper substitute. Nor is it hard to see within this formation the
seeds for the contemporary mobilisation of celebrity as a key location for the construction of cultural identity.\footnote{G. Turner, \textit{Understanding Celebrity}. London: Sage, 2004, p. 121.}

The actual woman and reader are encouraged to configure a visual identity based on the look of the ‘executive’ celebrity. Figure 2.22 is a spread from \textit{New Woman} and show how to, ‘get instant Carrie Chic – without SJP’s salary,’\footnote{\textit{New Woman}, June 2004, p. 134.} this is in reference to obtaining \textit{Sex and the City}'s Carrie Bradshaw’s look, without Sarah Jessica Parker’s (who plays Carrie) salary.

![Figure 2.22 100 for $150](image)

\textbf{Figure 2.22 100 for $150}\footnote{ibid.}

A look such as the ‘Carrie Bradshaw’ is constructed by stylists and fashion designers, and
purchased with a programme/celebrity income, or given to the star from designers based on their status as a celebrity. This ‘gift economy’ is illustrated at such events as the Academy Awards, where an actress’s style and ‘who they are wearing’ is as important as their nominations. This judgement of fashion over filmic performance is illustrated in the comments regarding style which are published on the Academy Awards website. For example ‘Jessica Alba in gold Versace halter gown with lace front and gold clasp at back of neck. Double rings on left finger from H. Stern’, accompanied the image of Jessica Alba (Figure 2.23) from the 78th Annual Academy Awards.

![Figure 2.23 Jessica Alba](image)

The manufacturing of real women to imitate celebrities, and how quickly and effectively these ideologies and images travel around the world, is a symptom of Australia’s fascination with the idea of ‘celebrity’. This is recognized in the production of reality television. Turner comments on the proliferation of talent in this regard, and in reference to the media he states that, ‘Their celebrity is produced out of nothing.

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bypassing what we might think of as the conventional conditions of entry (specialized training, or a history of performance, for instance). The manufacturing of a celebrity, through the ideological positioning on such media as television and radio, has rendered the talent and time that is required to train and work celebrity jobs such as actor, singer or radio announcer unnecessary. The talent, effort and education that make the celebrity famous have become dislocated from the star’s job. Appearance, both in terms of looks and location within the tabloids, are more important and marketable than their actual talent. In an ironic turn, celebrity jobs are being replaced by manufactured looks. This lessens the gap between celebrity and real, but increases the pressure for ‘everybody to look like a celebrity.’

The division between the ‘executive look’ and the real ‘executive’ (woman) is precise: Young versus older, colour versus black and white, accessorized versus simplified, slim versus curvy, flesh versus fabric, bodied versus disembodied. The images talk at - rather than to - each other. The image that the ‘executive look’ sells through the body, clothes and accessories is virtually unattainable. They also sell a largely white image. There were minimal amounts of non-white models within these texts. This constructs both the ‘executive

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95 Turner, op. cit., p. 53.
96 Examples of this are: ex Australian Big Brother (series one) contestant Blaire McDonough plays Stuart Parker on Neighbours. Ex Australian Idol (series one) contestant Dan O’Connor plays Ned Parker in Neighbours. Ex-Australian Big Brother (series two) contestant Nathan Morris hosts a morning radio show on Nova fm in Western Australia. Ex-Australian Idol contestants such as Guy Sebastian (season one winner), Shannon Noll, Cosima Devito, Paulini Curuenavuli, Rob Mills, Casey Donovan (season two winner), Anthony Callea, Ricki-Lee Coulter, Kate DeAraugo (season three winner) and Lee Harding have all had top one hundred hits in the Australian music charts. Sebastian also won an Aria. Curuenavuli has also appeared on Celebrity Overhaul and Mills co-hosted Stooged.
97 Artists such as Gwen Stefani, Hillary Duff, Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen and Nikki Webster, all have their own clothing labels, which encourage this imitation. This pressure to conform has been confirmed and attacked by such celebrities as P!nk (Stupid Girl) and the trend towards consuming celebrity ‘looks’ has been parodied in other popular cultural texts like Kath and Kim, ‘I saw this photo of Posh and I couldn’t believe it. I thought it was me…and like Posh I never smile and I never read’. Kath and Kim. http://www.kathandkim.com/separated.htm, [accessed 12.1.2006].
look’ and the powerful woman as white. Youth is also another issue. To present a youthful body, the owner must be young. Yet to be able to afford the clothes and accessories, the owner must have money and a place to wear the clothes. The years of time, education and work experience to obtain purchase a wardrobe of ‘executive’ clothing and accessories cannot be traded for the variable or attribute of ‘youth.’

The concern with the ‘executive’ does not only lie with the need for affluence and youth. It is also captured in the disparities between iconography, ideology and lived experience. Real ‘executive’ women do not look or dress in this way. The presence of actual ‘executives’ within these texts - as smaller, older and disembodied alongside of these large full-bodied ‘executive look’ women - frames them as ‘lacking’. These women who have power - often the editorial power of the magazine - do not have the power to be represented as a full person. As they have ‘used their head’ to gain their authority, they will be represented as one. I am not suggesting through this argument that ‘executive’ women should be framed as sex symbols. Instead, encouraging a diversity, complexity and plurality of working women and their representations is my interest. Magazines depict an uneasily attainable ‘executive look’ while exhibiting real women as disembodied. The equation of the ‘executive look’ equalling ‘power’ needs to be recognised especially in the parameters of the workplace – and this thesis. The trend is to portray performances of power rather than discussions of methods, rationales and strategies for real power is in existence. A consciousness of these discrepancies can permit greater visibility of real ‘executive’ women and provide greater

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recognition for women who may not look like supermodels but have achieved high level successes. The relationship between clothing, women and workplaces needs to be recognised, so that women are rendered whole, diverse and embodied.
Chapter Three
‘Good Clothes Open All Doors’: The fit, the function and the fashionista’s role in finding workplace clothing.¹

Figure 3 Banner from Working Wardrobe²

Fashion is not essential to completing an effective and productive day’s work. In particular employment contexts, fashion can lead to a person’s dismissal or censure, triggering undue expenses, social pressure and personal under-confidence. This chapter investigates clothing and fashion. It probes the relationship between power and clothing in contemporary working environments. This chapter evokes the disparity between ‘work clothes’ and ‘fashion’.

Through an examination of current trends in the Australian fashion industry, I discuss clothing availability, design, fabric and sizing. I evaluate the politics of sizing and how this measurement system frames women’s work wear. Through a comparison of current trends in women’s work clothes, I reveal the gaps in the market both in terms of quality, availability, functionality and price.

Clothing is the collective term for materials that cover the body. Clothes are signifiers of what we are and who we want to be. Susan Kaiser in her article ‘Minding Appearances’ confirms that, ‘clothes mark the troubled boundary between the larger social world, ambiguously and uneasily.’³ Clothes function as a negotiator between the body and its social surroundings. They can camouflage, protect, assimilate and reveal the body depending upon the inhabitant’s environment. Not all clothing is ‘classic’ or fashionable. Clothes can travel through seasons and years, in and around the label of fashion. For example, Levi Jeans have an extensive range of jean cuts that do not change. They add styles such as the hipster or the engineered jean as a way to capture trends, but their basic range is standardized. Fashion, unless the piece is a ‘classic’, is cyclical and when a style comes back into vogue it is usually changed slightly so the clothes from the previous era are not considered to be ‘in’. Fashion

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refers to giving shape and style to any number of objects such as clothing, furniture, art, architecture and automobiles. Entwistle states that,

‘Fashion’ is a general term which can be used to refer to any kind of systemic change in social life, in architecture or even academia; the ‘fashion system’ as it pertains to dress refers to a particular set of arrangements for the production and distribution of clothing.\(^4\)

Fashion, in terms of dress, has historically been dictated by a social elite. Class played a major role in terms of what constituted fashion. This is still recognisable in contemporary fashion, especially in the realm of couture. Entwistle realized that,

One reoccurring theme, proposed by Bell (1976), Simmel (1971) and Veblen (1953), and more recently McDowell (1992) and Tsson (1992\(^a\)), is that during the movement towards a capitalist society and the emergence of a bourgeois class, fashion developed as a tool in the battle for social status.\(^5\)

Sweetman reveals the fashion process ‘as a cycle of adoption, imitation and abandonment.’\(^6\)

This theory, developed by Veblen\(^7\) and then Simmel\(^8\), believed that the bourgeois developed a fashion, the lower classes would try and imitate and then the ‘upper echelons’\(^9\) would abandon it. A similar cycle is witnessed within contemporary fashion, although the motivation for imitation is no longer only classed based.

\(^5\) ibid., p. 44.
\(^9\) Sweetman, op. cit., p. 62.
Within the fashion discourse, the inspiration for imitation follows two modes. The first is within the industry. Designers in the world’s fashion hubs develop new styles and ‘fashions’, of which the broader clothing industry adopts and reproduces. This appropriation stems from the class system whereby the clothing industry is copying the more credible and expensive ‘couture’.\(^\text{10}\) The purpose of this imitation is based not on the clothing industry’s acceptance into the ‘upper echelons’ of couture, but also on the consumption of these ‘knock offs’ to the broader base of consumers. As fashion houses abandon old designs for new, so does the rest of the clothing industry. Consumers also mirror the fashion industry’s designs. Such an aspiration is not purely or actually based upon achieving a higher level of class status. Paul Sweetman writes,

> Clothing or dress no longer indexes an external social reality, and particular items, whether fashionable or otherwise, can no longer be said to signify either class, status, or conventional social attributes.\(^\text{11}\)

The appropriated designs, which are commonly known as fashionable clothing, can be procured from department, discount ‘fashion’ stores and boutiques Australia wide.\(^\text{12}\) These stores are where the majority of consumers regularly purchase clothing. Originals of these pieces can also be bought from designer boutiques.\(^\text{13}\) Copies are often free from layers of

\(^\text{10}\) Angela McRobbie makes a pertinent point, in regards to where the inspiration for this fashion emerges. She argues that fashion is taken from the streets, therefore the cycle flow is street, couture, street. McRobbie writes, "While fashion currently trades on the nostalgia boom, it also, more specifically, re-works the already recycled goods found in street markets. It produces new and much more expensive versions of these originals in often poor-quality fabrics and attempts to sell these styles, on an unprecedented scale, to a wider section of the population than those who wander round the ragmarkets." A. McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*. London: Routledge, 1994, p. 139.

\(^\text{11}\) Sweetman, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

\(^\text{12}\) Australian examples of ‘knock off shops’ are Supre, Jay Jays, Cotton On (Australia’s equivalent of Top Shop) and Valley Girl, where a fashionable ‘look’ can be inexpensively procured. These stores have their own culture with such tag lines as Supre’s ‘for girls who want it now.’ Designers in the UK even provide cheaper designer pieces for Top Shop’s clientele.

\(^\text{13}\) An Australian example of this is Sheree Dornan’s label Love In Tokyo which since the late 1990s has produced couture Vietnamese twisted silk garments. In 2003 label Sarah Jane emerged with similar looking, similar priced silk clothing. Then in 2004 and 2005, Picnic and Tokito (stocked in Myer) constructed
lining and solid gold adornments such as broaches and buttons. The edges are cut, raw and frayed. Stitching is visible and bra straps are shown. This ‘fashionable’ clothing, as Sweetman suggests, does not signify class or status. It signifies fashion.\textsuperscript{14} It is the imitation of the clothes rack, the celebrity, the model and the magazine picture. ‘The body in fashion is simply a mannequin or shop-window dummy. It is the clothing, rather than the wearing of it, that is regarded as significant.’\textsuperscript{15} Fashion is floating, fleeting and cyclical and to be ‘fashionable’ does not require money, knowledge or style by the consumer. The clothing imitators are armed with their knowledge of the catwalks of Milan, Paris, London, Melbourne and the celebrities on the streets of New York and Hollywood. They provide consumers with a buffet of the latest wears. Each season, from boutique to department store, sees the emergence of stylistic variations. The result is that consumers have to search to clothe themselves in attire that is not in some way fashionable. Therefore if consumers desire to adorn themself in a different mode of dress, then they must seek out separate departments that are not influenced by current fashion, or specialty stores which are usually higher priced. A person in full time employment spends fifty percent of their waking day in work wear. If they do not seek out specialty departments/stores, then it is reasonable to conclude that their clothes will be fashionable. This determination can have ramifications in their working

\footnotesize

\begin{itemize}
\item inexpensive versions of this clothing made from cheaper silk and not bias cut, which was featured by both the Love In Tokyo and Sarah Jane’s labels.
\item In the descriptive introduction of \textit{No Logo}, Naomi Klein makes an alternate argument in regards to fashion’s relationship with class, All around me, the old factory buildings are being rezoned and converted into “loft-living” complexes with names like “The Candy Factory.” The hand-me-downs of industrialization have already been mined for witty fashion ideas – discarded worker’s uniforms, Diesel’s labour brand jeans and Caterpillar boots. So of course there is also a booming market for condos in secondhand sweatshops, luxuriously reno-ed, with soaking tubs, slate-lined showers, underground parking, skylit gymnasiums and twenty-four-hour concierges. Klein, similar to McR Robbie marks new fashion trends as emerging from the working class.
\item Sweetman, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 59.
\end{itemize}
environment as clothing carries within it a history of authority and power. For such a system
to function, a literacy of clothing, fabric and design is required.

Clothing and/or fashion literacy is not a knowledge that women (or men) possess from birth.
McRobbie writes, ‘the act of buying and the processes of looking and choosing still remain
relatively unexamined in the more academic field of analysis. One reason for this is that
shopping has been considered a feminine activity.’ Gaining knowledge of fashion is easier
to acquire than a developed, subtle and reflexive clothing literacy. What is ‘fashion’ or
‘fashionable’ is taught at school, parties, university, clubs and through the media. Actresses,
pop stars and other celebrity are contemporary dictators of fashion. Fashionable frame codes
and guidelines are required for fashion literacy. Blumer argues that it takes much more than
clothing to create fashion. Reading these texts within all facets of the media – print,
internet, television and film - allows the audience to quickly grasp the floating and fleeting
concept of fashion, and how to become literate through the consumption of these items.
McRobbie writes, ‘This instant recall on history, fuelled by the superfluidity of images
thrown up by the media has produced a non-stop fashion parade in which different decades
are placed together with no historical continuity’. Gaining knowledge of a literacy of
clothing is more difficult. In Australia, what was once taught to women by their female
relatives, in school or deportment classes, has been critiqued or challenged through
generations of female revolution and emancipation. Where a literacy in fashion requires the
readership to soak in images of celebrities to learn its codes, clothing literacy necessitates a

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16 McRobbie, op. cit., p. 136.
18 McRobbie, op.cit., p. 147.
person gaining knowledge through personal experience. For example, a person becomes aware of the literacy of workplace clothing by the negative, positive or ambivalent response to their clothing when they enter a particular workplace. This may be the reason why the suit is a safety net, the advertised and celebrated tool of office success. It is a constant in an environment in which women feel dysfunctional.

Clothing mode is of great importance in a working environment. While fashion is frivolous and rapidly changing, workplace attire has a grounded style that is drenched in histories of power. The suit is an example of this as it an optimum signifier of power, success and knowledge. The suit, in its sleek lines and lugubrious colouring, covers the wearer’s imperfections and exudes the garments authoritative message. The status of the suit has been historically privileged. The suit is a signifier of aristocracy and ideas of historical masculine success, authority, respect and power. The wearer, whether they are male or female, assumes the unmarked status along with the suit’s signification. Ruth Rubinstein remarks,

In his well-attended seminars and workshops, John Molloy (1978), the author of Dress for Success, has insisted that his research shows that the appropriate mode of dress for those who wish to command respect continues to be the sombre business suit. The attire conveys authority because in the public mind it is associated with knowledge...Banker J.P Morgan insisted that his employees dress in a solid pattern, dark, three-piece suit because it conveys stability and reliability...Those working in the entertainment and cosmetic industries often choose a more stylish appearance - body hugging attire with a more visible motif or texture.  

The ‘sombre’ suit does convey messages of stability and reliability. The image of the suited worker is very apparent in Australian workplaces. The slogan ‘Suits are Back IN BUSINESS’ was sprawled in bold across the cover of the February/March 2004 edition of

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VIVE: The Magazine for Women Who Mean Business.²⁰ Besides media portrayals of powerful people in suits such as news readers, politicians and sports people, thousands of individuals on the street are wearing these garments. Paul Sweetman propounds,

> When I wear a suit, I walk, feel and act differently, and not simply because of the garment’s cultural connotations, or the fact that – as a sociologist – dressing smartly is something of a novelty, but also because of the way the suit is cut, and the way its sheer materiality both enables and constrains, encouraging and demanding a certain gait, posture and demeanour, whilst denying me the full range of bodily movement that would be available were I dressed in jogging-pants and a loose-fitting t-shirt.²¹

Sweetman is suggesting that the suit in its design and fabric manoeuvres the body in a certain way. The garment, through its expectation of good posture, changes the occupant’s physical position. The wearer does not only look different but feels different as well. Rubinstein asserts that,

> Throughout time, authority has been carried by the garment: More complete covering and uniformity conveys more authority. The individual must measure up to the garment, or rather must appear to become the garment. If it is worn constantly, clothing authority will ultimately be dehumanising, subsuming the person it contains.²²

Rubinstein’s comments suggest that the occupant will ultimately become the garment and the authority that is contained within it – you are what you wear. This is highly visible in the hierarchy of Australian workplaces. There are expected levels of dress for different level positions. If an employee dresses beyond or below their position, it disrupts the working environment. The grammar of power is disrupted. Clothes are the punctuation for power in the workplace. When these grammatical rules of clothing are broken, then the rules of the workplace are unsettled. For example, if an administrative assistant was to dress in a pant-suit and the office manager was to dress in a shirt and skirt, then the assistant is claiming the

²¹Sweetman, op. cit., p. 66.
²²Rubinstein op. cit., p. 73.
clothing’s authority. Who is dressing below or beyond their power level? Authoritative clothing is a tool that can be used to yield power. The occupant must be willing to work to maintain that power once they have obtained it. Suits and other authoritative attire are physical representations of the seriousness of power and duty within the workplace. This formation of clothing codifies, to employees, clients and the occupant, the reason for them being there. This reason is to work and achieve personal and company success. Dress codes are put in place to enable the employees to complete their jobs with ease. ‘Standards’ are assembled for the purpose of employee protection and to discourage distraction. What employees wear to the office should not matter if they are able to do their job to the highest level. This maxim is true if the employee is working alone and has no visual interaction with other employees or clients. Clothes are positioned in semiotic systems and have their own history, language and cultural connotations. This has to be taken into account when working in a public work environment. Personality, capability and professionalism are gauged on an employee’s appearance. When I was working in University administration whilst completing my undergraduate degree, I learnt this semiotic pecking order.

I had been working at the University for two years, where I had worn office attire such as skirts and shirts but I used to wear my trainers as I had to do run back and forth across campus. When our division reshuffled I had to apply for my own job. For the interview I wore a chocolate-coloured, high necked, mohair skirted suit and heeled boots. One of my bosses, a woman who was dean at the time, commented on my outfit. She said, ‘That is a great suit. You know, people think you are more capable of doing your job when you dress appropriately.’ I was stunned by her candour - but she was right.

23 Throughout history the suit has been a signifier of power and professionalism, this is recognised through its appearance and necessity, for heroes and villains in such films as the James Bond series, Pulp Fiction, Reservoir Dogs, Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels and Four Weddings and a Funeral. Neil Norman suggests, Enter the hero in a suit. In the first decades of the cinema, the suit was the only acceptable dress for the prototypical screen hero. It betokened reliability, trustworthiness, elegance of body and also mind, cleanliness and athleticism. It lent the wearer the air of someone who could take care of himself and, by association others. Suits were the mark of the professional, N. Norman, Dressed to Kill: James Bond The Suited Hero. Paris: Flammarion, 1996, p. 93.
Capability in multiple spheres and tasks is judged on appearance. Because clothing plays such an important part in an employee’s success in the workplace, an exploration into relationship between the Australian fashion industry and workplace attire is required.

Style, fabric, cut and length of clothing are important in deciphering whether a piece of clothing is appropriate for a workplace. As Rubinstein states, ‘those working in the entertainment and cosmetic industries often choose a more stylish appearance - body hugging attire with a more visible motif or texture’. Furthermore she asserts that, ‘the general assumption is that, as in the theatre, many roles cannot be believably performed without the aid of a costume’. An item of work clothing needs to be observed as both equipment and costume. A professional tennis player would not commence a tournament wearing jeans and sporting a cricket bat. The problem for workers is that where there is a dress standard but no specifically designed uniform, a shopping expedition can result in a collection of ‘fashion’ work-wear. These modes of clothing are the crisp white shirts that have hooks up the front instead of buttons and show a line of skin between the hem and the low slung, tight fitting hipster trousers. Contemporary trends in the Australian fashion industry show the production of clothes as tight, short and sheer. In terms of purchasing work attire from general department stores, these clothes for women may have low neck and waistlines, short lengths of tops and sheer or clingy fabric. This ‘fashion’ does not serve the desired purpose of working clothing: that is the ability to work in it.

24Rubinstein, op. cit., p. 69.
25Ibid.
26For examples see
The question with a highly elusive answer is what are the parameters, limits and values invested within workplace clothing? The answer is dependent on industry, workplace and the level of the position held. In terms of this debate, I am looking at the workplace of the ‘office’. It is here where pink ghettoism meets Liz Claiborne. Lower level staff members mingle with consummate professionals and unspoken rules regarding ‘appropriate’ workplace attire are dictated by the dress standards of the upper echelons. Behaviour is coded through fabric, cut and style. Diana Crane writes:

In accordance with corporate dress codes that may or may not be explicitly defined, they are likely to wear contemporary versions of nineteenth century alternative dress, including suit jackets and skirts, with shirts styled like men’s or with silk blouses, the entire outfit in neutral, conservative colors (McDowell 1997:146 Hochchild 1997: 74). Now, however, these types of outfits are considered conservative rather than subversive (Kimle and Damhorst 1997). A fashionably feminine or seductive appearance is considered demeaning.

Corporate dress codes define the clothing boundaries for other office employees. Entering this space requires a basic level of professional dress for all employees - shirt or blouse, suit skirt or pants and suit jacket. The tones remain bland, the outfits inoffensive and unremarkable. This office dress code is a standard to which men and women must adhere. Although corporate and professional dress codes are ingrained into the Australian workplace culture, the full extent to which dress ‘matters’ is not necessarily known until a person enters an office environment.

A personal example of this ranking and judgment of importance was when I was working as a junior in administration.

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I wore a suit skirt, with a fitted v neck top and trainers to the office. My mother who worked a few offices down from me gave me a disapproving look as did a number of the other female administrative officers. I asked my mother later that day what the matter was with my outfit. She informed me that my top was too tight and revealing and that I shouldn’t wear trainers to the office. The top was slightly low, but was comfortable and not incredibly revealing and I had thought that trainers were a logical choice, as I had to walk across campus numerous times in a day.

At that moment I realised several literacies regarding office dress. These were that every employee, regardless of level, is expected to know and adhere to a basic standard of dress. This standard of dress is based on blending into the corporate ethos. Office attire is not matched with the employee’s job description. These dress codes inhibit and restrain the body from functioning in an efficient manner. This is particularly relevant for women. Skirts, heels, stockings and suit jackets force activities such as fixing a photocopier, plugging in a computer or even the simple task of picking up a pen to be undertaken in a stilted and slower manner. It forces the wearer to be aware of her own female body and restrict the visual display of particular body parts. Office clothing is not constructed to be functional in the work environment. Its function is to emanate respect and professionalism. Elizabeth Wilson demonstrates that the way in which professional women dress disengenders the female body.

The post-feminist career woman of the 1980s, on the other hand, has eliminated sexuality. In the wake of best sellers John T. Molloy’s *The Women’s Dress for Success Book* and Mary Fiedorek’s *Executive Style*, many America career women appear to have followed the advice these authors give on dressing ‘seriously’ for work. An army of New York clothes consultant are teaching business and professional women to eliminate not only sexuality but even gender. According to the *New York Herald Tribune* (27 May 1984) John Molloy believes that ‘dressing to succeed in business…and dressing to be sexually attractive are mutually exclusive’…In the worst of all worlds the dress-for-success woman has ruled out ambiguity, and polyester shirt frills hint only at the coif of the nun or hospital matron, the suit articulates only the professional persona.28

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The suit, a historical object of female rebellion and assimilation, has reached the point of super-saturation. It reveals a multitude of binary contradictions. It is signifier of power and respect, and it articulates all that it is to be a professional. Concurrently, it has been used as an object of rebellion for females, rock musicians and the genre of Victoriana fashion.\(^{29}\) It signifies Old Economic ideals – form over function – and has used to desexualize the body of the wearer. Yet the media such as magazines, television and advertising have used it to sexualize the wearer – predominantly female. Fred Davis writes,

> By the mid – 1980s, this ensemble not longer seemed capable of sustaining whatever male (career) versus female (sexual object) gender ambivalence it had managed to adjudicate. By then it had come to be denigrated as “a uniform,” thereby tilting it disconcertingly, silk blouse and all, toward the male side of the ambivalence polarity. Its visual/symbolic force was dissipated, and new emblemata had to be found for assuring men, and career women themselves, that it was “still a woman” who inhabited its sexually distancing business front.\(^{30}\)

There is a reoccurring quandary for the professionally clothed female. It seems whether she is ‘suited’ or not she will always remain female, sexually alluring and seductive. So, when the suit and its professional clothing companions remain only as an empty signifiers, will its dysfunctional nature be revealed?

While Old Economic environments exist so will the wall of suits. Its function is to be recognisable as a marker of professionalism, a cover for a gendered body and a symbol of identity ambiguity.\(^{31}\) As we travel into new working environments, the suit will move further up the workplace ladder. Appropriate workplace attire will match the job description of the employee and what constitutes contemporary professional attire will be redefined. This

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\(^{29}\) Australian fashion in 2004/2005 with fashion designers such as Ericamerica, One Fell Swoop and others emerged with Victorian styles of garments such as suit trousers, waistcoats and full skirts, as well as other accessories such as top hats, canes and fob watches.


\(^{31}\) ibid., p.27 -28.
convergence of function and status is already occurring within the creative industries and as these employees move into other arenas. The ‘geek chic’ of the information technology arena is an example of this tendency.  

Historically, women have often used clothing as a form of non-verbal resistance. The suffragettes used feminine clothing to aid their cause when opponents tried to paint them as losing their femininity. Diana Crane writes,

    Both the suffragettes’ rejection of clothing with masculine connotations and its use by their opponents to discredit them suggest that masculine items of clothing did not lose their symbolic meaning in the process of being adapted to women’s wear. They represented an alternative image of women which challenge the dominant ideal of femininity.  

As the suit and its professional clothing cousins are iconoclastic representations of corporate conformity, they have not lost their masculine emblems. While the suit has been adapted to the female form, for women to ‘fit in’ with the office surroundings it does not encourage the physical articulation of work itself. Women’s bodies and clothing entered the New Economic workplace before the majority of their jobs. Male peers have yet to arrive. Women are more inclined to knowingly and unknowingly question and push the professional clothing boundaries. Gina Leros writes, ‘when systems analyst Evelyn Lundstrom applied for a promotion to Assistant IT Manager, she missed out. But when she was overlooked a second time, Lundstrom realised her love for flamboyant fashion was her downfall: she wasn’t projecting the image needed for the position’. Suit pants and other trousers are ‘the standard’ and are teamed with tops that, in terms of this debate, would be considered non-

33 Crane, *op. cit.*, p. 127.
professional wear – they are not ‘suit shirts’ or ‘blouses’. These tops are often cotton or a predominantly cotton blend, fitted, with or without a collar.

![Cotton fabric swatch](image)

Figure 3.1 Ezibuy catalogue images

This upper body wear often hugs the female form. It is less revealing than a suit shirt which, when breasts are place beneath it, shows the wearers cleavage – regardless of breast size.

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When women with larger breasts wear them the buttons bulge and gape exposing pockets of skin between button-holes. These shirts/blouses are often made of a see-through fabric, revealing the occupants underwear, which due to office politics then requires a jacket to be worn over the top.

Figure 3.2a Ezibuy images see through top

Figure 3.2b Ezibuy stretched shirt

36 *ibid.*, p. 60.
37 *ibid.*, p. 36.
Polyester fabric swatches

As clothing price often dictates clothing quality, the affordability of these shirts and blouses in a natural fibre is often out of the question. Clothing that is made from a synthetic fibre has a tendency to stick to the skin and does not allow the body to breath. As well as being cut in an obtrusive and inhibiting manner, the fabric itself also hinders work. It is easy to recognize why women have attempted to push workplace boundaries in terms of workable/functional clothing. As the nature of workplaces remains predominantly Old Economic, the availability of such functional/workable clothing is limited. This problem is observed within the Australian fashion industry.

Within recent years the explosion of Australian fashion design talent has been recognisable worldwide. The likes of Lisa Ho, Collette Dinnigan, Akira Isogawa, Morrissey and Alannah Hill are just a few examples of Australian expertise. From the Shabby Vintage Chic to the seductive and flesh baring.

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38 Rosalie Bliss writes:
If a fabric dries fast because it has high air permeability but it also has low moisture-wicking capacity, the moisture won't absorb sufficiently to be pulled away from the skin... A good example of fabrics with low wicking are those made with traditional synthetic fibers, such as polyesters. They tend to hold moisture close to the skin, rather than wicking it away from the body.
Through to finely crafted pieces blend eastern influences with an array of textiles, there is a diversity of ‘fashionable’ labels and clothing configurations.

These labels, in terms of pricing and influence within the general Australian fashion market, are in line with their international counterparts. The trend towards the shabby, the vintage, distressed fabrics and deconstructed clothing is recognisable throughout boutiques and department stores. Clothing prices depend on designer, fabric, printing and where the piece of clothing is manufactured. Melissa Kent’s article dictating the movement toward clothing production overseas\(^43\) states,

“Whether they realise it or not, most of the stuff people wear is made in China or Hong Kong,” WA Clothing Trade Union secretary Joe Bullock said. “We just can’t compete with the low labour costs and the cost effectiveness of mass production that China offers.”\(^44\)


\(^{44}\) M. Kent, The West Australian Newspaper. 20 August 2004, p. 3.
If clothing is manufactured within Australia, the price of the piece will vary accordingly. Hence ‘Made In Taiwan’ garments, which have emerged from appropriated designs, are the affordable choice. As the industry is saturated with these ‘knock off’ pieces, the consumer has an increased array of fabrics and cuts to choose from. Due to the built in expiration dates sewn into these clothing, durability and wearability is of lesser consequence. As clothing is manufactured both internally and off-shore the standard of clothing size – or lack there of – is problematic.

The Australian clothing and fashion industries suffer from inconsistencies. Currently there is much debate in regards to clothing sizes. This discussion is derived from the lack of an Australian standard.

According to a spokesperson for Standards Australia: “It is clear that the industry needs to fund research in this area if the Australian Standard is to be updated, and this initiative to bring together the key players in this area will go some way in helping to determine accurate clothing sizes across the country.”

“There is no question that women’s clothing sizes need to be update to reflect the real size and shape of women across Australia. Over the years it would appear that clothes manufacturers and the fashion media have used size and shape to reinforce the popular idea of what is beautiful.”

Such an example is that a size ten in Myer will not necessarily match a size 10 in Portmans or Esprit. This divergence occurs for a number of reasons, including the popular ideology that thin equals ‘beautiful’. As clothing is often manufactured off shore in Asian countries, clothing sizes often relate to the size of women – who are frequently petite - in those countries, rather than Australian women who have larger proportions.

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45 Industry asked to measure up in pursuit of Ms Average
The first Maggie T store was established in Armadale, Victoria in 1980…Research at the time showed over 60% of Australian women wore a size 14, yet the fashion industry failed to cater for this demand. Indeed, 22 years later, statistics continue to reveal that average Australian woman wear sizes 14-16, yet mainstream fashion continues to cater primarily for sizes 8 – 12.46

Individual designers have a target and targeted market. They know what size and shape body their designs suit and manufacture their clothing to those body types. Unfortunately not all consumers know the form of these particular sizes or shapes. Companies also use the discrepancies in sizing as a lucrative marketing technique. By marking larger sizes with smaller tags, the customers feel better about their body size and thus buy more clothes. This short-term thrill is discounted by the patrons anguish when in the next shop they try to squeeze their size fourteen body into a pair of size ten jeans.

The politics of sizing and how this structure relates to women’s bodies requires attention. The fluidity of women’s body size is no match for the ever-changing sizes of clothing and therefore a standard must be deciphered.

The Standards Australia Technical Committee also met to consider the preliminary results of a recent industry survey conducted by the University of Adelaide and Sharp Dummies Pty Ltd.

According to the Managing Director of SHARP Dummies, Ms Daisy Veitch: “The industry survey found that based on the current Australian Standard size 12 bust of 85cm, women’s waist and hip sizes had increased to between sizes 14 and 16, that is to 72cm and 97cm respectively.”

“This means that the survey has shown that women are at least one size, if not two sizes, larger than they think they are,” said Veitch.47

Women’s bodies – let alone the sizing of clothes to fit them - cannot be standardized.

Clothing sizes if approached carefully could become the marker of clothing dimensions not

46 http://www.maggie-t.com.au
47 *Industry asked to measure up in pursuit of Ms Average.*, *op. cit.*
of the body that should fit it. In turn, the emphasis would be taken off the consumer’s body and placed onto the garment. It would be naïve to suggest that this would cease the judgement of body image. It may change the fashion industries design, manufacturing and advertising of clothing. Different body shapes may have to be used in order to sell the clothing, and magazines images, such as those disclosed in chapter two, may change. This alteration in advertising could shape the way women shop, in terms of buying a piece of clothing that fits. Changing the markers of sizing would also have an impact on style. One arena in which this transformation would have a large impact is women’s work wear.

Unlike fleeting fashion items, design, cut, fabric, durability and wearability must be taken in consideration when purchasing work wear. Size matters not necessarily in terms of whether it is an eight or a ten but whether it was designed for a size eight body or a size twelve body, a breasted or non-breasted body, long legs or short legs, hips or no hips. This diversity of shapes and measurements is even more important when office standards of dress are enforced. A lack of standard guidelines for size impacts greatly on a working woman’s choice of work wear. As the shape of workplace environments are changing, workplace clothing needs to move accordingly. Functional, fitting attire needs to triumph over suited straight-jackets. While this has begun to an extent with a trend developing towards ‘separates’ over ‘suits, Old Economic ‘professional’ ideals still ultimately define the work wardrobe. So unlike the late 1980s and 1990s where the market was flooded with power suits, a gap now exists. The gap is between the price and design of designer suits and separates, and non-designer suits and separates. A comparison between Australian and non-Australian work wear designers such as Liz Davenport, Maggie T, Country Road, Camilla
and Marc, Helen Cherry, Gorman with boutique fashion work wear such as Cue, Portmans and Sportscraft map out the current trend in Australian work wear. At the end of this chapter I have charted such attire in table 3.1.

This table displays work wear clothing availability, in terms of the label, collection title, clothing, price, fabric as well as design origin, manufacturer and ethos. It charts characteristics within the work wear genre, such as a movement away from suit saturated designs to separate interchangeable pieces. It also visualizes the gap that exists for the choice of clothing which inhabits all the characteristics of affordability, functionality, quality and fabric. This table illustrates the availability of both ‘shopping mall’ and ‘designer’ workwear readily available in Australia. ‘Shopping mall’ workwear refers to those boutiques such as Portmans, which hold significant positions in Australian shopping centres. ‘Designer’ workwear are the those designs which are considered more exclusive and don’t necessarily have a boutique in a shopping mall, but are sourced by larger stores such as Myer and David Jones.

In table 3.1, figure 1.1 the archetypal Liz Davenport suit, an Old Economic ‘must have’, is available. This table shows that a well cut suit such as this, in a natural fibre such as wool or linen, costs approximately A$1000 (if a shirt was included). The price of buying a cheaper suit – which in itself proved to be a difficult task to procure - is that the cut is not as defined or fitted around the body and the fabric is a less expensive polyester blend. Such an example is the Portmans’ suit jacket in table 3.1 figure 5.1 for the price of A$99.95 which has a matching skirt or pant (not shown). The result of purchasing a less expensive suit can often
be as costly as buying a designer label as deterioration of shape and fabric occurs at a heightened rate\textsuperscript{48} and thus replacement will occur more frequently. A polyester suit also does not allow the body to move with ease or the skin to breath. There is a gap in the suit market between the A$1000+ designer labels and the A$250 fashion suits. Suits, although not necessarily everyday work wear for all women, are still considered an office necessity. The price and wearability of suits has seen women opt for separate ‘good quality’ pieces of clothing rather than full suits. Australian fashion designer Liz Davenport is well known for her line of corporate wear.

Davenport’s designs are well cut, and the fabric creates slick silhouettes and long bodylines. Although this collection allows women to prolong their wardrobe by adding ‘separates’, these separates cost as much as individual suit pieces. This is shown in table 3.1, figure 1.2 and 1.3 where the prices are listed. This trend away from the ‘suit’ toward separate pieces is also recognized in the designs of Maggie T and Country Road. Maggie T has non-natural fibre and natural fibre separates which begin from a A$99 cotton shirt in table 3.1 figure 2.3. However to match it with pants and a jacket to make a suit it will cost A$479. Country Road with its Urban Career wear also has an array of interchangeable separates which when placed together to make a work outfit (using the 2005/6 seasons as examples) have a starting price of A$427.95. When

\textsuperscript{48} This is often caused by a lack of appropriately matching underlining. Polyester and polyester blend fabrics are considered ‘soft’ fabrics and require lining, if they are not lined with adequate material then deterioration will be hastened. Pamela Stecker writes,

\textit{Underlining is a light weight fabric cut and sewn as one with the garment. It provides crispness, body and support, and helps retain the shape of, and reduce wrinkling in the outer fabric. It preserves the shape and grain of loosely woven or limp fabric, and prolongs the life of the outer fabric…}\textit{Lining is an inner garment which is assembled separately and sewn to the inside of the outer garment. It provides a smooth inner finish, comfort and warmth for the wearer, helps retain the garment shape and prevents stretching and wrinkling in the outer garment. Light, transparent fabrics or rough prickly fabrics are usually lined.}

compared to the A$259.85 Portmans outfit, shown in table 3.1 figure 5.1, another gap is recognized. Boutiques such as Portmans, Cue and Sportscraft specialize in fashionable separates. As these pieces err on the side of fashion rather than office suitability or functionality, they suffer from the same expiration flaws that all fashion items endure. The affordability and availability of these fashionable appropriations in comparison to the lack of alternative affordable work wear, together with a trend towards the separates, has seen these items bridge the gap between casual and work attire. This can be recognised in table 3.1. In light of these liminal garments, it is difficult to infer whether it is the boutiques following the designers into separates or the other way around. It also still fails to address the price/design gap in the availability of functional, affordable work wear. The current state of the work wear market does not allow a school or university leaver to purchase an appropriate, functional work wardrobe, but it insists that they recognize and adhere to workplace levels of dress professionalism. One A$1000 outfit, even a A$500 outfit, is not a luxury that the majority of women can afford. Multiply that by five for a working week and the price/affordability gap widens.

Davenport and Maggie T have an interchangeable wardrobe ethos. Their belief is that women have changed and their work wear is also now their casual/recreational clothing.

The Liz Davenport boast is, "intelligent clothes for intelligent people," referring to a system of dressing cleverly based on pieces rather than suits. This helps you extend the life of items in your wardrobe since you build on previous purchases rather than discarding them after one season.\footnote{Liz Davenport. \url{http://www.lizdavenport.com.au/collections.shtml#design}, [accessed 15.12.2004].}
By marking their clothing as fluid, it widens the clothing market. Although Liz Davenport still has separate collection titles such as corporate, work wear has moved into the general seasonal collections or has ‘fashionable’ titles such as Country Road’s Urban Career. This movement towards separates blurs the already troubled ‘appropriate’ work wear boundaries. It allows for a multitude of non-work wear clothing to slip beneath the consumer’s radar. It also diminishes the choice of available women’s work wear in an already crumbling market. This movement away from the suited professional needs to be acknowledged and addressed.

The current state of women’s position in the workforce, both in terms of employment level and the way in which their bodies function, does not allow for a total dismissal of work wear. ‘Appropriate’ work wear holds within it an inherent protection device that is a necessity for those women who are entering the workforce for the first time. Adorning the working body with fashionable clothing is an inappropriate way to dress the body for workplace. In Australia, a niche market exists for functional, affordable workplace clothing. This attire needs to take into consideration Australian women’s varying sizes as well as the ability to be able to work comfortably. Indeed, that sounds like intelligent clothing.
GOOD JOB’S DON’T FALL FROM THE SKY. NOR, IF THEY DID, WOULD we know what to make of them. Like the aliens who visited us in Cold War science fiction films, they might be regarded as threats to our way of life.  

Andrew Ross

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The introduction to Andrew Ross’s *No-Collar: The Humane Workplace and Its Hidden Costs* presents the reader with the craft and hardship required to obtain a ‘good’ job. Due to social and economic development, much has changed in terms of what constitutes a job, work, employment or career. Digitized technological advancement and popular culture have moulded ideas of work, workplace structure, professionalism and lifestyle. By approaching theories of Fordism and Post-Fordism, and mapping the spaces and links between the ‘New’ and ‘Old’ Economy, I explore and probe the changes in workplace practices and its representation. This chapter also focuses on digitized technological transformations of industry, ideologies of the popular cultural workplace and the how the ‘New Economy’ has transformed and revealed meanings of work, work ethic and professionalism in Old Economic environments. In doing so, I ponder the repercussions of changing ideologies of work upon the genders in terms of body politics. Within the discussion of changing workplace environments, ideas of the fragmented body, Foucault’s theories of sex, power and family, and women’s role as body are mobilized. By utilising these theories, I illustrate how sex and sexuality in the workplace affects workplace relationships, women and men in the midst of non-standard working environment.

A conceptualization of the term ‘work’ is necessary to initiate any examination into the discourse of work. Paul Ransome suggests four criteria for the basic definition of work.

Firstly, this definition of work encompasses a number of alternative terms used to denote the performance of an activity. Secondly, this activity is associated with the notion of payment or income. Thirdly, the basic assumption is made that this performance requires the discharge of physical and/or mental energy. Fourthly, there is the expectation that work is in some way useful or expedient, which is to say that working activities can be distinguished from non-working activities such

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3 *ibid.*
as ‘play’ or ‘leisure’, on the grounds that their purpose tends towards some form of quantifiable material gain rather than towards simple enjoyment or relaxation.⁴

‘Work’ is viewed as an energy-fuelled activity undertaken for gainful purposes. It encompasses such activities as housework, a job or labour. Ransome’s definition also distinguishes it from that of an act of leisure. The word ‘work’ is also used to describe job description or place of employment. Due to its varying use, I utilize work as both a noun and a verb within this chapter. This denotes the changing nature of the work paradigm. It allows for the recognition that other aspects of lifestyle, such as leisure, are shifting into the arena of work and transforming concepts of work ethics.

Utilising the ideologies of a work ethic highlights the vicissitude of the work discourse.

Ransome writes that,

> if an important constituent part of the concept of work is a work-ethic of general beliefs about society and our role within it, there is a clear implication that by participation in the organization of work individuals are endorsing these wider beliefs.⁵

A familiar example is the Protestant work ethic. This ‘ethic’ meshed worker morality with personal success and a desire to work for God. Developed in the seventeenth and continuing well into the twentieth century, this ‘ethic’ was such that:

> With the consciousness of standing in the fullness of God’s grace and being visibly blessed by Him, the bourgeois business man, as long as he remained within the bounds of formal correctness, as long as his moral conduct was spotless and the use to which he put his wealth was not objectionable, could follow his pecuniary interests as he would and feel that he was fulfilling a duty in doing so.⁶

⁵ ibid., p. 75.
The problem is that belief structures are inequitable. Emile Durkheim believed, ‘although by constitution woman are predisposed to a life different from man…if these differences make possible the division of labour they do not necessitate it…for specialized activities to result they must be developed and organized’. Durkheim believed that these inequalities between gender and the division of labour were only able to be performed within a situation where they were supported and developed. So while there may be differences between the genders, a division in labour becomes systematic when this division is endorsed. Durkheim ‘assumed that the gender-based domestic division of labour was a good example of the social harmony generated when social inequalities were allowed to mirror natural inequalities.’ This ideology of a ‘division of labour’ was one of the wider beliefs in existence during the period framing the Protestant work ethic. So although this ‘ethic’ promoted a formal working structure in the drive for economic gain, high moral conduct and religious sanctity, it was directed at the profitability of white bourgeois males. A work ethic, although enacted by the majority, is not necessarily benefiting to all. A particular example of this is that the discourse of the work ethic, containing the idea of a ‘natural division of labour’ does not take into account working class women and children. The Protestant work ethic, minus the religious affiliations, is a foundation for the Old Economic workplace. Women within these workplace structures adhere, but remain disempowered by it. This compliance is recognisable with the changing face of the workforce.

There are a few defining eras in the history of work and economic restructuring. The two major terms, concepts and epochs on which I focus are Fordism and Post-Fordism. It is

considered that 1914 marks the beginning of Fordism when Henry Ford, ‘introduced the $5, eight hour day, working week on the first car assembly line at Michigan, in the USA’. His ideologies were centred upon increasing the productivity of labour as well as the mass production of goods. His assembly line, although enabling large, widespread economic growth through maximized productivity and mass-produced goods, proved to create unskilled and deskillled employees.

As Fordism involved the utilisation of Taylorist principles based on the division of labour it led to the emergence of an unskilled workforce, performing highly fragmented tasks. Wherever possible Ford attempted to reduce the number of jobs requiring skill, knowledge and judgement, replacing these by simple, repetitive, unskilled tasks. This workforce model was not focussed on the development of employee skills, only on how to produce goods in a highly efficient manner. Ford’s eight-hour working day and unskilled workforce produced two major outcomes: a system of paid unskilled ‘work’ and an economy that was saturated in consumerism. Employees worked to mass-produce goods and then purchase them. This created a sentiment in the Fordist society of working to play. There are problems surrounding such a system of labour. The Fordist assembly line models particularly exemplify the Marxist notion of worker alienation within capitalism. Marx confirms four spheres of alienation:

The first facet of alienation is derived from the absence of control by the producer over the product...The second aspect of alienation stems from the ever-increasing division of labour...The market economy and commodity exchange comprise the third facet of alienation, for they turn every productive group into competitors...Finally, Marx asserts that the mindless repetition that typifies work under capitalism blurs the distinction between humanity and animality by destroying the creative content of production.

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10 *ibid.*, p. 8.
11 *ibid.*, p. 9.
12 This is not ignoring the fact that many workers actually worked to survive.
These four spheres of alienation are enmeshed into the Fordist labour system. Workers’ labour is ‘fragmented’ by ‘simple unsophisticated tasks’. They are encouraged to increase productivity for income, which in turn promotes competition between employees and industries. The repetition of this work develops an unskilled worker who is only able to ‘perform’ on similar assembly lines. This worked well during the post-war period when an economy that was based on production and manufacturing was booming. Huw Beynon remarks on the job expectation in Britain during the later years of Fordism.

I was brought up in the South of Wales, the ‘jobs’ available were clearly outlined and understood. There were ‘jobs’ in the steel works and in the coal mines. Boys who left school at fifteen or sixteen went into either of these places and became coal miners or steel workers. Those with academic qualifications became apprentices and were prepared for jobs as skilled maintenance workers in these industries. All of them understood their job to involve a powerful occupational identity and to be a ‘job for life’…There were comparatively few manual jobs for women. The girls who left school at fifteen worked as machinists in the one garment factory in the town; alternative employment was offered in local shops and, for those with some academic qualifications, in the local ‘council offices’. The strong expectation was that young women would marry and not return to employment.

This is reflective of the Australian model. A similar trend is tracked in the structure of the Australian workforce and gender-based positioning during this era. The Australian workforce during this time had a multitude of manufacturing jobs to fill. Christopher Wright states that,

Male work predominated in much of manufacturing, backed by the prevailing view that heavy, dirty or machine-based work was naturally suited to male workers. By contrast, in areas such as textiles, clothing and footwear, pharmaceuticals, food processing, and clerical work, managers tended to employ female workers, given a perception that tasks involving minimal heavy lifting and

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14 Michael Moore confirms this in the documentary Roger and Me. He showed that the workers that Ford had laid off in Flint could not ‘manage’ the pressure of the fast food industry. M. Moore (dir) Roger and Me. USA: Dog Eat Dog Films & Warner Brothers, 1989.

a high degree of repetition or manual dexterity were both physically and mentally more suited to women.\textsuperscript{16}

A change in labour and employment structuring occurred in the 1970s, resulting in the demise of the manufacturing sector. This marked the beginning of Post-Fordism.

Post-Fordism did not signal the end of Fordism. The Fordist system of work is still recognisable in areas of the manufacturing sectors, hospitality, retail and throughout the service industry. As many of these positions within the era of Fordism were female orientated it is questionable if Post-Fordism affected them as much as it did men.\textsuperscript{17} It did however restructure the workplace and ideologies of work with the employers opting to recruit a ‘higher skilled’ workforce. With the arrival of Post-Fordism followed ‘buzz’ words such as downsizing, outsourcing, relocation and teamwork. Wigfield illuminates this trend suggesting that, ‘the search for labour flexibility has led to a need for a smaller but more skilled ‘core’ workforce and a less skilled and quite vaguely defined ‘peripheral’ workforce’.\textsuperscript{18} Assembly lines were dispersed to geographic locations that had greater economic viability. The Post-Fordist workplace structure, consisting of downsizing and production relocation, left many of the ‘Fordist’ assembly line employees without ‘work’. Although the normality of a fulltime job still existed for some, there was a rise in part-time and casual employment within the general workforce. In Australia, in the late 1980s, this employment trend was matched by a decline in the company acceptance of trade union activity. It was the end of the ‘job for life’ and the emergence of unemployment anxiety.

\textsuperscript{17} Wigfield, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{18} \textit{ibid.}, p. 52.
By the 1990s, ‘globalization’ was the new buzz word, description and explanation effecting workplace structures. Stephen Frenkle asserts that,

Globalisation was changing workplace relations in ways that were as yet not well understood. This prompted three subsequent studies of multinational subsidiaries. The cooperative dependence pattern was explored further by distinguishing between Neo-Taylorist and Lean Production manufacturing variants. There was a general tendency towards the latter pattern characterized by increasing management and technical expertise and systems integration, more complex work, greater employee involvement and weak or non-existent trade unionism.\(^{19}\)

At this period in time, the restructured workforce was comprised of multiple highly skilled managers and a ‘team’ of employees knowledgeable in changing technologies. Those ‘underling’ jobs once pertaining to the masses were now outsourced to temporary and logistical agencies. Underemployment, over-employment and self-employment, known collectively as non-standard employment, was now a career trajectory that had to be considered, it defined a different ‘job’ formula and propagated a new work ethic. Falling beneath the guise of ‘labour flexibility’, it is considered that non-standard work has both consequences and benefits – depending on what end of the scale an employee is located.

Kim Hoque and Ian Kirkpatrick stipulate a division within the United Kingdom’s contingent workforce,

- with low-paid and poorly trained workers at one extreme and professional occupations on fixed-term or temporary contracts at the other, ‘where pay is higher than average and there are high levels of human capital’.\(^{20}\)

Hoque and Kirkpatrick suggest that there are similarities with all forms of non-standard work, such as lack of career advancement and marginalisation – especially for women.\(^{21}\)


\(^{21}\) *ibid*, p. 670.
Although there are similar ramifications for both ends of the contingent workforce there is a greater impact upon the lower end of the scale. Many have experienced the non-standard workforce as shop assistants or service industry workers when they were at school, or in post-secondary or tertiary education. It is the rudimentary stepping stone to move into different industries and better paid places of employment. The transient work reality is only an option if their socio-economic status allows for such a transition to be made. There are others who remain at the lower end of the non-standard workforce for life. Hoque and Kirkpatrick write,

Management decision-making is often influenced by stereotypes of non-standard employees as less committed, less reliable and – in the case of part-time employees – unsuitable for promotion.

Such positions also show a lack of job security as well as no holiday or sick benefits. For high-end temporary or contract employee, this is counterbalanced with an income that is usually higher than their full-time employed peers and matched with titles such as project officer or consultant. Such incentives of large pay and respectful titles are not a reality for lower scale employees. This reality has become not acceptable for the current generation of employees. This is due to two major influences: the New Economy and the popular cultural workplace.

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22 Erica Smith writes,

Typically, children commence with jobs in the ‘informal’ economy such as paper rounds and babysitting, progressing on to formal jobs in the service sector jobs, typically in fast-food outlets and shops.

Formal part-time work whilst at school is now a common experience for school students in Australia. The latest data (from 1997) suggests that among teenage students (including teenage university students), around 30 per cent of males and 40 per cent of girls worked part-time. E. Smith, ‘One foot in the workplace’, Australian Trading Review. April – June 2000, number 34, p. 15.

23 ibid.

24 Hoque, & Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p. 670.
The 1990s’ mode of globalization was facilitated by digitization and convergent media, creating an expansive growth in the IT industry. Such phrases as the age of information, information super highway and the world-wide-web were prolific. The ‘pink ghettos’ of computer and information technology industries were being masculinized and in the United States of America, the New Economy workplace was arriving. Ross remarks, ‘as rising productivity coincided with the internet boom in the last few years of the decade it became common to identify all digital or online companies as New Economy and all brick-and-mortar firms as Old Economy’. The New Economic paradigm, besides its obvious links to capitalism, sparkled with early Marxist ideals. The employees regained control over productivity, skills were being enhanced and creativity flourished. The shape of the workspace also changed evolving from the lifestyle of programmers and computer geeks. Due to the unusual working hours, workspaces became places of leisure as well as ‘work’.

Liz Nickles asserts that,

> The philosophy seems to be: Just because you work in a pressure cooker, it doesn’t have to look or feel like one. In fact, for those who practically live at the office, it makes sense to provide the comforts of home, whether that means an on-premises kitchen to whip up an omelette, a VIP spot under your desk for your dog, a twenty-four-hour media rec room, or, on lesser budgets, a chance to paint your unfinished door-desk any colour you choose.

A recent example of this is the animation company PIXAR, where the employees play foosball and ride the corridors on scooters. Such a change was meant to promote a comfortable and ‘family’ environment, which in turn would stimulate productivity by making working long hours easier. Workplace attire was also affected, with employees opting for the

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‘geek chic’, ‘up all night’ look as an approach to office wear. Clothing has always been a marker of workplace power and women’s relationship with its functionality has been problematic as well as a site for social commentary. A web designer, when interviewed by Nickles, stated that,

expressing your individuality through dress is rampant among the women of the New Economy space and is another way of expressing an empowered attitude. Where the women of the 1980s first tried to clone the look of the men, in their dark suits and business-correct bow ties, and tried to power their way through the glass ceiling in broad-shouldered *Dynasty* power suits, the women of the New Economy have never been afraid to show they are female.

‘Feminine but comfortable’ is the dress mode of the New Economy woman. The effects of this change in work wear had ramifications for the fashion industry. Influential women’s work wear designer Liz Claiborne had to change her line of clothing to a range that did not revolve around the suit. It seems that women entering this mode of production, which was once typified as a female domain, find it easier to align clothes, identity, work and location. This synergy could be due to removal of Old Economy archetypes of work such as physical structure, flexibility of time power and location. This economy is based on the creativity and talent of its workers. Historical markers of success such as the suit and big offices have been replaced with accessories that make the employees comfortable. The New Economy addresses the problem with Old Economic ideas of workplace attire that were outlined in chapter’s two and three. Professionalism is embodied in the creative process and the quality of the final product or service, not in whether the employee looks stereotypically professional whilst producing it. Ross remarks that employees working in these kinds of spaces, ‘vowed to pursue similar working conditions, or seek ways of creating anew, even if their career paths

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29 *ibid.*, p. 156.
30 *ibid.*, p. 157. Liz Davenport’s progression to separate pieces and melding of work with leisure wear, which I discussed in chapter three, is reminiscent of this trend.
led to corporate employment outside the orbit of the new media industries. An environment such as this sounds utopian. A ‘good job’ is the ambition of prospective employees.

There are a number of problems with New Economy workplaces and the first is that generation X and Y believe that they are instantly entitled to a job with a relaxed workspace, a large income and plenty of incentives. Nickles writes,

> The attitude is pervasive and has moved beyond the Internet space. For instance, in the legal area, Web sites such as Greedyassociates.com, a site for law associates, have sprung up so that entry-level lawyers can make sure they are up to the minute with the salary and benefits status quo.

Not every child is raised in a house that professes that they will be rich and successful. The origin of this sense of instant entitlement is important. Donny Deutsch suggests that it has evolved from a media illusion and that ‘these are kids who grew up of a media age, and it is what they saw around them, on TV and in the news. It is what gets written about because it is sexy and exciting’. While there are not many ‘pure’ New Economic workspaces in Australia, Generation X, Y and beyond are aware of such workplaces and the ideologies of entitlement enclosed within them. Every worker is ‘entitled’ to good working conditions and an interesting environment, but this form of metaphoric penthouse entitlement extends beyond the idea of a ‘good job’. It is the expectation of a ‘great job’ with executive level bonuses when these young workers are straight out of school or University. There is no longer the ‘pay your dues’ ideology of the Old Economy. This transformation is due in part to

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31 Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
32 Nickles, *op. cit.*, p. 15.
33 *ibid*, p. 15.
the solicitation of such ‘New Economic’ ideals within the popular cultural workplace. These environments are depicted within such programmes as situation comedies and dramas.

This environment is categorized by the disintegration of physical workplaces. An example of this is the popular cultural workplace presented in the programme *Sex and the City*. Workplaces are rarely frequented for sustained periods by the female characters within *Sex and the City*. It is the lack of attendance to work, which illuminates the correlation of freedom of time with career success. There is no delineation between workplace and social attire. The employees are transient, successful, sociable and have a large disposable income. The boundaries between work and social life are blurred with highly sexual relationships between employees, colleagues and clients. HBO’s *Sex and the City*, is a significant case study of the successful woman in the popular cultural workplace. It also presents a format that is recognisable within other Australian popular cultural texts. *Sex and the City* is more than simply a show where ‘Four beautiful female New Yorkers gossip about their sex-lives (or lack thereof) and find new ways to deal with being a woman in the 90’s’.

Starting in (Australia in) 1998 with its final season ending in 2005, this show depicted how a magazine sex columnist, PR executive, lawyer and art dealer functioned as moving bodies throughout the streets of Manhattan. Defined by their clothing, party invitations and sexcapades, these women reset the televisual boundaries of what it meant to be thirty, single, successful and in a profession. These sculpted women were blessed with careers that the viewers rarely saw. When these women were shown at work it was usually in relation to sexual behaviour.

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34 *Sex and the City* (1998), on http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0159206/?fr=c210ZT1kZnx0dD0xfGZiPXV8cG49MHxrdz0xfHE9U2V4IGFuZCB0aGUgY2l0eXxmd0xfG14PTIwGxtPTUwMHxjbz0xfGh0bWw9MXxubT0x;fc=1;ft=21;fm=1 [accessed 11. 4. 2004].
enacted in the workplace. Such an example is when Samantha hires an attractive male assistant and she is voyeuristically gazing on him, or when Charlotte is trying to decipher the sexual orientation of one of her clients. The workplace is also used as a site to find a partner. This can be seen at Samantha’s PR parties or Charlotte’s art exhibitions. In the final season Miranda’s workplace has a higher visibility. This is when she was faced with the problem of her new baby and a high workload. Ultimately she reduces her workload to spend more time with her child and the problem was ‘solved’. She learnt the art of ‘balance’ between work, leisure and motherhood with a minimum of fuss or negative impact to her life or lifestyle.

The workplace presented within this series is easily accessible and manipulated. The characters constantly dine out at the latest restaurants and bars and appear to be ladies of leisure rather than professionals. These women are portrayed as feminine and highly sexualized.

The clothing, habits and mannerisms define these characters’ opinion of work as well as their sexual nature. Charlotte, the art dealer, adorns herself in ‘pretty’ classical dresses, skirts and heels. She is quiet, reserved about her work and is considered the ‘prude’ of the group. Her goal is to be married. Miranda is a strong-minded lawyer who wears suits and dresses. The suit being a signifier of success in the workplace this is juxtaposed with dresses which are a symbol of femininity. She is the grounded, stable character who is not as promiscuous as Samantha or Carrie. Samantha owns her own public relations company. She is highly opinionated, brimming with sexual innuendo and wears figure hugging, revealing clothing. She is constantly surrounded by male employees, clients or colleagues who she has slept
with, or is trying to do so. Carrie is the sex column writer who adorns herself in an array of colourful (and sexual) outfits. Richards writes,

Indeed, Carrie’s wardrobe is as much an intrinsic part of the programme as sex and New York City, thus recalling a comment made by Baudelaire that a ‘woman and her dress [are] an indivisible unity’. They serve the purpose of attracting attention to her, along with her celebrity writer status, making her an extremely visible flaneuse.\[35\]

Carrie’s flamboyant collection of outfits, including hot pants, stilettos and boob tubes, mark her visibility as a celebrity and sex column writer. Her body signifies the business. Her attire marks her as sexually alluring and provocative. Similarly Samantha’s attire suggests she is highly sexed and self-assured. Miranda’s clothing provokes feelings of stability and professionalism and Charlotte is illuminated as rich, naïve and pretty.

![Figure 4.1 Sex and the City season 4 episode 59 ‘Coulda, Woulda, Shoulda’, Samantha (left) and Carrie (right).](https://example.com)

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35 H. Richards, ‘Sex and the City: a visible flaneuse for the postmodern era?’, *Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*, 2003, volume 17, number 2, pp. 154.

These women’s careers, which allow them the freedom to socialize and the socio-economic status to do so, turn them into consumers of clothing, sex and men. Looking at the figures above, a remarkable difference in the outfits is recognized. The difference between the height of necklines and the material of the garment is relational to identity and job. For example, the picture of Miranda and Charlotte shows the Audrey Hepburn style dress and flowing hair of art dealer Charlotte stands opposite to the dark suited body and cropped hair of Miranda. In the picture of Samantha and Carrie, the public relations executive wears a slender lined, low-cut, black and white dress and stands next to the writer in a pink, frou-frou, strapless dress, covered in beads, a big broach and a head scarf. The women’s bodies speak the language of their position. The characters’ self is manifested through a series of outfits and sex toys. Career capability is based on appearance rather than hard work. The characters of *Sex and

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37 *ibid.*
the City are comfortable in their clothes, but rarely are these clothes seen functioning in their workplaces. Miranda equals a good lawyer because she wears a suit. Charlotte a qualified art dealer because she dresses classically, Carrie is a well-known sex columnist because she appears sexually free and active. Samantha is a successful public relations person because she can sell herself. The characters within this program emit the traits of successful, intelligent, affluent women, with creative jobs and lifestyles, treading the invisible line between work and play. They are the pin up ‘girls’ for the popular cultural workplace. Employment has also been sexualized by the characters’ appearance. Carrie’s profession as sex columnist, and facilitated by the technological platform of the laptop, allows her to work at home or wherever she desires. She could be filmed in jeans and a t-shirt but she is shown in her underwear or hot pants. Samantha tempts male employees and clients by her revealing clothing. Miranda’s tough lawyer image is juxtaposed with men whistling at her, while Charlotte’s prettiness is presented as prudish, sexually intriguing and developing in the context of the mysterious world of art.

A change in focus is recognized from season one to season six, aired on Australian television from 1998 to 2005. Series one focussed heavily upon sex and (appropriately enough) the city, approaching what it was to be female, thirty plus, single and successful. There was a balanced mesh between the women being dressed up and visible on the streets of Manhattan and being dressed down – clothes such as track pants and t-shirts – and staying in at each others houses. This is noticeable in the first episode of Sex and the City where, ‘at a birthday party for thirtysomething Miranda, Carrie and her friends vow to stop worrying about finding
the perfect male and start having sex like men’. It is an attempt to reject the ‘feelings’ that females attach to sex. These women were meant to represent to freedom of successful women in contemporary New York. Katie Hanson suggests that,

Sex and the City attempts to find a stereotype for each of the women so that the viewer can relate to at least one of the characters. The creators of Sex and the City have tried to make the characters liberating and feministic, but they have done it to such an extreme that it makes the characters less believable. It is as though the show was written more for men to enjoy and relate to rather then the shows ideal target, women.

Whatever Hanson believes these characters are supposed to profess is undermined in their constant discussions regarding men and clothes. They are not believable because although they may have high-level careers, the viewer is not aware of how they achieved or sustain them as the characters focus is upon men and wardrobes. Therefore, discussion must shift from the ideology of positive and negative representations, to how this programme constructs archetypes and narratives of femininity, sexuality, power and fashion.

As the program progresses, the show, although still presenting stories relating to sex and Manhattan, directed its attention towards fashion and the city. Costume Designer Patricia Field comments upon Carrie’s style stating that, ‘I think when we started out with Carrie her style was a bit more thrift shoppie, downtownish. As the seasons wore on she moved a bit more into a designer and smart girl look’.

39 K. Hanson, Sex and the City http://student.fortlewis.edu/KEHANSON/sexandthecity.html [accessed 16. 6. 2004].
40 The way this programme is constructed can be related to chapter two’s discussion of Stratton’s work, which approaches the similarities between the streetwalker and the middle class female consumer. Within Sex and the City an image of the modern woman is created through the relationships between the consumption of fashion, sex, the male and female gaze. J. Stratton, The desirable body: cultural fetishism and the erotics of consumption. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996, p. 87.
between the ‘old’ thrift Carrie and the ‘new’ designer Carrie is highly recognisable. In this episode entitled ‘Cover Girl’:

Carrie is appalled to see a mocked-up photo of herself all but naked on the proposed cover of her "Sex and the City" book. While browsing for book cover ideas at Barnes & Noble, Samantha offers to help Carrie create a look that says ‘smart and sexy…’ With Samantha’s help, Carrie wears a sexy short suit and holds her laptop for the cover shoot. She looks fabulous.  

Figure 4.3 Sex and the City Carrie in Barnes and Noble in a pseudo-thrift outfit

Carrie’s final book cover outfit left her wearing a Vivienne Westwood jacket and pink Chanel shoes. Even her pseudo thrift outfit (shown in Figure 4.3) sported labels of Narciso Rodriguez, Juicy and Fendi. This outfit would cost over US$500, as opposed to her US$5 tutu, which is recognisable in the opening sequence of the show. This movement towards the ‘designer’ outfits is recognized as having occurred to all four characters. The shift in focus is also observed in the structure of the HBO Sex and the City website.

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video footage of the costume designer commenting on each character’s clothing style, providing where they found some of the ‘intrinsic’ pieces and who designed certain items of clothing or accessories. There is also a series log where the reader can find the synopsis for the episode, and from series four onwards, a break down of the character’s outfits, including the designer. This shows the relevance and importance of the pieces. A bulletin board is also available for commentary. It is split into four categories including one that is dedicated to fashion. Within the fashion bulletin board, I found discussions relating to where fans have bought similar clothes to the characters and how they have replicated outfits and accessories. This selling of fashion within the shows structure warrants attention. The fashion was integral to the show’s audience and also enhanced the characters visibility and sexuality.\(^{45}\) Thrift shop clothes may claim feasibility through labels of retro cool, vintage glamour or the infamous shabby chic, but they were only legitimate when teamed with Manolo Blahnik pumps or a Dolce and Gabbana gown. McRobbie writes,

> These trends including that of second-hand dress, require much more specific analysis. While pastiche and some kind of fleeting nostalgia might indeed play a role in second-hand style, these have to be seen more precisely within the evolution of post-war cultures. Second-hand style in this context reveals a more complex offering, among other things a kind of internal, unofficial job market within these ‘enterprise subcultures’.\(^{46}\)

What is pertinent to note that Carrie is not ‘a youth’. She is a thirty-something adult. Her placement of vintage with designer clothing, and the celebrity factor\(^{47}\) has allocated the vintage clothes a modern designer price.\(^{48}\) The success and personality of these women was

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\(^{45}\) The characters of this programme (especially fashion icon Carrie Bradshaw) were often seen in this fashion as they walked (and narrated) the streets of Manhattan. This visibility of fashion, sexuality and consumption can again be linked to Stratton’s theory of the fetishized middle class female consumer. Stratton, *op. cit.*


\(^{47}\) Other celebrities such as Mischa Barton and Chloe Sevigny perpetuated the trend of ‘Boho’ and vintage throughout the early 2000s.

\(^{48}\) Examples of this were observed when as search for ‘boho’ or ‘vintage’ was conducted on
materialized through the designer garments. They allowed the reader to view what a successful woman looked like – well dressed, free and sexually active. As Samantha exclaims, 'I will wear whatever and blow whomever I want as long as I can breathe and kneel'. The clothes sold the successful body and that body sold sex. This is also recognized in Australian advertising texts portraying workingwomen. These texts present images of the successful workingwoman’s power being sexual rather than knowledge based. Such an example is the Portmans ‘Strictly Business’ commercial that aired on channel ten in Australia in May 2004.

The Portmans advertisement presents a woman in a brown tweed skirt suit walking into an office where a man is already present. She moves towards the man and grabs him. They lie on the table where he begins vigorously caressing her legs and body. Another woman begins to walk in and the two people sit up, assuming an innocent stance. The first woman smiles and there is a voice over, as well as a written slogan superimposed over the image stating, ‘Strictly Business’. Portmans’ business attire, including the suit, brings sex into the office. The ‘Strictly Business’ slogan suggests that a women’s business in the office is that of being sexually appealing.

The popular cultural workplace expressed in commercials such as this and shows like Sex and the City participates in the myth that sets an unbelievable and uneasily attainable

49 Sex and the City. Series five, Episode seventy.
standard of success for women in the workplace. This ideal is then perpetuated in other media texts such as magazines. During May and June 2004, Marie Claire, New Woman and Cleo all had feature articles relating to Sarah Jessica Parker and Sex and the City. Marie Claire and Cleo featured her on the cover. New Woman’s article stipulate “100 ‘Carrie Looks’ under $150’, most of the garments alone were $100 each, not $150 for a whole outfit. They also had a correlating story entitled ‘The Real Sex in New York City’, which compared the lives of four real women with the characters on the show. Cleo featured a story on how to ‘Carrie-fy Your Life’, this explicated five pages of information about the reader’s appearance, relationship and career using examples from Carrie’s behaviour in the show. Beneath the caption ‘Have a dream’ is the quote,

Writing for VOGUE was Carrie’s. “You need to believe you can achieve anything,” explains Frehse. Connop says, “Building you career is about taking little steps…Putting things in place.” As Carrie says: “Maybe the best any of us can do is not quit, play the hand we’ve been given and accessorise with what we’ve got!”

Supposedly this is relevant advice from a fictional, televisual character. The reality is this is not reality. The show is quirky, funny and a fashion palette, but for most women the standards and visions are unattainable. Most people cannot walk into an op shop buy a tutu and make a living writing for VOGUE. It is this illusion that encourages the ideology of

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51 Another example of this is the revealing office clothing worn and the subsequent workplace relationship that Bridget Jones endured in Bridget Jones’s Diary.
52 Marie Claire. June 2004, pp. cover, 82 – 86.
55 Marie Claire. op. cit.
56 Cleo. op. cit.
57 New Woman. op. cit.
58 ibid., pp. 90 – 92.
59 Cleo. op. cit.
60 ibid., p. 98.
meritocracy, a sense of entitlement and also dismay and annoyance when such success is not
the available.

The New Economy and the popular cultural workplace resonate and dialogue. Both exhibit a
change in the definition of workspace through entwining work and leisure, providing an
empowered space for women, and increasing the visibility of casualness in terms of hours
and dress. They provide a utopian formula for work and lifestyle for both genders, but have
presented an empowered space for women. A differing trait that the popular cultural
workplace provides is that this power is often centred upon the sexualized female body. The
workplace loses its function as a place of work. Fashion and the desired female body are
paramount. This is revealed within the *Sex and the City* case study.

The sexploitation in *Sex and the City* and the *Portmans* advertisement are problematic for
working women because these popular cultural texts are presenting controversial messages.
These texts affirm that it is positive for females to use their bodies or have their bodies be
sexualized in a business environment, as long as they are seemingly positioned as the ones in
control. This raises questions: is it possible for these women to actually be in control? How
would this control appear? While it is sexist for men to whistle at women, is it acceptable for
women to sexually exploit men? This clothing is provided with a dialogue of power and
control and brings forth ideas of a woman’s sexual nature being defined by her work
clothing. These texts provide notions of workplace environments and relations that are
oppressive and destructive to women in varying working positions. It brings the plunging
necklines and sexuality addressed in chapter two’s ‘executive look’ to the fore, rather than
accounts of real working women into the office. Shows such as *Sex and the City* instead render ‘the executive look’ as real and attainable.

Female characters in a visible workplace are depicted as hard, tough and the bitch. Such an ideology is summoned by and through Miranda from *Sex and the City*. She is positioned as tough and bitchy at work,\(^{61}\) but is also capable of being desired by work colleagues. This ‘sexual’ side is illustrated when Miranda had a brief sexual encounter with a colleague, Walker.\(^{62}\) The role of male characters and the workplace within this series are portrayed in a different manner. The male characters within these texts are depicted as successful and charming. Their relationship to the workplace is represented as transient but also stable. Rarely is any toughness relating to the male character equated to being a ‘dog’. It is portrayed as matter-of-fact and passed off as charming or humorous, as opposed to the ‘bitch’ status of their female counterparts. Mr Big in *Sex and the City* is rarely shown at work but his success and position is shown through his social posture, possessions and free time. He calls and breaks dates with Carrie due to work commitments, which she always accepts even when she has suspicions of another woman being on the scene. The invisibility of the popular cultural workplace portrays a legitimate environment for men to escape to or from. It creates a place for women to talk about their successes in regards to it. But they remain dislocated from this workplace, unless it is on sexual or negative terms.

\(^{61}\) So much so that her boss thought she was a ‘lesbian’ in series one, episode three ‘Bay of Married Pigs. ‘Episode Guide’, *Sex and City-Official Website*. http://www.hbo.com/city/episode/season1/episode03.shtml, [accessed 12.1.2005].

\(^{62}\) *Sex and the City*. Series five, Episode seventy one.
The popular cultural workplace present within texts such as *Sex and the City* reveals the complexities of the New Economy. It also highlights a major flaw and confirms that the New Economy is not that distinct from the Old Economy. The New Economy with its free-time and free-dress is a façade of change. It offered hope, difference and a break from Old Economic aesthetics, but the structures behind it were intrinsically the same. The New Economy did not change work practices such as hierarchical structures or gender equality. It ultimately focussed too much on the affectations and appearances of being ‘creative’ and did not develop new workplace structures, such as addressing gender issues, education, work ethics and trajectories, in order to sustain these environments and careers – hence the demise of multiple dotcoms in the US. The majority of the Australian workplace is Old Economy. The influence of both the New Economy and the popular cultural workplace has breached its brick walls. On the surface, this divergence could be regarded as a significant and positive change. Yet the morph is aesthetic. While technological gadgets, bonuses and casual dress have moulded the workspace, the hierarchical structure of old school workplaces remains in tact. Ideologies regarding professionalism, codes of dress and ethics are also enforced. This has created a clash of New Economic and Old Economic values of ‘work’ and workplace structure. The casual nature of workspace meshed with old ‘work’ ideals is also highly problematic for the function of female employees in the workplace. The ‘laid back’ ideology of the New Economy workspace and making employees feel like a ‘family’, when entwined with ideas of the female sexualized body of the popular cultural workplace, and placed with

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63 This may be due in part to the fact that there is not a comprehensible division between Old and New Economic environments. There are a number of ideological distinctions but the two inhabit the same time and space.
Old Economy structures causes ramifications for working women. The problems are due to how women and their bodies function in Old Economic hierarchical structures, to be viewed as fragmented and attractive as well as capable. Within the New Economy, workplaces have adopted attributes of the ‘family’ home – which in itself has historically been refigured in terms of power – such as lounges, fully stocked kitchens, wardrobes and televisions. When these Old and New ideologies of women clash, confusion, in terms of power relations, arises. The problems women reveal in terms of their body and clothing in the workplace captures this ideological clash.

When an executive man dresses for work, does he think about whether his outfit is sexually alluring? Unless he works in the adult or porn industries the answer is probably not. Certainly, men’s bodies – such as those of athletes - have been objects of desire. Christopher Breward confirms that,

> Responding to fears of degeneration and contamination the figure of the athlete presented the ideal formula for twentieth century notions of masculine fashionability and attractiveness, though the maintenance of a fine distinction between wain excess and sartorial perfection ensured that the logical destination of fashion, a kind of sexual self-love remained safely in check. As The Modern Man confirmed, by the first decade of the new century the male wardrobe was capable of concealing all manner of corporeal sins.

For a particular class of men, their prescribed work attire floats over the body’s folds – invisible flies, blowy shirts and suit jackets. Whether they are in polyester or a natural fibre the shape of contemporary male clothes hide rather than accentuate sexuality. Muriel Dimen writes,

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64 I am not proposing that there is a clear division between Old and New Economy, but highlighting the distinctions in ideologies of dress standards while contextualising the problematic nature of these formations in different working environments.

Here is a preliminary classification from years of crotch-watching:
1 A slight bulge just to one side of and two-thirds of the way down the fly
2 A long, skinny cylinder slanting across the fly almost to the other thigh
3 A loose dangle way down the inner thigh
4 A horizontal ridge straight across the bottom of the fly
5 A faded spot right next to the bottom of the fly
6 A little bump centred on a little hump
7 A big bump centred on a big hump
8 Gay fourth button bulge
9 Tight no bulge at all
10 Preppy-loose, denying everything
11 Packed so full, with so little differentiation, you wonder if it’s real
12 A neat round wet spot which dries quickly after he returns from the bathroom
13 Huge balls stretching the pants on the thigh; you can see this as he sits spread on the subway

Here are some feelings I had watching these crotches: Curiosity: what exactly lay beneath the blue denim, the chinos, the wool? Excitement: what might be the relation between surface, contents, and performance? Empathic discomfort: do they feel as ambivalent as being observed as we do? Shame: you are not supposed to poke into people’s private business.66

Dimen’s observation of men’s crotches and her subsequent feelings, reveal the genders preoccupation with sexual organs, the shame of gazing and also questions female objectification. It also brings forth the image of the fragmented body. While women such as Dimen participate in crotch-watching, some heterosexual men participate in bottom, leg, thigh, calves, hips, knee, neck and breast gazing. The body has been fragmented into sexualized parts and women’s bodies contain the majority of them. Men may have more sexualized parts than the penis – chest, bottom, and shoulders. With clothing such as the suit and loose fabrics, these ‘bits’ are strategically elusive. When writing about body parts, Dimen expresses,

Ambiguity makes sex difficult to deal with. Take, for example, part and whole relations with which we play with sex, sometimes being or relating to a part – a breast, penis, buttock – sometimes being or relating to wholeness. Parts and

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wholes come in bodies and in social roles…Women are taught to relate to sexuality as whole beings in a society that celebrates parts, for example, measuring women by their breasts and penises.\textsuperscript{67}

If women are taught and relate to sexuality as a whole, then it is men who are the perpetrators of the compartmentalized form.\textsuperscript{68} I do not believe this to be true. Women are taught from a young age that their bodies are sexual and reproductive objects. Men gaze at them, women gaze at them and they gaze at themselves. Women also watch men’s bodies. The problem is when the fractured, sexualized, female form enters the working environment. These parts do not become ‘desexualized’ by an invisible fly. They instead are hyper sexualized by fitted skirts, clingy, cleavage-revealing shirts and tight low-waisted pants. The sexualized female body is always in some way visible. Breasts, even when covered by a well fitting shirt, are recognisable as two lumps of flesh sticking out of the chest. This poses the prospect that women’s bodies will always function in a sexual manner within the working environment.

The power of the body has been yielded by both genders as a political and social tool. The sexual body, within popular culture and society, has been utilized to gain and destroy employers/employees/public respect and status. Such examples are the rendezvous between President Clinton and Monica Lewinski or Hugh Grant and the Divine Brown. More common are the employee stereotypes that seem to operate in some form in contemporary workplaces: the successful woman who slept her way to the top, the male office cad and the young intern who wears revealing clothes. There is a relationship between knowledge, power and sexuality. Foucault, when writing upon sexuality, states that,

\textsuperscript{67} ibid., p. 145.
\textsuperscript{68} For examples on how the female body is read by men in parts see, S. Brownmiller., \textit{Femininity}. London: Paladin, 1986., Stratton, \textit{op.cit.}
It is the name that can be given to a historical construct: not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power.  

The fluctuation that exists within the discourse of sexuality makes the boundaries of the sexual body difficult to define. As conservative or liberal ideologies surrounding sexuality formulate so too do opinions on the nature of the sexual body. Such negotiations are often surrounded by religious, racial or political belief systems. Within contemporary Australia, a multigenerational split in ideological debates concerning sexuality is occurring. This is due in part to the ability of reproductive choice. Lucinda Peach writes,

Reproductive technologies have reshaped women’s relationship to motherhood…Contraception and abortion make it possible for women to avoid becoming mothers. Techniques like in vitro fertilization, sperm and egg donation, and fertility drugs makes is possible for many women to become mothers who would not be able to do so otherwise.

This reproductive technology has increased the range of women’s social and sexual choices.

In the current conservative climate, both an affirmation of the ‘family’ reproductive stasis and the accentuation of a highly sexualized single environment are recognized. The former lifestyle is favoured in terms of political policy, polls and media coverage. The latter is popularized by cultural texts such as Sex and the City, Secret Life of Us and the Big Brother

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72 Germaine Greer comments that, ‘the first tenets of the gospel of manmade motherhood are, one, that female fertility must be managed and, two, that women themselves can not be trusted to manage it.’ G.Greer, The Whole Woman. London: Transworld Publishers, 1998, p. 76.
phenomena. These texts present a highly sociable, ‘singles’ environment with minimal or invisible contact with work or family. The individual is consumed by social interaction, ‘getting to know’ the other characters and steered in the direction of sexual promiscuity. Such formulas for sexuality reflect redundant lifestyles for working women - whether partnered or single. Both representations disallow a multitude of living situations such as the single parent with a career, the partnered, career woman and the unpartnered, career woman. Sexuality in its nature is not sanctioned to the social environs of the single individual. The workplace, in which many women now spend a large amount of their time, is riddled with sexual content. Barbarach Gutek suggests that,

    most of the sex at work, however, does not grow out of a person’s interests in establishing long-term relationship with another employee. Some of it is a display of power, and much of it occurs only because sexuality permeates the work environment.  

With the aesthetic changes brought about by the New Economy, encouragement of the work ‘family’ and non-standard work hours I believe that sexuality has a greater opportunity at permeating the work environment.

Programmes such as *Sex and the City* and the popular cultural workplace displayed within it, redefine the boundaries of sexuality. Foucault argues that sexuality can be entwined with the hierarchical state of the family.

    The family, in its contemporary form, must not be understood as a social, economic, and political structure of alliance that excludes or at least restrains sexuality, that diminishes it as much as possible, preserving only its useful functions. On the contrary, it is to anchor sexuality and provide it with a permanent support. It ensures the production of a sexuality that is not homogenous with the privileges of alliance, while making it possible for the systems of alliance to be imbued with a new tactic of power which they would

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otherwise be impervious to. The family is the interchange of sexuality and alliance: it conveys the lay and the juridical dimension of the deployment of sexuality; and it conveys the economy of pleasure and the intensity of sensations in the regime of alliance.  

It is the deviance and forbidden relationships within the existing structure of the family that activates desire and sexual intrigue. This can be linked to the encouragement of the ‘family’ in the paradigm of the New Economy. In doing so, it also reveals the symbiotic nature of alliance and sexuality, and another site where sexuality is deemed deviant is the workplace. Similar to the hierarchical structure of the family, the work environment is governed by certain rules and laws. Instead of a parent-child and a mother-father axis, there is an employer-employee and an employee-employee axis. The sexual relations existing within these axis’s can be compared to incest within the family.

Incest – for different reasons altogether and in a completely different way – occupies a central place; it is constantly being solicited and refused; it is an object of obsession and attraction, a dreadful secret and an indispensable pivot.

There are laws against sexual harassment within the workplace. These laws do not govern the solicitation, acceptance and rejection of sexual innuendo at work. Nor does it prohibit glares and stares which cover the bodies beneath and above the age of sexual consent. When dealing with an environment such as a workplace, it is problematic to decipher what exactly is sexual behaviour. Gutek suggests, ‘Sexual behaviour at work takes place in an organization having its own culture, its own norms and regulations, a hierarchy of job classifications, and diverse tasks carried out by a variety of people’. Deciphering sexual

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74 Foucault, op. cit., p. 108.
75 ibid., p. 108.
76 ibid., p. 109.
78 By this I mean that there are no laws that governs whether or not a sexual relationship is prohibited in the workplace.
79 Gutek op. cit., p. 22.
behaviour is even more problematic with the melding of New and Old Economic structures and the increase non-standard workforce. Discussion of this workforce is neccessary in order to illustrate the environment that the respondents in chapters five and six are employed in.

Australia is currently suffering from underemployment within its ever-growing non-standard workforce. The Australian Bureau of Statistics biennial Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours undertaken in May 2002, showed 69.3% of persons in full time and 30.7% of persons in part-time employment. The ABS survey however does not include self employed persons, enterprises primarily engaged in agriculture, forestry or fishing, private households employing staff, foreign embassies, consulates, members of the Australian permanent defence forces, employees based outside Australia and employees on workers compensation not paid through the payroll. The absence of Australian defence force employees from the scope of the study is interesting as a large portion of available full-time jobs fall within this category. This creates a discrepancy in terms of available jobs and unemployment rates. In a country that within the last decade has supposed to be going through an economic boom, the statistics regarding (un)employment rates have been flawed. The reason for this is because the categories used to define (un)employment are also imperfect. Jason Lacharite suggests:

80 I am not suggesting that the division between Old and New Economy is clean and clear, but each term summons differing ideologies and aspirations.
82 ibid., p. 60.
In essence, official statistics and classifications of employment are conceptually indiscriminate. They tend to ignore things like quality of pay, underemployment, homelessness, and the true number of workers who want to work more hours. Whether one is employed or unemployed is really just a matter of definition, or even the way the question is asked.\(^{85}\)

Underemployment in the workforce is more than a categorical mistake within the structure of employment surveys. Australia also suffers from over-employment. Wooden in regards to the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey, suggests there is also a problem in regards to employees who are working long hours. Wooden perceives that,

> It is worth noting that the least satisfied group are those full-time employees working the very long work weeks, lending some support to the argument that the trend towards longer work weeks among full-time employees is having adverse effects on those workers involved.\(^{86}\)

Excessively long working hours reveal negative consequences personally for employees. Family and social life can become nonexistent due to late nights and weekend work. This can create enormous pressure, especially on women, to perform as a super-employee / parent / partner. In his study of ‘middle-Australia’, Pusey writes that, ‘When both parents are working, we were told, there is not energy or time left for activities outside the home.’\(^{87}\) This mismatch between an employee’s actual and preferred working hours also has repercussions in terms of the structure of the workplace.

Underemployment and overemployment has created a highly visible non-standard working environment. Those who are underemployed display this through transient hours, casual clothing, behaviour towards the job and other employees. This behaviour is reflexive of both

\(^{85}\) ibid., p. 244,


the New Economic and popular cultural workspace. But there is also a deflated level of respect for the company. Alternatively those persons who are spending the majority of their time at work have begun the New Economic trend of bringing leisure to the workplace. Modern offices are now equipped with small wardrobes for extra clothing, coffee plungers/percolators, fridges and microwaves. Take away food, alcohol, sundowners, overseas trips and the internet are utilized to balance evening and weekend work. These are trappings of the New Economic workspace. There are also the transient full-time employees such as project officers who move in and out of companies. It is this non-standard working environment that allows such relationships as alliance and sexuality to mutate. Reeves writes,

Office flings are not the exception. They are the norm. Shere Hite, in *Sex and Business*, finds that 62 percent of women and 71 per cent of men have had a ‘love affair with a colleague…Mixed workplaces with lots of interaction and friendship is bound to lead to sexual relationships.

For employees work becomes a ‘playground’ where part-time hours are tethered with the home-like, leisure benefits installed for full time staff. Laws and rules regarding sexual conduct, employee relations and workplace politics are blurred by the boundaries of this ‘post-work’ environment. It is here that a conflation between the non-standard ‘Old’ Economy, ‘New’ Economy and the popular cultural workplace is recognized.

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90 *ibid.*, p. 103.
The invisibility of the popular cultural workplace portrayed in such texts as *Sex and the City* can be contrasted by the extreme visibility of the Australian non-standard workplace. The popular cultural workplace is based not on space or boundaries but on material markers such as job title, work functions and economic determinants such as beauty, fashion and expendable income. The ‘success’ of the employee is exuded by the amount of time s/he does not spend in the workplace. The non-standard workplace in also determined by the amount of time spent there. It is this ‘time’ which defines the boundaries relating to clothing, expendable income and employee success. Success in this case is marked by more hours spent there.

The popular cultural and New Economic workplace is negotiated in the ample social and home environments of its characters, the non-standard workplace functions inside the Old Economic workspace. There is a necessity to ‘be at work’ all of the time. Therefore the part-time/casual workers existing within this space are deemed unsuccessful due in part to the amount of time spent in the workplace. In terms of the popular cultural workplace, the freedom of the social, transient aspect of their lives makes them successful – but without economic affluence. Sexuality also plays a different role within each of the workplaces, and is circulated within programmes like *Sex and the City*.

Within *Sex and the City*, the dislocation of job from workplace allows sexual relations to move between spheres. Another way to approach this representation of sexuality would be that sexual relations for a character such as Carrie always occur in her workplace, as she has no defined space. The boundaries of the non-standard workplace have also expanded with the length of working hours. Sundowners, after work drinks and fridges full of alcohol have brought a social aspect into the office as has digitized technological advances such as the
internet with chat sites. The homely yet social office environment - matched with extensive long hours - marks it as a potential hotbed for social and sexual activity. Reeves suggests that:

Work is pulling more strongly upon us. Work is how we identify ourselves. It is what stimulates us to learn and grow. It is where spend time in agreeable surroundings with colleagues, friends and lovers. For some, these are troubling trends. The salience of work is seen as dangerous, a collective equivalent of Mrs Thatcher’s famous ‘hinterland’ a life beyond work. Companies, in US academic Arlie Hoschild’s phrase, are ‘absorbing’ us. An invasion of the life-snatchers is underway.\(^91\)

Popular culture would have us believe that even the most competent, intelligent women are required to have sex appeal in a working environment. This is a consciousness that most people already have – especially women. James McDonald writes that:

Most of us are shameless “lookists.” We have a natural preference for good-looking people over ugly ones, whether in the context of hiring employees, selecting a mate, or watching a movie on television.

To date most employees have largely been free to discriminate against the homely. A few nations, such as France, have outlawed discrimination based on physical appearance. In the U.S., only a few Jurisdictions, such as the District of Columbia and Santa Cruz, California, have enacted legislation prohibiting discrimination in employment based on physical appearance. Otherwise, until recently, employers have been free to take good looks (or their opposite) into account when making hiring or employment decisions.\(^92\)

It is accurate that the popular cultural workplace sells the idea of the ‘good looking’ workplace as an idealistic environment in which to earn a living. The profound concern is that women are trapped in a perpetuating, damaging and unrelenting cycle. In order to obtain a job, they must ‘look good’ but cannot appear too sexual. Yet because fashion activates the literacies of the viewer rather than being an intrinsic and determined response to a textualized body, the ‘reading’ of feminine corporeality may – in specific contexts – always appear

\(^91\) ibid., p. 116.
sexualized. There is no way to police the thoughts and uncaught glances of other employees nor is there a way to cover the body in a non-sexual manner. The interconnections between public and private, work and sex cannot be denied or categorized. There are also the reoccurring questions regarding women’s reproductive role.

The division of labour is changing and work spaces are altering. Through Fordism and Post-Fordism, the Protestant work ethic morphed into working for economic gain and the grace of the self. Because of the highly masculinized and patriarchal system of labour this ethic was also centred around the male worker. By changing the environment and modes of working, the New Economy environments altered this, by attempting to create a new work ethic for both genders, matching work requirements with the knowledge and expertise pertaining to the individual. It however did not implement sustainable structural or systematic changes and in turn did not create workable and functional spaces for women. Instead it developed an aesthetically pleasing façade with an Old Economic core. Work ethics, within Old and New Economic spaces, have not made such a shift regarding women. Although women may be hired for their expertise, they must function as both a body and worker. In this context, the female characters in *Sex and the City* maintain a pedagogic function. This may be due to the fact that the male role of worker is never questioned beyond the ability to work. Where women are concerned, there are numerous questions, especially in regards to her role as mother. Pusey writes,

The structural social change that most closely coincides with economic reform is obviously, the large increase in the proportion of women with children in the workforce. But is it good or bad for women with children to work? Will the children suffer if they do? Should they stay at home and look after the children? Are male and female roles interchangeable with respect to caring for children?
How is the New Economically restructured context for choice internalised, and how are the choices socially expressed?93

These choices are internalised and socially expressed by the malfunctions within Australia’s current employment structure. Women’s ‘role’ regarding childbirth or child rearing should not have instant ramifications on her ability to work. This is due to the fact that not all women wish to have children. Despite workplace hiring practices, women should also take responsibility for their actions in regards to if/when they would like to have children, and the affect this will have on their ability to work. With a woman’s work ethic being given to her as a reproducer first and an employee second, the focus upon her, as a temporary, fragmented, sexualized body, will remain.

The belief of a woman as an inherently labelled sexual body, when tethered with a fragmented workplace, blurs the lines of workplace, leisure and sexual harassment. Philippa Martyr suggests, ‘Women who do not understand rape cannot defend themselves from it. The same goes for sexual harassment, in the workplace or in the teacher-student relationship’.94 Sexual harassment is any sexually related act that makes the harassed feel uncomfortable.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission in Australia states that:

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual conduct which makes a person feel offended, humiliated and/or intimidated where that reaction is reasonable in the circumstances.95

Are the unwelcome glances to women at work enough to justify sexual harassment? Even in my last sentence, the definition of ‘unwelcome’ is arbitrary and debateable. Attention and

93 Pusey, op. cit., p. 84.
time is spent considering how the body is covered or uncovered, and how such a decision functions in the workforce.

The current non-standard structure of the Australian workplace is disempowering and stunting women in success at their jobs. This disempowerment is matched by the unrealistic attitudes of work environments that are presented in popular culture, along with the ill-fitting and uneconomically viable attire provided by the clothing industry. Workplace structure, as it is a large part of this problem, needs to be rethought. Methods to provide protective boundaries, job stability and satisfaction may enable these environments to become a place of professionalism and work, rather than a disrespected playhouse. Such an outcome could be achieved by balancing those who want to work less and those who would prefer more hours. Such a strategy or goal may seem to complex to enact. Yet women need higher visibility in an actual working environment rather than only increasing their appearance within the popular cultural workplace that is depicted in magazines, film and on the television screen.

Theories and discussions of New Economic structures are required within workplace environments, rather than focussing purely on aspects of leisure and ‘perks’. The aesthetic changes to the New Economy were put in place to mesh with the new ideology of work, which stems from the encouragement of employee creativity and productivity. As Reeves suggests,

Nobody should think for a moment that companies are offering these services out of the goodness of their hearts, out of concern for the health of the nation. They are offering them because their increasingly demanding workers are demanding
them. Because they keep staff happier, healthier and therefore more productive. It is all about the bottom line.  

If such staffing issues are ‘purely’ economic, then structural change and policy revision is required in Australian workplaces. A ‘Hawaiian shirt day’ will not increase the productivity of the disheartened non-standard and over worked workforce. A work ethic centred upon ‘work’, duties and equality of employment needs to be implemented, along with a workspace that fulfils the needs of its employees. We do not live in a society with a job for life. We live in a time where, although still defined by our occupation, we either spend all or not very much time at work. While social time, family and money are sacrificed; work will remain integral to the primary definitions of self. A generational shift in the work paradigm is occurring. Knowledge of a new work order is seething beneath the surface. When new workplace structures finally renovate Old Economic industry a change in women’s work function will begin. Until then, we must accept that our cleavage will be a point of discrimination.

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96 Reeves, op. cit., p. 90.
97 M. Judge, Office Space, USA: Twentieth Century Fox and Cubicle Inc, 1999.
In one clip for example, Robbo, a seemingly conservative man, says, ‘Losers? Pay-as-you-earn workers are losers.’ Someone else adds, ‘and they are tax prisoners’. In another group a similar exchange takes a familiar turn as Yanni says, ‘Losers? People forced into casual jobs! Some people have to work three casual jobs!! Can’t take a mortgage ‘cos it’s too risky…No peace of mind. No security…And the jobs just disappear’. Almost without exception we hear these themes about the cost of reform for workers associated with what they see as the other side of the coin. In but one example, Carli, a teacher, says, ‘Winners? The multinationals! The big companies. The banks. The managers and the CEOs on perverse salaries’.

Michael Pusey

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Michael Pusey’s *The Experience of Middle Australia*³ utilizes surveys and focus groups to decipher the affect of economic reform on working middle Australians. He recognized that the effect of economic and institutional reform upon employees within big and small business has been varied. The arguments within this thesis are not media determinist. Yet the media is not representative of range of business and employment practices, such as those who have been made redundant and those ‘on perverse salaries’. The Australian private sector, in terms of this thesis, broadly covers those from the self-employed to those working in big business. This chapter is configured into four sections: structure, women in the structure, bodies in the structure and success in the structure. It focuses on the way in which women are situated in the changing shape of workplaces and explores varying facets of the working environment. I approach the structure of the workplace and the presence of New and Old Economic influences. The objective is to explore the idea of how ‘success’ is achieved and the work/life crisis facing women across industries. Finally, I observe the relationship between women’s bodies and the workplace, how it is used and how this affects such success. The majority of this chapter is comprised of interviews conducted with women across varying private industries. I have enacted this process in order to provide detailed accounts of these women’s experiences and link the common threads of successes and problems facing women employed in the private sector.

Due to confidentiality agreements, I refer to the interview participants as respondent or ‘R’: A, B, C, D, E, F. The interviews for the private sector covered a number of industries such as law, automotive, information technology, environmental engineering and accounting. Of the

³ *ibid.*
women contacted to be interviewed, those who accepted all had completed some form of higher education. Respondents $A$ and $B$ have completed Bachelor degrees, $B$ also has two certificates. Respondents $C$ and $D$ have double Bachelor degrees. Respondents $E$ and $F$ have completed Bachelors degrees, $F$ has also accomplished an MBA and $E$ is currently undertaking an MBA. All women are at different stages of their career: $RA$ is an Executive Director, $RB$ a Business Planner, $RC$ an Environmental Engineer, $RD$ is a partner in a Law Firm and head of its online technology group, $RE$ is a Senior Director of within an information technology company and $RF$ is a Purchasing Manager within the automotive industry.

**Structure**

The structure of private industry workplaces was dependent on the industry although most were designed in an open plan manner, with the higher-level employees such as managers in actual offices. One industry that differed was law in which $RD$ stated that there were ‘more offices than most … due to the nature of the work’. In the Australian-owned companies, the workplaces were generally tiered, dividing blue and white-collar workers. The workplaces observed were hierarchical especially in the law.

$RA$ - Law firm’s are reasonably hierarchical. You start off for lawyers, there are junior lawyers, then the next level is senior associates and sometimes there is an interim level between senior associates and partner, which is a special counsel role, so senior associate, special counsel, then partner.

The internationally-owned companies seem to opt for a less layered structure, trying to make all levels as approachable as possible.

$RE$ - No, we are a US company, so we are very flat in the way we approach business and also our team. We are very conscious of how many layers go from our CEO down to the
individual contributor. We try to minimize that as much as possible. So within my own team, if I don’t include myself there are only three layers.

The majority of the respondents believed that the structure of their workplaces was becoming more flexible. This alteration in workplace (physical and time) structure can be linked to the rise in the non-standard workforce and New Economic standards that were examined in chapter four. Working hours and job sharing was cited as changing practices both in terms of shorter and longer hours.

RC- Yeah, it’s getting quite flexible. We have people on part time, people fiddling with their hours to allow for better travel time etc. We bought in paid maternity leave just the other day! Being typical engineers, there are some good ideas that the company’s receptive too [sic], but a lot of traditional influences still go strong – the cubicles won’t be going for a while I don’t think!

In terms of visible structure RE articulated the IT industry as becoming an ‘open forum’, where as RD believed besides refurbishment law firms were not.

RD - Our firm is definitely changing, particularly around flexible work practice. Say, when I was the first part-time partner. That was eight years ago now and there were no other part-timers. Now we have got around 15 per cent of the workforce in a flexible arrangement, that is about 270 staff and that it just becoming more a more prevalent – the flexibility. That’s just one thing. Our office and layout is changing all the time with refurbishment and whatever, but it is still pretty much offices that are predominant. We are not moving to take everyone open-plan.

New Economic influences are being recognized via internationally-owned companies. The IT and automotive workplaces in particular opted for a largely open plan layout and configure a less layered, more approachable employee structure. The appearance of New Economic trends continued in terms of company ‘perks’. Conversely, law retained an Old Economic structure with some New Economic elements - such as the rewards and incentives

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4 An example of the workings of international corporations and the state of globalization is portrayed in Mark Achbar, Jennifer Abbott and Joel Bakan’s film The Corporation (2003) which, explores the nature and spectacular rise of the dominant institution of our time. Footage from pop culture, advertising, TV news, and corporate propaganda, illuminates the corporation's grip on our lives. Taking its legal status as a "person" to its logical conclusion. The Corporation Synopsis http://www.thecorporation.com/index.php?page_id=2 [accessed 2.1.2006].
that their companies provide. Four out of the six respondents cited incentives ranging from sundowners to movie tickets and cars. These forms of reward systems are already a precedent in some industries such as law and information technology:

RD - Yes, car parking, in-house lunches. Depends on what your role is, what your level is Cash bonuses are another one. Kind of I would say ‘intangible’ rewards like weekends away and this and that. Yes, a whole range of things.

AJ - Would you say that, that has increased over the last few years, or it has always just been a part of it.

RD - It has always been a part of it. But one can always see in future generations, Gen Y particularly, the research that we have done shows, that aspirations of those workers are different and it is not always about the financial rewards. But we are recasting the reward system to make sure that we are also looking at the future generation requirements.

AJ - So what rewards would they be?

RD - They would be things like, weekends away, for people who have worked particularly hard. Whether they be a lawyer or a secretary or whatever. Because an increase of what I call more intangible awards, so it is not like a salary increase although each person has their salary reviewed every year, but an increase in just other forms of recognition.

RE - We have a very comprehensive overall package for employees. The basic things we take for granted, and again, this is an American company, so we have very widely stocked kitchen. Everything from soft drinks to juices to fruit to biscuits, coffee, tea, and so forth. In my centre also, we have breakfast as in cereals, biscuits, chips as well. And then on Friday we will also have beer and wine as well. Not a large quantity, but that is also provided.

The overall package scheme that the company provides, we have a very generous scheme. We have 10% normal for super. We have the normal things such as the mobile phones, the laptops are provided. If people need to work at home that can be reimbursed, health insurance for the person plus their family. We often have a very strong yearly bonus scheme and the bonus scheme is reliant on the position of the person, the contribution, the grade of that person and three other company factors that we have had to achieve as a company. We also have the ability to reward people on an exceptional basis, monetarily, and that can happen throughout the year.
RD’s workplace even with its Old Economic ‘walls’ – largely due to the private nature of the employment – has adopted the New Economic incentives reminiscent of American law institutions of the early 2000s⁵.

RE’s company is representative of an archetypal New Economic environment. Together with its open plan offices and reduced tiered employee structure, it also provides the ‘stocked kitchen’ as well as an incentive package and flexible hours. This behaviour is also being considered by other industries,

RF - We did have massive communications meetings that were company wide where alcohol and food were provided and even when people were retiring they would do that. I haven’t seen any alcohol for a while but they do put on food and drinks. I’m trying to think of some of the other incentives. There aren’t that many I would think.

AJ - A lot of companies have them in their employment packages. That is basically what that question is about.

RF - To consider them an employer of choice and actually agree to it. No we don’t, but the thing is we are starting to realize that this is going to be a growing issue. Given the fact that the power of employees is going to be increasing over time and is starting to increase now. You probably recall it was only a few years ago that if you were an IT professional you could command an exorbitant salary they would have on site masseurs, yoga the whole lot – the fruit basket would come in every morning, whatever. We are considering all of that stuff. There is talk of an on-site subsidized gym and things like that. There is talk about it, but it has not actually materialized, so I think we are in the early phases.

It is observed that, although lagging behind such nations as America, the Australian private sector is applying New Economic aesthetics and incentives to workplaces across multiple industries. The extent to these changes varies across sectors from a general flexibility in hours and the occasional movie ticket to the internationally owned companies that offer – or at least consider - a whole employment package. When the respondents were asked these

questions regarding workplace structure, flexibility of hours seemed to be of great importance, and this goal and aspiration continued in relation to other interview answers. The questions relating to company incentives, although disclosed with ease and recognisable as ‘good’ bonuses, were not revealed as an incentive for applying for that job with that particular company.

Women In The Structure

After deciphering the structural elements of these women’s companies, I explored the presence of high-level female employees within them. When asked about whether there was an equal amount of women in high-level positions all responded in the negative. One particularly detailed account was provided by RF.

RF - Hell, No! Actually that you should put it that way. Actually, if you look at our Board we’ve got four female members and I think that in all there are something like 10 or 11 board members. But we actually had the equal opportunity for women in the workplace agency out a couple of weeks ago, and I met with them, and I was sort of thinking, after that meeting, that the irony of course is that we pat ourselves on the back for that, you know, and think, oh look great we’ve got four female Board members. But the reality is that three of those female Board members were actually brought in from outside and only one of them rose through the ranks to achieve that Board position. And when you look at it from another perspective, all bar one are not really what is considered a ‘line’ position. If you look at it, we’ve got the Head of HR, so that is considered a soft role and they don’t really get involved in product related or business related decisions. I think it’s by choice because certainly they are not excluded. The Head of Corporate Affairs and Government Relations, which is another of kind of traditionally female facilitating kind of role. The Head of Information Systems and Services, so IT, which is a service function, once again not a line function as such. And then the other one is the Purchasing Director is a female, and that’s the one that has the potential to wield the most power in that it is a line … even though I guess one could argue it really is a support function at the end of the day. It’s a major support function, it is about acquiring all the bits that go into making a car and structuring contracts with suppliers, and actually even purchasing all the facilities and equipment which is required to set up the infrastructure to build the car. So it is actually a powerful position.

AJ -So what did you call the other positions rather than service, ‘line’ positions?
RF - I call ‘line’ position, the purchasing role. The ones that are considered ‘hard’, like really necessary positions. With the others are sort of considered line functions or even described using the language ‘soft’ roles. If you look at the next level in the hierarchy there is a distinct lack of women. I think that of the management team, and I wish I had the stats… because I do have them somewhere,

At the moment we’ve got 10% of women in the entire organization.

So it is very low, and certainly at the managerial level. Like, the levels directly below that, the Director levels, look I would be struggling to count, half a dozen. It is very low, very low.

AJ - Is that because it is a typically male oriented industry?

RF - I think there are other issues at play. I think that is certainly one of them. __ has traditionally been a very, very aggressive environment. And if you...and this is going to sound grossly generalising but, women tend to, I think, and I have found examples of both extremes, but women tend to focus on task and people, whereas the real reward at __ for many years, has just been focussing on the task. Getting the task done and not really worrying about the collateral damage that you leave in your wake. I have been in some pretty amazing meeting where people have behaved appallingly badly and I think that women don’t generally deal with that well. I don’t think anyone should have to deal with it quite frankly, but women, actually will say something about it, whereas with men there is this macho thing that sort of inhibits them from saying, ‘hey that behaviour is over the line and how about we get back to what we are trying to do?’ So that would have a role to play. The fact remains that we don’t actually attract women. We are not a sexy industry. We’ve got this reputation that is not that sexy. We’re seen to be part of the manufacturing industry, and it still carries with it all of the stereotypes, one would imagine, when thinking of the industrial revolution – like “dirty place”. It couldn’t be further from the truth. The production line can be a bit like that, although it’s not bad at all. People don’t think of coming to __ to have a career as …like in the law and yet we have corporate lawyers. They don’t think of it as a place to come as a marketer, and yet, it has probably got one of the most successful and highly recognized brands in the whole country. So you can have a career as an Engineer, as a scientist, which is traditionally associated with manufacturing, but there are also these other streams, accounting, management, like business, law and marketing. They are all there and you can do them. I just don’t think we are specifically seen as that attractive to women or young women who are graduating.

RF’s frank account provides pivotal arguments regarding women’s role in high-level positions within the automotive industry. The high-level positions that women hold in this company are referred to as ‘soft roles’ such as human resources and service/support roles.

This structuring of women’s positions illustrates the historical position of women as nurturer
that I alluded to in previous chapters. It also resonates with chapter four’s argument that there is a lack of a functional or structurally changed workplace in both New and Old Economic environments. There is a lack of women in ‘hard line’ roles, which are the ‘hard’ management and director positions. RF paints her company with a historically unfeminine brush, relating the lack of women to the ‘dirty’ stereotypes, aggressive nature and un-sexiness of the industry. The ‘aggressive’ nature of industry to which RF refers and the presence of women in soft roles are reflective of the perceived capacity of women in high-levels. It is a quandary that exists for women presenting jobs that require ‘balls’ as unattainable for women that do not want to be perceived as having or wanting ‘balls’ to acquire such a position. Even a high-level engineer such as RF still recognizes the difficulties for women in possessing certain positions. Is this a trap of the gender gap? Lucinda Peach writes,

> Even for women in professions, gender discrimination operates to relegate many women into so-called “women’s professions”…So, for example, many women physicians are in paediatrics, women lawyers are in probate, and women professors are in the humanities rather than sciences.⁶

Is such a demarcation gender discrimination, or do these positions require certain attributes that women do not, nor wish to, have? I believe that it a combination of the two. These line positions require ‘bitch’ content – which is legitimised and stigmatised through the media – and the women I interviewed do not wish to be perceived in such a light.

When asked about how they achieved their current positions, they either inquired directly to the employer, applied or were head hunted for their position. All but one of the interview

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participants had been employed without any problems. RF was only one woman who acquired her job differently and she already worked within the company.

RF- In getting this job, now, no, there was no issue. But it is interesting how I actually went around in getting it...I actually had a change of boss, which would have happened about a year and a half ago. And, I just had a major clash with him. So went through a number of processes to deal with that clash and it just didn’t really... We are a fairly risk averse company, particularly when it comes to Personnel issues and basically this guy refused to go through the processes and what I discovered is that basically, that was ok. And I thought “well, I don’t want to stay in this situation” so I just said “look guys get me out of here, how about a stint in purchasing?” and it was arranged. It was basically. I gave them a path of least resistance and they took it.

The structure and policy of the company allowed for ‘bosses’ to avoid the correct avenues of conflict resolution regarding such a dispute but in response, they then allowed the effected employee to shift positions. In terms of the difficult in obtaining their current positions, the answers varied. RA referred to her achievement as a manner by which she applied for the job. RB stated, ‘This level is easy the next level up the ceiling is too thick’, RC’s stated the ease of gaining her position but quoted her ‘good’ academic background. RD, E and F who hold more senior roles remarked on other factors in gaining and retaining their level.

RD - It is quite difficult when you are trying to balance other things. I’ve got a young family and a husband who works in a high stressed job at as well. When I look at how, for me internally I have always been quite well supported. So, yes, it is not impossible, but it is not easy.

RE - I think I have actually been quite fortunate. I think working for an American company it is much easier to be recognized for results and skills than working for an Australian company and I will give you the reason why. I worked for an Australian company prior to coming to this particular company and I found that regardless of what I did, it was hard to progress beyond a certain level due to age, sex and, I hate to say it, but the Australian culture for women. Then when I left that company to come to this particular one I have been very, very, fortunate and promoted a few times in this company based on my results and my contribution.

RF - I think I had to work a bit in terms of making myself marketable. I am not a silly person, so I guess I am lucky enough to have the intellectual clout behind me. With the
MBA I was top of the class. With the Engineering, an Honours degree stuff like that. So, I am quite smart. So that was one thing that was easy to overcome. You have to sort of earn your stripes in this organization, particularly if you are woman. I overcome that first barrier quite quickly and then it was just your ability to build a network and actually work across this gigantic organization and I think that actually helps to make you more marketable, when you are being considered for other roles.

I have been here for 11 years and I came in…yes, I have worked my way through the management hierarchy to where I am today.

Each of these respondents revealed a major problem facing working women: work/life balance, the structure of Australian companies and being a woman climbing the ranks. These problems became reoccurring themes throughout the interviews and when the respondents were asked about any foreseeable problems if or when they decided to apply for a job in a higher position, four of the six cited work/life/family balance as a major consideration and in some cases a hurdle in order to achieve this role. Such answers included:

RB - There is very limited scope for this and if a position did arise it would mean that I would have to shift – which with my family at the age they are I am unable to do so.

RD - At some stage, yes, I will do something different, for sure. What I do, I suppose primarily for me it needs to be something that works in with my life and that is around my family. Around my husband, making sure that it fits in with what he is doing at the time…Maybe it is coming back to the other question about what are the problems for women. I think the other thing is that we are in a stage now where in a lot of households you’ve got two high achieving career people and who is making sure that the whole family is centred and that the food is on the table and all that kind of stuff. That is an absolutely incredible challenge. When we take into account my next move… we will be looking from a “whole of life” perspective.

RE - There is an interesting question and it is about work/life balance, so I realize that if I move to the next level position I will have to leave Australia, I will have to leave Asia Pacific. So, at the moment, no. I don’t intend to do that. That’s if I stay with this company. If I decide to progress higher, then I will probably have to move to another company within the Asia Pacific or Australia area, but when I truly look at it I would say, no, just because of the work/life balance.

RF - Yes, because I am pregnant.
Work/life balance, although a ‘normal’ concern for either gender, was especially of major concern to these respondents. The idea of work/life balance is a pivotal and reoccurring theme discussed throughout this thesis. The respondents kept falling back upon this issue. This ‘balance’ between work and life assumes that work remains separate, or in addition to a women’s life. Creating a balance between the two lives then becomes of great concern. It warrants worry and planning by women. Ellen Gragg’s suggests that:

> It’s right to put your children before your work but it’s also clearly a concern for businesses that their workers are available to get the job done. We’re all struggling as individuals and as businesses to get the balance right. It’s terrific that so many businesses are allowing responsible workers the flexibility to work out the balance for themselves as long as the work gets done and commitments get met.\(^7\)

Flexibility by both parties in terms of hours and working situations is recognized as a common characteristic of contemporary work life. This balance has become a research imperative in terms of workplace standards and even occupational health and safety within the working environment. Laurent Vogel explains this as one of the main workplace health issues regarding women that have been researched.

> The gender dimension in workplace health research is interpreted in a wide range of ways. For some, research focussed largely on female group – nurses, say, or textile workers – is treated as gender sensitive. For others, the fact that the research contains comparative analysis between men and women is enough. Still others insist that it must be exclusively or mainly about issues relevant to women – hence the significant amount of reported research into reproductive health, sexual harassment, or the work-life balance issues.\(^8\)

Vogel’s comments regarding research into the main health issues – reproduction, sexual harassment, work-life balance – that were pertinent to women in the workplace surround the

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\(^7\) E. Gragg, ‘Family matters ... but so does work’, *OfficeSolutions*, 2004, volume 21, number 4, p. 43, Expanded Academic ASAP A119311064.

\(^8\) L. Vogel, ‘A gender for action: are the particular needs of women, as an employee group, really taken into account fully by either employers or those that inform and implement health and safety at work policy?’, *The Safety & Health Practitioner*, 2004, volume 22, number 8, p. 23, Expanded Academic ASAP A120846587.
woman’s function as a body. I believe a woman’s life becomes separated – work life and family life – when the issue of raising children or a partner’s career move enters it. This recognized within the answers of RB, RD, RE and RF. These women commented on balancing work with family, children and husbands. It seems as if there is a notion of primary care giver that intrinsically circles the role of woman in family life. This does not necessarily mean that women will exit their job although it often means a restructuring of role and hours. This could mean that a woman’s career takes longer to progress, not necessarily due to lack of time but a shift to part-time hours often means a lack of opportunity for advancement to higher end positions. The notion of work/life balance is an issue for all working women, not just those who wish to have a family. As long as work life and family life remain split and often incompletely incompatible, the choices of those women who want flexibility in working hours and a family, those who do not these and all the women in between will all have an effect on workplace standards. Two examples of this could be: all women will be treated as if having a family is part of their life plan whether or not that is accurate, or part-time positions will continue to result in a lack of career advancement. The issue of what work/life balance is – and the difficulty in achieving it⁹ - needs to be addressed. I see the problems with achieving this ‘balance’ for women with families is due to the fact that they are actually trying to balance two lives – full time carer/mother/wife and be a full time educated/career woman.¹⁰ Where women have one life, they now have two. The difficulty in the balance occurs because of a lack of time to give adequate attention to these two ‘lives’. The pressure to perform well in both emerges through social, familiar and media expectations and aspirations. I am not suggesting that women must choose either one or the other. Instead,

⁹ ibid.
¹⁰ This also does not take into account other considerations of citizenship beyond work and family such as community work or further education.
they need to recognize that the difficulty they are facing is endured by any person trying to undertake two full time positions simultaneously. Work and family needs to be integrated as part of life – for both genders – not as opposed or detached from it. Women and men need to recognize the sacrifices to their families and/or career that they will be required to make if they choose to undertake both. With an increase in forms of non-standard employment and flexible work hours, employment must be compatible and allow for career advancement from these part-time positions. A focus on compatible work may permit an integrated and complete life to emerge for working women, rather than a balancing act between two.

Discussion on work/life balance is theorized further in chapter seven and concerns relating lifestyle are examined in chapter eight. The issue of work/life balance percolated the respondents’ answers and detailed power relations in the workplace.

In terms of the amount of ‘power’, five out of six respondents believed they had the same or similar amounts of power as others working in the same or similar roles. This power was equated with the level of the position. Such an example is the more junior engineer realized she had little power, whereas the higher end engineers recognized their level of power due to their rank and the fact that they had a team. If they believed they were treated differently due to their position, the respondents believed it was workplace/level related, rather than the fact it was a woman at their level. There was a mixed response in relation to whether they were asked to complete tasks outside of their duty statements. RA and RD answered in the negative, but RC did not have a duty statement and commented that,

I have been used as a secretary to a manager who should have used someone else for those jobs. That’s more of a case of people-management – said manager is notorious for using grads for administrative work, rather than administrative staff!
The other three respondent’s answers were yes: they performed tasks outside their duty statements. These duties however were related to either ‘touchy feely issues’, ‘women’s initiatives’ or diverse, unrecognized and unacknowledged work.

RB - Yes often. A lot of these are HR as I am a confident “people” person and my Manager is not and does not know how to cope with the “touchy-feely” issues.

RC - In … we are very much about getting in and doing the job and having the exec sponsor, help out and it may not be within my function but it might be a good learning development for me, or it might be for example that I am heading up the women’s group within … Something I feel strongly for but has nothing to do with my function. We have the ability to do some of those, but nothing from the perspective that I have been asked to do that I feel very strongly against doing.

RD - When I read this the first time I thought it is just hilarious, because when I was running the … program, complete open plan office, every time the guy came to deliver water he came to me and I had to ask him one day, “why is it that you come to me every time?” and he thought I was a secretary, sort of thing. Yes, you are asked to do things that other people in a similar position aren’t asked to do. I’ll give you an example. I’m leading in a work/life balance initiatives in the department. I’m leading the implementation of occupational health and safety related stuff in the department. I am happy to do that because I give a rat’s about it. But I do realize that I find it strange that the guys aren’t asked to do that.

AJ - So that wasn’t your choice?

RD - No, but I was happy with the result, because it is stuff that I value. But I know that other people don’t value it and I wonder whether I am the easy one to pick off, so to speak.

It’s massive, absolutely massive… but, no the other stuff… I think now that I am not in an open plan office, that I am actually in my own office, actually stops that stuff happening. Like the guy delivering water, because it is a barrier and it is a status symbol that goes with having an office. That kind of stops or inhibits them from coming in.

These were not duties that these women minded undertaking – minus the delivery of the water bottle. The majority of the tasks that the respondents completed were issues and initiatives that they felt strongly about. The subjects of these duties – feelings, women, work/life – brings forth two themes: women’s role in the workplace and again the notion
work/life balance. I observe that these were issues that the respondents felt required attention – such as maintaining women’s groups and addressing women’s issues. In her paper, *The Importance of Talk to Midcareer Women’s Development: A Collaborative Inquiry*, Teresa Carter writes,

> Women need opportunities to make meaning of their common experiences as women in the workplace. Results from this study suggest that creating a space for single gender talk can support them in their efforts. Miller (1986) noted that organizations are often hostile environments in which to seek growth-in-connection. Fletcher’s (1998,1999) exploration of relational practices amongst women engineers corroborated this, finding that women’s ways of working and communicating were devalued in a traditional male setting.

As Carter suggests, this need to forge women’s groups and the ability to deal with human resource issues may have stemmed from being devalued in the traditionally male dominated occupation of engineers – a job in which three of my respondents are located. These women disclose that their industries are still male dominated, but I am hesitant to suggest that the ways that women communicate and work remain devalued. Women categorize their two modes of communicating: ‘soft’, which is valued in areas such as human resources or occupational, health and safety, and ‘the bitch’ which is labelled, judged and sometimes valued at the management and executive levels. Women’s groups and mentoring programmes lean towards to former group, where as the ‘bitch’ is associated with harshness and masculine work ethic. Women, unlike men, are forced to choose to maintain either a ‘soft’ or a ‘bitch’ work ethic and this in term can effect the direction of their career. Softness is also associated with not allocating herself to being a full-time career woman. This revelation continued

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12 *ibid.*, p. 84,
when the respondents were probed about the difficulties facing women in their field of work.

R4 - Most cannot commit the time because of children and family commitments.

RB - In my field – Accounting, you have to fit the mould in most of the large accounting firms. To be unique is to be different and that is not encouraged. Women are seen as clerks not anything better.

RC - The successful people have defied stereotypes. Within our company there are probably fewer hurdles in the areas where women are already in management positions and have other women to back them up. In my area, it is easy to be a woman and feel like success is achievable, because there are other great role models around. Difficulties arise with clients (eg as a young woman, I’m often expected to be the one taking minutes or arranging for administrative stuff to occur) and with individuals. I don’t think that the difficulties are as institutionalized any more, but that individuals with bigoted notions can still pose problems.

RD - Mainly the long hours that end up competing with other aspects of your life. The lack of a senior role model. You can’t be what you can’t see. You mightn’t like what you see as well. Lack of mentoring. In a sense, I think another thing is it is a life change. Gender isn’t really seen as a major issue. People are more promoted on merit, as it should be, but there is in a sense, I think, that the system can almost conspire against women. It mainly comes down to the long hours.

RE - It also I think, in this particular field of IT and engineering, is their background in technical areas. A lot of women don’t go through university to do technical degrees and that is probably one area that I think is preventing women from being more dominant in the IT world in the public companies.

RF - Dealing with an incredibly aggressive environment and an environment that often doesn’t value the difference that women can bring. That is pretty huge. For example today, I have had two young women come to see me who come and speak with me fairly frequently about issues that they are facing and trying to work out how they might other ways they could be going about dealing with the issues that they are facing...yes, the aggressive environment, the fact that there are a lot of sexist people to deal with. We are not good at dealing with difference I’ve got to say. And that is in all shapes and forms whether it is race or gender…

Long hours and aggressive working environments are not women friendly. They are not worker friendly. To focus specifically on women suggests that women as worker are identified as nurturer or those that need to be nurtured. RF, concurs with Carter’s statement,
suggests that her workplace does not value the difference that women can bring to such an aggressive environment. Once again I see this as this ‘difference’ is read as a stereotypically ‘soft’ feminine difference that is valued in areas such as HR and OSH. The difference, which RF speaks of, is the space between the ‘soft’ and the ‘bitch’ work ethic. But I do not believe that this is necessarily related to a difference that women bring. I suggest that this different, less aggressive work formation can be attributed to individuals from both sexes. The reason why the ignorance and devaluation of women in these roles may appear more prominent is because of the polarisation of women as either ‘soft’ or a ‘bitch’. Some industries are aggressive and competitive, requiring such an ethic to work within them. Women are segregated in the workforce, locked in the ‘caring’ professions. This separation has consequences for determinations of success. These issues of segregation continued when they were queried on the problems facing women’s achievement and success in other fields.

RA - Depends on the field of employment.
RB - Culture, egos, tokenism.
RC - I think the conflict between lifestyle and success, and motherhood and career are huge and universal.
RD - I think the other thing that is common, regardless of industry would be the balance of home and work, particularly for women who have families or are trying to start families. I think there is an awful lot of pressure for employees to dedicate a lot of time at work now. And that does really conflict with the work/life balance. Typically, what I am seeing is women choose not to progress higher, because of that or they choose to drop out of corporate and to start their own businesses because of that.
RE - I think, all those issues, the ones that I mentioned. But, sometimes other women aren’t terribly helpful to women. They got there, so they are going to kick the ladder out and not help anyone else. The main across all the jobs is the structure of work. We need to think laterally about how we can restructure work to fit into lives.
RF - I’ve got to say that a lot of them would be similar to the difficulties that I have mentioned here. One thing I can say that I haven’t faced, and I am happy to say that…
you know that whole concept of women pulling the ladder up behind them as they sort of climb the hierarchy? That I haven’t faced here, in as much as I have found the women around me incredibly supportive and not threatened by me, or other women. And I think that is just because they are actually quite capable women. How they came to be in the organization is beside the point, they actually very capable people and they are actually very capable people. That’s what I’ve put it down to. They are quite confident in themselves and I don’t believe that is the same in other organizations.

But, I’ve got to say that I have never felt that to be an issue here at all.

These responses demonstrate the importance of oral testimony such as these. The respondent’s answers tell stories of both competition and support provided by women when working in the same environment.

**Bodies in the Structure**

How women’s body’s function in places of work is a focus of this thesis. I queried the respondents as to the type of attire they wear to their place of work and how their clothing and body is responded to by their peers. All women wore what they considered to be professional or business attire to the ‘office’, such as skirts, trousers, shirts and jackets.

- **RB** - A range of clothing, from the casual to the more formal business suit, However always trousers.
- **RC** - Shirt and pants, or skirt and shirt and jacket.
- **RD** - A suit. It would be something, smart and corporate.
- **RE** - It depends if I am visiting customers. So if I have customers coming in, or if I am going out I will be wearing one of my better suits, otherwise I wear I guess, neat business attire.
- **RF** - Mainly pants suits and I do get heaps of comments. Whenever I do wear a skirt or a dress, I can absolutely guarantee I will get comments all day. And I don’t know whether that is, that I just wear pants normally and it is unusual for people to see me in a skirt or in a dress. I think that is probably it, more than anything.
When asked if other colleagues wore the same attire as them, answers varied but most confirmed a similarity. Others said some dressed casually and such a standard did not align with their level. Respondent $F$ believed that most workers wore trousers but also recounted stories of clothing functionality and professionalism present in her workplace.

$RF$ - The men always wear pants don’t they? That’s the other 90 per cent. (laughs) Women? Of that 10 per cent? A bit of both. Yes, a bit of both. I guess in the role I had prior to this, I would go over to Adelaide to the plant and I would be on the factory floor from time to time and you can’t wear a skirt down there. For occupational health and safety reasons, you’ve got to be covered – long sleeves, whatever. There, you just don’t see women in skirts. Quite practical purposes. But, here, which is much more of an office environment, you do get a mixed bag. I’ve got to say generally I think the women around here wear pants. Maybe that’s just me transferring my philosophy.

$AJ$ - Are they kind of suit-ish attire? Very professional?

$RF$ - Yes. I will recount a funny story though. We have just recently recruited a young woman, as it turns out I think she’s about 27. And, she wears very provocative gear and even though it is winter here and very cold, it is not uncommon to have her come in wearing a singlet, a very scooping neckline and a very short skirt. And even I looked at her and though “wow, that is a bit over the top”. Because the guys who report to me have actually made comment and said “Oh my God, I just can’t believe what she’s wearing!” Bare mid-drift, the whole shabang! And they just say, “does she believe we are going to take her seriously, or more seriously, whatever, by wearing what she does”? It was actually brought up at a management meeting. Her manager actually brought it up and actually wanted to write a policy dictating what people could and couldn’t wear.

And I actually kicked up about it and said “look I think you can have that conversation with her in terms of the perceptions she is putting out there about her, or if you are uncomfortable about it, I am happy to do it. Personnel, being a woman - kind of thing… But in putting it in to a procedure, I’ve got a real issue with that. Because I remember when I was graduating in the late 80’s that IBM were a big recruiter at that time and the thing that really put me out about IBM was the fact that they actually mandated the colour of the suits you wore and everything. They actually dictated what you could wear, and yet wanted you to be creative. And I just thought the two, really didn’t go hand in hand. (laughs) So, I just said that and basically we haven’t created a policy around it. He has done nothing about it. He certainly hasn’t had a conversation with that women. Hers is over the top. I don’t know where that line is.
It will be different in different professions, I think. Like, look at the women who work in the design department here. Very, highly creative, people. You wouldn’t have the same expectations of them.

This response dialogues with the ‘executive look’, appropriate work wear and dissonant workplace clothing literacies that were discussed in chapters two and three. RF’s attention towards the younger woman who did not dress appropriately and the problems that this caused is demonstrative of the lack of actual change in regards to workplace expectations of dress. Such an answer aligns with the question I asked about whether the respondents had experienced comments regarding their clothing. All of them reported that they had ‘managed’ this experience. This ranged from positive comments regarding whether an outfit was new, to comments regarding the appropriateness of a garment. Such examples were:

RB - Occasionally, when I wear a suit a comment is passed about looking businesses like or formal.

RC - Mm, I got yelled at for wearing too-low cut a top one day. It wasn’t intentional on my part! Apparently someone had complained to the manager – I was embarrassed by the whole incident.

RE - When I first joined ___ yes. When I first joined ___ and the casualness of the clothing and I dressed down to that level, I was informed that it was not an appropriate thing to be doing.

I then asked the respondents whether they had experienced comments made to them in regards to their bodies. All with the exception of RD had had comments made to them ranging from casual conversations regarding belly dancing, not eating enough or weight gain.

RF - Funny, I’m looking at the one, in brackets “pregnancy”. It is starting to happen a lot now. I have had comments made about me. Because basically earlier this year, I was on the Victorian Canoeing team, so quite a strong woman. Tall and skinny but strong and yes, it draws comments when you are fit and whatever. And now I am getting them all around the tummy, yes. I was going to say, I have had a couple of comments like “are you putting on weight?” Yes, but little do you know why? I think that because people have a fairly open relationship with me, or the people who have made those comments have been fairly friendly, on friendly terms anyway. So
that is a little bit different. But the pregnancy one now is drawing a lot of comment. People want to touch you as well.

Another concern raised by the informers was employers checking the size of their bottoms.

RB - Over the years I have had a huge number of male associates comment on my weight – as a person whose weight in the past has fluctuated – I had one boss that regularly checked the size of my bottom and never hesitated to comment if I was putting on weight.

RF and RB’s comments epitomize the function of woman as body in the workplace. Women can and do function as intellectual workers, but people are allowed to comment on their body freely. The workplace is an environment that is bound by rules and regulations relating to harassment and employee conduct, so what gives people the right to touch RF’s pregnant body? Or for RB’s boss to comment on the size of her bottom or her weight gain? Would this happen to a man? Well in RF’s case, the answer is in the negative, because men cannot currently become pregnant. But if a man’s stomach expanded, then it would not be appropriate to rub it, so the same should apply to a pregnant or non-pregnant body.

When I was pregnant working in administration I had a line manager say, ‘Hey Fatty’ when he greeted me. This is far from appropriate behaviour in a social environment, the fact that it was my place of work, he was a ‘senior employee’ and I was a junior meant it was difficult for me to respond in a reasonable manner.

Whether comments such as the ones made to me or my respondents are made in jest or malice does not matter. The fact that they are made does. The freedom to comment on employees’ bodies, changes the relationship between employees within the structure of workplace. This could be anything from feeling sexually harassed, worrying about the shape and effect of a pregnant body, to worrying about people seeing you eat your lunch. I also asked if they believed they would be treated differently if they dressed differently. With the
exception of RA all of the respondents said yes. They all provided answers relating to
workplace expectation and respect.

RB - Absolutely. People treat you with a lot more respect if you wear a suit and have
makeup on and your hair done.

RC - I think people would be upset if I dressed inappropriately. Our workplace
expects professional attire. Particularly in terms of dealing with clients, I would be
expected to dress conservatively and respectfully. Failing to do so would exasperate
the people around me who are working hard on maintaining our professional image.

RD - Undoubtedly it is all part of non-verbal communication

AJ – And has this ever happened to you?

RD - Well, I suppose part of it is because I dress appropriately with that in mind. So,
no, it hasn’t. But I can imagine if I went in, in jeans every day that I would not be as
anywhere near as effective, or I wouldn’t be perceived to be as effective. I am sure I
wouldn’t be, because of the dress that I wore.

RE - Yes, to some people. In the American culture no, but to the Australian culture
and also to the Asian culture, yes.

RF - Yes, I think so. Wearing big flowers in my hair or whatever. I think that these
guys just wouldn’t be able to handle it. And they would just think I am off with the
fairies and I’ve been smoking dope at the weekend. They just wouldn’t be able to
deal with it. I’ve got to say that I am very conscious of what I wear, and I think I am
quite conservative in what I wear. I don’t flash the boobs. I don’t wear short skirts. I
just don’t want people …

These women wore professional attire every day. From this basis, I then inquired about the
ease or difficulty in finding workplace clothing. With the exception of RD the other
respondents found difficulties relating to the: boring nature of shopping for work clothing,
availability in Australia, size and the main problem expense.

RA - Relatively difficult at a reasonable price. Easy if you have dollars to spend.

RB - Very difficult - Suits etc are very expensive so are good pants.

RC - A right pain! It’s boring and expensive.
I followed this question by asking how much they would spend on an outfit for work. The answers ranged from RC who is at the junior level of her field spending a ‘few hundred dollars a month’ to the others, with the exception of RB spending from five hundred to two thousand dollars on an outfit, with the average being a thousand dollars. This again affirms the problems regarding workplace clothing, size and cost that were examined in chapters two and three. The unavailability of appropriate, inexpensive, correctly fitting workplace attire is a problem for Australian working women. There is an important gap – economically, political and socially - that is available to be filled in the clothing industry, which needs to be addressed.

**Success Within the Structure**

Mixed responses were returned when I queried the respondents to their views on the current media representation of successful women. They provided answers ranging from ‘adequate’, ‘Cheryl Kernot’s fashion sense’\(^\text{13}\) to lack of media representation. They saw this representation as:

**RE** - Not very good. I think that successful women they focus on are more in the entertainment industry and they don’t actually focus on the intellectual capabilities of women. Particularly in business, and when they do it is quite critical. For example, all the things we heard recently about the NAB crisis, and there are a lot of very strong, wonderful, successful women out there but we don’t get to see or hear from them.

**RC** - What media representation? I think we’re either portrayed as money hungry, soulless toughies, or not at all. I think it would be great to see how success could

\(^{13}\) A posed photograph of politician Cheryl Kernot, (once leader of the Australian Democrats and then defected to the Labour Party in 1997) was taken of her in a red evening dress with feathers (or what was later referred to as ‘the red dress’). The picture was displayed on the cover of the April 1998 edition of *The Australian Woman’s Weekly* and sparked a political furore about the nature of a politician in such a ‘glamorous’ picture. See: *The Australian Woman’s Weekly*, April 1998., C. Kernot, *Speaking For Myself Again*. Australia: HarperCollins, 2002.
merge with quality of life, and family. I think a redefinition of what we mean by success would also be a good idea – is money the be all and end all? I don’t think so, but there’s a common portrayal of values in that way.

These two respondents commented on the prominence of celebrity and ‘toughies’ as the media’s representation of successful women, rather than female intellectuals. There is a lack of intelligent models of women and mentoring. Tabloidization ensures that female celebrities permeate news and current affairs. Australia plays homage to those women who are successful in the arts and the sporting arena, such as TV hostess and author Gretel Killeen, songstress Kylie Minogue and swimmer Brooke Hanson. It is a rarity to regularly see/hear other genres of female intellectuals, male examples would be Adam Spencer and Dr Karl Kruszelnicki, within the media, unless they are being utilized as experts in debates which involve relationships between the genders, such as Dr Feelgood or Cindy Pan. RC’s comments on the portrayal of successful women as ‘money hungry, soulless toughies, or not all’ is another example of the perpetuation of workplace bitch manifesto. It portrays the continuance of the gendered workplace and the antagonistic roles and functions within the female working environment. Similar to RC, the other respondents also brought forth the representation of work/life balance.

RD - Five years ago when you read an article on a successful woman it would be how much she was driving up the share price and driving down costs all that kind of stuff. Now, I think it is changing and they are portraying women much more as a more balanced person. Has she got a family? What does she do in her spare time? Those kind of things. They are trying to portray the whole package, to a much greater extent than they would be portraying a whole package for a man. There have been quite a few article often effectively not so much particularly about my work but how I balance things usually.

RF - I think they are pretty far fetched and they focus on these bizarre women that have children, have an amazingly successful career or are running businesses themselves and they are perfect and harsh. They always come across as quite manly.
And I don’t know whether that is just my perception, but that is the feeling that I get. Quite unrealistic stuff I think.

AJ - Do you find that both in kind of representations of real women and kind of within popular culture as well. In terms of rock stars and people like that?

LT - They are the people that the media focus on, I think. In fact, because I was getting a fare bit of media coverage personally, with the stuff I was doing with ___ and had one mob call and they went “well ok, you don’t have children, ok we don’t want to talk to you” (laughs). So that was a funny one.

Media, such as women’s magazines\textsuperscript{14} encourage the superwoman myth\textsuperscript{15}, and as RF suggests, are quite unrealistic. Images of working women in the popular cultural workplace encourage competition and present specific, intangible, role models for women. When I asked these women if it affected how they saw themselves as a ‘successful’ woman, with the exception of RA and RD, all of the women said it had affected the way in which they saw themselves.

RB - Yes, because I don’t like criticism and I don’t like being bitchy or aggressive and that is what is seem to take to be a successful women. How many times to [sic] you hear that a successful has “balls”.

RC Well, I question how “successful” I want to be. Family, life experience – more important to me than having things and power.

RE - Definitely. I find that dealing with Australian companies, that they find it very difficult to deal with a young female at my level, who is an Australian.

RF - Yes, I think I have had pretty big demands of myself. But I think that has been true of the way I have guarded myself right through in terms of going through uni. I have got pretty big expectations of myself. But it is really changing now, particularly with becoming pregnant. I have never ever thought of big issues like childcare. Never in my wildest dream. When I have heard people talk about organising childcare and that getting in the way of them actually continuing in a career or

\textsuperscript{14} For example \textit{VOGUE AUSTRALIA BUSINESS}, \textit{Scoop Magazine} and \textit{The Australian Women's Weekly}.

actually have to stay at home. I thought that was bad planning or whatever. But there are structural issues. You know, even the working day. The fact that you are expected to start before 9.00 or whatever and work until 6.30 or whatever. That really doesn’t take into account other responsibilities that you might have outside of work. Particularly, we are still the primary care giver when it comes to children. Once again generalising, but it is a fairly safe generalisation. So the images of these women that you see in the press. Hey they had a nanny and all that sort of stuff, which is pretty expensive. I might be able to afford that now, but certain women below me in the ranks here at Holden, would never ever in their wildest dreams be able to do that. So it is an odd representation of women I think it is unrealistic in most cases.

To these respondents, the meaning of being a success or a successful woman requires more than a career. Hurdles of balancing family with work, as well as the portrayal of ‘bitchiness’ and aggressiveness equating to higher levels of female workplace success were pronounced issues within these interviews. As private industries adopt New Economic aesthetics, issues relating to women in the workplace are changing. This reinforces chapter four’s notion that the New Economy has not created a workable and functional environment for women. These respondents, although recognising the issues relating to voyeurism and commentary on their bodies, have accepted it as a given characteristic of the workplace. Women’s focus is upon two elements of work/life balance and the bitch manifesto. One reason why these issues remain such a problem for women is that they are gendered female. While female workers continue to be split and compartmentalize into specific gender roles and archetypes, these issues will remain. Women need to step back, regroup and focus on all that is holding them back within the workplace. If they did they would realize that some of what is holding them back are issues that have flown beneath the radar such as body politics. Other problems that they are focussed upon, such as work/life balance, are actually created by the individual and can be resolved only when that woman decides to deconstruct her two lives and rebuild them as one. Labels such as ‘the bitch,’ the aggressively successful woman as opposed to the nurturing worker, need to be examined in terms of who gains from the perpetuation of these
archetypes. The current focus for women has moved away from male-dominated workplaces. Although this issue of entry into these occupations is still a concern, working women have a new ‘problem’: the expectation of ‘having it all.’ The desire for a fulfilling, well paid career, maintained without aggression, which has options for advancement and flexibility, permitting family and recreational time is the expectation of women through my interviews. These women, although happy with some elements of their workplaces, were not entirely satisfied. Until women ponder their ‘lifestyle’ priorities and both genders realize that not every individual, regardless of gender, wants a family, then this dissatisfaction and compartmentalisation of the workplace will remain.
Chapter Six
Moving on Out: Women's bodies in Government Institutions

Figure 6 The Ladder

The Australian government sector, within the parameters of this thesis, includes those working in government departments and institutions. This chapter focuses on the way in which women function in the changing shape of workplaces and explores three main facets of the working environment. This chapter is split into four sections: structure, women in the structure, bodies in the structure and success in the structure. I approach the structure of the workplace and the presence of New and Old Economic features with attention to how ‘success’ is defined, achieved and measured, and the relevance of clichés like the glass ceiling and boys’ club shape and challenge women working in governmental environments. Finally, I observe the relationship between women’s bodies and the workplace, how it is used and how this affects such success. I examine the significant role that clothing plays in maintaining respect, careers and the ideology of professionalism within these sectors. The majority of this chapter is comprised of interviews conducted with women across varying private industries. I have enacted this research in order to provide detailed accounts of these women’s experiences and link the common threads of successes and problems facing women employed in the private sector.

Due to confidentiality agreements, I refer to the interview participants as respondent or ‘R’: N, O, P and Q. The interviews for the government sector covered a number of areas such as higher educational institutions as well as other government service departments. The respondents’ employment within the higher education sector ranged from high-level administration, lecturers to Dean of their School. Of the women contacted to be interviewed, those who accepted all had completed some form of higher education. Respondents N and Q have completed Bachelor degrees with honours degrees and are currently undertaking their
PhD. Respondents O and P have completed masters degrees and RO has also accomplished her PhD. All women are at different stages of their career: RN is an Executive Assistant within a University, RO a lecturer in a technical college, RP an Associate Dean of Law within a University and RQ was an employment officer at a Joblink office.

**Structure**

The respondents are derived from two institutions: those employed in the higher education system and those in government departments. Australian universities and colleges are constructed through tiers. At the top are the management and boards of directors (primarily made up of accountants and top level academics such as the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor). The next layer encases middle management and high-level academics, flowing down to full time academics, administration and casual/part time teaching staff.

RN - In the immediate office I worked in there were 9 employees. There was an Administrative Assistant/Receptionist on the front desk that greeted visitors. There were five dedicated offices to positions with the four remaining positions being located in an open plan area.

RO - My employment organisation is structured through a series of tiers. At the overarching level are the administrators. This institution is a corporate university and there is a board of directors overseeing its administration. Employees rarely see these people. Rather, we are most closely involved with the second level of individuals – the academic administrators who run the institution from day to day. I have three superiors. The person who employed me is the Principal who reports to the directors. Under him is the deputy principal who controls the logistics – timetables, room allocations, and resources. This person is also a staff liaison for diploma level courses. Branching out from the deputy are the full-time staff who are liaisons for the broad disciplines offered – Business, Communications, and Computing and IT. Under these are the office staff who run reception, accounts, enrolments and student advisory services. Finally, there is casual teaching staff. These individuals are employed on a semester by semester basis and usually incur a high turnover rate. I am a casual worker employed to deliver lectures, monitor courses and mark assignments.

RP - The University is divided into Faculties. The Law School is part of the Faculty of the Professions. The Law School is headed by the Dean, assisted by the Associate Dean
of Teaching and the Associate Dean of Research. The Associate Dean of Teaching manages fulltime and casual academic staff and ensures teaching program is implemented efficiently and in accordance with University policy. The Associate Dean also deals with student matters including student complaints against academic staff. There are 28 Equivalent full time staff in the Law School - 25 casual appointments and 30 full and half time appointments.

The higher education sector remains ‘old school’ and hierarchical. Despite the occasional open plan office, there were no conscious and trackable movements toward a New Economic working environment. These responses support the claims regarding the precedence of Old Economic workplaces in Australia, which was argued in chapter four. Universities and colleges are moving toward corporate imaging, but as yet have not applied this desire to the working conditions (and clothing conditions) of their employees. Government service departments are also highly tiered, working from the service team at the bottom to team leader, section leader, and department head, creating a ladder of service, administration and management roles – structurally Old Economic.

RQ - Not quite sure what you mean by “structured visibly”. Is this in terms of the building? It was part of a medical centre in ___, off the main road. When I first started, it was painted a dirty, mottled brown. The Manager and I made sure that we used some of our funds to repaint the office (in warm musky pink) & put in vertical blinds that weren’t broken etc, which made it 1000% better. There was a front reception room, 3 small offices, a small area partitioned off behind the front desk (needed for overspill) a small lunchroom & a large meeting room, where we also undertook training for jobseekers.

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2 This hierarchical structure is recognised in the relationship between academic staff and administrative staff. For research regarding the ‘invisibility’ of administrative staff see: J. Szekeres, ‘The invisible workers’, Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management. 2004, volume 26, number 1, pp. 7 – 22, Informit, 200404301.

In terms of employees. We had a Manager, who was accountable to the Board, who worked full-time (4 days/week), me as Senior Admin Officer and Employment Officer (2 days), another Employment/Admin Officer (3 days), and a volunteer trainee (who came in 3 times a week). We often had volunteers working there to increase their skills. We also had one-off projects and we had extra staff in for the duration.

A commonality amongst all these responses was the amount of non-standard staff employed within the sectors. The majority of the bottom tier is made up of part-time, casual or volunteer staff. This non-standard work structure flowed through various positions from administration to lecturers, and was made evident when I queried the respondents as to whether they believed the structure of their workplaces was changing.

RN - The office layout went through a number of changes while I was there and has recently undergone a further change. It changed in accordance with reorganisation of positions. All positions were full time (ie 37.5 hours per week). Senior management probably worked longer hours (I say probably because they often had long lunches).

RO - Within my workplace, casual labour is extremely high. The bulk of the staff is employed on this basis. Furthermore, there does not seem to be any strategies in place to move employees from casual to more permanent positions – either through application or long service merit schemes.

RP - The structure of work is changing. Work practices are now more flexible and teaching occurs throughout the whole year instead of traditional semesters. Also teaching is undertaken online after hours and also off-shore. Productivity expectations have increased significantly over the last 10 years.

As a result of funding, the Law School has been required to adopt a policy of casualisation. There are now 25 casual staff who perform at least 35% of the total teaching duties.

RQ - The structure certainly changed. With the view to “improving” services, the government strongly pushed the amalgamation of the 3 Joblinks in the South-Eastern corridor ie the ones at ____. As a direct result, the centre at ____ has closed down, with staff being spread between ____.
The ___ Joblink had been planning to move into the new Community Centre that is currently being built in ___. This is no longer required.

The hours changed considerably, but I am unaware of details.

The Manager at ___ was very flexible concerning hours, which is one reason I worked there for so long.

The other Admin/Employment officer wanted full time work, so she ended up working 3 days at ___ and 2 days at ___. (This was before the amalgamation, so not sure if she is working 5 days at ___ now.)

These responses represent a movement toward the non-standard working environment. All respondents noted a change to the structure of their workplaces in terms of hours worked. They detailed both an increase in hours worked for senior management, as well as a development in online and offshore hours. At the other end of the scale there has been an increase in casual employment. RO visualized the problems with the lack of a path to permanent advancement, where as RQ observed the ‘flexibility’ aspect to this formation.

Unlike the private industries, this movement toward a ‘flexible’ working environment is not a part of an increase in New Economic working conditions. These findings are reflective of the lack of the blurred lines between non-standard Old Economic and New Economic workplaces. When asked about the incentives that their employers supplied the respondents provide the following comments.

RN - Occasional sundowners were organized, usually coinciding with someone leaving. Parking fees are paid by employees. The university provides a generous superannuation scheme and salary packaging.

RO - Every year my employers hold a Christmas function at no cost to staff. Food and drinks are provided at a local restaurant. At the end of every financial year casual staff receive either a bottle of wine or gift voucher in thanks for their service.
RP - The University provides:
- Special studies leave – paid leave to undertake research
- Funding for conferences/ research assistance
In addition, the University provides salary sacrificing for cars, superannuation etc.

Up until 2004, lunch was provided at staff seminars

RQ - [Laughs.] Pitiful pay. No overtime – you were just expected to work the extra hours or get the job done in the time available. Ha ha. I think we got taken out to lunch by the manager twice. Oh, and for Christmas lunch, although one of these was really a business lunch.

The main reason I stayed there was the flexibility that the Manager provided regarding my hours/days at work.

The incentives provided by government employers seem minimal. Functions and presents are rewarded at Christmas time, funding is provided for work-related conferences and lunch is provided when people leave or it is business related. The government sector, in terms of its structure, remains an Old Economic environment. Any movement toward a New Economic environment that might be suggested through non-standard employment strategies, can be contested by the increase in workload and lack of career advancement for these positions.

WOMEN IN THE STRUCTURE

After I examined the structural elements of these women’s companies, I explored the experiences of high-level female employees within them. When asked about whether there was an equal amount of women in high-level positions, I was provided with a mixed response. RN and RO both said no.

RN - The most senior positions (academic staff and general staff) of the Division are Executive Dean and Divisional Administrator. They are occupied by males. All other senior academic positions are held by males, including Deputy Executive Dean, Deans of Faculties. The Dean of Research and Graduate Studies and Director of Graduate Studies
are female. The Director of the Humanities International Office and Director of Australian Institute for Research are male. Most Heads of Department are male although there are three female HODs in one faculty. Females hold most middle and lower general staff positions in the division.

This is replicated throughout the wider university.

RO - There does appear to be more men in high-level positions. Amongst the senior personnel, only one of my three immediate supervisors is a woman and she is positioned as the lowest ranked in authority of these people.

Both of these respondents commented on males holding the high end positions. They detailed the fact that women within their departments hold less authoritative positions. The results display that the majority of women within Humanities departments within these education institutions hold positions within the middle and lower tiers. Comparatively RP said there were equal amount of men and women in her department in high-level positions and RQ commented that in her department they were all women. She stated that,

RQ - In our office, it was all women. The Joblink network had several offices around the Perth Metropolitan and country areas. Most of the Managers were women. However, the Managers all worked very hard for poor remuneration. And the rest of the staff were not highly paid either.

RQ’s detailed recognition of a lack of remuneration for these employees also positions these women in the middle to lower tiers within their departments. This can also be linked with the RN and RO’s comments on the position of women in their sectors. It also parallels the soft line and service roles which women tend to fill within the private sector.

There was no commonality amongst the respondents in the way that they obtained their positions. RN applied unsuccessfully for her job and was then offered it twelve months later. RO gained her position, through non official means, when another lecturer left the position.
RP was appointed her position by the Dean, ‘based on aptitude and experience’. RQ stated that,

RQ - I was working at another Joblink (at ___) on a casual basis. I applied for this position. However, the ___ Joblink Manager hated the one at ___ and so didn’t take me on. As they didn’t bother to advise me but left me hanging, I phoned up as follow-up a couple of times. When ___ got a new manager, she called and asked if I could start in 2 days’ time. I was temping for a GP as a medical receptionist and told her I couldn’t start for another fortnight. If she wanted to wait, then I would take up the position, if not she should find someone else. She waited for me and I worked there for 18 months before I resigned so I could focus on my study.

Besides RN having to wait for her position, none of the respondents saw any problems in achieving their employment. RN and RO put it down to luck, RQ experience and RP time.

She stated that, ‘I achieved my current position after 15 years employment with the University. I don’t think it was difficult to achieve – it just took a long time.’

The respondents provide a myriad of difficulties if any that women face in achieving success in their chosen field. These answers support chapter fours claim that neither the Old nor New Economy has created a functional or structurally changed working environment for women.

The responses ranged from problems with work/life balance. RP’s response was, ‘juggling family and work commitments’. RP’s comment alludes to the issue of work/life balance that was a major problem for those working in the private sector. The other respondents saw the structure and state of the working environment and the fact that it was not the respondents chosen field as highly problematic.

RN - Working in a patriarchal environment - being bullied, being demeaned. Not supported by male colleagues.

RO - I think women face the same difficulties they face in any other type of employment stemming from the basic bias in our culture to women as competent and successful figures in the workplace. There does seem to be some difficulty in women being able to
rise beyond the sessional staff level into more permanent, mentoring and management positions.

Largely, women as teachers remain highly legitimized within educational workplaces. Seeing them beyond these narrow roles is deprioritized and denigrated amongst women themselves, colleagues and their immediate superiors.

RQ - Lack of commensurate pay. Expectations of working well beyond what is paid. I do not wish to continue in this area & have no plans to continue in it.

There seems to be an assumption in this question that I am working in my chosen field.

My “chosen” field is academia. And there are huge difficulties. Numbers of female professors are actually declining. There is definitely an old boys’ club and a glass ceiling for women. My husband jokes that he is looking forward to the day I will become a Professor. I believe that I am a) too old & b) the wrong sex for this to be a realistic or achievable goal. However, I would like to become a Senior Lecturer, if that is at all possible considering the current position of Universities and their lack of funding.

The structure of the education sector, as a male dominated ‘boy’s club environment’ and lack of support/mentoring from colleagues male and female, is a key issue for these three respondents. There seems to be some problem in moving out of the ‘Old Economic roles’ of administrators and ‘teachers’ that women have historically held within these institutions.

This is representative of how the New Economy failed to properly infiltrate the government sector, changing only aesthetics and ethics as revealed in chapter four. RQ’s response was that, ‘there seems to be an assumption in this question that I am working in my chosen field’ surmised the position of these women, which was a supposition that I had not queried until her response. The consequences of this assumption were revealed when I asked whether they were planning on applying for a higher level position in the future.

RN - No – going for a career path change.
RO - Yes, but not within the current institution I am employed at. In order to advance I will have to move elsewhere. My employers are not structured to allow casual lecturers to advance to higher levels.

RP - Yes – however I will need to undertake further study which I am planning next year.

RQ - I am not seeking a higher level in this field. See above.

In all the responses, either a career change or job change was imminent for these women. RN and RQ both were opting for a career change which differed from their field in administrative and service roles. Even with their knowledge of the problems facing women in the higher education sector, they still sought careers which would move them from the lower end of the middle tier to the middle tier and higher within the education sector. It would seem that the problem of ‘the boy’s club’ environment along with the casualization of this workforce is a reality to be endured rather than a deterrent to be avoided.

When I asked about the problems facing women achieving success in other fields of employment, I was met with similar answers.

RN - I couldn’t comment on all fields of employment but generally I would say that “it is a man’s world” and the glass ceiling is here to stay.

RO - I remain very concerned about the levels of covert sexual harassment women experience. This may not be the obvious behaviours involving inappropriate comments or touching, but more subtle strategies located in language and the unspoken expectations of other workmates. Through these covert means, women are demoralised and discouraged from seeking promotion and equal participation in the workplace. Often, women are manoeuvred – through behaviours, conversational grammars and assumptions – into performing the expectations of femininity by others (men and women) they work with. This can result in the trivialisation of women as workers and reduce their capacity to be taken seriously as functional employees and career makers.
RN and RO observations, although participating in different careers in distinct higher educational institutions, confirm that women’s achievement of success in other fields were similar. They both comment on the ‘man’s world’, ‘glass ceiling’ aspect of the workplace. RO provides an explicit account of the lack of equality within the workplace which is encouraged by levels and different languages of sexual harassment. Her comments reveal how women function as bodies and sexual objects within the workplace. She observes how being positioned as a sexual object affects their ability to work legitimately as an intellectual within the working environment and the impact that this has on women’s career advancement. This supports chapter two and three’s argument of women’s role as a ‘body’ in workplace environments. RQ’s comments continue with this boys club and bodily theme.

The problems in achieving success she states that the problem is that there are:

RQ - Boys’ clubs – especially in law and specialist medicine.

Taking time out to have children. Although there are supposed to be regulations against it, I know of some management level people who will take on a man rather than a female, because they won’t get pregnant and take maternity leave. Also, it seems to fall on the female to stay away from work when children are sick, rather than the male.

It tends to be the female who undertakes casual and part-time work when children enter the equation.

There is also a pay discrepancy with women receiving lower incomes – this is influenced by the larger numbers that are not in full time work, but even full time managers indicate this gendered difference.

RP also notes the problems of ‘juggling family and work commitments’. Within the government sector, women are faced with a number of battles. Women are judged on their historical roles within these environments as well as their function as a body, whether that be sexual object or walking womb. When I asked if they undertook duties that were not within
their duty statements, that people in similar positions were not asked to do, mixed responses emerged.

RN - Very frequently. One example is that I undertook a counselling of staff and students with complaints. Also often other people were asked to undertake tasks but didn’t carry them out – this included press release, event organisation. As it was up to me to follow up, it often ended up that I would complete the tasks. This goes from simple/junior tasks to tasks asked by senior academics.

Also because I had an academic background I could move between academic and general staff positions – something that was not fully appreciated.

RO - No. My employers are a corporate university. They understand and respect the relationships between employers and employees. This means that they only pay for the work you do and in return do not expect you to do more than you are paid for. However, having said that, the teaching profession is set up so that teachers are always doing more work that they are actually being paid for. The hours or preparation, course design, marking and administering I do to teach my courses is unpaid.

RP - I am often asked to undertake higher level duties and usually am able to claim higher duties pay.

RQ - Yes. I had the skills and was willing to undertake them. The younger staff member was much more inclined to say it is time to finish so I’m leaving. I would stay until the task was completed.

Those working in an administrative capacity are required to do other duties. Those working in an academic capacity are not required to do so without some form of remuneration.

However, as RO remarks, lower end academic careers are structured on always having more work to do than is paid for. RO’s comment affirms the hierarchical structure of government workplaces. I asked them how much power they held within their positions. Three of the four did not believe they had much, if any authority.
RN - The power I held was really illusionary. It came from being the Executive Dean’s
time keeper and gate keeper. If people wanted access to him they sucked up to me.

RO - Very little. I am a casual worker who is employed on a needs and demands basis. If
there were no students to teach I would not be employed.

RQ - In what sense? I certainly have to conform in terms of clothes and abiding by the
regulations of the workplace. My manager was willing to negotiate and be flexible, but
this was power that she was willing to share, it is not necessarily guaranteed.

With the break-up of the power of the unions and the increasing casualization of the
workforce, and workplace agreements, I think that today’s workers are becoming more
and more disempowered. They have to rely on the goodwill & management style of the
boss. It is either put up or get out. And it can be difficult to find another job at present.

RP, who was the only respondent in a higher level middle tiered employee, thought she had
some form of power.

RP - I am responsible for deployment of teaching resources and administratively
contribute in a significant way to the formulation of University policy. Consequently
while I do not exercise much direct authority – indirectly I feel that I contribute
significantly to management.

The environment is highly tiered and male dominated, while career advancement can be
achieved the field, educational level and degree of time commitment determine it. While
such a system is a common trait of all successful careers, the movement towards a highly
casualized and non-standardized employment has made career advancement in a multitude of
fields – administrative and academic – increasingly difficult. All of the respondents believed
that others working in similar positions to them held the same amount of power. With no
other workplace incentives and low pay women’s roles within these government institutions
is typically Old Economic and difficult to manoeuvre through.

When I queried the respondents as to whether they believed that they were treated any
differently by colleagues due to the level of their position, they responded as follows.
RN - Yes – for the reason above.

RO - I believe I am treated differently because of my age rather than my level. As a younger member of staff I am often mistaken for the students I teach and while senior staff do treat me with respect some of the other casual staff do not.

RP - Yes – because I am responsible for deployment of resources, colleagues treat me respectfully.

RQ - There were usually only my manager and myself there on an ongoing basis. So this question does not really apply.

Certainly people were treated very differently in the bank depending on the level of their position. Banks are highly stratified and hierarchical.

The treatment of the respondents varied. The common links were in RP, RQ and RN responses, where the level of the position, what the position entailed or who it was linked to affected the level of respect they were given. Ultimately RP and RQ had quasi-respect, because they were responsible for certain resources or linked with important people (the Dean). Alternatively, RO was treated differently because of her age and the level of her position. A pertinent point in her answer was the fact that the casual staff were the perpetrators of the disrespect. This can be linked with the problems with non-standard work that was outlined in chapter four.

**Bodies in the Structure**

How women’s bodies function in places of work is a focal point of this thesis. I questioned the respondents as to the type of attire they wear to their workplace and how or if their clothing and body is responded to by their colleagues. All women wore what they considered
to be ‘executive’ or professional attire to the ‘office’, such as skirts, trousers, shirts and jackets.

RN - Skirts, pants and matching jackets. I had a corporate jacket. I mixed and matched with a lot of my own clothes creating a corporate but individual look. I generally wore panty hose and court shoes. On special casual days I would wear my jeans with a smart white shirt and my navy blue corporate jacket. My wardrobe had a lot of navy blue, light blue, white, black and red. Most of my clothes were solid colours – very little floral or patterns. I accessorized with scarves and jewellery, although my jewellery was usually understated. Never did I wear midriff tops, shoe string straps or mini skirts. The length of my skirts was on the knee or slightly below although I did have a couple of longer skirts but I did not wear them very often.

RO - I wear smart, tailored clothes – tops and skirts, pants, white shirts and jackets, flat shoes or boots.

RP - The clothes of a professional woman – eg good shoes, skirts and stockings or suits

RQ - Usually a blouse (which covers my shoulders) and slacks or skirt.

When queried as to whether other peers wear similar attire, the answers were mixed. The responses seemed dependent on the level of their positions and age, with the respondents stating that other employees dressed more or less casually than themselves.

RN - More corporate, smarter, less casual.

RO - Yes. Some colleagues dress in full business suit attire, others in more casual attire. I tend to be more stylish and contemporary.

RP - Younger and more junior members of staff dress more casually.

RQ - The manager often wore business suits, especially if she were attending a meeting. The other admin person wore similar clothing to myself.

I believe that three out of the four (RN, RO and RQ) floated between the casually dressed and the corporate wearers. RO who is the youngest of the respondents commented on the fact that she dressed more ‘stylish and contemporary’. They all believed in dressing in semi-
tailored attire. The trend of these answers supports the idea that workplaces are still Old Economic and the prevalence of the ‘executive look’. RP, who held a higher level position, stated that she wore ‘clothes of a professional woman’, which she then detailed that these ‘executive’ clothes were ‘good shoes, skirts and stockings or suits’. All of the respondents had had comments made about them in regards to their clothing.

RN - Yes – frequently. Comments were always positive, including “You are looking very corporate.” (Mainly from female academics)

RO - No. But my hair does spark a number of varied responses. Colleagues tend to pass judgements about me as the radical, trivial and ‘fun’ communications and media teacher as opposed to the more serious business and computing lecturers.

RP - Yes - ‘that looks nice’ or something like that.

RQ - “Nice top.” “Haven’t seen that before”

Back when I was in the bank (before the introduction of corporate wardrobes), I was told that my clothing was too casual. I was told to not wear sandals, but proper shoes. I also wore a jumper that had a clown on the front. The customers loved it. I was told by a female staff member that it wasn’t sufficiently professional. I conceded with the shoes, but not the jumper, saying that all the feedback from the customers had been positive. Perhaps this is why I never became a Bank Manager!

There is a level of professionalism and corporatism that exists within the government sector in regards to clothing. Positive comments surround those who dress in the suited manner, perceiving them as serious, dedicated employees. Where as a spiky hair or a clown jumper has deemed the employee trivial, radical and unprofessional. Thus supporting the research on the ‘executive look’ and clothing appropriateness that was disclosed in chapters two and three. RP’s intellectual ability and education comprising of three degrees is hampered and demeaned by her hair do – in a field which falls under the ‘Arts’.
I continued this inquiry, asking if the respondents had had comments made to them in regards to their bodies. All with the exception of RO had had comments made to them ranging from conversations regarding pregnancy to weight loss.

RN - Yes – weight loss. When you wear black people say you have lost weight.

When I was pregnant and working as a secretary at a mining company up north, I had a royal blue pinafore with pintuck pleats that I could wear with a number of different blouses plus a black maternity skirt and several tops. I always looked smart and received compliments. I did feel bad one time, not for myself but for another co-worker who was also pregnant as someone said how good I always looked. It sounded as if they were inferring she looked bad.

RP - When I was pregnant I was asked if I was pregnant.

RQ - People have commented on weight loss, when I have lost significant amounts. This has not happened recently! But that is because I haven’t lost any for some years now.

RQ comments that her body was commented upon when she lost weight. The respondent’s statement regarding weight and looking good, and the comparison to another women affirms the type and level of competition between women in the workplace, it is not contained to matters of work, but also characteristics pertaining to body size. The remarks made to and from the respondents did not follow through to sustaining a weight or putting on weight. Yet when women increased their weight through pregnancy commentary on her body is allowed. Pregnancy is a ‘get out of jail free card’ for women to increase in size. Her body becomes a target for bodily comment, triggered by more than just the size of the foetus growing in her uterus. It allows people to comment on the woman’s hair, skin and clothing. Pregnancy also disables the barrier of personal space whereby individuals feel they can touch the pregnant woman’s body. The lack of workplace structures or policies regarding prohibiting such a
situation reveals the nature of women’s function as body within this environment. RO also made a statement regarding her body coming under scrutiny in another semi-professional situation.

RO - No, not in a work situation. In another semi-professional context I was told I ‘filled out’ a shirt particularly well – presumably in relation to my bust-line – which offended me. It was a completely inappropriate comment and when I explained this to another male colleague of mine he was confused as to what the problem was.

Recently, I was invigilating an exam for my students and a colleague commented about the scarf I was wearing that he was used to seeing the colours in my hair not around my neck.

This comment resonates with the relationship between body gazing and the workplace that was argued in chapters three four. A lack of understanding is present within workplaces regarding boundaries of appropriate language and conversation. I am not advocating that conversations be monitored with incisor-like precision, but I do believe that new lines and boundaries need to be clearly revealed. Remarks such as RO’s make employees uncomfortable and conjure anger and resentment. There is a lack of knowledge, consciousness or awareness of why women may find these comments offensive. Simply because a statement about appearance is made in a positive manner does not mean the employee wants to hear it. A pregnant woman may enjoy the fact that she is pregnant, but this emotional state does not necessarily mean she wants the office workers judging her body in comparison to her previous size or the size of other pregnant women. The body is not relevant to work unless it is inhibiting the employee from completing his/her tasks. This is where clothing works as a protective tool. Utilized in various manners, it can combat and sensor the remarks made by peers and colleagues.

These women understood the clothing literacy of their workplaces. I asked if they believed that if they dressed differently within their workplaces, they would be treated differently. All responded in the affirmative.

RN - Yes – definitely. In a past position I was mistaken for being the senior manager by a visitor.

RO - Yes. In the times I have visited my place of employment out of work hours in casual clothing – jeans, shirt and sneakers – others have confused me for a student. I also get comments that people do not recognize me when they see me in this attire. Further, if I dressed in more conservative suits and flattened my hair I believe I would be treated as a much older and more serious scholar.

RP - I try to dress ‘professionally’ because I think that reflects on my managerial role and also in relation to my teaching.

If I dressed casually, I feel that I would not be projecting a ‘professional’ image.

RQ - Definitely. However I have never had the inclination – or the money – to ‘power dress’.

All of these women had a sense – even if they disliked it – of what they had to wear to the office. The respondents had learned the literacy of their particular workplaces. I asked them of their difficulty in buying appropriate workplace clothing.

RN - Not so much difficult as finding variety of style and colour so that it doesn’t become boring.

RO - I do find it difficult to find sharp and stylish clothing at a reasonable price. Obtaining clothes that are tailored but do not make me look like I am fifteen years older than I am can be adverse. There must also be a consideration of finding the right clothing that can make you look professional but not like you are wearing a sack. Portmans usually offers a nice range of professional, but shapely clothing. But I often find sizing and adequate diversity for my taste lacking.
RP - It's not difficult and I buy a lot of my clothing 2nd hand.

RQ - Difficult to find within my budget. And also, to find clothing that I like in my size. I have a bust and shirts tend to gape, so I have to spend time trying to find ones that either don’t have buttons (which is the ones I tend to prefer).

I found it much easier when I had a corporate wardrobe with the bank.

I also hate wearing work clothes when I am out casually, so I tend to have a completely different wardrobe.

All of the respondents besides RP found it difficult to buy appropriate clothing. This ranged from availability of differing styles to the cost and need for a separate working wardrobe. The respondents’ comments resonate with chapter two and three’s earlier discussions of sizing, functionality and the availability of appropriate clothing for the working environment. It also affirms the problem with the price of clothing and the gap that exists in regards affordable work attire that was addressed in chapter four. Responses were more varied when asked about their budgets for a working wardrobe.

RN - I tend to buy one or two very good pieces and mix with less expensive items. Hard to put a figure on it – between $200-$300.

RO - $120.00 But, recently for a job interview I paid $250.00 for an outfit.

RP - If its 2nd hand about $30-$40
If it’s new about $100 - $150

RQ - Absolutely minimal. I tend to buy new clothes when I have to. And, hopefully, on special.
The average price for a work outfit was between $150 and $200. This was considerably less than those working in private industry spend. RP had found the loophole of second hand clothing to address this problem.

The need for a second wardrobe reveals not only the requirement of a specific style of workplace clothing but also that this clothing does not align with the personality of the wearer. As RO remarks that she found, ‘sizing and adequate diversity for my taste lacking.’ This lack of appropriate workplace clothing diversity repeats the current problem within the Australian fashion industry to provide functional and appropriate workplace clothing. I believe that as professionals become younger, such as RO, workplace styles for women have not yet caught up. Once again, women have reached the door of a new work order before their clothing and workplaces have.

**Success Within the Structure**

I was provided with a myriad of responses when I asked respondents about their opinions on the current media representation of successful women. The majority of the respondents focussed on the stereotypes.

RN - They seem to fall into categories. The ruthless hard bitch that wears dark tailored suits. The “Betty” – the dizzy secretary - with loud colours, mini skirts or flowing gowns. The predator who wears sexy, low cut see through clothes. The office mouse who wears mid calf length straight skirts and cardigans.

RP - I think professional working women are presented reasonably well. There’s not much representation of non-professional working women
RQ - Very limited and very stereotyped. Let’s all power-dress & spend a lot of money on make-up as well. (By the way, I rarely wear make-up to work. Very occasionally, some lipstick. And, yes, people commented when I did.)

The way in which these stereotypes functioned was noted by both RN and RQ. Fashion and make-up played a significant role in the depiction of these characters through the media. The respondents’ remarks also reflected the stereotypical characters found in the popular cultural workplace. The comments made by RN and RQ confirm the bitch manifesto stereotype of professional women, and the lack of real representation of general working women. These answers reflect the notion of the ‘executive look’ as an image of the successful working woman. It was also what these respondents had focussed upon. The positions that these women were working in was lacking from their accounts. RO provided a very detailed account of this in her response.

RO - Well rounded representations are a little thin on the ground. Professional women are usually presented as completely incompetent or mean-spirited ball-breaking ladder-climbing egotists.

At the same time, I find another set of images of professional women as clothes horses – as if the workplace is simply a space for women to demonstrate their competence in dressing themselves rather than thinking, writing, managing or generating innovative solutions to problems. The case in example I am thinking of is Susan from Neighbours. Recently, this character has gone through a transformation. Her husband, Karl, has left her which she dealt with by getting a make-over. She now goes off to work with her groovy new hairstyle and stylish clothing – as if this is a symbol of her professional success and competence.

However, I find Sydney Bristow in Alias an interesting rendering of the professional woman. Sydney dresses in elegant black pant-suits in the workplace, but when she is out on a mission, the success of her infiltration and operational integrity is constructed on her surfaces. She wears wigs, extravagant eye-make-up and sexy little dresses as if to counteract the ‘masculinising’ influence of her suited office-wear. Sydney ‘works’ most productively, in her fashionably feminine outfits. She is at her most creative in this camouflage. This suggests that a woman is only as successful as her outfit. Her black suit is for meetings in the office where seriousness, protocol and policy hold sway. She is limited in this sphere by the structures of the workplace, and as a result she must conform
to the strategies of this space and its politics. Sydney walks the line many professional women balance upon – the desire to be taken seriously at work and the need to perform a functional femininity encoded on the body through fashion. She must be both serious and sexy – but few women are international operatives with the opportunity to slip into a little black dress and dance the salsa to flush out arms dealers trying to take over the world – thereby having the opportunity to demonstrate their sex appeal alongside their intelligent insight.

There is much truth in RO’s brutal account of the portrayal of successful women within the media and how these roles infiltrate wider societal beliefs. The need to walk a line between professional and a functional feminine body is provided within these texts. These texts reaffirm the need for constant vigilance in maintaining and portraying the female body in a work and social environment to prove her success. As RO so eloquently states, ‘a woman is only as successful as her outfit’. RO’s comment reflects the characteristics of the popular cultural workplace that was discussed in chapter four. The female characters within different television genres – soap, drama, crime, comedy - such as Neighbours or Alias reflect and conflate ideas of self, confidence and success, with clothes and image. These programs and characters such as Susan or Sydney vend the popular cultural workplace ideal, that to be an intelligent female, you have to be simultaneously beautiful. This beauty/intelligence sentiment links in with the attitude that is illustrated in self-help texts such as the girlosophy series, which was discussed in chapter one and the ‘executive look’ that was examined in chapter two. With such strong interview responses, I asked these women about the relationship between clothing and success. Two out of the four believed that it did have some affect on how they saw themselves.

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RN - While I’d like to believe that I dress to please myself and to a certain extent I do – I like to look smart, in keeping with the seriousness of the workplace, it does give you confidence. However, I do believe that media representations do affect self perception and perception of others.

RO - Yes. It has made me increasingly aware of the fine line women must walk at work between being ‘feminine’ in the traditional sense of conforming to fashionable and formfitting clothing and the professional tailored attire required to be taken seriously by colleagues.

These women are all – or on the way to being – highly educated and yet these images affect the way that they perceive themselves in the workplace and as women. They realize what is being shown and how this affects how they need to execute their bodies and clothing within the workplace environment. Education and experience and even the position that they are entering does not allow these women to let down their protective clothing barrier. Even within a Division of Arts a female employee can not be too artsy or too radical. When asked if there was anything that the respondents would like to add in regards to their treatment in the workplace, two responses ensued.

RO - My harshest critics are my students who are from across the world. These individuals often come from wealthy families and from places like Hong Kong, Singapore and Kenya where fashion is absolutely functional to the status you occupy in those societies. These people care deeply about fashion and the labels they wear. They are judged by their peers on this basis. It is a signifier of their wealth and social status. Therefore, I find my presentation to these students to have more at stake than my colleagues. If I do not dress appropriately for them – they will not take me seriously. This does not mean I must wear a suit – but I must appear contemporary, cutting-edge and fashionable.

RP - My working conditions are relatively good – although sometimes productivity expectations cause me stress and anxiety. However this applies to any professional working position.

These two responses represent the two ends of the academic spectrum. RO is at the bottom beginning her career as a lecturer. She is aware of how she is perceived visually and how this
affects her credibility intellectually. To navigate her way through the system and her career with speed and respect, she must adhere to appropriate dress standards. The fact that RO is required to act in such a manner, illustrates that historical links between women and social status/credibility are still linked to image and dress. RP is at the upper echelons of academic as an Associate Dean she has already worked her way for fifteen years up the rans of academia. Looking down from up there she now sights if her working conditions are actually good and the productivity and anxiety involved in her position. Responses such as those provided in these interviews, demonstrate the importance of oral testimony as this material revealed the stories, histories and the complexities that surround contemporary Australian workplaces for women at the beginning, middle and end of their careers. Perhaps this anxiety would be lessened if women in government institutions did not have to spend a large part of their lives worrying about how clothing may affect their comfort, personal boundaries or the continuance of their careers.
Chapter Seven
The New Work Order: education, mentoring and the compartmentalisation of the Australian workforce

Genelle: ‘Angela what song should I play at the beginning of my Sociology of Work tutorial, to start the student’s thinking about work?’

Angela: ‘How about Dolly Parton’s Nine to Five?’

Genelle: ‘How about …Take This Job and Shove It?’

Nine to Five

Working nine to five
what a way to make living
 Barely getting by
 it's all taking and no giving.
They just use your mind
 and they never give you credit
It's enough to drive you crazy
if you let it.

Take This Job and Shove It

Take This Job and Shove It
I ain't working here no more
 My woman done left
 and took all the reasons
 I was working for
You better not try to stand in
my way as I'm walking out the door

Take this job and shove it
I ain't working here no more
I've been working in this factory
For nigh on fifteen years
All this time I watched my woman
Drowning in a pool of tears
And I've seen a lot of good folks die
That had a lot of bills to pay
I'd give the shirt right off my back
If I had the guts to say

The contemporary Australian workforce is punctuated with exclamations of employee despair. Such aggravation is not sourced from the (increasingly rare) nine to five job, or a long-term occupational role held for fifteen or twenty years. It is exemplified through unemployment, underemployment and the casualization of the workforce. This chapter aligns the shifting theories of the Australian workplace presented in chapter four with its lived applications, as disclosed through the interviews with working women. The role of this chapter within this thesis is to illustrate the evolving workplace and Australia’s movement into a work world that is focused on the creative industries. It explores the interviewees’ relationships to New Economic elements. In doing so, I unpack theories of post work and the compartmentalized workforce. Stepping forward from the problems that were expressed by women in chapters five and six, this section provides a strategy for a change in education as well as confirming the necessity of mentoring in relation to careers and entry into the new work order.

Within chapter four, I discussed New Economic ideologies and how they were emerging in the Australian employment landscape. The interview responses, from chapters four and five, provided first hand knowledge and experiences of these New Economic developments and how they are largely an aesthetic change. These came in the form of the look of office (as in the physical with the rare corporal example of) structure as well as an increase in workplace flexibility and employment packages. It is recognized that such aesthetic progress is occurring in Private rather than Government industries, and that most workplaces are really Old Economic structures and formations with New Economic ‘looks.’ An analysis of the
accounts of women existing within both structures illustrated some problematic interactions between woman and their role in the workplace.

The responses proved that most women did not have a problem attaining a job within a private or government workplace through standard practices, such as answering an advertisement and attending an interview, or via the non-standard, being headhunted or knowing somebody already in the industry. Issues and concerns arose in two areas. The first is captured in the phrase ‘work / life balance’. The other emerged through career advancement. It would seem that the former had an impact on the latter. Concern was dispersed differently between private and governmental sectors, within different industries as well as within the same industry but different positions. Women in the private sector noted ‘work/life balance’ as their major concern. For these women, the ability to ascertain a higher position is less worrying than the capacity to maintain it. The long hours, travel or moving to another country would disrupt the family life. The other concerns for the success of women in private industry were the lack of women undertaking technical degrees in university as well as the aggressive nature of private industries.

The government sector appeared to be more rife with problems. Although there were work/life balance concerns, the main focus was upon male domination. Those working at an administrative level did not want to attain high-level positions as they were not employed in their chosen field. Those women, working in the bottom rungs of academia, articulated problems with the physical structure of educational institutions. It was labelled a ‘boy’s club’
where women, operating at varying levels, were directed into performing historical notions of femininity.

When investigating the two sectors, it is clear that the private industries are more advanced in manifesting New Economic ideologies. I observe that the private sector is a step ahead of the government industries, whose residence in Old Economic environs, both aesthetically and structurally, ensures that barriers are blocking women climbing the ‘corporate ladder’. On closer inspection, it seems that there has been a removal of ‘ladders’ altogether. This is not by any means a positive step. It means there are no longer straight and definable roots for career advancement – for women and men. Employees cannot simply bide their time in one workplace and expect that they will receive a superior job. There is no assumed career path.

Perhaps an adequate label for this awkward and irregular conceptualization of employment and identity is encased in the word ‘post work’. Contemporary Australia, akin to the rest of the world, is managing the intricate dialogue between technological and social change.

The twentieth century ends with the growth of cybervanguardism, a stridently pro-technotopia movement, particularly in the mass media, typified by an obsession to the point of hysteria with emergent technologies, and with a consistent and very deliberate attempt to shut down, silence, and exclude any perspectives critical of technophobia. Not a wired culture, but a virtual culture that is wired shut: compulsively fixated on digital technology as a source of salvation from the reality of a lonely culture and radical social disconnection from everyday life, and determined to exclude from public debate any perspective that is not a cheerleader for the coming-to-be for the fully realized technological society.3

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Although Australia has not yet faced Borg assimilation, it is a technocentric society. A fixation with hardware and software has lead to a change in expectations of employee technological knowledge, as well as the permeation of work into free time through mobile telephones, pagers and emails. Such expertise, as an employee requirement, has created a barrier for those who do not have it and/or those who are unable to procure it. The ‘problem’ with digitized technology is not only a class debate, it also intersects with education and age - the cliché that an eight year old knows more about a computer than their parents holds some truth. A proliferation in digitized technology is part of the New Economic paradigm, but what is its effect on ‘work’ as an activity?

An increase in workplace technology has allowed for a change in the idea of ‘work’. It is something that no longer requires a workplace. It also has a significant relationship with women. Employment that once could only be achieved in an office, a boardroom with colleagues or travelling overseas can be undertaken in a lounge room with a computer and an Internet connection. In 1997, B. Ruby Rich wrote,

> For too long, technology for the home has meant food processors, microwave ovens, or at best, the home shopping network and Volvos. That’s what’s aimed at women. But what if life were different? What if home technology could mean more than listening to the baby over a wireless monitor or baking bread in the same machine that kneads it?...

> Imagine a truly interactive computer/telephone system that seeks to break women’s isolation, replace the extended family with virtual communities, and enhance women’s empowerment through strategic linkages.  

Rich’s technological dream, summoned almost ten years ago, is recognisable in Australian households. Computers, the Internet and other digitized technologies

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continue to permeate the domestic sphere. Rich also argues, ‘it’s clear that the entrance of these technologies into the home has rendered domestic space less “female”’. While I agree with Rich that certain technologies within the home can increase a user’s link with different communities, I disagree that it enhances empowerment – this would assume that all women have access to such technologies and are literate in their use. Technological platforms such as computers and the Internet, if used in the same way as home shopping and bread makers, encourages women to remain within the domestic space. This is not to say that women who want to be in the domestic sphere should leave, but those who want to move into the public realm should not be placated by the availability of technologies such as the Internet in the home. Women’s relationship with digitized technology requires greater complexity than concerns with ‘access’ and the availability of broadband in the family home.

Judy Wajcman observes,

Much of the best writing that combines feminist perspectives with the social studies of science and technology is in the area of biomedical innovations. In contrast to earlier feminist analyses of reproductive technology, this literature adopts a more nuanced version of the socio-technical network that encompasses the medical profession, including the entry of women into the profession, as well as women’s consumer power.

Technology and feminism require precise historical and contextual convergence. It is only in recent writings that celebrations of ‘progress’ and ‘the future’ have been critiqued by detailed investigations of women’s engagement with technology and the way in which they affect each other. This may be a result of a change in the perception towards technology by the next generation of females. These women are savvy with

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5 ibid., p. 228.
6 A recent Australian example of this is the Optus broadband advertisement that was released in April 2006. It features two women drinking coffee in the kitchen and one woman is telling the other how broadband could improve her friends life because she can pay the bills online, research for household appliances and do the shopping. Optus Broadband Advertisement. Channel 10, April 2006.
digital technology and they create it as a part of their education or career, and engage with it, as a time saver, a provider of knowledge and a source of leisure. Wajcman writes,

Technology must be understood as part of the social fabric that holds society together; it is never merely technical or social. Rather, technology is always a socio-material product – a seamless web or network combining artefacts, people organizations, cultural meanings and knowledge.\textsuperscript{8}

It is socially productive to cite technology and its affect upon gender in an overarching manner, as Wajcman has suggested. Otherwise, it becomes 1950s designs created for women to operate, but not engage with, the development of technology. A lack of technological application positions women as consumers, and as Rich would have it, accessing the world from their lounge rooms without corporeally entering it. The relationship between domesticity, women and technical devices, does not render technology in the domestic space as dire. It has created a new workforce that has allowed employees to conference from the couch. Although gender is involved, there are ramifications for the entire Australian workforce.

As recognized in chapter three, the boundaries of social life and work life are frayed. Such a change does not infer that we are operating in a post-work society. Post-work assumes a society existing beyond work. Where the structure of employment is deconstructed and where a fulfilling non-work life is sort. Stanley Aronowitz et. al. are of the belief that,

The new world of post-work is a rupture with both the economic and cultural assumptions of work without end. What has been called utopian in the past is now a practical necessity. The world of post-work doesn’t have

\textsuperscript{8} \textit{ibid.}, p. 106.
to mean a world of massive poverty and drudgery and want but it can be a
world of limitless individual and social potential where everyone is
guaranteed “the good life”.

There are markers of this post-work ethos within contemporary Australia. The
casualized labour force, increased free time, increased technology and an increase in
the creative industries. These changes are matched with increased unemployment,
multiple casualized jobs and declining stability in work, a concern about citizens near
or below the poverty line, children living with their parents longer and a minority of
people who are actually living the “good life”. People are not blessed with ‘free’ time.

Stanley Aronowitz remarks:

We are now faced with the unexpected but startling prospect for long term
10-15% unemployment in all advanced capitalist countries because growth
rates have not matched forecasts and employers are scrambling to use
labor-saving technologies to bolster profit rates especially in Europe where
labor’s power prevents the alternative strategy of wage cutting…However,
10-15% permanent unemployment raises larger issues for the society as a
whole. Since the workers and their unions moved, implicitly, on the
assumption that work itself was the defining activity of their lives, the
question was what to do with the time, the most knotty and complex
question of the technological change.

Aronowitz raises the issue of free time. Such an idea follows the argument that where
employment and ‘leisure’ were opposed, they have become entwined with the idea of
free time. The arrival of free time is not a marker that we are ‘in’ or heading toward
post-work system. Simply because there are those who are not (currently) working or

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Lacharite, ‘Sustained and Growing Underemployment in Australia and Canada: The Truth behind Government
200207351., M. Pusey, The Experience of Middle Australia: The Dark Side of Economic Reform. Melbourne:

11 ibid.

12 ibid.
who are employed part-time does not presuppose a society which does not wish to work or are not working full time (or more) hours. Within Aronowitz et. al.’s program for a life ‘beyond compulsory labour’\textsuperscript{13} they outline an eight point structure\textsuperscript{14} which involves a guaranteed income for all, although ‘able-bodied women and men would share the tasks associated with a clean and healthy environment.’\textsuperscript{15} His structure, which also involves reduced working hours, building a mass transit system and funding for the arts\textsuperscript{16} is contradictory. Although it is evocative to think of a society where we can throw off the shackles of an embedded work ethic and consumerism, it is optimistic to assume that workers have the consciousness or the means to enact such a change. As revealed through my interviews, Aronowitz is correct to confirm that there is dissonance between employees and current state of the workforce, but I cite this new work order as that of the compartmentalized workforce.

(Late) capitalist society is often defined as post-work because the organization of the workforce has been transformed from a full time to a part time labour force. James Rinehart suggests that, due to globalisation, this was also occurring in America in the 1990s,

\begin{quote}
Globalization and the need for competitiveness, so it was claimed, left corporate chieftans no choice but to introduce drastic cost-cutting measures. Outsourcing and subcontracting, part-time and temporary jobs, and two – tiered wage systems increased. There was no need to amplify these
\end{quote}

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{13} Aronowitz, Esposito, DiFazio & Yard, ‘The Post-Work Manifesto’, op. cit, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{14} \textit{ibid.}, pp. 75 – 79.
\textsuperscript{15} \textit{ibid.}, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{ibid.}.
\end{flushleft}
developments. Companies simply slashed their workforces and restructured without much, if any sugar coating.\textsuperscript{17}

A similar shift in employment occurred in Australia during this time, and has continued to transpire. The problem with a part time or casual workforce, is that is creates an illusion of a society of ‘leisure’ rather than employment. A transient workforce does not recognize the lack of money required to undertake ‘leisure’, or that this casualization of the workforce has driven people to embark on multiple jobs. Therefore life is no longer split between a job and ‘leisure’. It is split into multiple compartments of work (paid and unpaid), home life and leisure. A retreat to the binaries of workplace versus home and work versus leisure reveals that they now operate in mutual territory.\textsuperscript{18}

The result is a compartmentalized/segmented workforce. The essence of a part-time-centric employment sector proposes the idea of increased job flexibility, but as Jennifer Jihye Chun suggests, ‘Critics of flexibility are highly sceptical of the “newness” of today’s workplaces and their ability to generate a “better world” for everyone’.\textsuperscript{19} Chun brings into light the suggestion that corporate leaders might actually take the wellbeing


\textsuperscript{18} The participation in leisure, even in these blurred leisure/work environments, is of a great importance to workers. In his research regarding the leisure world of ‘lads’ Tony Blackshaw writes,

\textit{The trappings of the leisure life-world may at times weigh heavy on our shoulders. This is because our life is not simple. It requires patient understanding, imagination and the power to endure constant adversity. Yet a feeling of 'home', of belonging, of happiness, always prevails. Without the leisure life-world we feel naked and exposed. Within the leisure life-world we resolutely protect what we love-our values, our ideas, our culture, each other. The marvel of 'the lads' is that we have the tenacity of spirit to go on fighting in spite of this troubling admixture of seduction, added responsibility and increased control. And the desire for a better life may be a powerful one, but the desire to be together has remained stronger. For a part of us will always be drawn back, to our rampaging and our madness. Now in our thirties, heaven is 'home', and 'home' is the leisure life-world. What is great about the leisure life-world is that it never completely loses its potency, because there is never any form of culmination or ending attached to it.}


of employees and, in a greater sense, society into consideration when formulating strategies for employment. If indeed a post-work society exists, such leaders would not be required to reflect upon the needs of employees.\textsuperscript{20} There would be no need for flexible ‘work’ as ‘work’, as a single ideal could not be sustained. Aronowitz’s idea of post-work society also decentres unpaid labour – such as domestic duties, family care and volunteering. Relieving society of compulsory work may shift some of these segments of working life from paid to unpaid, but even such a movement would be minimal. As long as people require food, shelter and clothing for which they must pay, work will be undertaken. The key node of discussion in a (post)work age is the degree of consciousness and agency in managing the exploitation enacted through the discourse of employment.

Australia is not operating in a post-work system, but is rather suffering from a crisis of working identity. By mobilising the term ‘crisis’, I refer to the current difficulty in defining a person by their work. This ambivalence and confusion is because they often have several jobs, and there is not necessarily one of which they carry out more regularly than another. In twenty first century Australia it is becoming increasingly more difficult to find an appropriate employment box to tick. People are now defined by outcomes, their ability to be able to have a life that encompasses a career, family, education and leisure. This trend that was revealed in the interviews that were undertaken in chapters five and six.

\textsuperscript{20} Reeves comment, which was discussed in chapter four, remarked upon employers ‘kowtowing’ to employee demands in contemporary workplaces. R. Reeves, \textit{Happy Mondays: putting the pleasure back into work}. USA: Perseus, 2001, p. 90.
There are both positive and negative consequences of such a development. Primarily such a problem, in the employment sector and in wider Australia, pinpoints the dilemma of people defining themselves by their work. A utopian result would be to have a ‘life’, rather than a work/life balance. A 2001 editorial opinion in *The Australian* remarks that, ‘the participation of women in the paid workforce is the great and ongoing social revolution of our time. Ye women have been left largely alone to manage the difficult problem of achieving a balance between work and home’. Although both genders are affected by non-standard employment, there is a particular consequence for women, who are beginning to make deeper inroads into the workforce and have now had the goal posts of success and achievement moved. But in making this statement, it is not only women being pushed to participate into the casualized labour force. In effect they have historically been balancing life with family in such a workforce for decades. In a discussion of ‘working fathers,’ the following statistic was stressed: ‘between 1966 and 1998 the labour force participation rate of married women increased from 29 to 55 per cent in June 1996, 61 per cent of couple families with dependents had both families in the workforce’. This has become problematic in a contemporary milieu for a number of reasons. Firstly it is no longer only women and their employment that is being affected. Secondly there has been generational change in thought regarding work – especially in terms of women.

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The generation of women currently entering and operating in the workforce are often the daughters of feminists or supporters of some form of gender equity. These young women have been informed that they have myriad career choices.\textsuperscript{23} They are told that they can be successful, but they might face difficulty because there are still more men than women in many workplaces. The problem lies in the socialization. Women entering the workforce, especially as a professional, have an underlying notion that success depends on whether they can succeed in a man’s world. Can they reach ‘the top’? If they cannot, then it must be the ‘boy’s club’ keeping them down.\textsuperscript{24} This was recognized in many of the interview responses found in previous chapters. I make a disclaimer here: I do believe that there are many gender-inequitable workplaces in existence,\textsuperscript{25} but I do not believe that is the reason why women are not making it to that next level. There are external forces, such as the lack of skills to operate in the rapidly changing workplace, which is an environment that is significantly different to our mothers before us. These women are also from a hyper-consumerist, instant-gratification generation. They want ‘it’ now, and do not believe in sacrifice.\textsuperscript{26} Michelle Rice writes,

\begin{quote}
Generational change is also fanning the work-life balance revolution. In particular, Generation Yers (born between 1981-1995) are looking for jobs and working conditions that provide a challenge and fit their lifestyle.\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{23} Education for these careers is offered at TAFE (technical and further education), through apprenticeships and University.
\textsuperscript{24} For examples see:
\textsuperscript{25} See:
What remains is a generation of women and men who are asking why they have not attained ‘it all’ – the enjoyable and successful career, the money, the family and the ‘lifestyle’? They cannot have these tokens and markers of success because they are not provided with the tools to negotiate their way through the contemporary workplace. The first step to gain this knowledge and consciousness is for women to remove the blaming of ‘men’ – as a category - from the work/success equation.

While women use the idea of a ‘boy’s club’, the ‘glass ceiling’ and ‘gender inequality’ as the excuse for being unsuccessful in a career then disequilibrium of power will remain in effect. There is a certain level of irresponsibility that the current generation(s) (X, Y and beyond) of women possess, as a result of not planning their lives. I am not suggesting that every person should have a fifty-year plan, but women seem surprised when they cannot balance a full time career with multiple children and leisure time, or they are horrified when they turn forty and find out they cannot have children. It seems that some Generation X and Y women have been swept up – and bowled over - in the abundance of life choices. These women have not considered the consequences of choosing career over education or family, or the notion that all of these choices cannot be undertaken at the one time. Women need to admit that they want to be

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28 This can be related to Blackshaw’s idea of leisure in liquid modernity. He argues, In terms of our leisure lives, this means that we now hold a cool disregard for the present and the uncertainty of the future, and what we embrace is the past. It is a new chapter in our existence. However, this new chapter requires nothing new, only our continued commitment. Today we may only occasionally be able to identify happiness by felicitation; to make the leisure life-world manifest and enjoy it for what it is. We might not have accepted this contingency, but we have adapted to it, and have coped with it. This is because, despite what we insist, we are flexible, we are much like other men and women in liquid modernity.

Blackshaw, op. cit., p. 93.
Superwoman. This term and label is not synonymous with the ‘Superwoman’ of the 1980s and 1990s. It was considered that women were being pushed into having to work full time and look after the children and household. This a reality created by too much choice and lack of information, education and mentoring on how to make informed decisions.

The rationale for the third reason of an imbalance of life, which also surrounds the first two characteristics, is that of a change in family care. This not only involves the precedence of duel career families and changes to the primary child-carer, but also the increased need for aged care. Elloy and Smith propound,

Women increasingly expect to combine a paid job with motherhood, and, duel earner households have become more prevalent. As a result, few families now fit the traditional mould of the man as sole breadwinner and the woman as housekeeper and primary care-giver.

I believe such a change has seen the birth of the work/life balance myth and a trend toward the acceptance of the part-time, casualized and contract workforce that is often part of the creative industries.

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30 Theorist such as Hochschild and Machung look at working women’s lives in terms of two shifts – one at work and one at home. Recently writers such as Allison Pearson are suggesting contemporary Australian women are wanting to ‘return to the home’, as simultaneously working and raising a family requires a sacrifice in time spent with their children.
Dissidence between the current structure of work and employee workplace knowledge has created this confusion. Both genders are not only facing the cacophony of changes to family work structures but are also caught in the limbo that has been created when these structures are separated from work itself, this has continued to shift with the increased casualization of the work force. The consequence is the need for a supplementary working life, which is witnessed in the trend toward the creative industries, however the job/life binary results in the inability to incorporate this with family or leisure. What remains are two compartmentalized lives – work and life. These are all symptoms of an overall lack of knowledge on how to deal with this new workforce. There are three major concerns that require discussion in order to initiate strategies for a change in thought regarding the relationship between work and life. These are the dissolution of the work/life balance myth, work education and career mentoring. The current predicament, in itself, is not a gendered. But it does affect women in a manner different to men.

Social conditioning from previous feminist generations has left this cohort of women feeling indebted to the cause – ambitious to achieve private and public success easily and without sacrifice. It is as if women feel like they are on borrowed time in the workforce and if they do not succeed quickly they will lose what precious inroads they have made. It is for this reason that they are seek out this elusive work/life balance. This phrase is bandied about amongst human resources, management and business sectors and in recent history has had much media attention. Articulated as work/life, work-life, work life or work and life balance (although some should mean the balance
between work and life and others, the balance of life at work), it would seem these phrases have become conflated and indistinguishable. James Cowley writes,

> Work-life balance is one of the issues concerning people today. Across the sections of society this concern has gained momentum over in the last few years. People leave jobs that don’t make sense in their lives; make radical career changes; or make mistakes and leave gaps in good business procedures when their lives become unbalanced.32

Cowley’s use of the expression reveals the disruption that can affect work-life when a life becomes unbalanced. The *Accounting Office Management & Administration Report*33, states

> “Longer working hours and unpredictable work schedules can all add up to less flexibility, less personal or family time, and ultimately more stress,” explains Dr. Susan Black, president of the Toronto office of Catalyst, the research advisory organization that works with businesses to build inclusive environments and expand opportunities for women at work. “In addition to the high cost to individuals and families, there is also a significant business cost when work/life balance issues are not addressed.”34

The Accounting Report cites the overall detriment to business and family when there is an imbalance of work/life. These ambivalent phrases can be taken to mean a balance between work and life (which constitutes everything outside of work). But what actually is this balance for which people are striving? Well there are a number of inconsistencies here. Firstly there is the problem of placing work as a binary to life. The two can never balance, as they do not exist together. This also assumes, similar to the theory of post-work, that work only refers to paid employment. If people want to strive for a balanced life, then they must include work in it rather than as opposed to it. A tethering, which symbolizes with the hypothesis of a compartmentalized life, when paid, unpaid and supplementary work are all combined as parts of a whole life. Rice

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34 *ibid.*, 10
writes, ‘Up-and-comers at some top firms have been told work-life balance is bunkum because work is a part of life’.\(^{35}\) Even if the linguistic problems of work/life balance are ignored and it is viewed as concept that, when stabilized, can create an über life, employers are still in a quandary. The problem is located in the assumption that employers can change working conditions to enable employees to obtain this ‘balance’. Although Cowley believes that businesses can modify work practices to support the expedition toward balance\(^{36}\) he also suggests, ‘balance is a journey, not a destination. A business cannot, and should not, try to do that for its staff.\(^ {37}\) At its core, the work/life balance quandary requires employers to provide a work environment that nurtures employees varied lives. In a society that promotes ‘lifestyle(s)’ it would be impossible for an employee to supply an environment that would meet everybody’s need for equilibrium. Therefore, the work/life balance - in the linguistic as well as in utopian sense - is a myth. Hammonds writes,

> Balance per se isn’t a goal. “It’s an afterthought, a way of describing the outcome,” says executive coach David Zelman. Seeking balance is futile because it’s an intangible and, so, impossible to measure.\(^ {38}\)

Intangible goals, add to the confusion of creating a stable life. ‘Am I balanced now?’ or ‘If I spent two less hours at work a week, would I be more balanced?’ To overcome this struggle, the employed need to review their lives and incorporate work as a part of overall structure. Hammonds suggests,

> Take your life for what it is – a rich and varied story defined by ever-changing circumstances and priorities. Work determines just some of those. The object is to achieve balance not at any one point, but over the

\(^{35}\) Rice, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

\(^{36}\) Cowley, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

\(^{37}\) *ibid.*, p. 29.

long haul. Doing so means deciding what’s important, then ordering your work and life accordingly.  

Hammond’s preferred recommendation for ordering work within life is important and relevant for women. Full attention cannot be given to nurturing a career, giving birth to a child, looking after a family and engaging with leisure simultaneously. Time management comes down to the clock. If a person is spending eight hours at work, they are not at home, shopping, playing sport or in school. As work continues on a path of casualized, part-time transformation, a compartmentalized life will ensue. If ‘life’ can be recognized as a series of compartments, then informed choices could be attempted. During various phases of a life, different compartments will need greater attention. If it can be realized that life is now divided into multiple, small segments of time, then feelings of balance, guilt, anxiety and being time-poor can be avoided. Twenty first century Australia is not based around, or structured by, nine to five jobs and nuclear families. If contemporary lifestyles are trying to be balanced with a disrupted workplace structure, the instability in workers lives will remain. Strategies to resolve these struggles involve the need for education on the structure of the contemporary workplace in school as well as continued career mentoring.

The belief that education in schools regarding workplace structure is required is not a criticism of current work experience modules. Sue Fullarton states,

Work experience programs began in Australia in the late 1960s (Cole, 1979, p.31) and have been a feature of the Year 10 curriculum since the early 1980s. Work experience is a program of relatively short duration that enables students to become actively involved in gaining first hand

39 ibid.
experience and a broad awareness of the world of work, and to develop and
test career choices in the actual workplace.\(^{40}\)

Current vocational education training (VET) as well as work placement learning
programs such as INSTEP and TRAC, allow the students to gain knowledge about
working and provide a form ‘real life’ on-the-job training. In these programs an
extensive period of time is spent in the workplace where some job specific skills as
well as ‘generic’ work skills can be learnt through work experience. In recent years,
work placement learning programs have become an alternative stream of education for
students who are not intending to continue on to University. Nhi Nguyen writes,

> Pilot studies were undertaken in the early 1990s to link schools to
>vocational education and training and create relationships between schools
>and industry. By the mid-1990s, there was clear support for expanding
>vocational education in schools beyond the pilots. By 1996, agreement was
>reached across all states and territories, and the Commonwealth, to allocate
>significant funding for the implementation of this new initiative, known as
>VET in Schools.\(^{41}\)

VET’s curriculum, includes programs such as INSTEP, an arrangement which offers
students placements in workplaces, a day a week for a semester. They then seek an
alternative job placement in the next semester. The student’s workplace supervisor acts
as a teacher, mentor and trainer. The supervisor grades the individual on program
specific criteria that is interpreted and applied to that particular job. Such an example
is: \textit{criteria – can student follow written instructions}? The workplace is a graphic design
studio and the application is: the student reads the manual and uses Adobe Photoshop
correctly. It is obvious to recognize why such criteria must be broad, as students are
entering a multitude of workplaces. The only negative attribute to this mode of

\(^{40}\) S. Fullarton, \textit{Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth: Work Experience and Work Placements In Secondary
education is that it is reliant on the willingness of the supervisor and drive of the student. The level of knowledge acquired is a result of how this criterion is applied. Overall, if quality links exist between the school and industry then these programs are invaluable. I would suggest that they are not marketed as an alternative to University. Such an act separates the two and marks such programs, along with apprenticeships, as of less quality and requiring less intelligence. This in turn affects the meaning and the experience for students attending University, as it necessitates that the institution is attended for status, rather than achieving the correct education required for an intended career. Although some students continuing onto higher education do participate in these programs, it should be something in which all students participate in order to be adequately trained for a career. In the NCVER paper Young People and Vocational Training Options, released in 2005, Davina Woods remarks,

> Teese (2002) reports that early school leavers have a positive view of the vocational value of VET across a range of objectives. These objectives include skills development, employment, career growth and access to further study. Teese also reports that early school leavers gain significant social benefits form VET. These include improvement in ability to communicate, in the perception of lifelong learning and in self-esteem.

It is these career objectives and social benefits which lead to informed life choices and direction. The VET workplace learning and work experience programs vary from school to school and from state to state. In those curricula in which I have acted as a supervisor - INSTEP workplace learning, TAFE work experience and University job placement - I have witnessed a distinct lack of information within the program criteria that addresses the impact of the intended job on life. I believe if all programs

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incorporated career research into work experience curriculum, a path to realising the impact of future careers, as well as improving time management, could be formulated. It would also allow prospective employees to recognize other potential aspects of a life involving the intended career such as: if they are going to have to undertake multiple jobs; study and work simultaneously; work seven day weeks or whether travel or work overseas is necessary in order to gain certain positions. It would act as an invaluable precursor to a burgeoning life. As Ryan suggests, ‘the route from schooling to employment is often depicted nowadays as long and perilous unlike the short and direct routes presumed available to previous generations’. By implementing career research into such VET programs, the extent of the route can be known before it is attempted.

Career mentoring is the continuation of this learning curve. Mentoring is different from ‘life coaching’. The Australian Women’s Mentoring Network states that, ‘coaching is for people who are willing to stretch themselves to go beyond what they could achieve on their own, to make their goals a reality’. Mentoring which can be formal, informal, professional, free, charged, an individual session or undertaken in groups, is focused on the mentee’s industry. Mentor/mentee relationships or as it is called in the USA being ‘peer pals’ is a contested affiliation. This what is often related to two major themes the nature of the role of mentor as a wise teacher and mentee is the padawan learner come protégé, but Woodd suggests

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This may be where the problem lies, as mentoring is perceived as hierarchical, the mentor being more powerful and having more knowledge than the mentee or a father figure for the mentor seems less appropriate today, even where the junior employee is assigned a more senior adviser to help them develop their career.\(^{47}\)

The other reason for conjecture over the mentoring relationship is that it often activated within the same workplace. Wodd confirms that, ‘job feedback is primarily a line management function which may be problematic to both the mentor/mentee relationship and the boundaries perceived by management’.\(^{48}\) Such a suggestion affirms the problem with workplace competition between women, and blurred boundaries present in contemporary workplaces that was addressed in earlier chapters. If a mentoring partnership exists ‘for career strategising and job related feedback (Collegial Peer)\(^{49}\) and outside of a singular organisation, then it can be imperative to the success of the mentee. Therese Joiner et.al. observe,

The mentoring process can serve both career enhancement and psycho-social functions for the protégé. Career enhancement roles in mentoring include sponsorship, coaching, exposure, protection and provision of challenging assignments. The psycho-social functions include acceptance, counselling, emotional support and role modelling.\(^{50}\)

If the balance between peer and informer/informed can be maintained, then such relationships are required for all those who wish to have a successful career. Work experience supervisors and other employees in the industry can impart information regarding the time, energy, location and money involved in a career. Mentors can then provide mentees with first hand knowledge to navigate their way through current situations. This ‘hand-holding’ could be considered questionable, but is a necessity for

\(^{47}\) ibid.
\(^{48}\) ibid., p. 335.
\(^{49}\) ibid.
success. Mentors are the new replacements for ladders. Where there were once direct routes, now mentors, who have been in the mentee’s industry, can show them what they need to do in order to gain their desired success.

This correlates one of RF’s answer in chapter five: ‘You can’t be what you can’t see’. Mentors are needed if not for anything more than explaining to women the trajectory and potential struggles that may occur working in particular fields. In their research, Alison Clarke and Patricia Howard comment,

One mentor said: “I have come through the school of hard knocks. It would have been nice for someone to give me some help and tips, and help with my direction. I just wanted to help some younger people – especially females.”

In the structure of the contemporary Australian workplace, mentors are needed for both genders. I believe that the reoccurring theme, that women are those that are in the greatest need of help, stems from their late arrival into higher positions in workplaces, the shifting structures of workplaces and the suggestion that many higher level positions are male dominated. In a 2003 radio interview with Phillip Lasker, Elizabeth Proust (once a managing director of ANZ Asset Finance) states,

I've never stayed longer than five years in one place and I've been able to move up a career ladder by moving out and up, if you like. I think the problems are still, today, acute for women who try to climb that career ladder within one organisation. And if I had to put my finger on one thing, I think it is around corporate culture, where there's still a predominant male culture in the organisation—and still in 2003 males who generally have wives or partners at home who look after child caring and household tasks and the like.

The existence of male-dominated industries has had an influence on the need for women’s mentoring. I believe that the reason why it is so heavily promoted is because of the lack of the early stages of pre-employment mentoring. Men may be the ‘unmarked sign’ in the workplace, but if women had prior knowledge of what was involved in obtaining high levels of success in their intended career, such as in workplace learning programs, then they would be aware of occupational strategies that are required to achieve this success. Men, alternatively, are already in these positions and only now have to deal with the changing shape of workplace structures.

A clear direction is required for women and men to successfully journey through the ranks of their careers and lives. The prerequisites for planning this begin with knowledge of the structure of the contemporary Australian workforce. Recognition of compartmentalized lifestyles and the abolishment of the work/life balance myth are necessary. Such realisation along with the implementation of career education and mentoring would mean individuals could realize what a life with an intended career would entail and the choices that they may need to make in order to achieve a desired level or success – and dare I say balance.
CHAPTER EIGHT
It’s a long way too the top: Working Women and the Creative Industries

Hotel, motel
Make you wanna cry
Lady do the hard sell
Know the reason why
Gettin' old
Gettin' grey
Gettin' ripped off
Under-paid
Gettin' sold
Second hand
That's how it goes
Playin' in a band

AC/DC

QUT Creative Industries Website

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Within the current economic ‘renovation’ of capitalism – often labelled neo-liberalism - it is difficult to recognize if creative arts working conditions have progressed since AC-DC’s 1975 release of *It’s a Long Way to the Top (If you want to Rock 'n' Roll)*. This change is identifiable in the transformation of cultural management to the development of the creative industries. This chapter ponders working life in the new knowledge economy. It journeys through the transformation of the phrase life style to lifestyle and explores the nature of supplementary work in relation to this change. I examine the appeal of the creative industries, the idea of a creative class and unpack the problems with creative industries in Australia. Mobilizing the fashion industry and a study of cultural industries within the UK, I explore how women locate themselves in this arena. While pondering the idea of social capital, I deliberate and ask if, how and why a new knowledge economy and growth of the creative industries is the beginning a new work order, and if it is what are the ramifications for working women.

The etymology of the word ‘lifestyle’ is derived from psychologist Alfred Adler’s use of the phrase ‘life style’ in 1929. In the Adlerian sense of the phrase, life style is taken to mean, ‘the individual’s characteristics way of thinking, seeing, and feeling towards life and is synonymous with what other theorists call “personality”’. The contemporary joining of the

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3 AC/DC, op. cit.
4 [http://www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)
two words has altered the Adlerian meaning\(^6\). Although ‘lifestyle’ encompasses thinking, seeing and feeling, it now involves doing. Markers of this transformation are such phrases as living an alternative lifestyle, lifestyles of the rich and famous, or lifestyle television programming. Ideologies of life have turned into practicing a style of life devoted to consumption. Maycroft suggests,

> A clear example of this is in the contemporary discourses around the creative industries, which routinely refer to the concept of ‘lifestyle’, as it is often written, and easily conflate it with notions of economic and cultural development, ‘quality of life’, social inclusions and cultural diversity. Central to this conflation is the location of life-style firmly within the nexus of consumerism, and the relegation of culture to the consumption of the products, services and experiences that the creative industries supply.\(^7\)

Lifestyle has become a conflation of terms, a mesh of personality with models of consumption. Selecting clothes, music, television programs, a partner, a suburb to live in and food to eat have become lifestyle choices. These consumerist practices presuppose that individuals can be grouped according to every day practices, and that they are consciously participating in a lifestyle. This behaviour is problematic because individuals completing the same routines in different areas can be placed in different lifestyles. An example is the urban and suburban dwellers whose living habits, including shopping, residing and leisuring locally, are similar. People residing in these two areas could be viewed as participating in different lifestyles, urban or suburban, due to the proximity and location of the performance. Bordieu addresses this issue in a ‘life-style’ formula and writes,

> Because it can only account for practices by bringing to light successively the series of effects which underlie them, analysis initially conceals the structure of the life-style characteristics of an agent or class of agents, that is, the unity hidden

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\(^6\) Maycroft prefers to use the 1970s hyphenated phrase ‘life-style’ as he considers that when the terms are joined as one, ‘they are naturalised and stripped of their critical and social comment’. I have used lifestyle because I believe it is this naturalization where problem the problem lies.


\(^7\) *ibid.*, p. 62.
under the diversity and multiplicity of the set of practices performed in fields
governed by different logics and therefore inducing different forms of realization,
in accordance with the formula: \((\text{habitus} \times \text{capital}) + \text{field} = \text{practice}\). It also
conceals the structure of the symbolic space marked out by the whole set of these
structured practices, all the distinct life-styles which are always defined
objectively and sometimes subjectively in and through their mutual
relationships.\(^8\)

Bourdieu creates a framework for understanding how life-styles are formed around habits,
money and locations. He also reveals the difficulty in defining individual life-styles.\(^9\) I
consider that lifestyle labels are empty signifiers, creating divisions that mask a discussion of
structural inequalities of class, age, gender, sexuality or region. Maycroft reveals,

The promotional industries of capitalism generate characteristic representations
of consumers based on market research (which we have many reasons to believe
are deeply flawed: see Campbell, 1995). These representations appear in
advertisements and life-style guides, and spread throughout consumer culture in
general. Many commentators on consumer culture seem to take these
promotional representations for portraits of real human behaviour.\(^10\)

Through advertising and popular culture, ‘lifestyle’ transformed from a term which began in
the discipline of psychology and taken to mean an individual’s personality. It has been
poached to create groups comprised of indistinguishable consumers. It is also not only
advertising companies that use this term. If I said, ‘I live in an inner city suburb, only buy
Australian designer clothes and chai tea’, in the discourse of lifestyles this would confer the
identity of a pretentious, urban dweller, rather than actually an acknowledgement of
preferences, tastes or feelings. In reality I may not have a car and need to be close to public
transport, I buy Australian designer clothes because the cut is made to fit Australian women
and I like the taste of chai tea. Choices about consumerism are conflated and engorged to

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\(^9\) ibid.
\(^10\) Maycroft, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
‘reveal’ social realities. Individuals are also in the habit of claiming that they do/do not have ‘nice lifestyle’, as if all the criteria of a particular lifestyle list has been completed. There is a reason that this expression is being laced into marketing and popular cultural discourses. Lifestyle, similar to the buzz phrase work/life balance, is a symptom of a crisis of work identity.

Working and middle class employees are working longer, harder and multiple jobs, but due to the nature of the fractured workforce and lack of job security, workers are finding it increasingly difficult to gain the meaning and identity that once encapsulated working. Where work/life balance is an unobtainable goal, lifestyle provides a space to buy a missing work identity. Lavina Plonka muses:

Many People work just to pay off their exorbitant credit card bills – expenses for products that the mass media has convinced them they need in order to live in the modern world. From video games to computer upgrades, from digital camera to surround sound home theatres, it seems there is always more to buy. Yet what is the underlying message in all the advertising campaigns? If you buy this product, you will have a relaxing wonderful life.

Lifestyle, and the consumption it requires, is costly but the working and middle class have been willing to undertake and work multiple jobs in order fill this void. There is however a

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12 Pusey writes, Australia has the highest rate of casual and part-time employment in the OECD after Spain and very high job turnover rates. About one in three jobs are casual or part-time. More work is done in unsocial hours – weekends, shifts, nights – with greater job insecurity, and rising lateral occupational mobility puts new pressures on families. M. Pusey, The Experience of Middle Australia: The Dark Side of Economic Reform, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 80 – 81.
14 In this way lifestyle can be linked with life satisfaction and life options. ‘Life options refer to the chances that an individual possesses to realize creativity and potential.’ C. Rojek, Leisure Theory and Practice. New York: Palgrave, 2005, p. 41.
twist to the lifestyle equation, which comes in the form of the fashion-centred workplace and the creative, supplementary job.

The result of the New Economic paradigm and the lack of appropriate work clothing that I discussed in earlier chapters is the ‘fashionable’ workplace. This formation holds particular importance for women and their relationship between body and the workplace. Liz Nickles states, ‘The (at the time) decidedly unchic workstyle of the Internet start-up community, rather than a chic designer, incubated its own fashion trend, which in turn, filtered up to a five-day-a-week casual on wall street.’ Fashion in the workplace can be read as a trace of changes to a ‘creative’ New Economic workplace as well as defiance to Old Economic values and professional workplace dressing. Such adornment links to the non-functional nature of the ‘Old Economy’ clothing such as the suit which was discussed in chapters two and three. In a highly casualized employment environment, work identity has to be found elsewhere.

Fashion is a building block in this identity formation. Finklestein writes,

> Fashion makes appearance speak; it invests inert objects with reputations. The necktie, lipstick, Burberry coat and Rolex watch all speak. They can substitute for conversation be telegraphically revealing our tastes to another. A man’s long hair becomes loquacious, as do stiletto-heeled shoes. Fashion encourages us to believe that when we own certain objects we will be happy, more self-confident and attractive, life will be more exciting and satisfying.

‘Fashion’ in the workplace is the new power suit. This form of dressing could be considered ‘creative’ as opposed to the suited workplaces of old. These clothes are not necessarily just worn in just New Economic workplaces. When this kind of clothing is worn in Old Economic workplaces, it can be viewed as inappropriate and deviant. But when the only affordable

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workplace clothing is fashionable – then everyone is a deviant, everyone is creative. Tara Brabazon suggests, ‘when the fashion was not suitable personally, politically or socially, it was not purchased.’ Fashion ‘work wear’ is all there is for women to wear the workplace and therefore has to be purchased. Women’s bodies have become the site of this political battle. For women their bodies have become a statement, signifying: identity, workplace respect, knowledge of contemporary workspaces, mobility and a lack of creativity - everyone is dressed in a similar manner, even if it is inappropriate.

Figure 8.1 Portmans Summer Collection 2005

18 Fashion is fluid and this makes it difficult to prove or track the synergies and similarities in dressing styles. I have used evidence of clothing images from fashion magazine and catalogues to formulate this argument both in chapter three. The images within this chapter show the lightweight fabric ‘Boho’ skirts/tops, skinny leg pants and cropped jackets of the 2005 Summer Collections of varying labels. There were no images of work specific clothing shown in the collections.
There is a dissonance between fashion, bodies and Old Economic workplaces. Media such as magazines and television do not acknowledge this discord. This may be a symptom of tabloidization. Graeme Turner suggests,

> the phenomenon of ‘tabloidization’ has become implausibly inclusive; it incorporates lifestyle programming, advice columns in newspapers, afternoon talk shows, viewer video formats, hidden camera journalism, gossip magazines and much more, into a miscellany of symptoms of a cultural malaise.

The normalization of tabloidization has resulted in the conflation of news and parody, crime television and crime on television, comedy and reality television, reality television and real life. This amalgamation creates conflict between appropriate and inappropriate social behaviors. Such an example is the American program *NCIS*. Within a government Naval investigation office Abby Scuito (Pauley Perrette), the forensic technician and pseudo Gothic/punk/fruit has piercings, tattoos, black hair, Gothic clothes (beneath her white lab coat) and plays rock music loudly as she works.

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She is the antithesis of an expert, science government employee. Through her fashion and signified identity as a ‘Goth’, her ‘serious’ workplace becomes creative and playful. Liz Nickles writes,

Role Models have undergone a similar evolution, as the Internet evolves into Phase Two, “Take a typical films says Sansolo. “Before, when you wanted to show new technology and how it was transforming the world, you had to focus on the nerds, because they were not only developing it, they were practically the only ones using it. But now technology has integrated, and who do the films show being involved with it? Tom Cruise.” He laughs “Well, anybody really. Because the technology has integrated as part of life now. It is no longer something off on the fringe. It is dead center, and it is associated with use. And it is associated with hipness. And looking good and feeling good and all those things”. But what about the übergeeks, like Bill Gates? A brilliant individual, but not many people would confuse Gates with Tom Cruise. 

27 Nickles, op. cit., p. 159.
The difference between Bill Gates and Tom Cruise is the former is a creator of technology whereas the later is a fictional user. It is the fictional manifestations, which are not tethered to economic structures or conditions that are shaping workplace codes are also examples of the popular cultural workplace which was discussed in chapter four. Through characters such as Cruise’s or Abby from NCIS ‘coolness’ created through style, fashion and music has meant that technological jobs have become fashionable by association. This is not to infer that science should not be considered as an attractive career, but more to note that the visual images that surround these positions are not accurate and are disallowed by lived workplaces. Science positions, such a forensics, which rely heavily upon precision, correctness and conclusive fixed data, do not cultivate creativity. Yet elements, such as fashion and music, style it in this way. Fashion in the workplace is a cultural beacon alluding to a shift in workplace codes and structures. It is a mark of the creative industries. Fashion is a palette for identity, a display of literacy and can be used to rebel or adhere to the codes of a wearer’s environment. Another channel for this is the participation in supplementary employment within the creative industries.

There are restrictive and expansive definitions of the creative industries. At this point in the chapter I am focusing on the more expansive conceptualization. The Queensland University of Technology provides a clear example of ‘big picture’ creative industry initiatives. Within the Faculty of Creative Industries a list of courses, streams and degrees (figure one below) are provided.
Table 8.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faculty of Creative Industries</th>
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<td><strong>Entry Programs</strong></td>
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**Entry Programs (International)**
- Foundation Program (1 Semester) (QC01)
- Foundation Program (2 Semesters) (QC02)
- Bridging Program (QC03)
- Extended Foundation Program (3 Semesters) (QC04)
- English for Academic Purposes for degree programs (QC10)
- General English (QC20)
- English for Tertiary Preparation (QC22)

**Certificate**
- University Certificate in Dance Teaching (KD16)
- Certificate in Dance Teaching (KD05)
- Advanced Certificate in Dance Teaching (KD06)

**Diploma**
- University Diploma in Professional Communication (IF06)
- University Diploma in Dance Teaching (KD17)

**Bachelor Degree**
- Bachelor of Journalism/Bachelor of Business (Advertising, International Business, Public Relations) (IF05)
- Bachelor of Journalism/Bachelor of Laws (IF07)
- Bachelor of Mass Communication (IF27)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Fashion Design) (KF25)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Animation) (KI26)
- Bachelor of Journalism (KJ32)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Interdisciplinary) (KK32)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Interdisciplinary) (KK33)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Communication Design) (KK33)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Television) (KK33)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Drama) (KK33)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Visual Arts) (KK33)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Media & Communication) (KK33)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Dance) (KK33)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Creative Writing) (KK33)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Animation) (KK34)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Creative Writing Production) (KK34)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Technical Production) (KK34)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Film and Television) (KK34)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Visual Arts) (KK34)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Sound Design) (KK34)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Fashion Design) (KK34)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting) (KK34)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Dance) (KK34)
- Bachelor of Music (KM32)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Television) (KP32)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Visual Arts) (KV25)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Dance) (KD32)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Film and Television) (KP25)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Technical Production) (KS26)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Creative Writing Production) (KW25)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Media and Communication)/Bachelor of Laws (IF10)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Communication Design)/Bachelor of Information Technology (IF90)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Creative Writing)/Bachelor of Laws (IF93)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Communication Design) (KJ32)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Acting) (KS25)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Drama) (KT32)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Visual Arts) (KV32)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Creative Writing) (KW32)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Media and Communication)/Bachelor of Business (Advertising, International Business, Public Relations) (IF09)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Dance)/Bachelor of Education (Secondary) (IX05)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Drama)/Bachelor of Education (Secondary) (IX06)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Visual Arts)/Bachelor of Education (Secondary) (IX08)
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Media and Communication) (KC32)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Dance) (KD25)
- Bachelor of Music/Bachelor of Education (Secondary) (IX07)
- International Visiting Students (NA05)

Honours
- Bachelor of Creative Industries (Honours) (Dance, Drama, Interdisciplinary, Visual Arts, Media and Communication, Communication Design, Creative Writing) (KK52)
- Bachelor of Music (Honours) (KK55)
- Bachelor of Fine Arts (Honors) (Dance/Creative Writing/Film & Television/Visual Arts/Communication Design) (KK53)
- Bachelor of Journalism (Honours) (KK54)

Graduate Certificate
- Graduate Certificate in Music (KM35)
- Graduate Certificate in Creative Industries (Drama Teaching) (KT35)
- Graduate Certificate in Creative Industries (Publishing and Editing) (KW37)
- Graduate Certificate in Creative Industries (Dance Teaching) (KD35)
- Graduate Certificate in Creative Industries (Communication Design) (KI35)
- Graduate Certificate in Journalism (KJ35)
- Graduate Certificate in Creative Industries (Film and Television) (KP35)
- Graduate Certificate in Creative Industries (Creative Writing) (KW35)
- Graduate Certificate in Advertising (IF94)
- Graduate Certificate in Arts and Creative Industries Management (IF01)

Graduate Diploma
- Graduate Diploma in Music (KM36)
- Graduate Diploma in Advertising (Strategic Advertising) (IF95)
- Graduate Diploma in Creative Industries (Dance Teaching) (KD36)
- Graduate Diploma in Creative Industries (Communication Design) (KI36)
- Graduate Diploma in Journalism (KJ36)
- Graduate Diploma in Creative Industries (Film and Television) (KP36)
- Graduate Diploma in Creative Industries (Drama Teaching) (KT36)
- Graduate Diploma in Creative Industries (Creative Writing) (KW36)

Masters Degree (Coursework)
- Master of Advertising (Creative Advertising) (IX96)
- Master of Fine Arts (KK42)
- Master of Journalism (KI42)
- Master of Music (KM42)
- Master of Creative Industries (Communication Design) (KI43)
- Master of Creative Industries (KK48)
- Master of Advertising (Strategic Advertising) (IF96)
- Master of Creative Industries (Drama Teaching) (KT42)
- Master of Creative Industries (Dance Teaching) (KD42)
- Master of Arts and Creative Industries Management (IF04)

Masters Degree (Research)
- Master of Arts (Research) (Creative Industries) (KK51)

Doctoral
- Doctor of Creative Industries (KK49)
- Doctor of Philosophy (Creative Industries) (IF49)

Distance Learning
- University Certificate in Dance Teaching (KD16)
- University Diploma in Dance Teaching (KD17)

This University provides the opportunity to study ‘creative industries’ degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate level. It combines arts disciplines such as fine arts, drama,
music, dance and various design courses with subjects such as law, advertising and journalism. The QUT website also the types of careers (table 8.2) that can be gained from studying in this area.

Table 8.2

| Accompanist | Media and Corporate communications specialist |
| Account manager | Media planner |
| Actor | Media policy developer |
| Animator | Media researcher |
| Art teacher | Merchandiser |
| (double degree with Education) | Mixers |
| Arts administrator | Multimedia designer |
| Arts education officer | Music producer |
| Barrister | Music teacher |
| Book editor | Musician |
| Cartoonist | Newreader |
| Choreographer | Novelist |
| Cinematographer | Painter |
| Communication specialist | Performer |
| Community artist | Playwright |
| Composer | Printmaker |
| Compositor | Producer (Radio and TV) |
| Copywriter | Production manager |
| Creative writer | Public relations consultant |
| Curator | Publisher |
| Dance critic | Recording engineer |
| Dance teacher | Recording producer |
| Dance therapist | Reporter |
| Dancer | Researcher (Radio and TV) |
| Directors | Screenwriter |
| DJ | Scriptwriter |
| Drama teacher | Sculptor |
| Dramaturg | Software developer |
| Event manager | Solicitor |
| Fashion designer | Sound designer |
| Fashion event manager | Sound editor |
| Fashion Journalist | Sound operator |
| Fashion marketing | Stage manager |
| Feature writer | Studio artist |
| Film editor | Studio Dance teacher |
| Gallery and museum assistant | Studio Music teacher |
| Games developer | Stylist |
| Information architect | Technical writer |
| Information designer | Theatre critic |
| Interaction designer | Visual artist |
| Interface designer | Visual designer |
| Intermediate artist | Web developer |
| Journalist | Youth arts worker |
| Lawyer | |
| Lighting designer | |

An examination of QUT’s Creative Industries Faculty, by comparing figure one and two provides the Universities pedagogic function within the creative industries, which is linking and teaching creative programs with non-creative programs and connecting them to career
paths and other non-creative positions. On the QUT website the career paths found in table 8.2 are linked with a degree or double degree. The role of big picture creative industries is to tether creative positions together, link them to other areas such as production and tourism. If implemented correctly, this interlocking of creative arenas serves to benefit the ‘creatives’ by optimizing skill and production and also economically and socially benefits the community by promoting the cultural aspect of the state or country. QUT’s faculty, however, demonstrates a rushed, ‘new and shiny’ façade of creative industries without any ‘new substance’. This curriculum is reminiscence of one of the flaws of the New Economy. These are established degrees that have been ‘rejuvenated’ or rebranded through the label of creative industries. On the website there is no opportunity to actually view what units are undertaken to achieve each degree. These courses fail to link to other areas of production, sports or tourism. They do not address the tighter definition of creative industries, with attention to copyrights, patents and trademarks. Law courses are provided as a means of gaining a position as an Arts lawyer, barrister or solicitor, and are undertaken as a double major.28 There is no recognition that creative industries workers all require these skills in order to function in their various areas. The QUT Faculty attempts to provide a pedagogic role for future workers in this field, yet does not teach them how the creative industries function and how to be mobilized within it. Instead, it adds to the lack of knowledge of how to participate in the contemporary employment sector.

In the midst of a casualized workforce, there is an answer to the world of lifestyles and that is the growing presence of creative, supplementary jobs. While not many wannabe musicians

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28 http://www.creativeindustries.qut.com/studyopt/careerlist.jsp
can afford to join a band and party all day such as in the lyrics of George Thoroughgood’s antiestablishment anthem, *Get a Haircut and Get a Real Job* many workers are employing themselves in supplementary jobs in the creative arts. Jim Shorthose and Gerard Strange write,

In the absence of more traditional forms of employment relationships, individual artists in these ecologies rely to a significant degree on their own and other’s entrepreneurial skills. For example, entrepreneurialism is crucial to the establishment of networks within the sector. These networks enable artistic workers to migrate as necessary between different projects and events. In contrast with the more rigid and fixed structure of traditional forms of corporate employment, such networks are amorphous and transient in nature, and tend to be contingent upon specific time and context.

Where there were artists having corporate portfolio careers to support their craft, there are now also professional career types seeking income from creative work. People are honing skills, once relegated to the garage, in order to aid their emotional and economic survival. Operating as a part-time musician, graphic artist, clothing and jewelry designer as a choice for a second or third job is on the rise. Within compartmentalized lives, such work can be undertaken outside of the hours of other employment as well as inside the hours of family care. Technology such as computers, wireless Internet, digital cameras, mobile phones and mp3 players has enhanced the mobility of these creative projects, enabling people to work while traveling to other jobs and destinations. John Williamson, Martin Cloonan and Simon Frith’s report on the Scotland music scene demonstrates how little musicians within creative industries are actually paid:

Income for these DJs will vary from virtually nothing (e.g. free drinks) in preclubslots at city centre pubs, to upwards of a thousand pounds for headlineslots in major clubs. On average, the full-time DJs will earn between

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31 ibid.
£200 - £500 per week, from a combination door takings from their night or guaranteed payments, depending on the number of residencies and one off slots they have around the country. The part-time DJs will, typically, earn between £50-£200 per week.32

Full time DJs working at the highest rate still earn low-level incomes. These ‘supplementary’ positions, while not large income earners, play an added role in workers lives. If we believe contemporary understandings of a new knowledge or creative economy33 this could be considered to be a supplementary form of lifestyle. This rendering however overlooks the multitude of primary portfolio professions, classes and ages undertaking such extra creative employment. It is supplementary creative work that is required in segmented lives. This is for income and identity building or what John Hartley refers to as DIY citizenship.

I have called this phase of modern identity formation “DIY citizenship” (Hartley 1999). The idea of DIY (“do-it-yourself”) citizenship owes something to the idea of DIY culture (see McKay 1998), which was an activist phase of youth culture in the 1990s, characterized by the newly emergent rave scene, ‘zines, the open source movement, eco warriors (“Swampy” became a national celebrity in the UK; McDonald’s- trashing French farmer José Bové became a globalized icon of anti-globalization), ecstasy, backpacking across the world, the Glastonbury music festival, and “ethnic bands”…From Big Brother and Popstars to American Idol, the quest is for self-hood and celebrity (or at lease fame) is its currency. As Australian Idol’s slogan has it, the dream is to go from “Zero to hero.”34

While zines and rave culture were developed in the late 1970s and 1980s rather than ‘in the 1990s,’ Hartley’s notion of ‘DIY citizenship’ and the function of reality television can be aligned to the role that creative supplementary jobs occupy in identity formation. DIY citizenship allows people to discover ways to ‘narrate their lives’35 and shows such as Australian Idol, teaches the process and provides grass roots inspiration. Such an example is

35 ibid., p. 113.
one of the 2005 contestants, Emily Williams who is a young single mother ‘from the ghetto’.
The programs manifest the belief that with some raw talent and ‘Aussie Spirit’ you can make it. John Hartley writes:

There is thus some sort of relationship, real and imagined, between the lives of citizens in commercial democracies and the “reality” formats that form such a prominent part of large-scale entertainment. People are performing themselves ever more self-consciously and professionally. They are creating identities, and along the way they’re choosing to watch and interact with entertainments that teach the ups and down of that process.\textsuperscript{36}

Involvement in creative supplementary jobs allows workers to perform these ‘creative identities’.\textsuperscript{37} Besides the ‘I can do it in my spare time’ aspect, supplementary jobs play an important ‘emotional’ role in workers lives and can be considered an alternative to the lifestyle dream, in terms of constructing an identity. The desire for creative positions may stem from some latent aspiration of becoming a rock star, a dream that has arisen since rock and roll in the 1950s. The ideology is that anyone, from any background, can one day be a star. Even if this dream comes to fruition, this does not guarantee any economic change.\textsuperscript{38} As Gibson et. al. suggest,

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{36} ibid.
\textsuperscript{37} In reference to performativity of gender Judith Butler writes, ‘the anticipation of an authoritative disclosure of meaning is the means by which that authority is attributed and installed: the anticipation conjures its object.’ This can be applied to performativity in relation to supplementary employment in the creative industries. The authority in this case is the ‘creative’ aspect of the work, it lures employees by the idea of becoming a creative or even a celebrity. In his discussion of aesthetics Lyotard writes, …the sublime is none other than the sacrificial announcement of the ethical in the aesthetic field. Sacrificial in that it requires that imaginative nature (inside and outside the mind) must be sacrificed in the interests of practical reason…This heralds the end of aesthetics, that of the beautiful, in the name of the final destination of the mind, which is freedom. Lyotard’s statement relates to the performance of creative identities. Creativity in a supplementary position is sacrificed for the employee’s belief that the job is creative. The final destination in this case is the freedom from a non-creative job, which evidently is a paradox, because the jobs are often not creative.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{38} An example of this is the recent flailing careers of many of the earlier \textit{Australian Idol} contestants such as season one winner Guy Sebastian and season two winner Casey Donovan.
One characteristic of the cultural economy is that individuals appear to engage in creative pursuits such as music, art and dance as a central element of their leisure, yet earn the majority of their income from other means. This reflects the level of risk involved in the cultural industries, and the variability of income streams from creative endeavours.\textsuperscript{39}

The real conditions of creative work are recognized in the low wages of both part time and full time DJs in Williamson et al.’s \textit{Mapping the music industry in Scotland: A Report}.\textsuperscript{40} As the employment sector continues on its casualization path maybe employees are thinking, if they have to be poor they may as well work at something they enjoy doing. Polly Toynbee writes,

\begin{quote}
The self-image of all Western societies is of consumer glamour, upward mobility, ever-growing economies and ever-rising expectations. In Britain average living standards rose by 30\% in the last decade and will probably rise by the same amount in the next ten years. In the general exhilaration of boom times, no-one wants to know about the bottom, and the less the rest of society sees and knows, the more they assume the people in dead end jobs are hopeless cases or even semi-mental defectives.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

Such a belief that all poor or underpaid people are situated in these positions because of they are incapable of working elsewhere is a fallacy. Creative positions match talent, knowledge and creativity with low pay and a lack of mobility. The difficulties of these positions are often placated by the glamour of creative employment. There are some problems with employment in the ‘creative industries’. In recent years, the rise of the creative industries and phrases such as the new knowledge economy in Australia and internationally has altered the shape and ambition of workers, and transformed the theories and ideologies of the workplace.

\textsuperscript{40} Williamson, Cloonan & Frith, \textit{op. cit.}
The ‘New Economy’ explored in previous chapters monitored the changing shape of workplaces brought about by the technological change and the dotcom startups that emerged out of America in the 1990s. It approached the physical changes to workplace environments and structures of time and space. I consider that the new knowledge economy and the birth of the creative industries are technologically linked to the creative elements born from the US’s New Economy. Steve Redhead remarks that it was the arrival of Tony Blair’s New Labour Government in 1997 that saw a significant shift from the cultural to the creative industries. He suggests that:

The role of the modern nation state has undergone something of a transformation in the years since the early 1970s, and cultural industries ideas which were developed around the nation state in some ways gave way to more free-floating creative industries strategies as the 1990s melted into the noughties. The question of the modern cultural state and its role in creating what we might call here ‘substantial creative futures – both the universities and the cultural entrepreneurs that develop the creativity and the industries which produce - has become central.

Australia, similar to the United Kingdom, has and continues to try and employ creative strategies within industry. These initiatives have emerged in a rush, such as the QUT Creative Industries faculty which began in July 2001 and Geoff Gallop’s 2003 Fashion Taskforce Report. In his book Living On Thin Air, Charles Leadbeater explains the mechanisms of a knowledge-driven economy.

The knowledge-driven economy is not made up by a set of knowledge-intensive industries fed by science. This new economy is driven by new factors of production and sources of competitive advantage – innovation, design, banding, know-how which are at work in all industries from retailing and agriculture to banking and software.

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42 Redhead, op. cit., p. 13.
43 ibid., p. 13.
46 ibid., p. 10.
Leadbeater views this creative, knowledge-driven economy as based on ideas and patents, rather than physical products. In reference to advanced economies he suggests that, ‘they trade, write, design, talk, spin, and create; rarely do they make anything.\(^{47}\) Trademarking and design define the creative industries. The constitution of what ‘creativity’ is, is now exaggerated, this generates problems in deciphering ‘creative’ positions and initiatives. For example, employment positions may now signify a creative edge, but this does not necessarily change the position. An illustration of this transformation is the position of ‘sandwich artist’ at fast food outlet Subway. The customer decides what they want on their sandwich and the worker constructs it. There are little creative opportunities here for workers. This is not to say that all ‘creative’ strategies involve such little inventiveness. Redhead suggests,


The policy document and the ideas within it may be inspired, but problems lie within the application. Creative initiatives are never politically neutral and seldom aid the actual creators. The creative industries and the new knowledge economy present an idea of a society filled with artistic and innovative jobs. It sells the idea of a creative class, creative city and creative modernity. It prostitutes the idea that ‘everybody’ has the opportunity to be

\(^{47}\) *ibid.*, p. 18.

\(^{48}\) Redhead, *op. cit.*, p. 25.
successful at being creative, while concealing the fact that the ‘new knowledge economy’ is
based around commodification rather than the creation of ideas. Leadbeater explains,

There is no better way of conveying the economic value of knowledge
transformation that to think about the home economics of food. Think of the
world as divided up into chocolate cakes and chocolate-cake recipes. A chocolate
cake is what economists call a rival good: if I eat it you cannot. A chocolate cake
is like most is like most products of the industrial economy: cars, houses,
computers, personal stereos…The chocolate-cake recipe is like many of the
products of the knowledge economy. Software, digital codes and genetic
information are all like powerful recipes which control how hardware –
computers and bodies – work. We are moving into an economy where the
greatest value is in the recipes, rather than the cakes.\(^{49}\)

The new knowledge economy and the creative industries are interested in the comodification
of ‘recipes’. In terms of the ‘creative industries’ this refers to intellectual property rights and
copyrights over such texts as fashion designs, lyrics and music. Redhead writes, ‘the legal
issues around copyright, patent, design and trademark have been given a renewed boost since
that is where the economic dynamism of creative industries strategies can be found’.\(^{50}\) These
are issues of law not creativity. The supposed ‘creative class’ of highly innovative people,
living the artist dream, taking in aural and visual motivation does not exist in the way that
theorists such as Richard Florida suggest. Florida remarks,

On many fronts, the Creative Class lifestyle comes down to a passionate quest for
experience. The ideal, as a number of my subjects succinctly put it, is to “live the
life” – a creative life packed full of intense, high-quality, multidimensional
experiences. And the \textit{kind} of experiences they crave reflect and reinforce their
identities as creative people…They like indigenous street-level culture – a
teeming blend of café’s, sidewalk musicians, and small galleries and bistros,
where it is hard to draw the line between participant and observer, or between
creativity and its creators.\(^{51}\)

\(^{49}\) Leadbeater, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 29-30.
\(^{50}\) Redhead, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 13.
Florida’s account cites such ‘high technology professionals and computer-science-orientated students at schools like Carnegie Melon’, as members of his Creative Class. Florida’s creative world omits negatives such as part-time, casual and contract labour and a deunionized workforce. In this discourse of sidewalk musicians and galleries there is no struggle for money or work – and if there was it would not matter because these people are not consumers, they are ‘creatives’. In reality, they are the ones being consumed. Creative industries do exist, but the people working within these sectors have to combine their creative impetus with economic struggle. Instead Florida suggests that thirty percent of the workforce are members of the creative class.

Florida takes the best of these nonmanufacturing occupations and amalgamates them into the creative class. Even with the supercreative core and the creative professionals removed the, the residual service class is still the largest occupational group, making up about 45 percent of the workforce. The creative class comprises about 30 percent of the workforce. About 12 percent of workers are in the “super-creative core.”

I am apprehensive to define participants within these areas as part of a creative class, as this excludes attention to socio-economic inequality and the disparate occupations that are included in such a label. It also labors to create a definition between those who are creative and those who are not. How can an administrative assistant for Sony be more creative than an administrative assistant of the Commonwealth Bank? How can a theatre accountant be creative, while the janitor is not? Kieran Healy questions Florida’s class:

Florida’s focus on occupational classes takes him in a different direction from Howkins. The idea of a creative sector necessarily plays a secondary role in his analysis. The stagehands and janitors who help keep the local theater running are in Howkin’s creative sector, but they are not in Florida’s creative class. However,

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52 ibid., p.135.
the theater’s accountants – as members of the “creative professionals” category – are part of the creative class.⁵⁴

Florida obviously has a passion for those who are creative and live artistic lifestyles. His eagerness for people to create rather than consume is commendable, but near sighted. Terry Flew also cites problems with Florida’s notion of a ‘creative class.’ He suggests, ‘if we examine the list of occupations in Florida’s Super-Creative Core more carefully, we can find highly variable degrees of autonomy, stability, and likely income.’⁵⁵ When every employment position becomes creative, then those who are really being innovative are neglected. Florida makes the comment that,

Experiences are replacing goods and services because they stimulate our creative faculties and enhance our creative capacities. This active, experiential lifestyle is spreading and becoming more prevalent in society as the structures of the Creative Economy spread.⁵⁶

I agree that low paid and underemployed people are opting to undertake creative employment to obtain a supplementary income. There is some merit in linking this creative capacity to a need to formulate identity that is disconnected from consuming. Workers are not leaving their primary careers to indulge solely in the creative industries. It has become a hobby or supplementary income. Primary career creators such as fashion designers, film makers, musicians and writers, who are often working autonomously are left to carry out their work in a fractured, unrelenting, low economic return environment. The survival of creative environments through portfolio careers and/or forging community alliances with other creators,⁵⁷ is required as there is little alternative support. Such ‘creative’ initiatives as

⁵⁴ ibid., p. 95.
⁵⁵ T. Flew, ‘Creative Industries from Chicken Cheer to the Culture of Services’, Continuum: Journal of Media and Cultural Studies. 2003, volume 17, number 1, p. 91.
⁵⁷ Shorthose & Strange, op. cit.
developing educational programs, marketing jobs as innovative or encouraging people to be
creative, if implemented ineffectively, does not improve the creative industries.

There is a problem within Australia’s creative industries and this stems from the lack of a
link between government policy, initiatives and the creators. Sectors of the community such
as universities, colleges, government, creators and industry are disconnected. Such an
example is in the system for arts grants from the Australian Arts Council. Here there are
numerous opportunities for grants for different formations: dance, new media, community
development and visual arts and craft. The applying process has barricades for new arts
workers, individuals and University groups.

Individual applicants must be practising artists or artworkers. While they may
not necessarily earn income from their practice, they must be identified and
recognised by their peers as practising artists…In recognition of this limitation,
universities have multi-arts status and may submit up to five applications per
calendar year to the grant categories. This is subject to the requirements listed
here, also ‘General eligibility’ and ‘How many times can you apply?’ both of
which can be found in this section under How To Apply. 58

Understandably, there has to be standards and levels for application, but the current eligibility
is based firstly on the ‘arts’ position within the community before actual skills or ideas. An
arts worker must forge relationships and ‘be creative,’ before they can receive grants to fund
their projects. There are also problems for University groups who on application are deemed
part of the parent institution. 59 This means there is the extra barrier of University decision on

7. 2005].
59 An example of this is ArtsWA who have a list of arts workers who are ineligible for grants.
What Doesn’t ArtsWA Fund?
- The total cost of any project;
- Film and television projects(refer to ScreenWest on (08) 9224 7340)
- Radio projects (contact the Community Broadcasting Association of Australia at
  www.ebaa.org.au or the Community Broadcasting Foundation on (03) 9419 8055);
- Touring (three towns or more). For regional touring support, see: performing arts
If the group chooses to dislocate themselves from the institution, they may then lose the credibility and support of the University. This is not to say that all government initiatives involving the creative industries are inherently bad, it is more to say that currently in areas, such as the grants system, there are inbuilt flaws that are hindering creative schemes from flourishing. Geoff Gallop’s *Fashion Taskforce Report* is an example of a proposal that has been executed in a promising manner. The Taskforce report headed by Ted Snell was released in August 2003. It stated that,

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    Designer fashion has been specifically included within a growing field of research and policy development classified as ‘creative industries’. In recent times, the creative industries sector has been amongst the fastest growing sectors of the global economy.
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(Country Arts WA - (08) 9481 0077); writing (State Literature Centre -(08) 9432 9555); or visual arts (Art On The Move - (08) 9227 7505);
- Activities that start before the stated commencement date as well as any activity that seeks funding on a retrospective basis;
- Educational, undergraduate or postgraduate study or work that will be used for educational or academic assessment purposes;
- Purchase of musical instruments, equipment, computers, software, motor vehicles, costumes or uniforms;
- Capital works, such as the establishment of artists’ studios and gallery spaces;
- Competitions, prizes and trophies;
- Restoration or conservation of cultural material;
- Applications from publishers not registered with ArtsWA;
- The work of other service agencies of the Department of Culture and the Arts as well as staff of those service agencies;
- The work of other State or Commonwealth Government departments; and
- University theses, facsimiles, genealogical works and histories of local governments, clubs, districts or organisations.

*Arts WA Grants Handbook*,

This publication illustrates problems in obtaining grants for those linked with University institutions. The non-distribution of grants to particular arts sectors, such as film and television workers who have to apply through Screenwest and those attempting potential radio projects who must contact the community broadcasting association, show the complexity, divisions and separations within creative industries initiatives. This list of ineligible people/groups/activities affects almost every arts group, which begs the question: who is actually eligible to obtain the grants?

60 The ironic point in regards to ArtsWA is that the sister programme ArtsEdge WA develops opportunities, policies and relationships between artworkers and education.


61 *The Premier’s Fashion Industry Taskforce Report August 2003*. op. cit
Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data on the clothing manufacturing sector in Western Australia shows that it is a significant employer which provides important economic benefit to our State (the ABS data does not produce specific data on the design fashion industry). The most recent employment statistics for the clothing manufacturing sector show that in November 2002 it employed 2200 people in Western Australia. The most recent ABS report in the manufacturing industry showed that in June 2000 the annual turnover for the Western Australia clothing manufacturing sector was $74.4 million.  

The report made recommendations of the State Government to create agencies specifically designed to support the design industry in Western Australia, along with marketing and nurturing of distinctive design with the education sector. In March 2004, Premier Gallop launched the fashion industry grants scheme at the Colonnade winter fashion show. He commented that,

This grants program will run for two years, with $250,00 worth of grants funding each year.

Grants will be available for:
- Travel
- Marketing
- Mentoring/partnership; and
- Business Development

These grants have been developed to help designer in all facets of their work – from attending relevant industry events to marketing their collections to supporting the implementation of long-term strategies that improve business viability.

Such grants programs are not only imperative for designers and the Western Australian fashion industry, but also show a promising link between government creators and industry. Western Australia is a pertinent example of an increased need for government support in the creative industries, especially when looking such a sector as fashion design. Gallop implemented a taskforce, received recommendations, implemented a grants program as well

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62 ibid., p. 5.
63 ibid., pp. 5-6.
as appointed a Creative Industries Working group. Perth and Western Australia has a small local market and these initiatives and grants are an acceptable start. This design industry, however, needs to be linked with the wider arts community, as well as areas of tourism, film and sport. This also concentrates on top end, easily exportable fashion and needs to be linked to the wider fashion community – textile, printing and production.

A case study of this is High Street in the West End of Fremantle, Western Australia. It is a street of designer/studio-based retailers. This is where the designer has an in-house studio either within the store or on the street. They manufacture and design the majority of the collections there, and the clientele have an opportunity to mingle with the designers. Hustle, Love In Tokyo, Kellie Rose and Deep Odyssey are the stores, which contain single and multiple designers. They also provide space within the stores for other local fashion, jewelry and textile designers to showcase their wares. There is an element to these works that separates them from their eastern counterparts. Fashion critics articulate that is the meandering and relaxed lifestyle that Perth offers and Sheree Dornan of Love in Tokyo agrees that, ‘climate makes the difference. Designs are trans-seasonal, although we do seasons, a lot of designs can be worn all year around.’65 This can create production and exporting problems for designers as they do not always have the stock or correct seasonal collections for international distribution.

The pivotal argument can be found in another of her observations, ‘with Hustle and myself, other designers could see the potential for creating a new design hub. Designer based

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retailers, a studio and retail outlet in one. Newcomers to the street designer Kelly Holliday and business partner Karen Johnson, of Kellie Rose, agree. Since beginning in March this year, they have gained success, securing an agent and both selling their label in Perth as well as in Sydney and Melbourne. Karen and Kelly remark that, ‘Perth designers feel the need to try harder to compete with their Eastern States counterparts. It is not an easy journey (both physically and metaphorically) to achieve this. Our designs are innovative and cutting edge, but reflect our laidback attitude we are known for in the West.’ The home of the designer studio-based retailer has become a draw card for this street and it is now gaining attention from both customers as well as up and coming and established designers.

These designers have created a fashion hub. They have a flavour or a branding effect to their work, which they promote at events such as the 2005 Fremantle Fashion Festival. They take on work experience students from the TAFE fashion course and have some support from fashion industry. There was a local council taskforce (Chelsea Project), of which some of the designers were members, in place to boost tourism in the West End of Fremantle, but this lasted for a year and ended in 2004. Due to lack of management, the projects that were planned never came to fruition. The West End in Fremantle is an appropriate example of a need for local council and government support. While government funding, such as through Gallop’s initiative allows for designers such as these to finish their collections and showcase them interstate, it does not provide crucial support at the grass roots level. The design industries, such as fashion, while in need of nurturing specific areas of the field – collections, ibid.

TAFE stands for Technical and Further Education. These institutes, which are located Australia wide provide vocational and practical certificates and diplomas. These courses can also be a stepping-stone toward university.
design, textile, manufacturing, catwalk exposure – need to be linked to an overall imagination of creativity which involves tourism, music, film and sport.

A strong example of this integrated initiative is Creative New Zealand, which is funded by the Arts Council but other decision making bodies are also involved such as the Arts Board, Te Waka Toi and the Pacific Arts Committee. It is focused on all aspects of the arts and works especially promotion internationally

Creative New Zealand’s International Strategy provides a framework for our international work. Key features of the strategy include developing international audiences and markets; working with artists to help them gain the necessary creative and professional development skills to achieve international success; and preserving and promoting indigenous links between tangata whenua and other first nation peoples.70

The link between New Zealand’s creative industries and the nation (and region, through expansive networks in the Pacific) is clearly recognized through tourism promotion. Such an example is www.creativetourism.co.nz. Here, a trip can be planned to New Zealand with opportunities to participate in artistic workshops, with New Zealand materials and techniques – such as bone carving. New Zealand’s official Tourism site71 boasts food, art and sport. The site also has information and links on various facets of arts culture in New Zealand. Within the scenic highlights section locations to films such as Lord of the Rings can be mapped. Lord of the Rings tours are available from multiple New Zealand sites.72

In 2004, Air New Zealand flights had paper on the headrests stating ‘welcome to middle earth’. This links popular

culture to a concrete landscape. In the same year, Virgin Blue Pacific painted an image of Liv Tyler as Arwen on the New Zealand bound airplane. Another example of this cultural imaging is in Auckland, NZ, where Air New Zealand also hosts Fashion Week.\textsuperscript{73}

This creative industries model show strong links between government, industry and the creators. It crosses artistic disciplines and uses other industries to support the arts. The government realizes the need to build and sustain arts based links. They recognized that talent that needs to be nurtured and how supporting these sectors will assist other areas.

Key initiatives:

- \textit{Design Leadership Strategy} – encouraging and enabling uptake of design
- \textit{Screen} – integration of the screen production industry, assisting global marketing through international film festivals, and hosting missions to New Zealand
- \textit{Digital Innovations} – working with the sector through the Digital Innovations Strategy and the Digital Content Forum
- \textit{Major regional initiatives} – for example, the Northland Cultural Highway
- \textit{Fashion and textiles into Europe} – aligning high fashion and textile sectors in New Zealand. This will assist entry into supply chains, new global markets and strategic alliances with European fashion and textile sectors.\textsuperscript{74}

New Zealand links design with manufacturing, screen production with festivals and so forth. Production and promotion are joined to facilitate a constructive creative industries model.

Australia is improving with attempts such as Geoff Gallop’s Fashion Taskforce. These initiatives must then be link to manufacturing support, international marketing and then to


other creative and promotional areas of tourism, music and other forms of design – which is the point of creative industries.

Relationships must also be forged between universities, colleges and industry. The Western Australian fashion industry does have strong links between work experience programs with Curtin University and TAFE students. The students are able to use knowledge learnt in the classroom in a production environment with an established designer. There are problems in that the students only complete minimal production work and do not necessarily get the chance to learn first hand about the industry, wholesaling, marketing or finance. Each different creative industry has specific criteria, which needs to be learned. Multiple links between education, industry, government and creators, would help to achieve functioning industries. The Creative Industries program the Queensland University of Technology has attempted to develop educational strategies within Australia.

As previously shown, QUT has recently developed a creative industries department with a number of creative industries degrees. The website states

At QUT, our Creative Industries Faculty teaches students in traditional creative areas, but places these within a new creative industries framework.

This means that our students don't just learn their craft. They also learn how they fit into the creative industries and how they can use their talents to be part of the new economy.75

The program is interdisciplinary and the faculty undertakes projects such as DRAFT which, ‘explores the connections and overlaps between the poetics of making clothes and the process of writing via the concept of the draft. The central tropes of the exhibition are the designer's

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toile and the writer's draft. Projects, such as DRAFT and the program in general are
supposed to train creative industries students for working life in the ‘New Economy’. This is
problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly it assumes that the New Economy does not
involve or displaces Old Economic structures, which is incorrect. It suggests a paradigmatic
shift. The ‘new knowledge economy’ is currently being marketed as the future of
employment, but Old Economic structures are rife within this system. In a retort to Robin
Batternham’s, the government’s chief scientist, findings that the relationship between the
social sciences and sciences would be the, formers supporting the latter, Stuart Cunningham
remarks:

But a huge part of the story of the knowledge-based economy is missing in this
account. The creative industries have been among the fastest growing sectors of
the global economy, with growth rates better than twice those of advanced
economies as a whole. Entertainment has displaced defence in the US as the
driver of new technology take-up, and has overtaken defence and aerospace as the
biggest sector of the US economy.

I agree with Cunningham that the growth of the creative industries is an indicator that
intellectual knowledge of social science requires increased space and validation. However, I
see it as problematic to view this sector and economic growth as a marker of a sustainable
and stable economy, over that of science and technology. Few question why these economies
are labeled with the adjectives of ‘knowledge’ or ‘creative,’ or if such an economy is
sustainable. Redhead writes, ‘alarmist commentators can be found proclaiming dire
warnings, suggesting that the economies which become over-reliant on creativity – in other
words on the knowledge economy – risk bankruptcy. Government’s therefore have to be

78 ibid.
Redhead’s words are even more important in light of his position as head of the Creative Industries Taskforce, where he delivered a report that was never released. Educational sectors creating programs around the creative industries also have to be alert. The ‘new knowledge economy’ is fractured. Grounding a course in something that is fluid and forever changing is volatile because, the creative industries framework develops and changes according to governmental and industrial interests. Creative industries and its links with education, government, industry and creators need to be promoted, separating these as a faculty away form other areas such as tourism hinders its progression.

For creative industries initiatives to succeed, they must be both linked with other industries such as tourism, but also linked with production. A strong example of this connectivity is the way in which New Zealand forges links between fashion design and textile and fabric manufactures. The creative industries need to be clearly and precisely defined. Are they based around creative ideas, where not all jobs are creative? Are they the creative ‘puritan’ positions? While there is no clear definition, these industries can remain illustrious and sort after, but also severed in economic and industrial connection. The kudos of working in a ‘creative industry’ perpetuates the fragmented structure with part-time hours, low, pay, lack of job security, and opportunity for career advancement. Chris Gibson, Peter Murphy and Robert Freestone remark that

The extent to which other industries allow reasonable stable, flexible and part-time work influences the average hours available to develop cultural expertise (in Sydney, retail, cafes, clubs, hospitality and tourism industries have fulfilled this function). The forms and flexibility of government income support and taxation systems, the regulation of other informal-sector activities and avenues for income generation (markets, busking and drug trade), and sympathetic venues, booking

79 Redhead, op. cit., p. 13.
agents, casting companies and other infrastructures, all mitigate participation in cultural activities.\textsuperscript{80}

The fashion industry is a beacon for such industrial dislocation and economic violation. Employees ranging from the designer, pattern cutter, machinist, shop assistant, shop manager, buyer, wholesaler, marketer and accountant could all be placed beneath the creative industrial banner. Yet they are all on different pay structures, contract types and working hours. They are separated from fellow creative industry workers as well as from people working in similar positions. For example, a clothing shop assistant in a ‘retail’ chain store such as Myer is offered union support, superannuation, a minimum number of weekly hours, there is an award pay rate, which increases with age and years of service. The high numbers of staff means there are people to cover sick days. There is also room for career advancement to manager, buyer and marketer. A shop assistant working in a ‘creative’ environment, such as a localized, small, boutique working alongside a designer is designated a wage and superannuation by the boss. The wage often stays the same over multiple years. Due to the small number of staff, there are not as many employees who can cover sick days or holidays. There is also little room for career advancement as it is the designer who is often the manager, buyer, wholesaler and marketer. The social status of working in the ‘fashion industry’ is equalized by economic dysfunction and career immobility. If the new knowledge economy is the future for the Australian workforce, then equitable employment structures need to be put in place in order to protect those who are working in the creative industries.

Stuart Cunningham, Greg Hearn and Jeff Jones remark that,

\begin{quote}
Many sub-sectors if the creative industries include micro-businesses working in flexible contracting networks with a variety of similar firms. While some firms grow larger and take on more conventional structures, they are often embedded in
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{80} Gibson, Murphy & Freestone, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 186.
a dense network of suppliers who are micro-businesses or independent contractors. Point of leverage for industry growth are key services that are currently difficult to source at reasonable cost:
- Bandwidth;
- Equity or loan capital
- Facilities of office space, production space, production facilities; and
- Collaborative networks built on maintaining competitive and collaborative relationships.

Lack of critical mass is a major threat to successful industry development. Current capabilities need to grow rapidly to meet national and international demands and to escape the limited size local market.\footnote{S. Cunningham, G. Hearn & J. Jones, ‘Smart State is also Creative State: Opportunities for Queensland in the Creative Industries’, \textit{Queensland Review}. May 2003, volume10, number 1, p. 33.}

Perth’s creative industries and such an example as Fremantle’s West End, High Street hub is an example of micro-businesses that are operating with collaborative networks and relationships. Government support is needed to support local, national and international growth as well as protect those working within these industries. The question can then be asked: is the new knowledge economy and rise of the creative industries building a new work order?

Currently the creative industries box is the sugar-coated casualized workforce. There may be growth in the new knowledge economy and creative industries, but is this because new positions are arising or is it because Old Economic jobs are being renamed and casualized? Employees use the creative industries tag to build identity, shadow the multiple or lack of jobs they are working, bad pay and/or lack of career advancement. The government uses it to boost societal morale and hide the fragmentation of the workforce, industrial reform and unemployment. The creative industries are the new ‘New Economy’. This is not to say that the creative industries are intrinsically tumultuous, moreover that it is a façade of change
without ‘new’ clear educational, organizational and career trajectories behind it. The concern is that contemporary initiatives and education are not adequately structured and implemented.

The lack of new organizational employment change within the creative industries is a concern, which is especially pertinent for women working in these arenas. At the surface level, the creative industries with its fluid workplace boundaries could be conceived as a gender neutral arena. An area based on ‘knowledge’ and talent, where women can succeed without constant gender, body and intellectual ridicule, which is a similar ideology to the New Economy which was discussed in chapter four. Richard Nagar et.al. remark that

Naturalized assumptions about work and the worker are constructed around “notions of appropriate femininity, domesticity, (hetero) sexuality, and racial and cultural stereotypes” (Mohanty 1997, 6) Mohanty discussed (inter alia) Mies’s (1982) study of home-working lace makers in Narsapur to show how capitalists mobilized the ideology of women as housewives to define lace makers as nonworkers and to label their lace making for corporations as a leisure activity.\(^8\)

This is a problem inherent to the current structure of the Australian creative industries. This gender pigeon holing which is frowned upon in the general employment sector is founding block of locating women in the creative industries. The naturalization of historical notions of masculinity and femininity creates men as rock gods and women as the ones who clothe them. Sheila Whiteley et. al. suggest,

In the cultural industries there are a number of ways in which the ideal worker is presented as masculine. In the music industry for example, the ideal rock musician is constructed as male through the symbolic male power associated with lead guitar and performance gestures, the gendered training of boys and girls from childhood that males and females should behave in very different ways, and the technical aspect of rock music that boys are encouraged to pursue but girls are not (Bayton 1998,Whiteley 2000, 2004). In the cultural industries more generally, recent research has identified the ‘creative entrepreneur’ as the ideal worker as

presented in policy and talk about the cultural industries…This view of the cultural industries worker as entrepreneurial ‘structure gazers’ with ‘reflexive portfolios’ suggests qualities and attributes that are presented as gender neutral but are in fact associated with notions of masculinity.\textsuperscript{83}

A contemporary example of this argument is presented in programmes such as \textit{Australian Idol} where female contestants are judged on their vocal performances as well as there ‘sexiness’.\textsuperscript{84} Another example is the Brownlow medal. This is a night celebrating the best male footballer (female footballers are absent) where the role of the woman is to state ‘who she is wearing’.\textsuperscript{85} Other female creative entrepreneurs, such as fashion, interior designers, artists, crafters, musicians and chefs are seen either in lifestyle programs – Better Homes and Gardens, Fresh - or at special events – Melbourne Cup, Mercedes Fashion Week, the weeks leading up to Easter and Christmas, Aria Awards. Government support is required to ensure that women in these arenas are not painted as operating a ‘little’ cottage industry, obtaining a supplementary income to a domestic life or as cultural eye candy. Women entering these industries not only have to confront the challenges of being a working woman, but also legitimizing her employment as a career rather than a hobby or an aside to domestic duties.

In 2004, Sheila Whiteley, Elly Tams and Dan Laughey researched, ‘the education and career paths of women entering the cultural and creative industries’\textsuperscript{86} in Salford in the UK. They remark that,

Further to sex segregation and part time work, it is also the freelance status of

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{83} S. Whiteley, E. Tams & D. Laughey, \textit{Women and the Cultural Industries}, Salford: University of Salford, 2004, p.
\item \textsuperscript{84} An example of this was the ‘gold dress’ incident between Paulini and \textit{Australian Idol} judge Ian Dickson. Dickson caused an uproar when he commented that Paulini had to ‘shed some pounds’ before she could wear a figure hugging gold dress. \textit{Australian Idol}. Sydney: Grundy Television PTY Limited, a FremantleMedia Company and Channel Ten, 2003.
\item \textsuperscript{86} Whiteley, Tams & Laughey, \textit{op.cit.}, p. iii.
\end{itemize}
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many creative or cultural industry workers which contributes to gendered inequalities in this sector. In cultural industries such as television, more women than men work as freelancers, and this involves ‘conditions of work which replicate those of part time and casual workers, such as lack of pension entitlements, sick leave, health cover and personal insurance etc’ (Cliche et. al. 2000:202). It is important, however, to distinguish between those workers who work freelance for companies such as in film and television, and those who run their own businesses.87

The findings from this study can be aligned with gender inequality within the Australian creative industries, which are in the midst of a growing creative and knowledge economy.

Gibson et. al. concurs with Whiteley et. al.’s study and explain that within Australia,

With the exception of fashion, design oriented occupations were overwhelmingly male dominated. 66 percent of all people involved in design were men, with the male dominance of graphic design (63 per cent men), architecture (82 per cent) and multimedia (72 per cent) particularly high. Gender divisions also emerged within particular activities; in music, women made up over 70 percent of singers, yet were only 30 percent of instrumentalists within bands or orchestras.88

Because of the highly fractured state of these industries, gender inequality can go unnoticed, as most of the work is casual and part-time. Similar to other industries, the men are receiving the full time and the women part time employment. These part time positions seem to be the less ‘creative’ and more administrative positions. The Whiteley et. al.’s study confirms that,

A comparable survey into creative or cultural industries activity in Sheffield (Bretton Hall, University of Leeds, 2000), showed there are more men than women in full time work in the cultural industries, so reflecting the national picture. The survey states that 67.9% of full time cultural industries jobs in the city were filled by men in 2000 and 57% of part time posts were held by women. It is not only that women are more likely than men to be in part time work that affects their positions and earnings in cultural industries work, but that the jobs available part time are generally at a lower grade and status than full time ones. Whilst there are few opportunities to be a part time record producer or film director, there are many part–time administrative and service roles that women fit around their domestic responsibilities and other aspects of their lives (Tams 2003).89

87 ibid., p. 6.
88 Gibson, Murphy & Freestone, op. cit., p. 178.
89 Whiteley, Tams & Laughney, op.cit., p. 5.
Women entering the creative industries are not only moving into noncreative positions, but also with lower hours, pay and room for career advancement. The only so called benefit is that the industry is ‘creative’. The New Economy brought about by the dotcom startups in the US presented creative environments, which initiated change for women in the workplace. The new knowledge economy and creative industries have fashioned a ‘creative’ banner, which sustains an Old Economic, part-time, uncreative work life for women. It pushes women into historically feminized roles of fashion, sewing, cooking and decorating, or allows them feminized roles within other creative sectors, such as an administrator in the music, performing arts or other design industries. While Whiteley et. al. found that both genders felt uncertainty regarding future work opportunities in the cultural industries, their study discovered that,

Approximately two out of three female respondents had alternative career paths compared to only about one out of two male respondents. Various interpretations can be made of this finding. If women are more open about admitting uncertainty about their careers than men it could follow that they can also be more prepared to admit considering other paths other than their chosen career path. In the context of this project and the analysis of gender and cultural industries work, this can be seen to relate to the masculinised, entrepreneurial model of the cultural or creative worker. The idea of being wholly committed to ones chosen profession and determined to make it work is part of this model, and it is a trait traditionally associated with men. But many women are not allowed the luxury of holding on to the concept of a single career path due to their awareness of events and circumstances that could change their plans such as getting married, having children and acting as carers (Pierce 2000, Tams 2003). Having said this, there was no difference in the proportion of female compared to male respondents who had a clear career path in mind. 

Similar to the findings in my previous interview chapters, women in the creative industries careers are bound to reproductive and family duties. I believe that the idea of having an alternative career is also linked to the fact that the majority of positions within this industry

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90 ibid., p. 35.
91 ibid.
for women are part-time. Non-standard employment affects both genders in contemporary Australian workforce, and also relates to cultural industries within Australia. Gibson et. al. write,

The sorts of jobs that are created in the cultural economy vary not only in their level of ‘creativity’ and daily functions, but also in terms of conditions and security, from holding down stable waged occupations through to various forms of subcontracting, casual and informal ‘work’...In addition, ‘creative content’ producers (artists, musicians, writers, etc.) commonly subsidise creative pursuits through other sources of income, and thus are likely to record another profession on the census even if they may perceive their own identity in relation to their cultural pursuits.\textsuperscript{92}

Gibson et. al.’s remarks relate to the idea that creative arts workers are often employed in a portfolio career and that cultural or creative work is often part-time. It also links with the idea that people are using creative work as supplementary employment and that this work is linked to the formation of identity. If the creative industry sector in Australia continues to grow, such as in the UK, and more jobs are bequeathed to this arena, the consequences for women could be dire. It is for this reason that the structure of creative industry education programs is so important – especially for women. Robert Putnam’s idea of social capital might be able to assist with the development of such structures. It is defined as ‘features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit.’\textsuperscript{93} Using this ideology could allow the tethering of links between education sectors, mentoring systems and the creative industries to be attempted.\textsuperscript{94} Anirudh Krishna suggests,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{92}Gibson, Murphy & Freestone, op. cit., p.178.
\item \textsuperscript{94}Blackshaw and Long suggest that there are some flaws in Putnam’s social capital paradigm and write, Putnam’s version of ‘social capitalism’ is largely inconsistent, there is a pivotal
\end{itemize}
Citizen’s capacities for mutually beneficial collective action can be enhanced through purposive action. The state can retreat gracefully in this manner. And its remaining agencies can engage fruitfully in co-producing services alongside community groups, made more effective by public investments in social capital.95

Krishna’s (and Putnam’s) argument is a more convincing paradigm for changing social structures,96 such as workplaces and new order’s of work such as the creative industries, as opposed to Aronowitz’s more utopian idea of a post-work society.97

Whiteley et. al. made some significant findings in regards to women and education. While they found that women often shared the level of further education qualifications and mobility within the cultural industries98 to men, they claim that,

Moreover, 64% of female compared to 59% of male respondents had arranged this work experience themselves rather than through a school or college. Although these differences are no huge, they are large enough in relation to the size of the sample to make a valid generalisation that young women in the cultural industries begin to plan their career ideas earlier than young men. This finding is significant in relation to the evidence, documented in the early sections role for Bourdieu’s sociology in the process of engaging with issues of social exclusion through leisure and we offer some tentative suggestions for an alternative policy agenda, which is not only alert to the cultural boundaries that divide local communities but also respectful of the differences that are characteristic of individuals who live in them.


96 Blackshaw and Long make an important point, regarding changing community structures, which needs to be acknowledged and applied to any tethering of social capital ideologies and the creative industries. They suggest, ‘community development through leisure initiatives has a responsibility to operate in the worlds in which people actually live, rather than trying to transplant them to a mythical world that only exists in the minds eye of civic communitarians.’ Any initiatives in regards to the creative industries or the new knowledge economy need to operate where arts workers are located, especially in order to help women working in these areas. Therefore a research project into the relationship between the Australian creative industries and the impact that social capital would have upon them is necessary.


98 Whiteley, Tams & Laughay, op.cit., p. 33.
of this report, that gender inequalities persist across cultural industries professions. Further research would be valuable to explore why, although young women are beginning to think about and plan their careers even before attending university, they still do not obtain such well paid jobs and achieve the levels of success that men do, further on into their careers.\textsuperscript{99}

While this is a UK study, it is significant to note that women began pursuing work experience before men and yet do not gain the higher level positions. While the educational structures may be there to qualify both genders equally and there is also work experience available, the structure of the actual creative industry workplaces disallow women equal employment opportunities. This difference relates to chapter seven, where I discussed the need to educate Australian women on how the workplaces they are choosing to enter operate. Work experience and education needs to be linked with government initiatives and industrial practices. A similar study to Whiteley et.al., should be conducted within Australia before structuring creative industry university programs. Gibson et. al. have pondered certain pertinent issues regarding the ‘cultural industries’ and suggest that, ‘Complex gender relations cut across Australian creative activities, an observation that suggests the importance of gender-specific dimensions of any future cultural industry development strategy’.\textsuperscript{100} While Gibson et. al. have discussed a number of gender and socio problems within the cultural industries a larger study, such as Whiteley et. al.’s into the creative industries within Australia is required in order to examine the extent of gender struggles, the employment structure, government initiatives and the link with identity. Exploration of social capital may assist such a study.

\textsuperscript{99} ibid., p. 34.
\textsuperscript{100} Gibson, Murphy & Freestone, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 178.
They walk on, and weave around with their heads in all directions to see better. Burka-women are like horses with blinkers, they can only look in one direction. Where the eyes narrow the grille stops and thick material takes place; impossible to glance sideways. The whole head must turn; another trick by the burka-inventor; a man must know what his wife is looking at.  

Asne Seierstad

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In Afghanistan during the time of the Taliban regime, women were forced to cover their bodies in public and adorn themselves in Burkas. These long dresses covered the whole of the woman’s body except for a grille at the front, which allowed her to look straight ahead. The punishment for disobeying these laws they were ‘damned by the Islam Sharia and can never go to heaven. They will be threatened, investigated and severely punished by the religious police, as will the head of the family’. For such reasons, many women continued to wear these habits after the fall of the Taliban. Contemporary Australian women are situated in a different position within the body control debate. Yet the metaphoric Burka still flutters around their bodies. They are taught that they have the freedom of choice and control over their appearance and reproductive functions. They are educated about contraception, the belief in freedom of dress and body augmentation. Yet the gaze of judgment, ridicule, blame and shame remains. Every woman possesses her own body literacy. The way in which it is communicated to women/men and their multiple body-literacies creates a dissonance between woman, her body and other bodies. This chapter tracks this dissonance of and in these literacies. It approaches women’s relationships with her own body, in terms of the freedom of dress, self and collective corporeal image and the learned body. I track the clash that can occur between a learned body literacy of the self and external literacies of the body. This concentrates on the coded body and how this relates to body literacy within the workplace. I approach the elements of pregnancy and sexual harassment in order to illustrate this dissonance within the workplace and then move towards devising strategies to deal with this difference.

3 ibid., p. 87.
This thesis has traced the journey of how women’s bodies are visualized by men and women and the role that fashion plays in this project. Chapter one illustrated the problems and conflation of feminism and self-help texts. It articulated the competition between women in areas of work, body image and female ‘roles’. This chapter also showed the need for the construction of a united female front, if gender equality is going to be achieved. Chapter two explored briefly the place of women’s bodies in history, and provided a context to the motives and structures that surround the woman versus woman competition. I illustrated the female competition using the idea of the self-surveyed body, and showed the role that fashion and texts such as magazines play in sustaining this antagonism. By introducing the idea of oral histories and popular memory theory I began to show the disruption in the relationship of female bodies and fashion through time. The oral histories of Robin and Evelyn also commenced the debate on the idea of appropriate workplace attire. Through the use of magazines, and a comparison of pictures of real working women to work-wear clothing advertisements, I examine the constructed ‘executive look’ image for working women.

Chapter three explored ideas of clothing, fashion in relation to workplace clothing and dress standards. Through the comparison of magazines, the Australian design industry and designer workplace attire, which observed sizing, cut, fabric and price, I examined the changing nature of workplace clothing to workplace fashion. This revealed the idea of the promotion of the sexualised female body in the workplace. Chapter four explored this idea further through the investigation of the popular cultural workplace, and investigated the idea of the body within the realm of the New Economic workplace. The example of Sex and the City with its image
of a popular culture workplace was used to illustrate this. The case study, through and 
examination of the characters, clothing and sexualised woman, suggested a lack of an actual 
popular cultural workplace. Using the idea of the New Economy this chapter revealed a 
change in physical and historical constructs of workplace practices. The oral histories of 
chapters five and six exposed the workplace success, failures and stories of real Australian 
women. The body sections of these chapters publicized the role of women’s bodies in the 
workplace. It showed the problem of finding workplace attire and clothing appropriateness. 
Chapters five and six also explored the notion of sexualised and ridiculed bodies. The 
common tropes between the five chapters are the notion that women’s bodily practices are 
learned and that these bodies are a problem. Chapter one disclosed women’s need to compete 
with their own and other’s bodies. Chapter two problematized women’s bodies in history and 
thorized the idea of self-surveillance. Chapter three showed the difficulty in finding 
‘appropriate’ workplace clothing. Chapter four articulated the trouble with portraying 
women’s bodies in the workplace in a non-sexual manner. Chapters five and six revealed the 
problems of clothing, harassment and body complexes that real women have in Australian 
workplaces. Chapter Seven explored women’s role in the workforce, and chapter eight 
affirmed that historical positioning of female role exist in the Creative Industries and why 
this is a problem if the this the new work order. The result of this research has revealed 
dissonance in body literacies and workplace.

Body literacies conflate with other literacies learned at a young age. Carolyn D. Baker, in 
reference to kindergarten learning, asserts that:

> Classroom reading practices create their own discourses and orders of 
knowledge: in the examples presented here these appear to be discourses and
knowledges about the interiors of stories and about world-knowledge, but not about texts. If literacy is understood as methods for talking about, characterising, and analysing texts as such (cf. Olson & Astington in press/1990), this raises the questions of whether students are encountering literate discourses in these classroom reading events.⁴

There are discourses and orders of knowledge that also surround how both genders learn the role and place of their bodies. If the role of the individual body – how it functions, where it alone is situated – is the only literacy learnt, then when it interacts with other bodies and texts a dissonance can occur. Mary Macken-Horarik suggests:

Even if we restrict our attention within theorisation of literacy to the mode of ‘lettered representation’ as I prefer to do (see also Kress, 1997: 116) there are still multiple realities to consider. Different literacy teaching regimes foreground different skills and these have both interpretive and productive dimensions. All of the following literate skills can be said to typify the reading and writing undertaken by students at different stages of schooling.

- Identifying sound/letter correspondences and developing an acceptable handwriting orthography;
- Recognising the ‘correct’ meaning of a text or text segment and producing an appropriate response to this;
- Questioning the dubious messages of texts and perhaps subverting or critiquing these.⁵

Macken-Horarik’s description of literacy can be applied to how body literacy is cultured. The body as a biological construct, a living organism must first be identified. Bodily functions such as eating and constructing an understandable dialogue need to be learned. As the body gets older ‘correct’ meanings of the text are recognized and responded too. Such as the difference between a male and female determines which toilet is used, or certain activities and surroundings determine whether the body is naked or clothed. Messages that are directed at a body also require questioning and a response. Such an example is if a man touched a woman’s chest, depending on the situation and the relationship between the women’s body to

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the man’s this could be deemed dubious, wanted or accidental. The problem lies in that while
the first two stages of literacy are applicable to both genders when learning how the body
functions, the third stage infinitely differs. It is dependent on age, class, setting, location and
gender. Mary Macken-Horarik literacy table\textsuperscript{6} is presented below:

Table 9.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Everyday</th>
<th>Applied</th>
<th>Theoretical</th>
<th>Reflexive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Starting points: diverse and open ended</td>
<td>Gaining control of specific kinds of expertise</td>
<td>Accessing dominant forms of knowledge and semiosis</td>
<td>Negotiating social diversity and competing discourses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Working with the contents of tacit knowledge, based on personal and communal experience</td>
<td>2 Using a specific skill or ‘know how’, based on acquired expertise</td>
<td>3 Assimilating and reproducing the contents of specialised knowledge, based on educational learning</td>
<td>4 Questioning the taken-for-granted understandings of specialised knowledge, based on alternative perspectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playing out the roles and relationships of family, kin and community networks</td>
<td>Taking up an apprenticeship role relevant to a particular practice</td>
<td>Becoming an incumbent member of a discipline</td>
<td>Challenging and reconstituting roles in a world of social diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interacting with others, primarily through spoken language</td>
<td>Using spoken and written language to enable experience or activity</td>
<td>Producing and interpreting epistemic texts</td>
<td>Reconstructing meanings through different media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘personal growth literacy’</td>
<td>‘skills literacy’</td>
<td>specialised literacy</td>
<td>‘critical literacy’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When body literacy is situated within this table it falls between ‘personal growth’ and ‘skills’
literacy. While work and education skills are continually improved, personal body literacies
are neglected. Certain body literacies that were previously taught by mothers and deportment

\textsuperscript{6} ibid., p. 78.
schools disappeared in the wake of feminism. They were replaced by knowledge of sexual freedom, family planning and ‘girl power’. Toril Moi’s idea of the ‘lived body’ describes the state of women’s bodies within contemporary Australian culture. It asserts the multiple influences - social, environmental and physical impressions – that mark and teach the female body. Iris Marion Young addresses Toril Moi’s idea of the lived body and expresses that,

The lived body is a unified idea of a physical body acting and experiencing in a specific sociocultural context; it is body-in-situation. For existentialist theory, situation denotes the produce of factivity and freedom. The person always faces the material facts of her body and its relation to a given environment. Here bodily organs have certain feeling capacities, and function in determinate ways; her size, age, health and training make her capable of strength and movement in relation to her environment in specific ways…Here specific body lives in a specific context – crowded by other people, anchored to the earth by gravity, surrounded by buildings and streets with a unique history, hearing particular languages, having food and shelter available, or not, as a result of culturally specific social processes that make specific requirements on her to access them. All these concrete material relations if a person’s bodily existence and her physical and social environment constitute her factivity.7

The idea of the body as lived illustrates how an individual’s body works in a specific context. Different languages to that of her predecessors surround the contemporary female body. Gender politics is often conflated with sexual politics and what feminism actually ‘is’, is difficult to decipher. Women are left trying to perform indeterminate roles. How this perplexing state differs for men in relation to the workplace is that in this particular context the role of the male body has intrinsically been written. For women, the knowledge of how the body operates in the workplace is determinate on the rules of that particular workplace, choice of attire and the actual body of the woman within it. Young asserts that:

The body as lived is always enculturated: by the phonemes a body learns to pronounce at a very early age; by the clothes the person wears that mark her nation, her age, her occupational status; and in what is culturally expected or

required of women. The body is enculturated in habits of comportment distinctive to interactional settings of business and pleasure; often they are specific to locale or group.\(^8\)

There is a dissonance in body literacies especially for women. The freedom of sexuality and employment has placed women in positions where either the body literacy is not recognizable or is yet to be formulated. Yet women have a body literacy bound in the ‘girl power’, post-feminist ideologies that they own and control their bodies. How they choose to write their body is not necessarily read in the intended way. The discord lies in the fact that body literacies are not universal. Each person has their own body literacy, socialized through intricately contextualized histories of identity. Each workplace has certain knowledge regarding bodily practices that must be maintained. Young women are entering the employment sector with a ‘personal growth’ or ‘skills’ body literacy, instead of a specialized or critical body literacy. A personal literacy is to be expected when often such knowledge can often only be learned in particular workplaces. In order to be successful within a chosen occupation a women or man should have the knowledge of a high level of ‘skills literacy before beginning work. This sentiment was reflected in RF’s interview answer regarding a younger female employee who was deemed to be dressing inappropriately. The need to be educated in regard to workplace clothing is not a primordial call for women to learn to curtsey or cross their legs. This is attacking body politics and matching individual’s lived body to the multiple body literacies of contemporary workplaces. There is a common level of body/workplace literacy that can be achieved before entering the structures and addressing this is a preventative measure to remove the body as a problem from the workplace. Elizabeth Grosz writes,

\(^8\) ibid., p. 106.
The city is one of the crucial factors in the social production of (sexed) corporeality: the built environment provides the context and co-ordinates for contemporary forms of body. The city provides the order and organization that automatically links otherwise unrelated bodies: it is the condition and milieu in which corporeality is socially, sexually, and discursively produced. But if the city is a significant context and frame for the body, the relations between bodies and cities are more complex than may have been realised.9

Grosz’s suggestion of the complex relationship between bodies and cities, relates the Moi’s idea of the lived body. Cities, buildings and workplaces affect the knowledge a person gains about their body, in the same way that a person applies their own conception of body literacy to the city. But the city and workplaces are no longer stable. Buildings have been replaced with wireless technology and life-long careers turned into contract work. The quandary that workers face is that while the employment sector may be destabilized, the body literacies required within these workplaces, have not necessarily followed suit. The dissonant state of bodies at work returns to the argument that arose in previous chapters, that features of Old Economic workplaces remain in aesthetically New Economic environments. If this is known then some of these literacies in relation to the body can be taught prior to entry.

As it has already been established, there are multiple body literacies required in different workplaces. Therefore how is conduit body literacy deciphered? Frances Christie and Ray Misson suggest that ‘the main thrust of much work in critical literacy is towards analysing representations to make apparent the inherent ideology. It aims to render the belief systems inscribed in the text and so negate their power.’10 If a critical literacy can be applied to texts that represent the body in the workplace, then certain common knowledge regarding the body can be recognized. Discourses of sexual harassment and pregnancy policies perform a

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pedagogic function, teaching employers about acceptable behaviour and the parameters of the
total body and workplace.

This thesis has determined that the body is coded and marked within the workplace. When a
body is decoded and functioning/dressed appropriately, then it is recognized as a ‘worker’ not
as a particular ‘body’. The cultural positioning of women in the workplace, with female
fashions cluttered with the markers of sexuality, is complex and rarely allows for this
decoding to occur. The female body, whether it is pregnant, disabled, able or sexualised,
remains as a sight for scrutiny. Bodies within the context of the workplace can be viewed as
deviant, aberrant and dissonant. These definitions are supported by the policies and
procedures put in place to protect bodies within such environments.

The ideology that links the female body with deviance has been tracked through the
interviews, magazines and popular culture in previous chapters. The female body as
specifically sexually deviant – especially in regards to the workplace - has been a common
element operating within this thesis. A significant marker that shows its existence is sexual
harassment. Katherine Franke suggests,

For a complex set of reasons, we almost intuitively label some behaviour as
sexual; take workplace sexual harassment, for instance. Yet, if pressed, most
people would not be able to identify or defend a set of criteria they apply in such
 nominalist moments.¹¹

Franke’s account holds great truth and this is because sex discrimination is metonymic for the
majority of bodily harassment. The Sex Discrimination Act of 1984¹² with its many

amendments now covers a multitude of types of harassment, especially in regards to the workplace. It covers direct and indirect sex discrimination, sexual harassment, family responsibilities and some elements of bullying. It is ‘an act relating to discrimination on the ground of sex, marital status, pregnancy, potential pregnancy or family responsibilities or involving sexual harassment.’ While I do not debate that this Act is necessary, it does cover so many forms of bodily discrimination that twenty-one years after its publication the articles that it covers may need to be rethought. The objects of this act are:

(a) to give effect to certain provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women;
and
(b) to eliminate, so far as is possible, discrimination against persons on the ground of sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy in the areas of work, accommodation, education, the provision of goods, facilities and services, the disposal of land, the activities of clubs and the administration of Commonwealth laws and programs; and to eliminate, so far as possible, discrimination involving dismissal of employees on the ground of family responsibilities; and
(c) to eliminate, so far as is possible, discrimination involving sexual harassment in the workplace, in educational institutions and in other areas of public activity; and
(d) to promote recognition and acceptance within the community of the principle of the equality of men and women.

The Act itself while protesting to protect both men and women and adhere to the ideology of equality amongst the genders the majority of its focus is on discrimination against women. Women’s ‘sex’ is always potentially deviant and historically has been in need of protecting from basic levels of discrimination – such as not been given a job to more overt breeches of sexual harassment. Grosz writes,

Female characteristics are often considered aberrations of the male norm. It is significant that in listing some of the defining characteristics of the two sexes earlier, I had to specify only the female; this is not surprising, given the

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13 ibid., p. 1.
presumption that men provide the ideal by which women are judged. They also require transformations in social practices and exchange relations – sexual or otherwise – between men and women, so that women’s bodies are no longer treated as inert, passive, incapable, and dependent, but in terms relevant to women’s specificity.\textsuperscript{15}

When observing the nature of such regulations as the \textit{Sex Discrimination Act of 1984},\textsuperscript{16} Grosz’s statement reveals itself and becomes exceedingly relevant. Men hardly need to be mentioned,\textsuperscript{17} as women’s bodies are ‘different’, needing to be marked and protected. As women’s bodies deviate from norm when they try to exchange relations and denounce passivity and dependence, this deviance transcends. As described in previous chapters, women, men and various facets of the media perpetuate this image of the sexually deviant woman in the ‘office’. This is illustrated through the blatant sexual antics of the women in \textit{Sex and the City}, to the comedy of \textit{Bridget Jones} and the unsubtle nature of Australian advertising, illustrated in advertisements for paper and dance classes.\textsuperscript{18} While regulations such as the \textit{Sex Discrimination Act of 1984}\textsuperscript{19} continue to grow, sex is being brought into the office. The dissonance between ‘good’ and ‘bad’ bodies continues.

\textsuperscript{15} Grosz, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 104.
\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Sex Discrimination Act of 1984, op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{17} This argument is contextualising the definition of women’s body as aberrant in terms of male bodies in the workplace. There are many issues of race, class and sexual orientation that male bodies face within the workplace and while these may intersect with women in the workplace they do not fall within the scope of this thesis. Blount and Cunningham write, ‘the irony, as well as the danger, in contemporary discussions of African American masculinities lies in the borders of separating the critical discourses of race, gender, and sexuality from one another and often black males as subjects’. For this reason this chapters is focussed on the aberrations of the female working body.
\textsuperscript{18} In 2004 an advertisement for reflex paper showed a girl kneeling on paper in the office when a male employee enters and looks at what she is doing suggestively. Another account is Gilkinson’s Dance Studio Perth Western Australia who in 2004/2005 ran an advertisement which began with people starting to dance in a sexual manner in an office. The tag line was ‘sadly the office is only a place for work’.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Sex Discrimination Act of 1984, op. cit.}
Sexual harassment is a symptom of this dissonance and in 2003/2004 the Taking It Seriously: Contemporary Experiences of Sexual Harassment in the Workplace Research Project, known also as the WASH report (Women Against Sexual Harassment) was undertaken by Patricia Hayes. This was funded by the WomenSpeak Network and supported by The Office of the Status of Women. The report outlines regulations, provides research and conducts a survey of accounts of sexual harassment in the workplace. It states that,

Many of the participants were unaware of their rights in regard to sexual harassment, or where to find accessible and affordable assistance and advocacy. They think that current processes administered by the Equal Opportunity Commission of Victoria (EOCV) and HREOC are too intimidating for victim/survivors. From our survey of people’s experiences of sexual harassment, 177 out of 235 (75%) respondents reported they had personally experienced unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour in their workplace. More than a third of respondents (37%) reported, at some level, the sexual harassment they had witnessed and experienced yet only six out of 136 people (5%) reported using the EOCV or HREOC.

The WASH research project is important for several reasons. Firstly it explains in detail what constitutes sexual harassment. Secondly, it confirms the number of lack of reporting and non-reporting of sexual harassment. These two problems affirm the lack of literacy in regards to what sexual harassment is and how and why it needs to be reported. These body literacy levels relate to the lived body, class and education. Giroux and Aronowitz suggest, ‘critical literacy interrogates the cultural capital of the oppressed in order to learn from it; it functions to confirm rather than disconfirm the presence and voices of the oppressed in institutions that are generally alienating and hostile towards them’. The WASH project also

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21 ibid., p. 4.
23 ibid., p. 128.
recognizes these voices and provides insights of actual cases of sexual harassment within
Australia.

Comprehensive data on the incidence and prevalence of sexual harassment in
Australia is currently unavailable. HREOC has embarked on a contemporary
sample survey of workplace sexual harassment to be released soon. The *Women’s
Safety Strategy* however cites research from overseas that suggests sexual
harassment occurs more frequently than reported. The UK and US have
suggested that between 33 to 50 per cent of women are victims of sexual
harassment at least once in their lives.²⁴

HREOC’s annual 2003/2004 report addressed the lack of sexual harassment information and
revealed the information gained from a telephone survey that had been undertaken. This
confirms the incomplete knowledge on how much sexual harassment actually occurs. The
Sex Discrimination Commissioner Pru Goward revealed that,

Twenty years after the Act first made this conduct unlawful we still did not know
what the general incidence of sexual harassment was in the broader community.
To address this shortfall, we first reviewed our own complaints data, suspecting
that they were the tip of the iceberg. The review of complaints established one
fact which should startle employers - 67 percent of those who made a complaint
had left their employment. Other findings of concern were: 78 percent of
complainants had reported the harassment within their workplace and 72 percent
of complainants reported that the harassment began in the first 12 months of the
complainant's employment. The implications for staff turnover costs are clear.

In late 2003, the Sex Discrimination Unit commissioned the Gallup Organization
to conduct a statistically significant telephone survey about the incidence and
nature of sexual harassment. The main findings were salutary:

- **Incidence** - 41 percent of women and 14 percent of men stated that they have
  personally experienced sexual harassment at sometime in an area of public life.
- **Nature** - 94 percent of the sexual harassment experienced involved 'crude or
  offensive behaviour'.
- **Duration** - 50 percent stated that the sexual harassment in the workplace
  continued for up to six months.²⁵

HREOC’s findings within Australia are similar to the numbers within the Unite Kingdom and

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²⁴ Hayes, *op. cit.*, p. 27.
United States of America. The length of time that this type of harassment occurs for is abhorrent. The lack of reporting and the amount of time the harassment occurred for are serious concerns. HREOC’s findings also do not reveal those incidences of sexual harassment that are not reported. If a critical literacy in this domain is to be achieved completed knowledge on the incidences of sexual harassment need to be explored in order to confirm the voices of the harassed and to provide other women with this knowledge. How such information is obtained without disclosure by the harassed is unknown. Within the WASH Report, a survey was conducted. The project reported that,

There were 235 survey respondents. Of these:

- 197 (84%) reported either personally experiencing or witnessing unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour in their workplace.
- 177 (75%) reported that they had personally experienced unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour in their workplace.
- 147 (63%) reported that they had witnessed unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour in their workplace.
- 137 (58%) of respondents had both personally experienced and witnessed unwanted or unwelcome sexual behaviour in their workplace.

Of those respondents who had personally experienced sexual harassment:

- 160 (90%) are female
- 120 (68%) were aged 25 – 44 years, 34 (19%) were aged 45 years and older.\(^{26}\)

The results of the WASH survey, which the smallness of the group must be taken into account, suggests that the percentage of sexual harassment incidences are higher than that of the HREOC report. This survey did also take into account witnessing acts of sexual harassment. Without the witnesses 75% had experienced unwanted sexual behaviour in comparison to the 55% suggested in the HREOC telephone study. The overall incidences of sexual harassment, including non-reported acts, probably falls between HREOC’s and

WASH’s percentages, as only 37% of the respondents in WASH’s survey actually reported the incident, 27% kept quiet about the incident and 31% left their job.\textsuperscript{27} Giroux and Aronowitz remark that,

Critical literacy responds to the cultural capital of a specific group or class and looks at the way in which it can be confirmed, and also at the ways in which the dominant society disconfirms students by either ignoring or denigrating the knowledge and experiences that characterize their everyday lives. The unit of analysis here is social, and the key concern is not with individual interests but with individual and collective empowerment.\textsuperscript{28}

In order for women to gain critical body literacy, they must be taught ownership of their bodies and that it is acceptable to talk about their bodies if they are being dealt with inappropriately. In the WASH survey, the length of time that this sexual harassment occurred ranged from one off to more than five years. The two to less six-month period, similar to the HREOC report, held the highest incident rate at 18% and then less than two months at 17%.\textsuperscript{29} These findings reflect a dissonance in knowledge regarding harassment and appropriate workplace behaviour. In the HREOC report Goward writes,

Sexual harassment continues to be an issue for Australian women. Sexual harassment complaints under the \textit{Sex Discrimination Act 1984} (the Act) have declined to about a quarter of all complaints received by the Commission by ground, partly due to the rapid rise in the number of pregnancy discrimination complaints. But even so, those complaining of sexual harassment under the Act make up just under half of all people complaining to the Commission. This includes men complaining about sexual harassment.\textsuperscript{30}

The increased number of pregnancy-related harassments is of large importance, as the cases relate not to just pregnancy but potential pregnancy as well, a topic that will be discussed further later in this chapter. The pregnant and disabled body deviate from the sexually

\textsuperscript{27} \textit{ibid.}, p. 20. \\
Note in terms of those that kept quiet this means that they did not report it or talk to anyone (family or friends) about the incident. \\
\textsuperscript{28} Giroux & Aronowitz, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 128. \\
\textsuperscript{29} Hayes, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 19. \\
\textsuperscript{30} Goward, \textit{op. cit.}
deviant body. They are categorized not through mental capacity but physical mobility.

Within this discussion the pregnant and disabled body have been classed as aberrant.

Aberrant bodies are those that deviate from the able body, such as the disabled or pregnant body. These bodies are considered ‘different’ and there are rules and regulations in place to prevent against their discrimination. The fact that there are these rules signifies that these bodies within the workplace are regarded as a problem. The disability discrimination act of 1992 defines disability as:

\[\text{disability, in relation to a person, means:}\]
\[\text{(a) total or partial loss of the person’s bodily or mental functions; or}\]
\[\text{(b) total or partial loss of a part of the body; or}\]
\[\text{(c) the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or}\]
\[\text{(d) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or}\]
\[\text{(e) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person’s body; or}\]
\[\text{(f) a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or}\]
\[\text{(g) a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour;}\]
\[\text{and includes a disability that:}\]
\[\text{(h) presently exists; or}\]
\[\text{(i) previously existed but no longer exists; or}\]
\[\text{(j) may exist in the future; or}\]
\[\text{(k) is imputed to a person.}\]

This definition covers both mental and physical disability. As this chapter concentrates on perceptions of the body, this discussion is centred on the physical side of disability. It is also pertinent to note that some of the clauses described within this definition of the disability act,

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Resonate with being pregnant, such as letters (c) or (g). This illustrates why disabled and pregnant bodies can both be classified as aberrant. The nine other definitions separate the two aberrant bodies. The disabled body is defined by discrimination against its permanent status, dictated through such clauses as (h), (i) and (j).

Discrimination against aberrant bodies within the workplace occurs when they are analysed and labelled and their ability to fulfil the task can be questioned. This does not necessarily mean that it has been proven that they cannot fulfil a task, simply that by the definition of being disabled or pregnant the ability to act as a normal worker comes under scrutiny. Robert Guthrie provides a court case of a Commonwealth bank employee versus the institution. He states:

In a recent decision of Garry v Commonwealth Bank of Australia, the Human Rights and Equal opportunity Commission suggested that special arrangements have to be put in places for disabled employees. In Garry, the employer was subject to the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) which permits discrimination only where the employee is unable to perform the inherent requirements of the job and where any modifications would impose an unjustifiable hardship on the employer. The applicant claimed that she had, by reason of diabetic condition and vision impairment, been denied access to the employer’s policies, a career path and opportunities for transfer and promotion. She said she was not placed on a proper roster and was not provided with proper lighting and space at her workstation. The Commission held that the employer had failed reasonably to accommodate the applicant’s needs which would not have imposed any hardship on the employer.32

This example displays clear discrimination based on disability. It shows the negligence and inappropriate behaviour that occurs in the workplace against a body that is deemed different. This difference is marked and judged as unable to succeed at ‘work’. Through this

categorization, the body is placed in a role where it is unable to complete the work to a high-level. It is then forced into fulfilling this prophecy. Such forced incompetency is illustrated within Guthrie’s example, where the woman was not provided with proper light or space at her workstation. She was given insufficient tools to be able complete her work tasks.

For disabled bodies within the workplace there is a dissonance in regards to what the individual body is capable of accomplishing, and what support is required. Body competency is assumed, and it is within these assumptions that discrimination emerges. While these judgements may stem from a general lack of knowledge and education on disabilities within Australia, workplaces and employees need to be informed. Similar to the dissonant female bodies discussed earlier in this chapter a skills literacy of how the disabled body may be treated needs to be gained before entering or re-entering the workplace. Knowledge of how a body should be treated also needs to be learned. Similar to the female bodies within the contemporary workplace, success at a task has to be proven before the body/person is recognized as having the capabilities to achieve it. It is constantly being marked and critiqued and therefore certain skills are required in order to navigate a clear path through the workplace, which is also related to the pregnant body.

While the pregnant and disabled body can both be classed as aberrant, obviously they are different. Specific challenges, histories and discourses encircle both these identities and corporealities at work. Pregnancy is limited to a nine month period. Disabilities often infer a lifetime of socialization, knowledge and oppression. It is important to note the specificities of oppression and discrimination, while also recognizing the assumptions of a ‘normal’ body.
that serve to undermine and undervalue those marked as different. Certainly there are some convergences: the pregnant body is faced with one similar critique as the disabled body in the workplace in terms of physical mobility equalling mental capability. The way in which the physical mobility of the pregnant body and the disabled body are critiqued, can be found in the policies that have been regulated to protect them. The disability act, in reference to employment states that:

(1) It is unlawful for an employer or a person acting or purporting to act on behalf of an employer to discriminate against a person on the ground of the other person’s disability or a disability of any of that other person’s associates:
   (a) in the arrangements made for the purpose of determining who should be offered employment; or
   (b) in determining who should be offered employment; or
   (c) in the terms or conditions on which employment is offered.
(2) It is unlawful for an employer or a person acting or purporting to act on behalf of an employer to discriminate against an employee on the ground of the employee’s disability or a disability of any of that employee’s associates:
   (a) in the terms or conditions of employment that the employer affords the employee; or
   (b) by denying the employee access, or limiting the employee’s access, to opportunities for promotion, transfer or training, or to any other benefits associated with employment; or
   (c) by dismissing the employee; or
   (d) by subjecting the employee to any other detriment.33

Alternatively, discrimination in regards to pregnancy falls within the area of sexual harassment. Christie Ziss writes,

Despite the fact that legislation concerning pregnancy discrimination has been in place for many years, a significant number of complaints continue to be made by pregnant employees to industrial and equal opportunity tribunals.

In 1998, the Victorian Equal Opportunity Commission announced that complaints of pregnancy discrimination had increased by 90 per cent over the previous 12 months.34

One recent account is the Scarpa v Elaeno Nominees case of September 2005 in Victoria where, “the Australian Industrial Relations Commission ordered a Melbourne pharmacy to reinstate a pregnant employee after she was sacked for taking time off for morning sickness.”\textsuperscript{35} Pregnancy discrimination still accounts for a large proportion of the discrimination cases within Australia. While a number of rules, regulations and policies have been put in place to avoid such detriment, these have not stopped the problem. For this reason women need to be aware of their rights as pregnant or potentially pregnant women. The sexual discrimination act of 1984 refers to discrimination regarding pregnancy or potential pregnancy. It states that

\begin{quote}
(1) For the purposes of this Act, a person (the \textit{discriminator}) discriminates against a woman (the \textit{aggrieved woman}) on the ground of the aggrieved woman’s pregnancy or potential pregnancy if, because of:
(a) the aggrieved woman’s pregnancy or potential pregnancy; or
(b) a characteristic that appertains generally to women who are pregnant or potentially pregnant; or
(c) a characteristic that is generally imputed to women who are pregnant or potentially pregnant;
\textit{10 Sex Discrimination Act 1984} the discriminator treats the aggrieved woman less favourably than, in circumstances that are the same or are not materially different, the discriminator treats or would treat someone who is not pregnant or potentially pregnant.
(2) For the purposes of this Act, a person (the \textit{discriminator}) discriminates against a woman (the \textit{aggrieved woman}) on the ground of the aggrieved woman’s pregnancy or potential pregnancy if the discriminator imposes, or proposes to impose, a condition, requirement or practice that has, or is likely to have, the effect of disadvantaging women who are also pregnant or potentially pregnant.
(3) This section has effect subject to sections 7B and 7D.\textsuperscript{36}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Sex Discrimination Act of 1984}, op. cit., pp. 9-10
The rules and regulations that are applied to discrimination in terms of pregnancy as a combination of the sexual harassment and workplace relation acts. The findings from the 1998 pregnancy and work inquiry were released in the 2000 report *Pregnant and Productive: It's a right not a privilege to work while pregnant*. This paper analyses, explains, presents examples, comments and provides recommendations on the *Sex Discrimination Act of 1984*. This report presents the general employment discrimination in regards to pregnancy and it is significant because it discusses pregnancy as similar to the disabled body. It explores in depth the types of discrimination direct and indirect and includes a clause relating to less favourable treatment.

4.27 A requirement of the definition of direct discrimination is that the pregnant or potentially pregnant woman be treated less favourably than someone who is not pregnant or potentially pregnant. As one submission noted, “less favourably” can mean different things to different people. Sometimes employers may intend to be supportive but actually act in a discriminatory manner. 4.28 The concept of “less favourably” in section 7(1) of the SD Act is objective and does not require motive or intention by the employer.

This is important to ponder as it brings forth the notion that pregnancy and potential pregnancy, are treated less favourably than that of the non-pregnant body. It seems from this report that often definitions in regards to such phrases as ‘less favourably’ are often fluid and unclear. Another important point to note is the notion of the potentially pregnant body being discriminated against. In contemporary workplaces, this rule can protect women in the working ages of approximately 14 to 50 against reproductive discrimination. Why this is so pertinent to ponder, is because this rule has been put in place because discrimination against potentially pregnant bodies has occurred. This illustrates the systematic crisis relating to

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38 *Sex Discrimination Act of 1984*, op. cit.
39 *ibid.*, p. 40.
women’s bodies before they have even entered the workplace. Chapter six of this document brings forth the ideas of ‘other’ detriment, in relation to the discrimination of the pregnant body. It states:

6.36 Often, unlawful discrimination under other provisions of the SD Act will also amount to detriment. For example, sexual harassment which is unlawful under the SD Act can also amount to detriment. As examples provided in a submission illustrate, many pregnant women are subject to a range of bullying harassing and humiliating behaviour that could fall under the definition of “any other detriment” if the employer was responsible or failed to take reasonable steps to ensure that the behaviour did not occur.

This ‘other detriment’ section is similar to that of disability, especially in areas such as discrimination causing detriment to career advancement and promotion. Another example was disclosed the Pregnancy and Productive Report. This stated that.

We have been contacted by women regarding treatment by their employers which could be seen to cause detriment to them, including verbal abuse and harassment, inappropriate comments (including references to abortion), a changed relationship with the boss after they were informed of the pregnancy and direct threats of sacking for the time off because of illness related to pregnancy. Hours being cut back without reason, roles changed, status diminished, the employer refusing to communicate with the employee, or comments being made to other workers about the pregnant worker making it clear that the employer planned to “get rid of” them from the workplace.

The definition of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission along with examples provided by the new South Wales government have also been included, to clearly outline what constitutes other detriment.

6.39 HREOC supports a broad definition of detriment, in accordance with federal and state/territory case law in this area. Each case must be considered individually. Examples of detriment will be provided in the Guidelines. They will also detail the fact that fair and reasonable responses or actions by an employer in relation to their economic circumstances or to legitimate performance difficulties

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40 The phrase ‘other detriment’ is considered to be confusing and this is disclosed within chapter six of the report. Pregnancy and Productive Report., op. cit., p. 67.
41 ibid.
42 ibid.
43 ibid.
with an employee are not unlawful.

**Pregnancy Guidelines 9:** That the Guidelines provide assistance with what could constitute discrimination suffered by employees within sections 14 to 17 of the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (Cth) on the basis of pregnancy or potential pregnancy. In particular, Guidelines should cover what could constitute unlawful

- limiting or denying access to benefits;
- dismissal or termination; and
- any other detriment.

**Examples**

6.40 The submission lodged by the New South Wales Government provided a list of loss and damage experienced by pregnancy discrimination complainants to the New South Wales Anti-Discrimination Board. This list provides a helpful guide to actions which could also be covered under sections 14 to 17 of the SD Act.

- Financial loss through denial of promised promotion/pay increase;
- Financial loss through denial of casual shifts or denial of overtime;
- Financial loss and loss of status through demotion upon return to work
- Termination of employment;
- Loss of status and career development through denial of opportunity to teach advanced classes;
- Personal inconvenience/additional costs through transfer to work location further from complainant’s home;
- Financial loss through demotion and enforced part time work;
- Loss of status/career advancement through demotion/relegation to less interesting and fulfilling “back room” duties;
- Apprehension of personal danger through transfer to position involving dangerous late night duties on return to work;
- Withdrawal of offer of employment;
- Exclusion from consideration for promotion/permanent employment.197

Through these inclusions, a list of inappropriate pregnancy treatments and behaviours can be formulated. The demotion to less fulfilling duties, money, status and career advancement shows the markers of competency and respect that can be placed on the pregnant body. These are akin to those that are designated to disable bodies. Neither have room to prove capability and intelligence does not equal capability, and as Joe Catanzariti comments in regards to the *Pregnancy and Productive Report*,45 ‘assumptions about the capacity of an applicant to perform the job because of her pregnancy or status as a mother – factors

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44 *ibid.*, p. 68
45 *ibid.*
unrelated to the requirements of the position – should not intrude on the recruitment process.\textsuperscript{46} Workplace mobility is based on physical mobility. The pregnant body is at a larger disadvantage because it is a definitive marker of being female, sexually active and physically different. It suffers from being aberrant as well as sexually deviant. It is sexually deviant because it is always marked as female and has the potential to become pregnant. Thus multiple body dissonances occur simultaneously. Grosz writes,

\begin{quote}
Biological sciences, for example, would have to be drastically modified so that distinctively female processes are no longer considered passive \textit{a priori} or by definition, in opposition to the activity attributed to men’s biological processes.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

Simply because women have the biological efficacy to become pregnant does not mean they will, or should be judged on this function. Aronowitz and DiFazio write,

\begin{quote}
High Technology created a new knowledge space that is not burdened with the gendered history of skill. It is a male domain, but because it represents a technological break with the past, it offers a terrain for struggle, a terrain where women’s knowledge – theoretical, abstract, aesthetic, moral – can intervene in ways that women have not been able to intervene in the past in the realm of skilled work.\textsuperscript{48}
\end{quote}

In the context of the body literacy and workplace argument, Aronowitz and DiFazios’ statement is problematic. It is the fact that women’s knowledge is defined as historical conceptions of ‘women’s knowledge’ as opposed to skill based knowledge that these problems arise. Women need to have a critical as well as skills-based knowledge in order to navigate the contemporary Australian workforce. Further to the NSW government’s additions, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission also added on other definitions to the \textit{Pregnancy and Productivity Report}.\textsuperscript{49} It states that:

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{47} Grosz, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 36-37.
\item \textsuperscript{49} \textit{Pregnant and Productive Report}, \textit{op. cit.}
\end{itemize}
In addition to those listed in the New South Wales Government submission, HREOC is of the view that the following non-exclusive list of behaviour may under some circumstances amount to actions prohibited under sections 14 to 17 of the SD Act.

- Unreasonable refusal to consider a pregnant employee’s request to work part time.
- Scheduling a regular group meeting at a time when a pregnant employee must attend a regular medical appointment.
- Bullying, harassment and humiliating behaviour, acts and gestures which create a hostile work environment.
- Alteration of the terms and conditions of the job without consultation with the employee.
- Unreasonable transfer or redeployment to a position of lower status, either with or without consultation.
- Failure to accommodate the physical requirements of a pregnant employee, for example, the provision of adequate seating or a maternity uniform.
- A standard policy that all pregnant workers move to “light duties” irrespective of individual circumstances.\(^\text{50}\)

This report provides very specific details of what accounts as ‘other’ detriment. This denotes the necessity in having such regulations as the *Sexual Harassment Act of 1984*\(^\text{51}\). The similarity between these additions and that of the disability act are easily recognizable. Both the Act and Report protect against unlawful dismissal, harassment or caused due to having an aberrant body. The *Pregnancy and Productivity Report*\(^\text{52}\) is perhaps more thorough than the disability act in its description of harassment and detriment. The disability act refers to ‘other detriment’ but does not elaborate on this. The pregnant body as both ‘aberrant’ and ‘deviant’ may be the reason for such a detailed report. These reports and acts reflect the dissonant nature in body literacies amongst Australian culture. The need for these reports and the frequency of harassment claims – caused through such events and behaviours as pregnancy – illustrates the lack of knowledge of how a body functions in the workplace. It also shows that mental capability is defined by physical attributes.

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\(^{50}\) Grosz, op. cit., pp. 68 - 69

\(^{51}\) *Sex Discrimination Act of 1984*, op. cit.

\(^{52}\) *Pregnant and Productive Report*, op. cit.
Why such regulations as the: *Sex Discrimination Act of 1984*;\(^53\) *Disability Act*;\(^54\) *WASH Project*;\(^55\) *HREOC Report*;\(^56\) *Pregnant and Productive Report*\(^57\) and the *Workplace Relations Act of 1996*,\(^58\) are so important is because they portray the dissonance of women’s bodies within the workplace. Peter Anderson suggests that multiple Acts can be confusing for employers.

A related, and not less complicating factor, is the existence of multiple discrimination law frameworks in the one jurisdiction. For example, apart from the *SDA* regulating discrimination in employment, other Commonwealth law as such as the *Workplace Relations Act 1996 (Cth)* (‘WRA’) cover the very same ground both in terms of objects and in terms of substantive provisions. Both Acts create mandatory obligations for employers on the same issue, yet may not enact the same substantive provisions, exemptions, remedies or processes.\(^59\)

While conflicting provisions, processes and exemptions should be remedied, if there was not dissonance between perceived and actual bodily actions, then there would be no need for so many rules and regulations to be in place. These reports also show that while certain types of harassment such as sexual harassment are declining, as previously suggested by Pru Goward, other forms of bodily harassment such as pregnancy and potential pregnancy are increasing. These regulations and reports provide a pedagogic framework from which women can learn how their bodies may be treated in the workplace. While most of these reports and other papers that have been written on these reports suggest educating the employer on relations of disability and sex discrimination, it is the potential ‘victim’ of discrimination who also needs

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\(^{53}\) *Sex Discrimination Act of 1984*, op. cit.

\(^{54}\) *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*, op. cit.

\(^{55}\) *Hayes, op. cit.*

\(^{56}\) *Gowards, op. cit.*

\(^{57}\) *Pregnant and Productive Report*, op. cit.


to be educated. Using the data that has been gathered, potentially fifty to seventy five percent of women are going to be sexually harassed in the workplace during their career. This is an alarmingly range. Teaching what accounts as sexual harassment or basic disability and sex discrimination does not provide enough tools for women to be able to deal with such crisis in the workplace. I am not suggesting that women are responsible for causing the harassment against them. But I am revealing that women need to know the literacy of a workplace and that if they deviate from adhering to this literacy then problems may ensue.

Understandably, most workers do not want to read through long reports. Yet the information discussed in this chapter must be made widely available to both men and women. Pedagogic strategies need to be in place in order to prevent women from placing themselves in situations where discrimination can occur and how to deal with it if it does arise. I am unaware of the level that sexual harassment is taught in schools, but it should be being taught at an in depth level, not simply as a subsection of health. It should also be a course that is compulsory to all workplaces and given when employees first enter a new workplace. This way the lines between work and leisure are clearly drawn. This would also allow for employees to obtain information regarding appropriate levels of dress. This returns to Macken-Horarik’s ideology of literacy. Knowledge of these reports and regulations teaches women about body literacy. It provides them with a ‘skills’ almost ‘specialized’ literacy in regards to how the body should or should not be treated within the workplace.
If the body is - as Young, Moi and de Beavoir suggests - lived or ‘in situation’, then once these systems are learned, then they can be applied and the body will utilize this knowledge accordingly. As the cause and effect relationship of having dissonant bodies in the workplace is learned, then we may see women adhering to critical body literacy when they are going to enter the potential workplace. Toril Moi suggests, ‘to avoid biological determinism all we need to do is to deny that biological facts justify social values, and even the most recalcitrant realist can do that.’ If women are not viewed as always potentially sexual and ready to reproduce, this in turn may see the demise of female body as sexualised within such areas as the popular cultural workplace, other media and eventually actual workplaces.

While the shape of workplaces may be changing if is difficult for women to shed the baggage of being the last ones to arrive. Grosz writes,

> The containment of women in a dwelling that they did not build, nor was even built for them, can only amount to a homelessness within the very home itself: it becomes a space of duty, of endless and infinitely repeatable chores that have no social value or recognition, the space of affirmation and replenishment of others at the expense and erasure of the self, the space of domestic violence and abuse, the space that harms as much as isolates women.

Women in the contemporary workplace suffer this homelessness, they are always on the back foot. The Sex Discrimination reports and regulations prove this – Acts that were and are largely still created to prevent against the discrimination of women. Women have made large inroads into the workplace and as it heads in the direction of new workplace ideologies and with creative industries initiatives women are attempting to build their own workplaces and environment. Women, however, still have to work alongside and through of other

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61 *ibid*.
workplaces that they have not built. For this reason they need to learn the literacy of these environments in order to navigate and protect their bodies. Employing strategies such as a program to read and discuss these reports prior to entering the workplace, such as high school or University, as well as creating compulsory education and mentoring programs on entry to workplace would provide both men and women a higher level of body skills literacy which can be enacted within the workplace.
Conclusion
I’m too sexy\textsuperscript{1} for this Office

There’s good news and bad news. The bad news is Neil will be taking over both branches and some of you will lose your jobs… On a more positive note the good news is I’ve been promoted - so every cloud… you’re still thinking about the bad news aren’t you?\textsuperscript{3}

David Brent

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\textsuperscript{2} \textit{The Office}. http://www.bbc.co.uk/comedy/theoffice/gallery/picture13.shtml, [accessed 10.3.2006].

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{The Office}. http://www.bbc.co.uk/comedy/theoffice/epguide/series1_ep6.shtml, [accessed 10.3.2006].
Why Work?\textsuperscript{4} Stanley Aronowitz proposes this question in his text \textit{Politics of Identity}.\textsuperscript{5} The arguments, interpretations and research presented in this thesis augment and reshape his question for women. Women and their bodies continue to struggle with their role, place and function in the workforce. The fluidity of its contemporary structure does not ease the burden, but moves the goal posts, making it even more unnatural, and success within it highly elusive. This thesis has traced the problems that women face, with particular attention to their bodies, within current workplace environment. By utilising interviews, fashion, cultural studies, leisure, labour and semiotic theory, I determine and track pertinent reoccurring themes for women working the contemporary Australian workforce. These problems are articulated as work/life balance, lifestyle and a dissonance in body literacies in the non-standard workplace.

Throughout this research project, a number of unexpected results emerged. The first surprise occurred when I was researching ‘the executive look’ in regards to the types of style, price, size and image of clothing that was advertised. I was amazed at the gap in clothing availability and price for workplace clothing. In the sphere of consumption my surprise continued when the majority of women interviewed expressed a hatred of shopping for work clothes, revealing the falsehood in aligning femininity and consumerism. The interviews and the idea of ‘success’ used in the questions resulted in a group of educated women in high-ranking employment being represented in the oral testimony. While the stories and histories of these women are important I was disappointed that the group did not contain any working class histories or stories. I was

\textsuperscript{5} \textit{ibid.}
also concerned that this thesis could not express the positioning and discriminations of working class women’s bodies in Australian employment. The lack of interest by these women was a result of using the term success within the interview questions. A number of women, self-employed or employed in ‘working class’ occupations, who were asked to participate in the interviews, articulated that they did not view themselves as successful. The type of interview group utilized is pertinent because it not only affected the stories communicated through this thesis, but also brought forth the question of what a successful woman or man is, and how in contemporary Australia ‘success’, for working class women, is intrinsically linked to career first, rather than to family or other elements of life and happiness. I was also surprised by the response from a number of local and state politicians who were asked to participate in the interviews. None of the female politicians agreed to be interviewed and I was provided with the same response from different national offices.

Before I commenced this thesis, I recognized the link between success, women and workplace clothing. I had heard tales of workplace heartache, triumphs, sexual harassment and office politics. I wondered how closely this was linked with images and expectations of work attire in contemporary, changing, Australian workplaces. Oral histories and popular memory provided an avenue for this journey to commence. This thesis attempts to add to the fashion writing of such theorists as Angela McRobbie, Elizabeth Wilson and Wendy Parkins in order to examine the repercussions when fashion rather than clothing enters the workplace. The thesis’s nine chapter structure - which ranged from defining the ‘executive look’ to unpacking the new work order in Australia -
enabled problems regarding work life balance, work clothing and dissonant bodies to be assessed.

The thesis commenced with the exploration of self-help and feminist texts in terms of the tumultuous relationship between gender, power and the female body. This chapter examined such self-help books as Fat is A Feminist Issue and Its Sequel (i and ii)\(^6\) and girlosophy: a soul survival kit\(^7\) to ponder themes of how the female body is read and critiqued within these texts. It also travelled through feminist writing such as Who’s afraid of women’s studies?\(^8\), Catfight\(^9\) and Volatile bodies: towards a corporeal feminism.\(^{10}\) Through its discussion of self-help and feminism, chapter one constructed a theoretical framework for thesis, for how women’s bodies are read and presented in popular culture. Using this framework, issues of body consciousness and competition were revealed.

Chapter two traced the role of women’s bodies and fashion in history. The two part structure located women’s bodies in a historical context. I also introduced the use of oral histories, and popular memory theory as cultural research material, and utilized these nodes to provide an alternative system of remembering bodies, clothing and their historical relevance is developed. The second section examined magazines. Fashion, the Panopticon and the ‘executive look’ are all utilized to outline the language and

consciousness of fashion and real working women. This research is conducted through a textual analysis of the ‘executive look’ that is illustrated in magazines. Section one provided ideologies of resistance and self-surveillance and section two articulated the relationship and politics between fashion and women in contemporary Australia. The role of chapter two was to present a historical context for fashion and to confirm female competition. It showed women as autonomous and voyeuristic body gazers. It also utilized magazine to illustrate how textual illustrations of women affect the standards of dress, particularly work attire.

Chapter three outline the distinctions between clothing and fashion. It examined the origins of authoritative clothing and is prevalence in the workplace and in turn the erroneous belief that fashion fits appropriately in a work environment. Through a discussion of the fashion industry, this chapter reveals the gap in the clothing market for women’s work attire in terms of fabric, size, design, accessibility and price. This chapter provided a framework for discussing actual clothing and fashion within the workplace and confirming the inconsistent standards within it. The aim was to commence the conceptualization of body literacy in relation to clothes, bodies and the workplace.

Chapter four provided a brief work history of Australia to open the discussion on the New and Old Economy and work theory. I utilized such theorists as Foucault in order to discuss women’s role as ‘body’ within a work environment. This argument is performed through a case study of Sex and the City. Through this programme the popular cultural workplace was disclosed. The meanings of such a workplace was discussed in relation to
the affects of sex, fashion and power on real women in real workplaces, and strengthened the argument between perceived/expected ideologies of working women and real working women. Chapter four also outlined the relationship and problems with the New Economy, popular cultural workplace and the rise of the non-standard workforce in Australia.

Chapters five and six continued the thesis’s critique of work by approaching how women function in the shifting workforce. It examined three main aspects of the contemporary Australian workplace. The first point to be discussed was the structure the contemporary workplace. Secondly, I pondered the relationship between women and ‘success’ in relation women employed in government and private workplaces. I also explored the relationship between women’s bodies and the workplace, its role and its involvement in ‘success’. Concurrently I reveal the function of workplace clothing and how it affects respect, careers and professionalism within government and private sectors.

Chapters five and six are comprised of interviews conducted with women from multiple private and government industries. These interviews were carried out in order to tell real working stories of Australian women and to raise consciousness of issues affecting these women in the workplace. Thus chapters five and six revealed certain reoccurring themes such as: elements of the New Economy; an increasing non-standard workforce; issues of work/life balance; lifestyle, dissonant bodies within the workplace; the role of women as a body within the workplace and the compartmentalization or segmentation of work. These interview chapters reveal a number of women/body/work distinctions and cement
the idea that there is a dissonance in literacy between women, body and workplace. These problems were then categorized and discussed in chapters seven, eight and nine.

Chapter seven interrogated the theory of the changing Australian workplace revealed in chapter three and applied this work to the interview responses. It articulates the interviewees’ relationships to the ideologies of a New Economic working environment. The theme of work/life balance in the non-standard Australian workforce was a major reoccurring theme of the interview chapters. I utilized ideas of post-work theory and the compartmentalized or segmented workplace to reveal the problems women have with the non-standard workforce and work/life balance. Chapter seven proposed a strategy for a change in terms of education and the requirement of mentoring in relation to careers and new work order. The role of chapter seven was explore and strategize appropriate solutions for women’s role in the contemporary workforce, beginning with the dissolution of the redundant ideology of work/life balance.

Chapter eight put working life in the Australian context by positioning employment in the knowledge economy. This process commenced with an examination of the phrase lifestyle and its transformation into lifestyle. I then explored supplementary work and its relationship to ‘lifestyle’ change. This link led to a specific awareness of the creative industries in Australia’s new knowledge economy. I used Australian examples – such as the fashion task force and High street hub – and then compared them to UK-based creative industries in order to monitor how women are positioned in this field. Chapter eight considered the idea of social capital and evaluated if the new knowledge economy
and rise of the creative industries represented the birth of a new work order. Chapter eight of this thesis related New Economic ideals to the growth of the creative industries and the trend of ‘lifestyle’ in contemporary Australia. It explored these themes in order to locate Australian women’s role in this new work order, as well as addressing the need for the new knowledge economy to execute structural change – unlike the New Economy – if it is to create a new work order and a functional working environment for women.

Chapter nine highlighted the primary argument of this thesis, encircling dissonant workplace literacies. Through the illustration of freedom of dress, image and the learned body, this chapter explored women’s relationship with her body. I traced the struggles that are incurred when learned body literacy of the self and external literacies of the body merge. Chapter nine concentrated on the coded body and body literacy within the workplace, and approached the factors of pregnancy, sexual harassment and disability in order to exemplify the dissonance within workplace environments. This enabled strategies of pedagogy and consciousness to deal with this difference to be proposed. Finally, chapter nine theorized the reoccurring theme of women’s body as a problem, and explored the idea of dissonant literacies and strategized pedagogic solutions.

A decade ago in the United States, the New Economy and the opportunities, such as dotcom startup, marked it as an employment haven. In the wake of the New Economy, shards of the old ideologies, standards and values have shaped the Australian employment sector. Peppered with ideas of creative jobs and creative opportunities,

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theorists such as Aronowitz, Giroux, Leadbeater, Oakley and Florida have critiqued or celebrated a new work order. This new work order summons questions of workplace structures, gender equality, dress, rules, regulations, hours, entry requirements, modes of exclusion and ultimately what is the contemporary meaning of work. As the non-standard Australian workforce continues to fracture, where are women and their bodies located in this cultural shake-up? My original contribution to knowledge is in the narration of the histories of real working women and their relationships with their bodies within this changing workforce. The mobilization of work and fashion theory, with popular culture and policy documents reveals a clearer picture of Australian highly educated working women. These women revealed clothing and work histories. They recounted tales of competition and confrontation of the body and issues of work/life balance, and body/dressing dissatisfaction seethed within these women’s accounts. By pondering these issues found within the oral histories, along with popular cultural imaginings of successful working women and policy documents, I revealed the dissonant literacies between the ‘executive look’, Australian working women and Australian workplaces.

This thesis focussed on Australian working women, but also pondered the place of women in/entering the workforce more generally, with a special emphasis on the creative industries. The creative industries offer an aesthetically distinct working environment. As the creative industries in Australia – and world wide – continue to grow this thesis is a timely reminder that new work orders need to develop new structures to support their trajectories. The New Economy promised so much, it opened a employment door for
women, which gave the impression of a new savvy working environment, free of Old Economic traits such as suits, ladders and gender division. With Old Economic structures clearly in tact, it merely pulled down the walls to create confusion regarding work, home, bodies and dress.

Dress, clothes and fashion are difficult to detach from the ideologies of femininity. Yet when at work, femininity and clothes connect in ambiguous ways. How women and men adorn themselves is socially constructed and historically embedded. It is only after the revelation of where these formations are perpetuated, such as in the workplace, when intervention and change can occur. Texts such as *Sex and the City* portray successful working women as fashionable sexy diva. The oral histories of Australian women confirmed the need to look good, but also be appropriately dressed within the workplace and the ramifications for not adhering to workplace standards. This dissonance between texts, women and workplace is of striking significance for Australian working women.

Women’s competition between work, bodies and success are surrounded by the myth of work/life balance. The absurdity of the myth is exposed within this thesis. Australian women need to consider why such phrases are bandied about so freely. Women of Generation X, Y and beyond need to ponder such questions as why they want everything instantly, why they want to have a full-time career and simultaneously be a full-time carer. Currently they do not seem to query as to why no one is discouraging their want of a double life or explaining the time commitments required by both. This thesis began by marking the troubled boundaries between feminism, self-help and how historically
women’s bodies have been constructed and watched. It communicated that women are now the panoptical body gazers and need to shift their attention. It also revealed that highly educated Australian women are not placated by fashion in the workplace and the majority of those who were interviewed were dissatisfied by how women are still positioned as ‘female’ within them. The observations within this thesis also show the definitive link with popular cultural imaginings of ‘executive’ women and real ‘executive’ women. While popular cultural texts such as *Sex and the City* provide images of successful women, they do not display tangible, recognizable icons, and as one of the successful Australian women interviewed suggests, ‘you can’t be what you can’t see.’ By valuing the experiences of women, and building a portfolio of corporeal literacies for the new knowledge economy, our eyes will lead us where our bodies can follow.
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