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.

........................................
Beverley L. Ward
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Note: Spelling has been standardised to Australian English throughout, including all textual quotations.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I want to acknowledge my gratitude and appreciation to all those professors who participated in this study – without them there would be no study – Thank you.

To my supervisor, Professor Trish Harris, I express my sincere thanks for her knowledge, expertise, encouragement, friendship and the generosity with which she made her time and energy available to me. I consider myself fortunate to have had her as my mentor and I hope on completion of this thesis her high expectations of me are reflected in its pages – Thank you.

To my parents and children – thank you for your continuing love, support and encouragement of my aspirations. In particular, I want to thank my mother – a very ‘significant other’ in my life.

Lastly, to dear generous Jim, who has made my life so good and happy, I dedicate this thesis with all my gratitude and love.
ABSTRACT

Although many studies have been made of female academic staff in Australia, there has been no discrete study of Australian female professors as an occupational class or of the relatively rare incumbents of this important position. This thesis makes a contribution to this previously unexplored area by providing a descriptive profile of current professors at Australian universities and an insight into female professors’ perspectives on how they managed their entry into the Australian professoriate. It responds to the twin central questions: “Who are the female occupants in the Australian professoriate and how have they managed their way through the academic hierarchy?”

A profile of current female Australian professors, constructed via a questionnaire, provides the study with a foundation -- a background from which to view the interpretative data. This part of the research also makes a contribution to the social arithmetic of higher education, by presenting systematic demographic information on female professors in Australian universities. Subsequently 13 in-depth interviews were conducted, giving a “voice” to the professors. This enabled the research to identify and explore six major themes - career, role, significant others, gender, change, and reflection.

The thesis presents the data collected in the questionnaire and interviews, discusses and interprets the research findings, and provides an insight into the milieu in which the female professors function. It includes an overview of some of the critical literature pertinent to the topic - female professors and their working lives - from both an Australian and an international perspective. It also details the methodology used in the study, which included both quantitative and qualitative research tools, and describes the theoretical position which frames the qualitative part of the research, symbolic interactionism, which is located within the hermeneutic/interpretive paradigm in social research.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Of the 2639 (approx.) full professors in Australian universities in 1998 (on which this study is based), only 289 (11%) were female (excludes Fellows and Honorary professors). The purpose of this study is to establish who these women are and to develop an understanding of how this minority group have successfully navigated their way to reach the apex of the academic hierarchy – a full professorship.

The notion that unusual or outstanding individuals are worth studying has been re-created over recent decades, for people often wish to “record the direct testimony of those rare individuals who are able to provide us with a vivid picture of life in realms otherwise closed to us outsiders” (Langness and Frank, 1981:5). Similarly, it is appropriate that the general public and academia itself understands, acknowledges and promotes the role of the female professor. Clark (cited in Potts, 1997:3), a noted American writer on higher education, offers a rationale for studying academia more broadly:

For many reasons the academic profession ought to arouse our curiosity and elicit serious study. It trains the members of an increasing number of leading fields outside the academy; its leaders speak to economy and politics, to social order and culture … in so many ways, and more than before, it touches the lives of the general public. Yet, in the face of such importance, how much do we know about the development of this profession in other than simple numerical terms? … [A]cademians study everything but themselves, a remarkable failing in an estate composed of scholars and researchers devoted to the task of assisting others to
understand the natural and social phenomena that make a difference in shaping the modern world. Of this we can be sure … We can hardly know too much about [the academic profession] … we still know little.

In general, professors provide academic and/or organisational leadership to their university. Traditionally, and still, professorial leadership is linked to a record of scholarly and professional achievement in the relevant discipline, with professors expected to be recognised at an international level as leading authorities in their fields. More recently, the notion of professorial leadership has been extended to community affairs, particularly those related to the discipline, and to professional, commercial and industrial sectors where appropriate (www.acs.uwa.edu.au). What is less clear is what this notion of ‘leadership’ actually means, and what kind of style it entails. According to Professor Amanda Sinclair (2001:1), a noted Australian writer on leadership, there is an “impoverished understanding of leadership” today. She writes:

The idea of leadership as the solitary, out-front hero, leading the troops into battle is a very seductive one. However, it encourages us to dwell on a very one-dimensional set of performances and performances that are becoming increasingly anachronistic in a diverse workplace and international market. It also encourages us to see the leader outside of her or his history and group, to inflate their powers and potency to fix things. (5)

Professor Sinclair argues that we need to:

Put the group back into leadership: see leaders in their contexts and in their times …. [It is necessary] to understand leadership not as some bundle of universal and overarching virtues but as a relationship which is collectively constructed …. Leaders can’t be separated from their history and their stories …. What makes … leaders is what they do when they are off-duty, on the couch, in the day-to-day interactions not the great deeds. Who they are and where they come from, how they have got there are all critical parts of their leadership. (6)
The focus on ‘who they are, where they have come from and how they got there’ are integral aspects of this study. The contexts, times, histories and stories of the female professors who participated in this research are therefore central to the thesis.

Although this study uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches, it takes its main theoretical impetus from that stream of qualitative research known as symbolic interaction, which, in turn, is located within the hermeneutic/interpretive paradigm in social research. In line with this approach, the thesis does not set out to examine a testable hypothesis or research supposition (e.g.; ‘the reason why there are so few female professors is that ….’; or ‘male and female professors differ in the following significant respects ….’). Rather it is purely and simply concerned with the characteristics of the female professoriate and, even more centrally, with how they experience and negotiate their roles.

The hermeneutic/interpretive paradigm has as its basis the assumption that all human behaviour is based upon meanings which people attribute to and bring to situations, and that behaviour is not caused in any mechanical way, but is continually constructed and reconstructed on the basis of people’s interpretations of the situations they are in (Punch, 1998). The identification of individuals’ interpretations, and the ways in which these interpretations may affect their attitudes and actions, were considered vital in understanding how the women who participated in this study managed their way through the academic hierarchy. Starratt (1996:xxiv) supports this argument with the following comments:

[W]e work as we live and have lived: …. We may adopt, for example, a particular strategy in resolving conflict …. That strategy, however, will be
coloured by our personality, by our personal history of dealing with conflict, by our cultural roots, by our feelings towards the people involved in the conflict, by our class, gender, and ethnic biases, and so on. Although we strive to be objective in our dealings with others, each of us nonetheless brings his or her own interpretive frameworks to bear on his or her experience.

Those who hope to understand the behaviour of specific groups must, at some stage, study the experiences, beliefs and values of individuals within those groups. I believe, along with many others, that certain events in our lives may be instrumental in shaping our attitudes and motivation with respect to our actions, present and future. Such phenomena are germane to the occupation any person adopts, and to his or her approach to that occupation. Given the gendered nature of socialisation and occupational expectations, it is highly probable that females have different points of view, values, experiences, priorities, interests, career patterns and conditions of life to men. While this study does not set out to compare male and female professors, it does set out to make the experiences, beliefs and values of female professors visible and specific. In this context it is interested in the women’s relations with male and female colleagues, support networks, experiences of discrimination, motivations and aspirations for the future. More fundamentally, it explores females’ experiences of entry into what is essentially a male dominated position within academia, how they act towards it, how they act towards others in relation to it, and how their understandings and actions change over time. In line with this, it is stressed that the purpose of using the hermeneutic/interpretive method of research is not to produce a standardised set of results but rather to produce a coherent and illuminating description and perspective of the female professors’ situation (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990) explaining the
operation of their social world and the myriad phenomena which it contains (Goetz & Lecompte, 1984).

As indicated above, this thesis asks questions about ‘who’ the current female professorial staff are, as well as ‘how’ these women understand, experience and manage their role. In relation to the ‘who’ question, the inquiry was guided by the following questions:

- What are the social, economic and cultural characteristics of Australian female professors? Where were they educated?
- What are their family circumstances, current and of origin?
- What is the distribution of female professors geographically and by university classification?
- What were the career paths of the present female incumbents within the Australian professoriate?
- What forms of family and occupational support, including mentoring, were available to the female professors?

These data provide the study with a foundation, a background from which to view the interpretative, qualitative, data. As their intent was thus descriptive – essentially a means of mapping the social demography of the female professoriate - statistical measures of reliability and validity were not relevant, because the purpose was to collect demographic baseline data, not to measure variables.
It is appropriate here to highlight the fact that the study does not deal specifically with race and ethnicity, though clearly these are pertinent issues which arise on a number of occasions. Nor does the study seek to see how females differ from their male counterparts. As stated by Gutek and Larwood (1987, cited in White et al., 1992:19) “although it is likely that women’s careers will be different from those of men, it does not mean that every study of women’s career development should involve a comparison with men … There are internal dynamics to women’s careers which also warrant examination”.

**Context of the Study**

Virginia Woolf (1979) wrote “even when the path is nominally open – when there is nothing to prevent a woman from being a doctor, a lawyer, a civil servant – there are many phantoms and obstacles … looming in her way”. So context matters, and the appointment and experiences of the women in this research must be viewed within the context of Australia, for it is in this milieu that they function and which therefore directly influences them.

The research is undertaken in the context of considerable gender imbalance in Australian universities, particularly at the higher levels of the academic hierarchy. Females represent over half of all undergraduate students enrolled in higher education, and are undertaking study in fields that have traditionally been male dominated (DEET, 1993; Anthony, 1998; Stevens, 2000). Paralleling the increase in female undergraduates has been a significant increase in the number of females engaged in graduate study: females now account for half
of total enrolments (DETYA, 2000; Ramsay, 2001). However, despite this, despite women constituting 50% of the population, and despite formal government educational policy directed toward increasing women’s representation in top academic ranks, the history of women’s entry into faculty ranks on a full-time basis, and in particular the rank of full professor, continues to be disproportionately low (Probert, Ewer & Whiting, 1998).

At the base level for employment of academic staff in Australian universities, 51% are women; however, the parity falters after this level. According to the Australian Vice Chancellors Committee (AV-CC, 1999) at level B (lecturer) the figure is 42%, at Level C (senior lecturer) it is 27% and for Levels D and E (associate professor and professor) the figure is as low as 14%. Single out full professors and the figure is even lower: 11% (as established by this study in 1998). A similar situation exists around the world (ETAN Report, 2000), with under-representation of women at senior levels posing "an even greater problem in the United Kingdom and the United States than in Australia" (Gardner, 1999, cited in Ramsay, 2000:1). Edwards (2000) reports that in the UK only 9% of professors are women, and in some subject areas there are no women professors at all. The fact is that, in many universities, the numbers of women professors can literally be counted on the fingers of one hand, while the men number in the hundreds (Brooks, 1997:23).

While the percentage of women academics has certainly risen over the last two decades it has risen at the slowest rate of any of the professions (Allen et al., 1995). It would appear that the much-touted progress of women in the workplace, in this instance academia, has been restricted primarily to entry and mid-level positions: big gender gaps remain in senior
positions – the pool of current and future university leaders. Simply put, the higher the position in the academic hierarchy, the fewer the females represented there. Within the realms of the Australian academic hierarchy females lag significantly behind their male counterparts, holding very few positions of power and prestige, and, perhaps, more importantly, the authority to influence the future development of academia.

This gender imbalance is now being viewed as a serious problem by the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, to the extent that in 1999 they initiated a plan to overcome the shortage of female professors and other senior-ranking women in universities. The AV-CC stated that:

increasing the total number of women in university employment will take time, and will depend on many factors outside of the control of universities. However, what we should be able to do more quickly is better utilise our existing pool of talent by giving women more opportunities in the higher levels of academia and university management (AV-CC, 1999, press release:2).

This statement was further supported by the observation of Professor Eleanor Ramsay, of the Colloquium of Senior Women Executives in Higher Education, that “at a time in which the sector is facing a range of significant challenges nationally and internationally, more than ever it needs the contribution, ideas and leadership available from the large pool of talented women already working in … universities” (AV-CC, 1999, press release:2).

The disproportionately low representation of women at the level of professor thus means that important talent is being wasted; the corollary of this assumption is that many senior
posts may be held by people not necessarily the best qualified to hold them. There also exists a paradoxical situation whereby overburdening women who are ‘good university citizens’, often at distinctly sub-professorial levels, with leadership and administrative roles, erodes their time for research and publication. This is particularly worrisome given that publication, despite rhetoric to the contrary, is seen as the major criterion for promotion within the higher education system (Deane, Johnson, Jones & Lengkeek, 1996).

Educational institutions are, however, changing in Australia. Added to this, the work force is changing and the literature suggests that in this, the 21st Century, the work force will be of a different composition (Dryden & Vos, 1997), with women comprising the major component of 61 percent (Little, 1994). What effect this will have on patterns of promotion and organisational culture remains to be seen. By telling a small part of the story as it is now, it is hoped that this study will contribute to the study of social change as well as more enduring patterns of gender difference and discrimination.

**Significance of Study**

There has been no published systematic investigation of Australian female professors as an occupational class or of the relatively rare incumbents of this position. The record of characteristics of Australian female professors is blank. This study thus fills a void in the “social arithmetic” (Sloper, 1994) of higher education. Such an inventory, it is hoped, will prove useful to participants in, as well as students of, higher education; for general historical purposes; and for policy makers who not only select and appoint professors, but
plan for their institutions’ futures. It may also be of interest to female academics at all levels. This thesis makes a significant contribution to a previously unexplored area by providing a descriptive profile of female professors currently participating in Australian universities and an insight into the professors’ perspectives on how they managed their entry into the Australian professoriate.

Over the last couple of decades a large body of valuable work has been carried out by many researchers, feminists and non-feminists alike, world-wide on the subject of ‘gender and universities’: female academic staff and their participation in positions within the higher education sector (for example Currie, Harris & Thiele, 2000; Goode, 2000; Luke, 2000). The key findings of these studies are extraordinarily consistent and will be referred to throughout this thesis. They reveal, for example, that male and female academics tend to have different work patterns and aspirations (Brooks, 1997; Barker & Monks, 1999); that they plan differently for their careers (Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988; Currie, Harris & Thiele, 1995; Poole & Langan-Fox, 1997; David & Woodward, 1998); that women feel ‘shut out’ of senior echelons (Bagilhole, 1993; Little, 1994; Deane, et al., 1996; Spurling, 1997); that discrimination operates in covert as well overt ways and is remarkably persistent (Eveline, 1994; Castleman, Allen, Bastalich & Wright 1995; Allport, 1996; Benokritis, 1998), and that academic work practices are increasingly ‘unfriendly’ to those with young families (Caplan, 1993; Eveline, 1994; Probert, et al., 1998; Currie, Harris & Thiele, 2000).
However, there has been no study which specifically asks whether, and in what way, such factors affect female professors in Australian universities. Are female professors, for example, still subject to institutional discrimination or, having made their way to the top, do they feel ‘free’ or even become part of the problem? Did they plan their careers or, like other academic women, is it all more a matter of chance? What does it mean to be a female professor? What are some of the enabling and constraining factors? What are the implications for females generally and for female academics in particular?

The qualitative part of this study provides a means for probing such questions, to which I will directly return in the Conclusion.

**Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is organised into six chapters. The next chapter offers an overview of some of the critical literature pertinent to the topic from both an Australian and international perspective. Chapter Three provides an insight into the broad milieu in which Australian female professors’ work. In this respect, it focuses on certain facets – demographic, economic, and political - which bear on the position of women in Australia. Chapter Four details the methodology used in the study which included both quantitative and qualitative research tools. It also describes the theoretical position which frames the qualitative part of the research. Chapter Five presents the quantitative information from the questionnaire, along with a statistical description of Australian female professors. Chapter Six provides a detailed description and analysis of the qualitative data collected in the interviews.
conducted for this study, as well as drawing on three interviews taken from my earlier work on female professors entitled *The Female Professor – A Rare Bird Indeed: Edited Topical Life History Portraits* (Ward, 1998). It was this previous work, studying the lives and careers of three female professors and the abundance of rich and useful data generated as a result, which established the need for the current study and acted as its nucleus. The final chapter discusses and interprets the research findings of this thesis and advances suggestions for further research arising out of the study.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE OVERVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the relevant literature pertinent to the topic of female professors from both an Australian and international perspective. At this stage only an overview, rather than a complete literature review, is offered so as to avoid repetition, as Chapter Six presents a further in-depth discussion on the literature relevant to the qualitative data collected in this study.

During the 1980s and the 1990s, a body of research emerged concerned with women’s participation in positions within higher education. Some of this literature provides profiles of successful female academics (Soliman, 1998; Walton, 1996), as well as studies on the academic female population within specific universities (Allen, 1986; Crawford & Tonkinson, 1988; Barker & Monks, 1999; Lambropoulou, 2001). However, the greater part of this research focuses on questions of gender, discrimination, careers and promotion. It also usually covers female academics as a whole - rarely singling out a particular occupational class/level, such as that of full professor. It emphasises the barriers facing women who aspire to senior positions. These barriers to the progression of women in the academy have, in the main, been classified as personal, institutional, and cultural/societal (Lie & Malik, 1994). The overall conclusion from this literature is that there is a significant gender imbalance in the academic hierarchy, where women find themselves in a minority compared to their male colleagues who are in positions of power and prestige, where they can effect and influence change. (Refer amongst others Blattel-Mink, 2001; Enders, 2000;
Goode, 2000; Barker et al., 1999; Collins, Chrisler & Quina, 1998; Probert et al, 1998; Brooks, 1997; Theile, Currie, & Harris, 1997; Morley & Walsh, 1995; Lie et al., 1994; Park, 1994; Bacchi, 1993; Park, 1992; Caplan, 1993; Allen, 1990a&b; Aisenberg & Harrington, 1988.)

The literature also indicates that women in universities in different parts of the world are, as described by Birgit Blattel-Mink, “highly socially and culturally differentiated but equally positioned” (2001:3). This ‘position’ is aptly put by Nina Toren, who observes that throughout their careers academic women around the world face “at the entrance an iron gate, then a sticky floor, at the top a glass ceiling, and in-between a hurdle track” (2001:51). That such a situation is so commonly shared is all the more remarkable when one considers, with Toren (2001:51), the enormous “social, cultural, economic, political and historical differences” among countries.

In many countries, including Australia, the proportion of women within the academic profession has grown considerably during the last twenty years, but the growth has primarily been in the lower positions. World-wide there continues to be a disparity in the salaries, rank, and promotion of women compared to men, which cannot be accounted for by such human capital variables as degree, rank, length of service or number of publications. An Associate Professor of Sociology in the United States observes: "You would think there was something mystical about the figure for the proportion of women at full professor, because it just doesn't change. It just sits there stagnating - almost independent of the changing pool of female Ph.D.-level scientists” (as quoted by Caplan, 1993:179).
In line with this, Acker notes that:

The impact of the imbalance on British academic life is extreme, especially when it is combined with tendencies towards hierarchy and elitism still found within many of the universities. In many universities, the numbers of women professors can literally be counted on the fingers of one hand, while the men number in the hundreds (cited in Brooks, 1997:23).

Jurgen Enders concurs. Referring to a study initiated in 1998 on academic staff in Europe, he points out that “the [academic] profession is … still clearly male dominated, and women are much more under-represented at the level of the professoriate or other senior rank positions” (2000:24). Similarly, Australian universities are described by Allport (1996:8) as “highly gendered workplaces for all staff, and male culture based on male experience continues to affect the way women’s work is valued in higher education.” Brooks' study of universities in England and Wales (1997:21) found that "statistics on distribution of those academic staff who combine both researching and teaching show that the proportion of professorships held by women academics was 4.7%". Rosalind Edwards (2000) advises this figure now stands at 9%, but states that in some subject areas in the UK there are no women professors at all. According to a report published by the ETAN Expert Working Group on Women and Science, entitled Science Policies in the European Union, during the years 1997/8 female full professors accounted for 14.0% of the Australian academic population, 13.8% in the USA and France, 12.0% in Canada, 11.7% in Norway, 10.4% in New Zealand, and 5.0% in the Netherlands. The highest percentage of full female professors was to be found in Turkey with 21.5%, followed by Finland and Portugal, with 18.4% and 17% respectively. Sweden, often considered to be the most equal opportunity country in the world, only reported 11% (ETAN on Women and Science, 2000:10).
So it is clear that few females make it to the rank of full professor. Exploring the situation of gender in higher education in Europe, researchers found that “the higher the status in the hierarchical structure of higher education, the lower the ratio of women” (Blattel-Mink, 2001:3). This situation of ‘vertical inequality’ is found across the globe, with numerous studies concluding that in the academic realm, females are disproportionately found in the job categories with the least security. Although a trend has been identified for more females than males to be hired in academia, it is only for short-term or part-time appointments, due to universities’ increasing financial problems and their cost cutting goals (refer amongst others Brooks, 1997; Probert et al., 1998; David, 1999; Harman, 2000; Edwards 2000; Enders, 2000; Bryson & Barnes, 2000; McInnis, 2000; Toren, 2001; Dugger, 2001).

It should be noted here that this situation continues to exist despite the increasing number of women entering and participating in higher education. Women now globally outnumber men in university enrolments at the undergraduate level and have reached, or are approaching parity with men at the post-graduate level (see amongst others Dugger, 2001; Ramsay, 2001; ETAN Report 2000). Women students and faculty are also much less segregated in academic disciplines than they were two decades ago. However, they still lag behind their male counterparts in the disciplines of engineering, mathematics and science/computer-science (see among others Dugger, 2001; Ramsay 2001). Unfortunately, these ‘positive’ statistics are not being translated into increasing numbers of women advancing in status, in particular to the position of full professor, in all the various
disciplines within the university system, with the exception of the more traditional feminie pursuits such as nursing.

These patterns suggest that there are processes governing academic employment which systematically favour males over females when it comes to secure and senior positions, and this exclusion in turn constrains the career advancement of females within the realms of academia (Eveline, 1994; Allen & Castleman, 1995). Park (1992), a noted English writer on higher education, points to the Hansard Society Commission on Women at the Top (1990), which found it ironic that universities – institutions dedicated to the development of new ideas and thinking – should persist with the traditional perceptions about women’s roles, since these perceptions are a major negative influence on women’s ability to progress in academe. The Commission, she advises, concluded that changes to these perceptions could impact significantly on the potential for women to advance their academic careers. In a similar vein, Thiele et al. suggest that while universities are widely (mis)perceived as neutral, they are, in fact, gendered organisations. They suggest that:

the gendering of organisations enters people's conceptual apparatus, forming and sustaining the way in which they think about organisations and their own part within them. Central to this "gender we think" is the establishment of men as the primary referent (1997:6).

Park (1992:237), states that “sex exerts a considerable influence” on occupying a senior rank in academia. She goes on to assert that “university women are about three times less likely to be professors than men when age and publication rate are taken into account” (237). This was further supported by Allen et al. (1995:22), who found in their Australian
study that men were “still more likely to hold senior and tenured positions”, even when they compared the tenure rates and the employment levels for men and women in the same age groups and with the same length of service. Dugger (2001:132) paints a similar picture for the US, stating that “after controlling for experience, publications, and educational attainment” females are still less likely to be a full professor than males. In contrast to Dugger’s findings, Probert et al. (1998) *Gender Pay Equity in Australian Higher Education* (which is the most recent and most thorough analysis of the relative position of women in universities, both academic and general staff) found that if you control for qualifications and years of service, there is no difference in the position of academic men and women.

Back in 1977 Rosabeth Kanter took issue with popular interpretations and argued that the problems women faced within the workforce were related not to their internal psychological structure, but to their position in the organisation structure. Similarly, Riger and Galligan (1980) suggested that formal and informal institutional policies and practices - an institutional explanatory model - differentially affected women. Over a decade later research was still coming to the same conclusion, with a report to the US Department of Labour entitled *Assessing the Glass Ceiling in Higher Education* (Quina & Romenesko, 1993), identifying institutional barriers as the main factor affecting the promotion of women. More pointedly, a UNESCO report, *Women in Higher Education Management* (Dines, 1993) concluded that women are disadvantaged by the simple fact that they are not men. In support of the UNESCO finding, Castleman, Allen, Bastalich & Wright (1994) in their study for the Australian National Tertiary Education Union on the position of women in higher education, came to the conclusion that the major factor accounting for the paucity
of women in senior positions was management’s own masculine styles and practices, underlined by the fact that the pathways to success were built upon dominant male traits and characteristics (Izraeli & Adler, 1994). Correspondingly, Burton (1997:2), in her Executive Summary on the study carried out on *Gender Equity in Australian Universities*, reported that “tradition is a powerful mobiliser of personal investments, interests and sentiments. Women are expected to accommodate to ‘the way things are’ - ways which, in important respects, reflect a more homogeneous population than currently exists”.

In relation to institutional change Burton (1997) reports that the efforts which universities make to achieve greater equity vary considerably. Some universities rely on general objective-setting, which has tended to achieve little. In comparison, in other universities a strong commitment “to the collegial form of governance has not precluded the setting of specific employment equity goals and mechanisms to achieve them within broader planning frameworks” (Burton, 1997:2). Burton’s study found there is a positive relationship between stronger EEO programs and women’s employment profiles. Stronger EEO programs are those where universities:

- have developed specific goals and mechanisms to achieve them;
- have achieved reasonable gender balance on staffing and key decision-making committees;
- have made real progress in integrating equal employment opportunities into strategic planning exercises;
- formally consult with women; and
- communicate EEO policy and activity to the university community regularly and through several avenues. (Burton, 1997:2)

Similarly, Gardner (1999), in her Australian study on *Workplace Effects of Affirmative Action Legislation*, found “higher levels of gender employment equity in those
organisations which are covered by the relevant legislation … than in those not required to comply with its provisions” (cited in Ramsay, 2000:3). Somewhat in contrast, the 1994 UK Report on Universities’ Policies and Practices on Equal Opportunities in Employment indicated that “greater progress had been made on the introduction of formal policies than on action to implement them” (Goode, 2000:245). In line with this, a number of writers believe equal opportunity legislation has been undermined by the cultural forces operating in institutions (Blattel-Mink, 2000; Blackmore, 1993). This is highlighted by Barker and Monks (1998) in their discussion of gender equity in Irish universities, when they comment that the barriers which women experience are heavily influenced by “the position of women in Irish society in general and in academic society in particular” (263). In brief, despite the legislative initiatives of the last few decades, “women are [still] disadvantaged in climbing the ladder to powerful positions” (Currie, Harris & Thiele, 2000:273).

It is worth noting here that in many parts of the world the gains that have been made under equal opportunity policy – the increased enrolment numbers of female students and the hiring of female faculty – are seen to be under threat given the political attempt to reverse such initiatives. The United States has been particularly important here with legislation, litigation and public referenda threatening the legitimacy of voluntary affirmative action policies by universities (Dugger, 2001). According to Dugger, a backlash is present in the US academy and the “dominant motifs of this backlash are that men are suffering because too many women are being hired over them as a consequence of affirmative action, and that affirmative action has resulted in a decline of academic standards” (2001:124).
In her book, *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, Susan Faludi provides numerous examples of activities signalling a backlash against women in the United States. She suggests that the driver of the backlash is the overall economic decline in the US, which, among other things, reduces job opportunities across the board. Dugger maintains that “the same can be said in regards to the opportunities for employment in higher education” (2001:124). Around the world cost-cutting initiatives in institutions of higher education are taking place and the practices of universities are becoming more aligned with those of the private corporations (see amongst others Waters, 1995; Currie, Harris et al., 2000; Currie & Newson, 1998). In the midst of such systemic change, there has been a decline in the number of full-time tenured positions and a significant increase in casual/temporary, part-time and non-tenured positions. In the meantime, the number of doctorates is steadily increasing, both by men and women, leading to a severe shortfall of academic positions for qualified scholars. It is in the face of this occupational shortage that many of the claims of reverse discrimination have arisen. Dugger observes, and laments, that “as is true in society at large, women and minorities are taking the heat for the economic restructuring of the academy, which appears to be more invisible than the presence of women and minorities” (2001:124).

As discussed earlier, even where structures have been produced within institutions to advance the promotion of women, cultural/societal and personal variables may work against the effectiveness of these strategies. These cultural variables include traditional gender roles and it is interesting to note that some of the literature on this topic, including that written by feminists, still tends to place the responsibility for this on women for making particular
‘choices’ in relation to children and family. Thus for example, some of the literature on careers, career theory and career planning and development for females, is prone to suggest that women, especially those who are mothers, do not think of their work as a career and do not place as much priority as men on getting to the top of an organisational hierarchy. The British sociologist, Catherine Hakim, asserts: “The reality is that most mothers give priority to children over paid work while their children are very young (2000:123). (See among others Poole & Laurel, 1998; Poole, Laurel & Summers, 1997; Smith & Hutchinson, 1995; Over & McKenzie, 1985; Romanin & Over, 1993; Grimes, 1990; Thompson, 1997; Still, 1990; Maienza, 1987; Gallos, 1989; Poole & Langan-Fox, 1997; White, Cox & Cooper, 1992).

Park (1992) purports, as did Bernard (1964), that part of the reason behind the continuing inequalities in academia could stem from the "refusal of women to enter the academic 'rat race' in the first place" (238). Any such refusal could stem from many reasons, but the literature tends to highlight the restraints of family ties on females taking on more time-consuming career pursuits, particularly when the demands of a more senior position come into play. Hakim (2000), in particular, reaches the conservative conclusion that most women do not prefer a life centred on a career, but rather some combination of secondary employment and homemaking responsibility, upholding the traditional division of labour in which women bear primary responsibility for homemaking and men bear primary responsibility for breadwinning.
What this literature generally fails to question is the differential structure of gendered responsibility in the first place and, with it, the fact that men are not faced with the contending responsibilities which affect women. On this, Aisenberg et al. (1988) argue that one of the major barriers to females is the very assumption that females must choose between a career and family. They suggest these assumptions are based on the perception that a woman’s primary responsibility is to her home and family (what they call the “old norms”), and that her failure to meet that responsibility will lead to a fall in family and community standards. This is compounded by the parallel assumption that a choice is necessary – that a female cannot fulfil both roles. Further, they point out that when women want to have both family and a career "it is often called 'having it all,' which calls up images of a child hogging all the toys or eating all the ice cream" although no such images are called up for men who want both family and career. However, Aisenberg et al. (1988:112) found that for most academic females, it is a case of not acknowledging that it is necessary to make a choice between their professional and private lives – “they refuse to forsake one major part of life, and insist on the possibility – and the rightness” of believing that it is possible to integrate the two.

In line with Aisenberg’s position, much of the feminist literature suggests that most "obstacles to women's careers are seen as lying outside women themselves and in the external environment” (Currie et al., 1995:40-41). Numerous researchers argue that the socialised stereotyping of traditional gender roles and the associated attitudes of males (and females) operate to compound and negatively affect the position of females in the educational hierarchy (Greyvenstein & van der Westhuizen, 1991). The American Federal Glass Ceiling Commission Report (1995:148) found that stereotypes and preconceptions applied to females across the board, included:
not wanting to work/not being as committed as men to their careers/not being tough enough/bei}ng unwilling or unable to work long or unusual hours/bei}ng unwilling or unable to relocate/unwilli}ng or unable to make decisions/too emotional/not sufficiently aggressive/too aggressive/too passive/and lacking quantitative skills.

The systematic causes of women’s subordination have long been recognised in the literature. Reflecting this tradi}on, Mathews (cited in Blackmore, 1993:28) points out that the gender order is a systematic process of power relations that, for the individual, begins at birth with society establishing a “basic division of labour, an initial social differentiation that permeates and underpins all other distinctions”. Similarly, a number of authors have suggested that women face a deep-rooted male prejudice that women cannot be successful professionally and be a wife and mother (Caplan, 1993; Aisenberg et al., 1988).

The causes of gender differentiation may be complex and difficult to disentangle, but their consequences are easy enough to establish. Caplan (1993) points out that time spent doing child-care and household tasks drains time, energy, and concentration from both teaching and publishi}ng, and women remain far more likely to do the lion's share of family-related care. She found those who have major child-care and home responsibilities work “70 or more hours a week, while the average [male] professor works 55 hours a week” (185). Probert et al. (1998), in their Australian study of 3872 academic and general staff found that 50% of women academics were the main carers for their children. A study of British academics (Morley & Walsh, 1995) similarly concluded that females work longer hours than their male counterparts, at every level in academia.

The literature states that the conflict resulting from family and work roles “has particular significance for women’s career development” (White et al., 1992:188). Poole and Langan-Fox (1997:139-140) found in their Australian study, that two coping strategies,
compromise and sacrifice, were adopted to resolve conflict. They report that “there were women who: (a) had sought and found a compromise between work and family life; or (b) had resorted to a sacrifice strategy in order to reconcile the demands of their dual roles of mother and worker”. (See inter alia Tiedje, Wortman, Downey, Emmons, Biernat & Lang, 1990; Probert et al., 1998). Edwards (2000) writes in a similar vein when she describes the strains and anxieties for women who are combining academia with a family life. She found that women dealt with their situation either by integrating the worlds of family and academia or keeping the two apart. The former course she found to be the “most difficult academically, familially and personally” (323), with some women initially attempting to connect the two but finding the “costs too great” (323) and eventually resorting to separating the two worlds.

Aisenberg et al. (1988) suggest that the tension between the personal and the public life is an issue never fully resolved for females; indeed in their view the conflicts are there at the outset, develop in the course of the woman’s career, and may well leave her at the end questioning whether she has made the right choices. The traditional notion that women should carry the primary responsibility for caring for the family, places claims on women, and these “claims are … heavy, … long lasting, … [and] fraught with serious consequence if ignored” (108).

The next chapter to follow will endeavour to provide an insight into the local environment in which the female professors in this research operate - Australia.
Numerous factors will make a difference in what a person, male or female, can achieve and consequently affect their ability to succeed. The appointment to professor\(^1\) of the women in this research must be viewed within the context of Australia, as it is in this milieu they function, and as Clark (1987:280) states, “context matters, and immediate context matters a great deal”. This chapter therefore, deals descriptively with certain facts – demographic, economic, political – which bear on the position of women in Australia.

**Background Data**

**Labour Force and Family Statistics**

In 2001 the female population (9,618,981) slightly exceeded that of the male population (9,353,369), accounting for 50.7% of the population (ABS, 2001 Census) - of whom 55.2% were participating in the labour force (ABS, Labour Force, 2001). However, in respect to equality in the Australian workplace:

Women on average receive lower pay, are under-represented in management and over-represented in casual work. Women working full-time earn on average 84 cents in the male dollar (average weekly ordinary time earnings), compared to men working full-time. Adding part-time and casual workers into
this equation, the disparity grows, with women earning 66 cents in the male dollar. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2002:1)

Although more women are now participating in the workforce than at any other point in the post war period, and although women have made some progress in occupying senior positions within the workplace, it has not been “enough to change the entrenched male-dominated culture at the top echelon of [Australian] business” (Casella, 2001:44). This is demonstrated by the proportion of female executive directors in Australia, which is only 2.9 per cent (Casella, 2001:44). Goward (1999:17) contends that Australia has “one of the most gender-separated workforces in the OECD” and that this position “has not changed for more than 20 years” (17). She suggests that the reasons for this “are complicated – from closed shops to cultural values to training times” (17).

In Australia 43% of all marriages end in divorce – this is lower than the United States and the United Kingdom, but higher than Canada. It is estimated that 23% of Australian women will never marry in the formal, legal sense: some “demographers are now predicting that, among Australian women thirty-five and younger, up to 45% will never marry at all” (Maushart, 2001:5), and those that do, will marry at an older age – the present median age at first marriage for women being 27 years (ABS, 2210.0, 2001). According to the Australian Institute of Family Studies, two-thirds to three-quarters of divorces are initiated by women with more than eight in ten female divorcees having no regrets about their choice. With this, the data suggests that divorced women are also nearly twice as likely as divorced men to describe themselves as being happy (Wolcott & Hughes, 1999). Research has also found that, upon divorce, women are emotionally better off being single;
however their standard of living is lowered by 73% (Tavris, 1992). In 2001, 3.9% of all females (15 years and over) aged under 50 years and 23.3% over 50 years lived alone (ABS, 2001 Census).

**Representation of Women in Political Institutions**

Historically, Australia has had a number of ‘firsts’ for women. Australia was the first country in the world to give women both the right to vote and the right to stand for Parliament when the Federal Parliament passed the *Commonwealth Franchise Act* in 1902. In 1903 the first women in Australia stood for election in a national Parliament and women voted for the first time in a Federal election. Although a woman was elected to the Western Australian State Parliament in 1921, it was not until 1943 that women were elected to the Federal Parliament. In that year, a female Senator (Dorothy Tangney) was elected, and in the same year the first female (Enid Lyons) entered the Australian House of Representatives. The first woman to become a Cabinet Minister in a State Parliament was Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver in Western Australia in 1947. It was nearly 30 years later (1976) before a woman was appointed to the Federal Parliament as a Cabinet Minister (Senator Margaret Guilfoyle).

In 1951 the first woman to hold the position of Government Whip in the Senate was appointed (Dame Annabelle Rankin). She was also the first woman to hold such a position in any Westminster system of Parliament. In 1973 the first Women’s Adviser to the Prime Minister was appointed (Elizabeth Reid); this was the first such appointment in the world.
In 1986 Australia had its first woman leader of a political party (Senator Janine Haines of the Australian Democrats); in 1990 its first woman to be elected an Australian State Premier (Dr Carmen Lawrence) (there have only been two in Australia’s history); and in 1996 a woman was appointed President of the Australian Senate (Senator Margaret Reid).

At the end of 2001 women comprised 31.6% (24) of the Senate and 25.3% (38) of members in the House of Representatives. Dr Lawrence, a long-serving Labor parliamentarian, maintains that women will reach a point of critical mass in Australian politics when “… 35% of Parliament [is] … female” (cited in Macken, 2000:13). (The United Nations Human Development Program has identified the threshold for women’s meaningful participation at 30%.) But she has no doubt about the enormity of the task at hand for women in Australian politics and claims: “If there’s two women standing together, it’s still seen as a plot around here. If there’s three, a coup is imminent” (cited in Macken, 2000:13).

In 2001, the Liberal-led Coalition Government of Australia had two women in its Cabinet out of a total number of 17; two in its Outer Ministry out of a total number of 13; and three women Parliamentary Secretaries out of a total number of 12.
Legislation Affecting the Status of Women

There is no doubt that the legislative framework directed toward equal opportunity has played a role in addressing the gender inequalities in the workplace, and the higher education sector is no exception.

The Equal Opportunity Section (later Bureau) was established within the Commonwealth Public Service in 1975. In 1984 the Federal Sex Discrimination Act was passed, based on the United Nations Convention on the *Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*. In 1986 the Federal Government’s Affirmative Action (Equal Opportunity for Women) Act was passed with the aim of improving the participation of women in all areas of employment. This legislation requires organisations with more than 100 employees, including Australian higher education institutions, to develop programs to increase employment equality for women staff and to report annually to a national government agency. In the same year as the Affirmative Action Act, the Commonwealth Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission Act was passed. In 1988 the Women’s Employment Education and Training Advisory Group to advise the Minister for Employment, Education and Training was formed and in 1992 amendments were made to the Affirmative Action Act (Equal Opportunity for Women). This is now known as the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act, 1999.

According to the Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Ms Pru Goward, maternity leave is now one of Australia’s most significant social issues. She believes that the Federal
Government needs to take the lead on this debate, given that “with 70 per cent of women in their child bearing years participating in the labour force, providing financial support to working women having babies is a matter of national significance” (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2002:3).

Currently, access to paid maternity leave depends on the type of organisation and the industry in which women work. Women in smaller organisations and the private sector are less likely to have paid maternity leave compared to those in large organisations and the public sector. Maternity leave is generally restricted to long term, permanent employees. Industries with high proportions of women and casual workers, such as retail and hospitality, are generally less likely to be offered paid maternity leave. (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2002:1)

International comparisons show that 18 of Australia’s top 20 trading partners provide some form of paid maternity leave. In 14 of these countries, paid leave is a statutory entitlement. With the exception of the US, and Australia, all OECD countries provide paid maternity (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2002:3).

**Education**

Australia’s educational system include universities, a state-wide technical and further education system, private vocational colleges and dual public (government) and private (non-government) school systems. In 2001 there were 9,596 schools operating in Australia (72.3% of which were public schools), catering for more than three million students of both genders each year (68.8% in public schools). In 1987 school retention rates for females exceeded those of males for the first time and by 2001 the rate was significantly higher.
(79.1%) than the rate for males (68.1%). (ABS, 4221.0 Schools Australia, 2002). At this time, there were 221,927 full-time equivalent (FTE) teachers at public and private schools. Just over three-quarters (78.7%) of primary school and 54.9% of secondary school teachers were female (4221.0, Schools Australia, 2002).

There are currently 42 higher education institutions in Australia. However, this thesis focuses only on those universities that are currently members of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee/AV-CC (the council of Australia’s university presidents), of which there are 38\(^2\). The AV-CC adopts the following statement of purpose:

> The Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee advances higher 
education through voluntary, cooperative and coordinated action. 
The Committee is non-partisan and exists exclusively for 
educational purposes. Its continuing aim is to serve the best 
interests of the universities and, through them, the nation. 

The Federal Government has the principle responsibility for funding the 38 public universities. Australian universities operate under state or territory legislation, apart from The Australian National University, which is constituted under an Act of the Federal Parliament (www.avcc.edu.au).

Australia’s spending on tertiary educational institutions was above the OECD average (1.59% of GDP compared with an OECD country mean of 1.33%), and spending on primary, secondary and post secondary non-tertiary educational institutions marginally above the average (3.8% compared with an OECD country mean of 3.71%). (‘Education at a Glance 2001’ (OECD)).
Although Australia prides itself on offering equal educational opportunities to males and females, its early history harboured a particularly conservative attitude towards women’s education and their role in society compared to their counterparts in Britain (Dixson, cited in Allen, 1986). This attitude grounded in the notion that females were intellectually less able than men for reasons connected with biological difference. It was thought that females had underdeveloped brains and therefore they could not be educated (Lie & O’Leary, 1990). The struggle to gain access to further education has been long and hard for females, and some of these ideas persist today. As Currie, Thiele and Harris (2002) show, notions of biological and social difference persist in certain sectors of the senior hierarchy. They linger on to affect the circumstances in which the female professors in this study currently work and may well have structured the circumstances in which many of them were previously educated.

It is appropriate and important to appreciate that Australian higher education has, over the last decade, faced unprecedented challenges. Higher education, as pointed out by a number of Australian writers (see amongst others McInnis, 2000; Probert et al., 1998), is being challenged by budget cuts and the increasing need to become self-funding; it is adjusting to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population; it is responding to the impact of global competition; and it is struggling to come to terms with the implications of new technology. Indeed, it is this very climate of change that will necessitate - even demand - the provision of effective and, as described by Dearing (1998:36) on discussing the future of universities, “inspired leadership”, if a university is to be successful in the 21st Century.
Universities and the Position of Women

Female Students

Women were first admitted to lectures and examinations at an Australian university (the University of Melbourne) in 1874. In 1883 Australia had its first woman graduate – graduating with a Bachelor of Arts (Hons.) from the University of Melbourne. In 2000, 695,500 students were enrolled in the Australian higher education system, of whom 384,100 (55.2%) were female: 59.1% were full-time, 26.8% part-time and 14.2% external female students (DETYA, Students 2000: Selected Higher Education Statistics). Females outnumbered males for the first time in participation in Australian higher education in 1987 and in recent years their academic performance and achievements have been generally higher than that of their fellow male students (Ramsay, 2000).

The highest proportion of female students is found in the fields of Education, Health and the Arts, and the lowest proportion in the field of Engineering where females only account for 15% of total enrolments (Ramsay, 2001). The fields of Business and Veterinary Science have seen the greatest proportional increases in the number of females over the last decade. There has been a distinct increase, over the last ten years, in the number of females enrolled in masters and doctoral degrees, where females account for approximately half of total enrolments (Ramsay, 2001). In 2000, of the students undertaking higher degrees either by coursework or research, 52.6% and 48.6% were females respectively (DETYA, 2000). The situation in respect to postdoctoral fellowships awarded to women is
particularly bad. The Australian Research Council administers 100 postdoctoral fellowships each year, and in the year 2000, the number of successful female applicants was only 13.5% (Ramsay, 2001).

Female Staff

Georgina Sweet became the country’s first female Acting Professor in 1916, and subsequently its first woman Associate Professor in 1920. However, it was not until the end of 1959 that Australia had its first female professor – the acclaimed geologist Dorothy Hill - at Queensland University. Professor Hill held a number of ‘firsts’, including the first female President of the Professorial Board of an Australian university and the first female to be elected as a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Science. The country had its first female Deputy Chancellor, Roma Mitchell Q.C., in 1972, who also became the first female Chancellor in 1983 [she was also Australia’s first female Q.C. (1962); judge (1965); and first female vice-regal representative when appointed Governor of South Australia in 1991]. In 1987 Professor Di Yerbury became the first female to be appointed Vice-Chancellor of an Australian university – Macquarie University. In 1990 there were two female Vice-Chancellors (6.9%), in 1999 six (16.2%), in 2000 seven (18.4%) and in 2001 there were nine female Vice-Chancellors (23.7%). Professor Eleanor Ramsay became Australia’s first Pro Vice Chancellor for Equity in 1993 and in 1996 Professor Faye Gale became the first female President of the Australian Vice-Chancellor’s Committee.
In 2000, 82,233 staff were employed in Australian universities (FTE for all full-time, fractional full-time and estimated casual staff), with female staff accounting for 70% of part-time staff. Of the 33,128 of total academic staff, females accounted for only 12,030 (36.3%). Men outnumbered women at all academic levels except ‘below lecturer’ where women constituted 53% of staff. At the most senior level - that is, ‘above senior lecturer’- women represented only 16.1%, and at the ‘senior lecturer’ level 29.4% (DETYA, Staff 2000: Selected Higher Education Statistics). Of the 2639 (approx.) full professors in Australian universities in 1998 (on which this study is based), only 289 (11%) were female (excludes Fellows and Honorary professors). It is also worth noting that because of women’s higher rates of part-time employment and lower classification levels, their ordinary time earnings are around 81% of men’s in the higher education sector (Probert et al., 1998).

There are some strong female network systems in the Australian higher education sector dedicated to counteracting these inequalities. These include the Colloquium of Senior Women Executives in Australian Higher Education and the Australian Technology Network (ATN) universities’ women’s executive development program. These networks have senior level support and advocacy across the sector, with the peak sector body, the AV-CC, regularly seeking “input, representation, comment and advice from these groups [in particular the colloquium] as a result” (Ramsay, 2000:15).

As indicated in Chapter One, the gender balance in Australian universities has been viewed as a serious problem by the AV-CC. In conjunction with the National Colloquium of
Senior Women Executives in Higher Education, they initiated a plan in 1999 to increase the total number of women staff in Australia’s universities across all classifications, with particular emphasis on reducing the imbalance in the numbers of female professors.

Equal Opportunities and Affirmative Action Policy

Since 1986 all universities in Australia have been required by law to put into place programs designed to achieve equality for their women employees. In addition, since 1991 all publicly funded universities have been legally required to develop, implement and report on their equity plans to promote equality of higher educational opportunities and outcomes for particular groups within the Australian community designated as disadvantaged in some fashion. Women are included as one of these groups in respect to areas where men continue to predominate and with respect to higher and especially research degrees (Ramsay, 2001).

As a result of legislation, universities have established what are commonly known as ‘Equity Offices’. In general, the role of the Equity Office is to develop, advise and assist in the implementation of the university’s equal opportunity and affirmative action policy. All publicly funded universities now have equal opportunity policy statements similar to the example given below:

Murdoch University is committed to equal opportunity principles and continues to develop and implement equal opportunity strategies to ensure that in all University structures, policies,
practices and decisions are based on the assessment of individual ability and achievement. Murdoch rejects inappropriate distinctions on the grounds of race (colour, ethnicity, national origin, nationality or descent), sex, pregnancy, marital status, age, sexual orientation, family responsibility, family status, political conviction, religious belief, disability or medical condition (not affecting work performance). Conscious efforts to eliminate all forms of direct and indirect discrimination are endorsed fully by the Senate, the Vice-Chancellor, and all members of University management. Sexual harassment and racial harassment are prohibited in all University life. The Murdoch University Act 1973-85 complements the Equal Opportunity Policy. (www.murdoch.edu.au/admin/equity/diversity)

Recent evidence suggests the existence of anti-discrimination and equal opportunity legislation, both on a national and state/territory level, has had a positive impact (refer Gardner, 1999, cited in Ramsay, 2000). However, the level of commitment to higher education gender-equality varies considerably across Australia. As a result, the availability of resources and significance of the attention devoted to its achievement, along with the value of the programs put into place, also vary considerably. Ramsay (2002) contends that some Australian universities take this issue seriously and apply considerable energy towards greater equality, while others give it only superficial attention and make a token effort. On the downside, there is also a belief that the current conservative political climate in Australia has led to a substantial weakening of the previously vigorous national women’s policy framework and brought changes to legislation which has reduced the potential for individual accountability (Ramsay, 2002).
Conclusion

This chapter has described the environment in which the female professors in this research operate. It has shown that while there has been a substantial increase in the participation of women in the workforce in Australia, this has not resulted in gender equity. Essentially, gaining access to the traditionally male-dominated upper echelons has largely resulted from a political/legislative battle, through which individuals and groups have struggled to remove rules of exclusion. Despite the legislation outlined in this chapter, females are still concentrated in traditionally female-dominated positions while the majority of positions in the higher paying, more prestigious professions, are held by men.

In this context, the chapter has highlighted a wide divergence in gender balance, both in terms of the academic staff as a whole, and in the ratio between academic staff and the student population. It has been shown that today females represent over half of all undergraduate students enrolled in Australian higher education, and that there has been a dramatic, albeit much slower, increase in the number of females engaged in graduate study. However despite the adequacy of the current pool of potential female faculty, and despite the legislative framework, the national policy requirements, and the range of programs and action plans which have been put into place in every Australian university to promote gender equality for staff, the level of entry of women into faculty ranks on a full-time basis, and in particular the rank of full professor, continues to be disappointing. While the percentage of women academics has certainly risen over the last two decades it has risen at the slowest rate of any of the professions (Allen et al., 1995). It would appear that the
much-touted progress of women in the workplace, in this instance academia, has been restricted primarily to entry and mid-level positions: big gender gaps remain in senior positions – the pool of current and future university leaders. Simply put, the higher the position in the academic hierarchy, the fewer the females represented there. Within the realms of the Australian academic hierarchy females lag significantly behind their male counterparts, holding very few positions of power and prestige, and, perhaps, more importantly, the authority to influence the future development of academia.

Kathleen Staudt purports that it is “difficult to locate societies in which women, because they are women, do not face …. underrepresentation and non participation in the political, institutional, and bureaucratic structures of the nation-state” (cited in Levy, 1988:16). The data presented in this chapter support Staudt’s contention as far as Australia is concerned.

1 The word ‘professor’ is used differently in the Anglo to the European and American universities. In most Australian universities there are four ways of obtaining a professorship: (1) By appointment (i.e. the professorship is advertised nationally and internationally). (2) Through appointment to what is called ‘a personal chair’. That is, an institution makes someone a professor because they are so outstanding. (3) By promotion from level D to E. This is a more recent innovation (has been operating for approximately six years) and is gradually taking the place of the ‘personal chair’ – this is a national trend. (4) By becoming an Executive Dean or similar executive administrative position which is at a level E. All professors occupy the same position on the academic hierarchical ladder. In this study no distinction has been made in respect to how the title of ‘professor’ was obtained.

2 When this research commenced there were 37 universities – 36 public and one private -- which held membership with the AV-CC - refer Appendix A.

3 Function within level classifications can vary from university to university but a general example within the Australian higher education sector is: Level A = below Lecturer; Level B = Lecturer; Level C = Senior Lecturer; Level D = Principal Lecturer, Associate Professor; Level E = Head of School, Professor, College Fellow, Pro Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

Why haven’t more women moved more rapidly up the ladder into the position of full professor? The search for answers to this question leads to the importance of learning about how women who have made it to the top of the academic hierarchy -- full professorship -- did so and who they are. This chapter begins by outlining certain theoretical considerations concerning the choice of methodology. It then goes on to describe how the research was designed, the methodology employed to collect and interpret and analyse the data, as well as the study’s limitations. Great care is taken to document as much of the process as possible so that others might extend this research beyond Australia.

Theoretical Considerations and the Research Question

There have been long standing debates on the relative value of two different and apparently competing approaches to social research - the scientific (quantitative) and interpretative (qualitative) models. Now most scholars agree that both approaches are needed, since no one methodology can answer all questions and provide insights on all issues (Burns, 1994). The polarised views of positing an absolute divide between the two - fact and value, evaluation and description - have altered. It is increasingly accepted that quantitative and qualitative aspects of research can be integrated in what Lakatos calls a “progressive research programme” of understanding (in Aspin & Chapman, 1994:42). This study took
an integrated approach, combining a statistical analysis with a qualitative approach which allowed the female professors participating in the study to have a “voice”.

**The Qualitative Dimension**

Essentially, the qualitative part of the study is located within the hermeneutic/interpretive paradigm in social research. Under this, the assumption is that all human behaviour is based upon meanings which people attribute to and bring to situations. Behaviour, then, is not caused in any mechanical way, but is continually constructed and reconstructed on the basis of people’s interpretations of the situations they are in (Punch, 1998). In his or her turn, the researcher seeks to understand the meanings that actors attach to their social situations, to their own actions, and to the actions of others. The basic aim of the interpretive paradigm is thus to develop a more complete understanding of social relationships and to discover human possibilities. Hence, the purpose of using this method of research was not to produce a standardised set of results but rather to produce a coherent and illuminating description and perspective of a situation (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990) explaining the operation of the social world and the myriad phenomena which it contains (Goetz & Lecompte, 1984).

Within this broad context, the particular perspective influencing the research was symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism has become popular in sociology over the past thirty years, being influential in Australia, Britain and the United States (Davis, 1966; Bryson & Thompson, 1972; Wild, 1974; Connell, 1985; Potts, 1997). Consistent with the
hermeneutic/interpretive approach, symbolic interactionists examine the meanings that phenomena have for people in their everyday settings. The concern is with the study of the “inner or experiential aspects of human behaviour”, that is, “how people define events or reality and how they act in relation to their beliefs” (Chenitz & Swanson, 1986:4). In framing the research focus in terms of how women professors have ‘managed’ their ascent into the higher echelons of the academic hierarchy, this study explored females’ understandings about the phenomenon of their entry into what is essentially a male dominated position within academia, how they act towards it, how they act towards others in relation to it, and how their understandings and actions change over time. It is from an understanding of these dimensions of the phenomenon that we can develop an understanding of how the professors who participated in this research ‘managed’ to succeed against the odds.

Key concepts within symbolic interaction include self, interaction, self-interaction, interpretation, voluntarism and common symbolic language. Of these, the concept of ‘self’ is of primary importance to the understanding of the symbolic interaction approach. George Herbert Mead (1934) postulated that the individual develops a sense of self through interaction with others. As such, the self is created in childhood when a person begins to make judgements about the way she or he is perceived by others. This process continues through life and involves individuals taking the role of others as a means of looking back at themselves from the perspective of the people with whom they interact. In this regard, people construct an image of how they believe others see them. Furthermore, this image changes throughout life because of social interaction.
Symbolic interactionism suggests that each person constantly engages in ‘self-interaction’. This means that the self becomes an object for the individual to consider, assess, communicate with, and act towards. This on-going interplay between an individual (subject) and self (object) enables individuals to anticipate the reaction that may be received if one is to act in a particular way. On this, Schwartz and Jacobs (1979:23) observe that self-interaction allows the person to “really ‘see’ others’ reactions to his (sic) own actions before these reactions occur”. For Mead (1934) and others who operate within the symbolic interaction tradition, the concept of self relates directly to the way people attach meaning to, and act towards, particular objects and phenomena.

Herbert Blumer (1962), who first used the term ‘symbolic interaction’ in 1937, proposed three principles as the basis of this approach: (1) human beings act towards things on the basis of the meaning the things have for them: meanings determine action; (2) the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, social interaction that one has with others; and (3) meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things encountered.

As stated by Blackledge and Hunt (1991:235) “in interpretive theory, the term ‘meaning’ is complex and often undefined”. This is not to say that it is undefinable. They suggest that it includes the idea of what one aims to do with regard to a particular phenomenon, the significance of the phenomenon to the individual, and the reasons one gives for one’s activity. Furthermore, symbolic interactionism, they argue, assumes that the meanings are
not just mechanically given by culture or society, rather they are actively constructed from culture by the actors involved (ibid.).

For the symbolic interactionist the meaning each thing, abstract or concrete, has is not fixed. Rather it is constantly being adjusted by new information. This information may be of many kinds. This new meaning structures human acts. So, meaning is acquired from our experience of the world, and because we are in constant engagement with the world, meaning is constantly being modified, if not completely changed. However, while “our interpretive scheme may be shared by all people, it may be associated with only one group or even be personal” (Woods, 1992:338).

Meltzer, Petras and Reynolds (1975:1) summarize the position as follows:

Thus, ‘symbolic interaction’ is the interaction that takes place among the various minds and meanings that characterize human societies. It refers to the fact that social interaction rests upon a taking of oneself (self-objectification) and others (taking the role of the other) into account.

Hence, it is the perceptions of the individual, rather than a definition of the facts by some external umpire, which will influence attitudes and actions. Perception is reality. Thus different individuals will place a different interpretation on an identical set of circumstances, and may be motivated to react in very different ways. The identification of individuals’ interpretations, and the way in which these interpretations may affect their attitudes and actions, is the very essence of this study - the interpretation of “the real world from the perspective of the subject” of the investigation (Filstead, 1970:7).
The study seeks only the perspectives of the participating female professors. It does not attempt to validate or verify this data from third persons. So how is the word ‘perspectives’ defined in the context of this study?

Woods lists perspectives as one of the key concepts in interactionist studies and defines them as “frameworks through which people make sense of the world” (1983:7). Perspectives apply to specific situations. They are ways of thinking and acting which have occurred as a result of certain institutional constraints, and serve as an answer to the problems these constraints cause. They are linked to the problems confronted by the individuals who hold them. They contain definitions of the situation as seen by the individual and include actions as well as ideas. Importantly, perspectives may take on a collective character (Potts, 1997).

The Quantitative Dimension

As previously indicated, this study combined its qualitative focus with a quantitative perspective, in the form of descriptive statistics. These provided the data for creating a demographic profile of current female Australian professors. Such a profile provides the study with a foundation - a background from which to view the interpretative data - and also fills a void in the “social arithmetic” (Sloper, 1994) of higher education, for there is no systematic demographic information available on female professors in Australia. There is a need for such an inventory, both as data for participants in, as well as students of, higher education and for general historical purposes.
Two points need to be made with regard to the ‘descriptive statistics’ in this study. Firstly, the issues of validity and reliability in the statistical sense are not relevant to this study, because the purpose is to collect demographic base line data, not to measure variables. Secondly, it should be noted that the study does not seek to compare the female professor with other groups of senior females (for example within the Australian Public Service); nor does it seek to see how females differ from their male counterparts. As stated by Gutek and Larwood (1987, cited in White et al., 1992:19) “although it is likely that women’s careers will be different from those of men, it does not mean that every study of women’s career development should involve a comparison with men … There are internal dynamics to women’s careers which also warrant examination”.

**Research Design**

The research was undertaken in three stages. These were as follows:

- Stage One – document study;
- Stage Two – survey via a mailed questionnaire (including a pilot study); and
- Stage Three – a combination of face-to-face and telephone semi-structured, in-depth interviews.

A detailed exposition on each stage and method is presented in the following sections.
Stage One: Document Study

In this stage, documentary evidence such as published materials of and about each university and the role of the professor, government publications, published background statistics and, in some cases, professors’ resumes were collected and examined. As well, associated literature of both a scholarly and popular nature was collected, and used to inform the structure of the questionnaire and the interpretation of data. However, one of the main purposes in generating such secondary data was simply to assist in portraying the context within which Australian female professors work.

Stage Two: Survey

The aim of stage two was to create a profile of current female professors participating in Australian universities and provide an analysis of the characteristics of female Australian professors. A quantitative (scientific) approach was adopted to achieve this aim.

Population

The research population was Australian women professors. Because of the small number of these women - 259 - the total population was included in this part of the research. The study population was sourced from the AV-CC’s 1998 electronic Register of Senior University Women. However, three restrictions were placed on the study population. Firstly, only those universities currently members of the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee were included – 37 in total. Secondly, only participating full female professors
within the designated universities were included (excludes Associate, Fellows, and Honorary professors). Finally, female professors who hold the rank of Vice-Chancellor, Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Pro Vice-Chancellor were excluded. It is argued that these women represent yet another Australian occupational group, worthy of study in their own right.

Of the 259 questionnaires sent to professors, four were “returned to sender”. Of the 255 who received the questionnaire, 182 participated in the survey.

Data Collection

As the aim of stage two was to capture a picture of the whole population, and since this part of the study was descriptive in character and intent, the survey research method (by means of a questionnaire administered by mail) was considered the most appropriate for this stage of the research. As well as being an efficient way of collecting data in large amounts at low cost in a short period of time, a survey is also capable of obtaining information about a subject’s past life and providing information on beliefs, attitudes and motives (Burns, 1994).

The survey was conducted by means of a printed questionnaire (which served as the basis for a structured interview). Some of the benefits of this over a face to face interview at this stage included: a survey is less expensive; its purpose could be explained clearly in print; each respondent received the identical set of questions, phrased the same way; the
respondent was free to answer in her own time; errors resulting from the recording of responses by the interviewer were reduced; and, most importantly, it was possible to include a large number of participants and greater geographical reach.

The structure of the questionnaire used in this study drew upon previous questionnaires used by:

- Cass, Dawson, Temple, Wills, and Winkler (1983) in their study of ‘Women Academics in Australian Universities’ (questionnaires were sent to 735 women);
- Little’s (1994) questionnaire used in her study of women who hold positions within the top ranks of management in the public service - the Senior Executive Service (the questionnaire was sent to the total population of 657); and
- Salimbene’s (1982) questionnaire used in her PhD thesis examining the career paths of US College and University Chief Executives (252 questionnaires distributed).

Full details of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix B. In the first instance it collected generic, demographic information of a personal and professional nature, including family background, education, career history, personal partnerships, and children. It inquired into the attitudes, experiences, values and behaviours of the women in the study, in particular: how they managed their professional and private lives; their use of mentors; the discrimination they might have faced; and what attracted them to an academic career in the
first place. Finally, it asked about their future plans and probed their ideas about the position of women in society.

The questionnaire was long and comprehensive, with a number of the questions being open-ended. It contained 45 major questions, of which eight had a number of sections to them, resulting in 58 questions in total. At the end of the questionnaire space was provided for participants to expand on any of their answers or to make any additional comment. As the questionnaire requested participants to identify their present university not by name but by classification, a ‘Classification of Australian Universities’ Table (see Appendix C) was attached to the back of the questionnaire to assist in fulfilling this request. The classification table is discussed in greater detail later in this chapter under the heading of ‘Confidentiality’.

A pilot study was conducted prior to the printing and mailing of the questionnaire. The questionnaire was forwarded to five professors, three of whom participated. The purpose of the pilot study was to test the questionnaire to ensure the questions were clear and meaningful. In addition to answering the questions posed, participants in the pilot study were asked to react to the wording and design of the instrument, to note any difficulty they had in responding to particular questions and to provide an indication of how long the questionnaire took to complete. As a result of the pilot study a small number of questions were deleted, some added and a number modified in wording. It was also established that the questionnaire took approximately half an hour to complete. Changes were also made as a result of comments/suggestions made by the Human Research Ethics Committee of
Murdoch University. In order to give credibility to the study the endorsement of the Colloquium of Senior Women in Australian Higher Education was sought and received (refer Appendix D).

Every questionnaire was accompanied by a cover letter (Appendix E) explaining why and by whom the research was being undertaken, how the addressee came to be selected and the benefits of her participation to the study. The cover letter was printed on university (Murdoch) letterhead with each one being individually addressed and signed. The endorsement of the Colloquium was also acknowledged. Respondents were offered a summary of the survey results in appreciation for completing the questionnaire. (Over 95% of respondents subsequently requested a copy of the summary.)

A directory of the population was printed, and an identification number was assigned to each. This number was placed on the back of each individual’s questionnaire and reply paid envelope, and utilised only for follow-up purposes. A packet containing the questionnaire, cover letter, and university reply paid envelope was mailed to all professors (259) on the 11th April 2000.

By the 23rd May 2000 a 62.4% response rate had been obtained. A follow-up e-mail was sent to all respondents on May 24th 2000. I decided to send the e-mail en masse so that no one felt they were being singled out for not replying and to ensure confidentiality. Hence, the correspondence was designed as a “thank-you” to those that had returned the
questionnaire and a reminder to those that had not. E-mail addresses were obtained from the AV-CC’s 1998 electronic Register of Senior University Women.

Of the 255 e-mails sent, 14 did not reach their destination due to a variety of reasons including: address not known, user unknown, host unknown and permanent fatal error. Where it was established that questionnaires had been returned by these ‘non-delivered’ e-mails, no further action was taken. In instances where it was established that a ‘non-delivered’ e-mail was also a professor who had not returned her questionnaire, she was contacted either by phone or fax. The follow-up correspondence lifted the response rate by a further 9%, resulting in a final figure of 71.4%. A very good response rate considering Burns (1994:360) states, “… response rates to mail questionnaires seldom exceed 50 per cent and rates between 15-50 per cent are common”.

Analysis

Analysis of the data commenced mid-May 2000 and concluded early September 2000. Due to the size of the population I decided it would be quicker, easier and in the long run, more advantageous (in terms of intimacy with the data) to analyse the survey data manually, rather than using a computerised statistical software package. This proved to be laborious and time-consuming, but it did result, as I had hoped, in a greater familiarity with the data than if it had been analysed by computer. All quantitative data was analysed to determine the frequencies for the major variables involved in the study, which presented a profile of the female professor in the total system of Australian universities. The
qualitative data – from the open-ended questions contained in the questionnaire - describing the attitudes, values and behaviours of the women in the study on various issues, were placed into categories on the basis of their similarities, and categories being differentiated from one another in terms of their variance. These categories led to the emergence of themes, which were further analysed for relationships between themes.

**Stage Three: Interviews**

The aim of stage three of the study was to provide an insight into female professors’ perspectives on how they managed their entry into the Australian professoriate. A qualitative (interpretive) approach was adopted to achieve this aim.

**Selection of the Participants**

Interview participants were recruited from the survey population participating in stage two. Participants were restricted to New South Wales and Western Australia, as these States provided a cross-section of professors within the five university classifications/types used in the study and assisted in reducing travel costs and time constraints. In an attempt to cover the five discipline groups identified in the study, one participant in each institution was to be drawn from the disciplines of either Health Sciences, Sciences or Humanities and Arts (where the highest concentration of female professors are located) and the other from the disciplines of either Business/Commerce or Education (the lowest concentration of female professors). This would provide ten interviews – the ten interviews being the product of two discipline groups times the five university classifications.
A list of professors meeting the ‘participant selection’ criteria was created. An invitational letter (Appendix F) to participate in the interview stage was mailed to ten professors on the 12th December 2000. Included with the invitational letter were a Consent Form (Appendix G) and an Aide Memoire (Appendix H). Because of the time of year (end of semester/Christmas/New Year) I felt it would not be expedient to rely solely on the mailed invitational package to participate in the interview stage, and therefore, the invitational letter and attachments were also forwarded by e-mail.

I received four replies immediately: three positive and one ‘maybe’. Follow-up e-mails to those who had not responded were forwarded in early January 2001, which resulted in four negative replies. On January 23, 2001, I mailed, and e-mailed, a further ten professors requesting their participation in stage three.

Due to the response to my request for participation (20 invitational letters to participate in total) I actually completed 13 interviews (which was a positive), but unfortunately I was not able to achieve an even number between the disciplines, as discussed earlier: three from the lowest concentration/ten from the highest concentration. Detailed below in ‘Table 1: Characteristics of Interviewed Professors’ I have provided further information on the composition of those interviewed.
Table 1: Characteristics of Interviewed Professors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Uni Classification</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Age Appointed Professor</th>
<th>Years as Professor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19th Century</td>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>46 years</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19th Century</td>
<td>51-60 years</td>
<td>48 years</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19th Century</td>
<td>Over 60 years</td>
<td>50 years</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post 1988</td>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>42 years</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post 1988</td>
<td>41-50 years</td>
<td>43 years</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post 1988</td>
<td>Over 60 years</td>
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<td>Early 20th C</td>
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<td>Post War</td>
<td>51-60 years</td>
<td>41 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post War</td>
<td>51-60 years</td>
<td>49 years</td>
<td>*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Over 60 years</td>
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<td>51-60 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>New</td>
<td>Over 60 years</td>
<td>57 years</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Information not provided

This Table demonstrates the diversity within the group of professors interviewed in terms of age group (with three aged between 41 & 50 years; six between 51 & 60 years, and four over 60 years), age appointed to professor and, where supplied, the number of years in the position of professor.

Data Collection

As previously indicated, semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted in this stage of the research. This was to gain a deeper insight and understanding of the interviewees’ perspectives on their situations, experiences and lives as expressed in their own words (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). The semi-structured in-depth interview method (Taylor et al., 1984) was utilized because it is concerned, first, with creating the environment to
encourage participants to discuss their lives and experiences in free-flowing, open-ended discussions, and second, it enables the researcher to interpret their views. General principles, as outlined by Spradley (1979) and Measor (1985), were followed in conducting the interviews. They included: having a clear purpose and making it clear to the participant; supplying continued explanations as to why certain questions are asked; being articulate; asking descriptive, structural and contrast questions; directing open-ended questions to stimulate responses rich in qualitative type data; avoiding framing the same questions in different time dimensions; encouraging elaboration by effectively probing; explanation and clarification; cross checking to avoid exaggerations and distortions; allowing the participant to do most of the talking; being objective and sensitive to the participant’s situation.

As mentioned earlier, I developed an aide memoire (Burgess, 1984) to assist each professor in framing her thoughts and give her time to consider the questions that would be asked in the interview. The aide memoire sought the participants’ opinions/thoughts and experiences on such issues as: career, significant others, role of professor, gender and reflections (refer Appendix H).

As would be expected, it took time, energy and patience, on both the participating professors’ behalf and mine, to put an interview itinerary together. The issues of busy schedules and the tyranny of distance had to be worked around. Reluctantly, in the end, I had to conduct three of the interviews by telephone. My first interview was on the 7th
February 2001 and the last was completed on the 20\textsuperscript{th} March 2001. During this period, one week in the month of February was spent in New South Wales, conducting interviews.

All but two of the face-to-face interviews were held in the professors’ offices, on their campuses. Of the remainder, one was held in an amenities room next to the professor’s office and the other at the home of the professor. These venues were chosen because they provided familiar surroundings for the professors, allowed me the opportunity to visually appreciate their work surroundings, ensured there were no interruptions and provided a quiet place for recording.

Most interviews lasted between one and one and a half hours (with the exception of two: one shorter, one longer). This duration concurred with Woods’ (1985:18) suggestion that:

> Quite often there appears to be an optimum limit for each conversation, on average … an hour and a quarter to an hour and a half. Beyond this concentration wavers (for the researcher also!), the conversation drifts off the point, becomes rambling, repetitive and imprecise).

Woods uses the word ‘conversation’ rather than interview, and in fact, I believe the term ‘conversation’ is probably a much more appropriate term for the process than interview. As Aspinwall (1992:251) states: “interview cannot convey the empathy and interest necessary to the process”. Accordingly, while the term ‘interview’ is used frequently throughout the thesis, it is to be understood in the sense of ‘conversation’.
All interviews were recorded, with the participants’ consent, to ensure the proceedings moved smoothly and quickly and that responses were recorded exactly as given. In addition, I took notes throughout the meeting. Woods (1985:20) explains:

> These are rather like rough notes made during ethnographic fieldwork, when one is being assailed by a torrent of data. The cryptic jottings made at the time are sufficient to stir the memory later, when one can record the full data or impression at length. Now the tape recorder may capture what is said. But it cannot capture fleeting thoughts and impressions …. The benefit of notes can aid recall.

Notes were also taken after the interviews, recording observations about the conversation itself, the room (furniture, memorabilia, art, office arrangement) and any other additional information that could assist in establishing the context for the interpretation of the data.

**Interpretation**

I personally transcribed all the interviews - a time consuming, difficult and sometimes frustrating task, requiring mental and physical energy - each tape taking up to three to four times its duration to transcribe. This process, as in stage two, gave me greater intimacy with the data and ensured confidentiality. Transcribing commenced at the beginning of March 2001 and was completed by the middle of April 2001.

The interviews were interpreted using a thematic approach, that is, the conversational data and my notes were analysed for recurrent themes and the relationships between these themes (the same process used for the qualitative data collected in the survey in stage two,
described earlier in this chapter). This process involved the total set of transcribed material being subject to the procedures outlined by Marton (1988), with utterances being brought together into categories on the basis of their similarities and categories being differentiated from one another in terms of their variance. Categories were then developed into themes that were further analysed for relationships between themes. A visual map of key themes and the connections between them was constructed (Dimmock et al., 1997). In addition, it examined how the responses of professors compared across an issue - both the divergences and similarities of response.

Finally, the interpretation process allowed me to use the data gathered in the interview to further interpret the qualitative data collected in the survey, particularly mentoring and discrimination.

**Confidentiality**

Each participant was guaranteed confidentiality, in respect to both the questionnaire and interviews. This was a crucial consideration for many participants. All information, especially quotations, was used in a form that ensured the professor’s identity was protected. To this end all references to any employer (university) or discipline were eliminated. To assist in this process, Sloper’s (1994) ‘Classification of Australian Universities’ was used, as previously described (refer Appendix C).
Limitations of Methodology

Dillman (1978) addresses the general limitations of the mail questionnaire approach to survey research, as used in Stage Two of this study. These include difficulty in assuring that the appropriate respondent completes the questionnaire, difficulty in the use of open-ended questions without the presence of an interviewer to clarify responses, and limited success in avoiding item non-response.

One limitation of this study was the use of the 1998 electronic Register of Senior University Women produced by the AV-VC to obtain the study’s population. This was chosen as it was the most complete listing available when this survey was conducted. However, personnel changes could have occurred between the publication of the directory and the mailing of the survey instrument. I was not able to account for these. It is possible, therefore, that invitations to participate in the research were forwarded to the wrong individuals, or that the packets were discarded as the addressee was unknown to the institution, and/or that such information was not relayed back to me. Also, this electronic register is by no means a complete register of all professors, as staff are not obliged to have their name and details placed on the register. Hence, a number of professors may have been omitted from the survey.

Another limiting factor was that no distinction was made between those professors who acquired their status and title through academic pursuit and those through taking on a management position within the academic hierarchy, such as Executive Dean, where the
title of professor comes with the job description. In other words, only the title of ‘professor’ was used as a basis for inclusion in the study, not job responsibilities or duties. A number of respondents highlighted this fact in their questionnaire.

Further, it must be borne in mind that demographic data goes out of date, as the ‘picture’ changes rapidly, and therefore the data detailed in this thesis provides a useful ‘snapshot’ in time.

Lastly, the qualitative data collected in Stage Three of this study were limited by constraints of time, money and distance. It is also appropriate to acknowledge that this part of the study resulted in a substantial volume of facts, opinions, insights and perceptions. While the data presented me with many disparate research issues, inevitably I was obliged to limit myself to selecting and to analysing data that would yield information that was most directly relevant to the research question of my thesis. As Geertz (1973:20) observed, “it is not necessary to know everything in order to understand something”.

In conclusion, the underlying theoretical position and the guidelines for data gathering, analysis and interpretation were developed from a wide variety of sources in line with the twin approaches of quantitative and qualitative research, and woven into what I believe is a comprehensive and coherent exposition. The findings presented in Chapters Five and Six represent applications of the methodology outlined in this chapter.

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4 I created the follow-up e-mail as a ‘group name’ in the belief the e-mail would be addressed as “To: Professors”, and not detail the members’ names of the group. To my horror and surprise each recipient was provided with the names of every member in the group. The e-mail generated both a response to the
questionnaire (its mission), as well as some correspondence on the study itself – nine of which were very positive and two negative.

In the course of the correspondence, I received nine very supportive e-mails from professors who wished me every success and/or offered their support, and thanked me for keeping them informed. As one professor wrote: “I just wanted to thank you for keeping us informed. We often say we will, but also often forget”. I will always be grateful to those who took the time to send me those much-needed words of encouragement.
CHAPTER FIVE

SURVEY FINDINGS: A PROFILE OF FEMALE PROFESSORS IN AUSTRALIA

In this chapter the information from the questionnaire has been analysed to provide a profile of female professors in the total system of Australian universities. All data was collected during the year 2000. These data respond to the first part of the central research question that motivated this research, viz., who are the female occupants in the Australian professoriate. In answering this question, a profile of the typical Australian female professor can be constructed, therein providing the study with a foundation - a background from which to view the interpretative data in Chapter Six. It can also be viewed as a contribution to the “social arithmetic” (Sloper, 1994) of higher education, for there is no systematic demographic information available on female professors in Australia. As I stated in the previous chapter, I believe there is a need for such an inventory, both as data for participants in, as well as students of, higher education and for general historical purposes.

In presenting the ‘statistical’ findings of this part of the study, no attempt has been made to compare the female professor with other groups of senior females (for example within the Australian Public Service), or to determine how females differ from their male counterparts, nor have I drawn any conclusions from these findings. In fact, comparisons are not possible as comparable research of other occupations, or of female professors in other countries, have not been undertaken. This chapter makes a beginning by attempting a
statistical description of Australian female professors. It documents a substantial volume of concrete details because I believe this is the best way of providing a ‘picture’ of this occupational group.

A total of 182 useable questionnaires, representing a response rate of 71.4%, were utilised in this analysis. For ease of reading the data has been divided into five sections: Personal Background; Academic Qualifications; Domestic Issues; Career Profile; and Attitudes and Preferences. I end the chapter by constructing a composite profile of the typical Australian female professor.

Note: All percentage figures have been rounded to the nearest decimal – i.e. if the figure is 14.3% it has been recorded as 14%, if it is 14.6% it has been recorded as 15% – consequently some totals will not add up to 100%.
PERSONAL BACKGROUND

I asked respondents about their backgrounds: their age, country of birth, secondary education, religion, size of their families, parents’ country of birth, education, and whether their parents worked in academia.

Age

Fifty-six percent of professors were in the 51 to 60 years age group, followed by 30 per cent in the 41 to 50 years age group. There were no professors in this study under the age of 30 years and only one who was between the ages of 31 and 40 years.

Table 2: Age Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 - 40 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 - 50 years</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 - 60 years</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 60</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>181</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Place of Birth: Respondents and Parents

The majority of professors (57 per cent) were born in Australia of Australian parents, and slightly more of Australian mothers (53 per cent) than of Australian fathers (51 per cent).
Forty-three percent of professors were born in other countries, with just over half of these in the United Kingdom or Eire. Over 75 per cent grew up in an Australian city.

Table 3: Birthplace of Respondent and Respondents’ Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th></th>
<th>Elsewhere</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Don’t Know</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>No Resp.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>City</strong></td>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>City</strong></td>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>Don’t</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>No Resp.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father Born</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>91 (51%)</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>88 (49%)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother Born</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>95 (53%)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>85 (47%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Born</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>98 (57%)</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>74 (43%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education and Occupation of Parents

Only a small proportion of respondents (9 per cent) came from a family background with a history of careers in higher education. There was no ‘following in the footsteps’ here. As would be expected in the generation in question, fathers of respondents were more highly educated than mothers, with 34 per cent of male parents/carers having a university education, compared with 19% of female parents/carers. Also of interest was that only 9 per cent of parents/carers were engaged in paid work in academia.

Table 4: Parents/Carers with University Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female Carer</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>145 (82%)</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male Carer</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>114 (67%)</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Family Size and Birth Order

Only 12 per cent (21) of respondents grew up as an only child. Forty-three per cent (78) of respondents were first-born children and 19.3 per cent were the last-born.

Figure 1: Siblings

Secondary Education

Private school education characterises the Australian educated professors: in particular non-Catholic private schools. Eighty-one per cent of respondents were educated in the city and nearly all (92 per cent) were day scholars. Noteworthy finding is the fact that the majority (60 per cent) of professors received their secondary education at an all-girls school. Sixty-seven per cent of respondents were educated in Australia.
Table 5: Secondary Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Both</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State School</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private – Catholic</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private – Non Catholic</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both State &amp; Private</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>99</strong></td>
<td><strong>22</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td><strong>49</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Religion

Nearly all those who responded to the question of religion had some religious upbringing, with the highest percentage being the Anglican faith – 33 per cent. However, the situation is different now, with 55 per cent no longer having firm religious beliefs and 11 per cent being Agnostic/Atheist (compared to 8 per cent and 3 per cent in the past). This decline in religious faith is across the board, with the greatest departure being from the Anglican faith (10 per cent now compared to 33 per cent in the past).

Table 6: Religious Affiliation of Respondents – Past and Present

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Groups</th>
<th>Religion Reared</th>
<th>Percentage Reared</th>
<th>Present Affiliation</th>
<th>Percentage Present Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uniting Church (Protestant/Methodist)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslim</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhist</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnostic/Atheist</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No religion</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>177</strong></td>
<td><strong>166</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>4%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS

This section provides details about the study pathways of the professors. It looks at the influences on their attending university and their choice of field; their first undergraduate degree, including where undertaken, field, level of attainment and type of student. It also covers the professors’ post-graduate study, including motivation, pattern of higher degrees, type of enrolment and factors that helped, prevented or hindered their pursuit to achieve a post-graduate award. Finally, the section provides details on the respondents’ sources of financial support as under-graduate and post-graduate students and whether they completed all their studies at the same university.

Influence(s) on Respondents Attending University

Most respondents responding to the question about who or what influenced them in attending university and their choice of field, attributed the greatest influence to their parents (83 per cent). It is worth pointing out that mother and father were just about equally represented - 42 per cent the father and 41 percent the mother – despite the fact that fathers were more likely to be higher educated. School teachers were also acknowledged with influencing the decision to attend university and the chosen field of study.
First Under-graduate Degree

A Bachelor of Arts degree was the most popular degree completed by respondents, with 44 per cent represented under this category. Next was a Bachelor of Science degree with 23 percent of respondents nominated here. The percentage numbers then dwindle to single figures with an MBBS completed by six per cent of respondents, Law and Education degrees with five per cent each, and the remaining consisting of minuscule percentages in fields ranging from Architecture to Engineering.

Tables 7, 8 and 9 detail level of attainment achieved by respondents (70 per cent Honours), the type of student they were (80 per cent full-time) and where their first under-graduate degree was granted (71 per cent Australia).

Table 7: Level of Attainment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pass Level</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pass</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honours</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>164</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Type of Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Student</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>82%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixture of FT &amp; PT</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>174</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 9: Where Degree Granted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Where Studied</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>173</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Post-graduate Study

As can be seen from Table 10, interests in research (51 per cent) and in their subject/field (51 per cent) were by far the greatest motivators for respondents undertaking post-graduate work.

Table 10: Motivation for Undertaking Post-graduate Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Qualification for academic career</td>
<td>73 (41%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification for other profession</td>
<td>20 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in subject/field</td>
<td>91 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in research</td>
<td>91 (51%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement from university lecturer(s)</td>
<td>56 (31%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>24 (13%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 180  Note: Multiple answers

Pattern of Higher Degrees

Ninety-four respondents (52 per cent of the total) have a Doctorate only, 75 (41 per cent) have a Masters and a Doctorate, 12 (7 per cent) a Masters, but no Doctorate and one
respondent had no Masters and no Doctorate. Table 11 below outlines the type of post-graduate work undertaken, and whether this was done as a full-time student, part-time student or a mixture of the two.

Table 11: Higher Degree(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>FT/PT</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grad Dip</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

n = 182

Respondents were asked to indicate from among a list, any factors that had a positive or negative effect on their pursuit of higher degrees, as shown in Table 12. Not surprisingly scholarships aided in pursuing higher degrees, with children causing the most difficulty.

Table 12: Factors which Aided or Hindered/Prevented Respondents Post-Graduate Study (percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Aided</th>
<th>Hindered/Prevented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scholarships (116)</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate preparation (146)</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home circumstances (117)</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of partner (99)</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment (107)</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility for parents/others (20)</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children (51)</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Money (82)</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No response = 5 n = 177

Scholarships also played a pivotal role for respondents in providing financial support as an under-graduate and post-graduate student. Of the 167 respondents who detailed their sources of financial support, 101 (61 per cent) had a scholarship/grant for their under-
graduate study and 98 (59 per cent) had a scholarship/grant for their doctorate. Thirty-nine (23 per cent) respondents relied on their own earnings to complete their under-graduate and 64 (38 per cent) their doctorate. Only 28 per cent of respondents completed their under-graduate and post-graduate studies at the same university.

DOMESTIC ISSUES

The personal elements of the respondents’ lives are covered in this section. It presents data on partnership/marital status; work affinity with respondent’s partner; children; household responsibility; role conflict between private and professional lives; the level of difficulty in parenting/caring for children and others; and the effect the responsibility for others has on career development.

Partnership/Marital Status

Most of the respondents live with a partner, often with children, but 19% live alone – one Australian female professor in five lives alone.
Table 13: Domestic Situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Do you live:</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With a friend</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With children</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With partner</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with partner and children</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With partner and other/s</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With partner, children and other/s</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With children and other/s</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With a group of friends</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With relatives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 173 responses to the question of separation/divorce, 42 per cent (72) have been divorced; of whom 57 per cent (39) said it affected their career – more positively (58%) than negatively.

Table 14: Effect of Divorce on Career

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>69</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Partner(s) and Work Affinity

In the survey participants were asked “If you are or have been in a relationship, how would you characterise the inter-relation of your career and that of your partner?” This question was divided into two parts – past partnerships and present partnerships.

With regard to past partnerships, of the 140 who responded only 6 per cent indicated that their career was primary and that their past partner adapted. However, there was an even divide (30/30 per cent) between ‘partner’s career was primary’ and ‘both careers were equally important’ in past partnerships. Responses to present partnerships provide a very different picture to that of past partnerships. Here only 3 per cent put their partners’ careers first, 20 per cent put their careers first and 56 per cent responded that both careers are equally important.

Respondents were also asked whether they had a professional affinity with their partner, both in the past and at present. In the past, 58 per cent (104) of respondents either worked in the same field or the same institution as their partner. But in the present day, only 33 per cent (57) of respondents do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 15a: Partner/s Worked in the Same Field, or the Same Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the past</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>At present</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15(b) indicates that any association between respondents’ field and place of work and those of their partners are currently less marked than they were in the past.

**Table 15b: Breakdown of Partnership/Work Affinity in Same/Similar field and Institution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In the past</th>
<th>In the present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Same field</td>
<td>18 (17%)</td>
<td>10 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same field/same institution</td>
<td>24 (23%)</td>
<td>5 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar field</td>
<td>15 (14%)</td>
<td>22 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similar field/same institution</td>
<td>28 (27%)</td>
<td>14 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Same institution</td>
<td>19 (18%)</td>
<td>6 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>104</strong></td>
<td><strong>57</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Children**

Seventy-one per cent of respondents in the survey have children and 43 per cent have, or have had, special responsibility for other people (for example elderly parents and relatives).

**Table 16: Number of Children Raised**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of respondents who have children stated they did not bring their children up as a sole parent, as shown in Figure 2.
Of those respondents with children, 41 per cent currently have children living at home – 35 per cent between the ages of 6 and 15 years, 31 per cent between 16 and 20 years, 29 per cent are 20 years and over and 5 per cent are five years and under.

**Household Responsibility**

The survey suggests that nearly 60 per cent of respondents are carrying a double load in performing or having responsibility for most of the household tasks and a career. None of the 182 respondents to the questionnaire employed full-time household help. However, 56 per cent (102) employed part-time and 19 per cent (34) engaged occasional help. Twenty-five per cent (46) of respondents never employ household help.
Role Conflict

Not surprisingly the survey showed that conflict exists between the female professors’ professional and private lives. Of the total number of responses to the question of role conflict (173), 77 per cent said they experienced conflict. Of the respondents who experience conflict between the two roles, 50 per cent make adjustments to both their private and professional lives (compromise strategy), while a further 19 per cent give up certain elements of their private and/or professional life (sacrifice strategy) in an attempt to resolve the conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 17: Coping Strategies to Resolve Conflict</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A compromise (C) strategy</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A sacrifice (S) strategy</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither of the above</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both – C+S*</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 135

Level of Difficulty in Parenting/Caring and Career Development

For those who have, or have had, the added responsibility of parenting/caring for others, the survey showed that virtually all respondents (96 per cent) experienced some level of difficulty in combining the two.
Table 18: Level of Difficulty in Parenting/Caring and Career Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of Difficulty</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Major</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minor</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>140</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>41</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Even though almost all the female professors experienced some form of difficulty combining the parenting/caring and professional responsibilities, there were almost equal proportions of those who thought this had affected their career (46 per cent) and those who said it had not (48 per cent). Despite the literature suggesting that this is one of the greatest effects on women’s careers, the participants within this study are divided on whether this is so.

Table 19: Responsibilities of Parenting/Caring for Others Inhibited Career Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responsibilities of Parenting/Caring for Others Inhibited Career</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both Yes &amp; No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>138</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CAREER PROFILE

This section presents details on the respondents’ professional lives. It covers the areas of their work history – both in and out of the university system; the pathways they pursued; activities they engaged in when not in paid work; their mobility; what disciplines they worked in; and mentors, which when put together provide a career profile.

Work Outside the University

The respondents to this study did not typically progress from school to university, to graduation, to post-graduate study, to first appointment, to movement up the hierarchy. Although the majority (73 per cent) went straight from school to university, a good proportion (64 per cent) worked outside of the university before their first university appointment, as Table 19 demonstrates. For the 99 women who stated they had worked outside the university before their first university appointment, 29 per cent worked in the area of health and 24 per cent in education, the remainder covering a variety of occupations from public servant to architect. However, once in the academic system respondents tended to stay within the university, with only a minority - 17 per cent - working outside the university between university appointments.
Table 20: Occupations Outside Academia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Between</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Years</td>
<td>Before</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>16+</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0-5</td>
<td>6-10</td>
<td>11-15</td>
<td>16+</td>
<td>Total</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>154</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pathways

Responses to the survey indicated at least 44 pathways into the university and from there, the number of ‘steps’ to reach a professorship could range from one step to five steps. There appears to be no typical pathway. There were 162 responses on the question of pathways, of which 69 (43 per cent) held three positions (that is, they took three ‘steps’) before being appointed a full Professor: with the highest percentage (16 per cent) taking the ‘steps’ of Lecturer, to Senior Lecturer, to Associate Professor before being appointed Professor.
Activity When Not in Paid Work

Ninety out of 160 (56 per cent) respondents had periods when they were not in paid work and this was largely due to studying and/or caring for children. The shortest period recorded when not in paid work was 6 months, with the longest period recorded when not in paid work was 17 years.

Table 21: Activity When Not In Paid Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Studying</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring for children</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study &amp; caring</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study, caring &amp; travel</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study &amp; travel</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care &amp; travel</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travel</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study &amp; other</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numerous</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>160</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mobility and Location

Mobility was assessed in relation to movement from the university of graduation and whether the professors had worked in universities outside Australia. Eighty-two per cent (149) of women did not presently work where they either graduated or were a post-graduate. Nine per cent (16) of respondents were presently employed where they were an
undergraduate, 4 per cent (7) where they were a post-graduate and 5 per cent (10) where they were a graduate and post-graduate.

Sixty per cent of respondents have worked exclusively in Australia. The United Kingdom is the most popular place for those respondents who have worked in a university outside Australia, as Table 22 demonstrates below.

### Table 22: Country of University Appointments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Australia Only</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA &amp; Canada</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>179</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>No Response</strong></td>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discipline**

In terms of discipline breakdown, female professors are primarily concentrated in the Health Sciences area with a total of 35 per cent represented here. Contrary to what might be expected, the Education sector has the smallest percentage of professors with only 9 per cent.
Table 23: Professors by Discipline Groups

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discipline Groups</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Administration, Business, Economics etc</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health Sciences</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities and Arts</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total (n)</strong></td>
<td><strong>182</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Using Sloper’s (1994) ‘Classification of Australian universities’ (see Appendix C), the highest percentage of female professors, 30 per cent (54), reside in Post 1988 universities (not surprising since 48 per cent of universities are within this classification), followed by ‘New’ universities with 27 per cent (49) of female professors, ‘19th Century’ universities with 23 per cent (43) of female professors, ‘Post War’ universities with 12 per cent (21) of female professors and lastly Early 20th Century universities with 8 per cent (15) of female professors.

**Mentors**

In the questionnaire the term mentor was defined as a long-term, professionally centred relationship between two individuals in which the more experienced individual, the mentor, guides, advises, and assists in any number of ways the career of the less experienced, often younger mentee. I was interested to know whether respondents had experienced such a
relationship. Fifty-three percent (93) of the professors said they had experienced a mentor relationship.

Table 24: Mentors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of those 53 per cent, 45% said their mentor was ‘very important’ to the advancement of their career. Four per cent said they were not important ‘at all’.

Table 25: Importance of Mentor on Career Advancement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat important</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Gender of Mentor

Of the 93 respondents who had mentors, 60 (65 per cent) had a male mentor, 18 (19 per cent) a female mentor, and 15 (16 per cent) both a male and female. The high percentage of male mentors reflects the lack of female mentors, i.e. women in senior positions, particularly for this generation of women.
Need for Mentor

An overwhelming number of respondents felt there was a need for a mentor, with 140 (85 per cent) of the 164 respondents answering in the affirmative. Only 14 (9 per cent) respondents stated they did not think a mentor was needed.
ATTITUDES AND PREFERENCES

In this final section I present questions from the questionnaire, which concentrate less on demographic and institutional factors, and more on the professors’ preferences, views and beliefs. Here I cover the attraction of academia; the teaching vs. research question; experiences of isolation and anxiety – both before and after participants became a professor; the ‘glass ceiling’ phenomenon; discrimination against and in favour of women – from both a personal and broad perspective; career advancement in the future; and whether they thought there was a need for change in the position of women in society and their involvement towards promoting that change.

Attraction of Academia

It can be seen from Table 26 below that research is what primarily attracted respondents to an academic career. The two most compelling attractions of academic life for respondents were ‘contributing to new knowledge’ and ‘freedom to carry out original ideas’- 88 percent and 79 percent respectively.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 26: Attractions of Academe</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>n = 181</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>115 (64%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>105 (58%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>45 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>43 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>159 (88%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>26 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>143 (79%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>37 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>71 (39%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>35 (19%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Multiple answers given
Teaching versus Research

On the question of teaching versus research, nearly 70 per cent of respondents experienced either a strong or moderate preference for research over teaching.

**Table 27: Preference Teaching versus Research**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very heavily in teaching</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In both but leaning to teaching</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In both activities equally</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In both but leaning to research</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very heavily in research</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>180</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Isolation and Anxiety

The study sought to identify whether the female professors experienced feelings of isolation during their academic career. Their answers showed that feelings of isolation were relatively common and were increasingly experienced as respondents moved up the academic ladder. Prior to being appointed a professor 60 per cent (101) of respondents felt the nature and structure of academic life was very isolating for them.

It is telling that having reached the apex of the academic hierarchy, many of these women (70 per cent of respondents) still experience self-doubt and a sense that their professional lives are conditional. At the same time, 28 per cent of the respondents in this research stated they never experience feelings of anxiety or ambivalence upon achieving academic
success or recognition. So there seem to be two quite distinct groups here – the ‘worriers’ (the majority) and the ‘certain’ (the minority).

Table 28: Anxiety or Ambivalence upon Achieving Success or Recognition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t Know</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total (n)</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Response</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The ‘Glass Ceiling’

Responses indicate that the ‘glass ceiling’ phenomenon is just as applicable in the domain of higher education as it is in other Australian industries, with 81 per cent of respondents believing it is more difficult for a woman than a man to achieve a position of authority. When it came to managing that position of authority 51 per cent believed it was more difficult for a woman: one might have expected this figure to be higher, given the paucity of women in senior positions.

Discrimination in Universities

The participants were asked two questions on discrimination – one relating to their personal experiences and one to elicit their views and observations on discrimination generally in Australian universities. Respondents could answer in more than one way, so the numbers detailed in this section (discrimination) show the total responses for each category and thus are greater than the actual number of respondents.
Broad Perceptions

Participants were asked if they thought there was discrimination against women, or in favour of women, in universities generally. Of the 159 respondents to this question, 33 per cent (52) respondents said they believed there was open discrimination and 73 per cent (116) thought there was latent discrimination against women in universities. Against this, of those responding 18 per cent (28) thought women were not discriminated against at all.

In respect to discrimination in favour of women in universities generally, 28 (18 per cent) women believed there was open discrimination and 18 (11 per cent) believed there was latent discrimination in favour of women in universities generally. Thirty (19 per cent) respondents believed there was no discrimination in favour of women in universities generally.

Table 29: Discrimination Against and For Women in Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>For</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Open</td>
<td>52 (33%)</td>
<td>28 (18%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Latent</td>
<td>116 (73%)</td>
<td>18 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>28 (18%)</td>
<td>30 (19%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No Response: 23  n = 159 (Note: Multiple answers given)

Personal Perceptions

At a personal level, 41 per cent (72) of those responding to this question had experienced open discrimination and 55 per cent (97) had experienced latent discrimination against them personally. Twenty-three per cent (41) of 176 respondents stated they had never experienced discrimination against them personally. On the other hand, 10 per cent (18) of respondents had personally experienced open discrimination in their favour, 11 per cent (19) latent positive discrimination, while 24 per cent (43) of respondents said they had never experienced any form of positive discrimination, personally.
Table 30 below, presents an intriguing set of responses given that 73 per cent believe that there is (as revealed in Table 29), in fact, latent discrimination against women generally. It suggests that the professors are more likely to appreciate it in general terms rather than recognise they may have been subject to it themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Against</th>
<th>For</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Open</td>
<td>72 (41%)</td>
<td>18 (10%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes - Latent</td>
<td>97 (55%)</td>
<td>19 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>41 (23%)</td>
<td>43 (24%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No Response: 6  n = 176 (Note: Multiple answers given)

**Career Advancement**

However, when faced with a more direct question - “Compared with a man of similar qualifications and age, how do you consider your likelihood of promotion to (i) Deputy Vice-Chancellor, (ii) Vice-Chancellor?” - the majority of respondents felt they were less likely than their male counterparts to reach the rank of either Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Vice-Chancellor. For those who felt their chances were ‘about the same’ or ‘more likely’ than their male counterparts, it would probably be as Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
Table 31: Likelihood of Promotion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC)</th>
<th>Vice Chancellor (VC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More likely</td>
<td>14 (10%)</td>
<td>9 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>About the same</td>
<td>48 (33%)</td>
<td>32 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less likely</td>
<td>70 (48%)</td>
<td>83 (60%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don’t know</td>
<td>15 (10%)</td>
<td>15 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>147</strong></td>
<td><strong>139</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fifty-eight per cent (101) of respondents were not interested in career advancement. However, of the 42 per cent who were interested in further career advancement, 60 per cent had a positive viewpoint with respect to achieving their ambition (26 per cent were ‘uncertain’ and 14 per cent ‘pessimistic’).

Of the 42 per cent (72) interested in further career advancement within the university system, the majority (42 per cent) stated they aspired to positions centred around research, for example a Research Chair, Research Institute Director, Senior Research Fellow. Only 17 per cent aspired to the rank of Vice-Chancellor, 11 per cent Deputy Vice-Chancellor and 23 per cent Pro Vice-Chancellor.

Table 32: Optimum Rank Desired

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Chancellor (VC)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC + DVC</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC, DVC + VC</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Involvement with Female Causes

The majority (72 per cent) of respondents describe themselves as feminists, with 21 per cent ‘not’ and 7 per cent ‘undecided’.

Ninety-one per cent (159) of 174 respondents felt change was necessary in the position of women to enable them to play an equal part with men in society. Of the 157 respondents who suggested ways to best achieve change, 59 per cent stated ‘radical change in social attitudes and institutes’ was necessary. As Table 33 shows, many of the respondents are involved in female causes, from participating in political action for women’s causes (56 per cent) to working in projects to set up special facilities for women (69 per cent), in an attempt to initiate change.

**Table 33: Involvement with Female Causes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Participated in political action for women’s causes</td>
<td>92 (56%)</td>
<td>71 (44%)</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Participated in projects to set up special facilities for women</td>
<td>113 (69%)</td>
<td>51 (31%)</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Taught courses concerned with women’s issues</td>
<td>84 (52%)</td>
<td>77 (48%)</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Taken part in a women’s consciousness-raising group</td>
<td>77 (50%)</td>
<td>76 (50%)</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Been involved in the production of publications or papers concerned with women’s position</td>
<td>99 (61%)</td>
<td>63 (39%)</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Been involved in any other activities designed to produce change in women’s condition or status</td>
<td>126 (78%)</td>
<td>35 (22%)</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No response: 1 n = 182 ((Note: Multiple answers given)
A Profile of the Australian Female Professor

The personal and social characteristics of Australian female professors detailed in this chapter are a contribution to the much neglected social arithmetic of higher education. It should be useful in itself in providing basic data about a small, elite group of influential people in the Australian higher education system at a specific point in time. While the total number of female incumbents in the Australian professoriate is small, it does comprise the leadership group of a particular occupational class. However, care needs to be exercised in interpreting data in this survey in isolation from other information relating both to professors and to the organizational setting in which they operate.

Based on the female professors who participated in this study and the data detailed in this chapter, I conclude with the following composite profile of the typical Australian female professor – a ‘snap-shot’ of an Australian female professor:

51 to 60 years of age, born in Australia of Australian parents, who were not tertiary educated; experienced all her education in Australia, having attended an all-girls school in a city, prior to entering university as a full-time student; achieved a Bachelor of Arts or (less likely) a Bachelor of Science, with Honours, then completed her doctorate on a full-time basis; lives with a partner who does not work in the same field or institution; has raised one or two children who have attended university; is responsible for most of the household tasks and employs part-time household help; has experienced difficulty in combining the responsibilities of parenting and caring for others with her academic work, and often experiences conflict between her professional and private life roles; is likely to be of no religious persuasion; was aged 40 to 49 years at appointment to professor, in either the Health Sciences or Humanities and Arts disciplines; participates and holds office in educational community organisations; has a career path that has been a mix of industry and academia, spending typically 11 to 20 years in academia prior to being appointed professor;
has worked solely or primarily in Australian universities; had a mentor, who was male and ‘somewhat’ important in advancing her academic career; has interests leaning more to research than teaching; was attracted to academe as it provided the opportunity to contribute to a field of knowledge; is hesitant to admit to direct personal discrimination, but is clear that women suffer from discrimination and that change is needed; is actively involved in female causes; is likely to think of herself as a feminist.

The next chapter will explore a number of the attributes and experiences detailed above in more depth, presenting the qualitative data of the study – the ‘voices’ of female professors who participated in this research.
CHAPTER SIX

INTERVIEW FINDINGS: VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

Introductory Comments

This chapter presents the qualitative data - the 'voices' of female professors who participated in this research. It details females’ experiences of entry into what is essentially a male dominated position within academia, how they act towards it, how they act towards others in relation to it, and how their understandings and actions change over time. These data respond to the second part of the central research question: how did the female occupants in the Australian professoriate manage their way through the academic hierarchy?

As has been outlined previously, the study adopts a hermeneutic/interpretive approach, and in line with this approach, does not seek generalisations for the Australian and other contexts. At the same time, however, the research does contribute to the general pool of qualitative studies of female academics from which, as Butt and Raymonds (1989:404) put it, “commonalities related to their lives and careers can be drawn”.

In arguing that I did not set out to seek generalisability, I am not rejecting Stake’s (1978) argument that case studies may be in harmony with the reader’s experience and thus a natural basis for generalisation. As Kennedy (1979), in the same vein puts it,
generalisability is ultimately related to what the reader is trying to learn from the case studies. Lancy provides a different angle on this yet again, when he states that such an approach “is comparable to the law where the applicability of a particular precedent case must be argued in each subsequent case. The reader must decide whether the findings apply or not” (1993:165). There is also a strong argument that those who are trying to promote change could benefit from reflecting on the data detailed in this chapter. As Fullan (1982) has so strongly argued, to effect improvement, that is to introduce change that promises more success and less failure, the world of the people most closely involved in implementation must be understood. In the same vein, Davies (1992:212) argues:

> Because they are often called upon formally or informally to advise others about career choices, decisions and problems of dealing with inappropriate jobs and roles, those involved in the process of training, developing and educating others have a particular need to understand their own career pattern and the *biographical narration* around it. (emphasis added)

She concludes that an outcome of such understanding is a greater depth and clarity of perception into our own approaches and limitations “which enables us to perceive and empathise with others in their own career and development issues”. (212)

A number of authors have drawn attention to the importance of narrative in interpreting the social world. MacIntyre (1984) suggests that we ‘live’ narratives in our lives and many authors view narrative as the primary way humans make meaning (Gee, 1989; Mishler, 1986; White, 1981). Thus Gee (1989:92) states “all human beings are masters of making sense of experience and the world through narrative”. Narrative can also be said to serve as
a lens through which a view of the whole can be glimpsed. Accordingly, the distinctive voices - the narratives - of the women who participated in this study are presented in this chapter. I believe the narratives speak for themselves, and demonstrate the divergences and similarities across the issues canvassed. In addition, these accounts are linked up with the wider research/literature, connecting these women’s narratives with the voices and experiences of others.

The material in this chapter comes from the 13 semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted in early February and March 2001, as well as three interviews taken from my earlier work on female professors, as discussed at the beginning of this thesis. Semi-structured, in-depth ‘interviews’ were used in order to gain a deeper insight and understanding of the participants’ perspectives on their situations, experiences and lives as expressed in their own words (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984). While the term ‘interview’ is used frequently throughout the thesis, the term ‘conversation’ is probably a much more appropriate term for the process. As Aspinwall (1992: 251) argues, the term ‘interview’ “cannot convey the empathy and interest necessary to the process”.

**Structure of Chapter**

The chapter is organised under the following six themes:

- **From There to Here** (career) – planning, motivation, teaching vis research and attributes for success;
• **Having Arrived** (professorial role) - perceptions of a professor's role;

• **Heroes and Helpers** (significant others) - the influence and support from role models, mentors, partners, friends and colleagues, the negative issue of the ‘Queen Bee’ syndrome and networking;

• **The View is Different From Over Here** (gender factors) - perceptions of the differences between male and female professors, perceptions on whether women are scrutinised or reacted to differently to male professors and the issue of appearance for female professors compared to that of male professors;

• **More than Half the World** (changing university population) – participants’ views on whether there should be more female professors and why, on why there are so few female professors, and how best the numbers can be increased;

• **Reflection and Advice** - reflections on how the participants managed their entry into the professoriate and words of advice to female students and academics.

These themes are partly an artefact of the interview schedule and partly of the ways in which certain issues clustered together and/or received attention during the interviewing process. Most of them are neither surprising nor original – for example, career paths, discrimination and significant others. Many have already been well reported in the research literature on women’s participation in positions within higher education and provided a natural base of discussion here. The extent to which the findings of this thesis are reproduced in this wider literature is touched on throughout the chapter and will be returned to in the Conclusion.
Interview Participants

Table 34 below details the university classification type and age group of each participant (including the three interviews taken from my earlier work on female professors as discussed in chapter one). Thirteen of the participants came from disciplines designated high ‘female concentration’ and three from low ‘female concentration’ (see chapter four for further details).

Table 34: Interviewee List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>University classification/type</th>
<th>Age Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor 1</td>
<td>Early 20th Century</td>
<td>51-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 2</td>
<td>Early 20th Century</td>
<td>51-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 3</td>
<td>Post 1988</td>
<td>41-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 4</td>
<td>Post War</td>
<td>51-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 5</td>
<td>Post War</td>
<td>51-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 6</td>
<td>Post 1988</td>
<td>over 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 7</td>
<td>19th Century</td>
<td>41-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 8</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>51-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 9</td>
<td>Post War</td>
<td>over 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 10</td>
<td>Post 1988</td>
<td>41-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 11</td>
<td>Early 20th Century</td>
<td>51-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 12</td>
<td>Post 1988</td>
<td>41-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 13</td>
<td>Early 20th Century</td>
<td>51-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 14</td>
<td>19th Century</td>
<td>51-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 15</td>
<td>19th Century</td>
<td>over 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor 16</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>over 60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FROM THERE TO HERE – The career

This section focuses on a series of questions in which I sought to determine how the respondents had actually become professors. Had they planned their move into academia, or simply “drifted” there? Once within academe, did they have or develop clear career goals? What do they see as key attributes of success in academe, and where do they stand on the issues of ‘teaching versus research’ and ‘publish or perish’? What was their underlying motivation for becoming professors?

Mitchell and Beach (1976) argue that people select the occupations they feel will provide them with the greatest benefits, whilst Pavalko (1971) suggests that much research indicates that people drift into occupations through a process of elimination rather than conscious selection. Over and above these points of view, Hall and Kehoe (1971:64) claim:

A decision to enter professional academic life means going through a reasonably rigidly structured socialisation process. Formally and informally, the graduate student is made aware of both the university's and the profession's reward structures and the appropriate routes to advancement within each arena.

The concept of a career is “modernist” (Taylor, 1999:106). The dictionary defines a ‘career’ as a general course of action or progress of a person through life, as in some profession; an occupation, profession, followed as one’s lifework. Taylor (1999:107) suggests that the term career brings with it “implications of pre-existing ‘structures’ which become both the path and the means of advancement” and that these structures “map a
pathway, providing guidance on what is valued, and what is more optional”. For two reasons, though, this pathway is problematic for academics. First, while the structures provide “a quite specific and limited set of options by which advancement might be achieved” they “really do not guarantee advancement” (Taylor, 1999:108). This was well expressed by one of the professors in my study, who observed: *You won’t get to be a professor if you don’t have the goods, but you can have the goods and never get to be a professor* (Prof.9). Second, Tierney’s (cited in Taylor, 1999) research found that the pathway was poorly sign posted in academia and that large markers that conveyed institutional meaning were missing.

**Intended Career Path**

Much of the research literature largely concludes that women in academia think in terms of jobs as opposed to a career, focusing on intrinsic rewards rather than long-term benefits for the self, and that many female managers never set themselves a career life plan (see among others Caplan, 1993; David & Woodward, 1998; Aisenberg et al., 1988; Davidson & Cooper, 1983). In addition, it indicates that generally females' careers are 'messier' than men's. Females’ lives are more uncertain and do not lead to the traditional concept of careers as 'orderly and linear' (Currie et al., 1995). Still (cited in Currie et al., 1995:40) found that "Australian women managers and entrepreneurs had mainly 'random' careers with little career planning and a sense that a career arose mainly through chance and opportunity". Further, Edwards (2000:315) draws on Inga Elgqvist-Satzman’s (1992) characterisation that women’s careers are often a “winding track” rather than a “straight road”. Edwards argues that this characterisation is supported by David and Woodward’s work (1998) where
many of the contributors to the ‘glass ceiling’ edited collection … reveal careers with a distinct lack of autonomous and strategic planning, as indicated by chapter titles such as ‘An accidental academic’ (Rose, 1998), “Luck, hard work and an unplanned career” (Crum-Ewing, 1998) and ‘The accidental manager’ (Willcocks, 1998) (315).

In fact, David and Woodward (1998:212) state that several women in their book “referred to their careers in academia as having developed ‘accidentally’ or by chance”. In their longitudinal study of the educational and career paths of 3000 Australian women and 2000 men, Poole and Langan-Fox (1997:247) argue that “women’s careers, and orientations to success, achievement and life satisfaction are different from those of men and that different theories, perspectives and strategies need to be developed in order to describe and account for women’s life orientations and work experiences over the life course”.

My research supports the current literature on female career development and occupational socialisation in two clear and significant ways. First, none of the professors entered academe with a career plan. In all cases, career development was ad hoc, spurred primarily by the encouragement gained from success at each particular level. Second, the participants’ responses suggested that they entered academia through a desire to conduct research and teaching as an intrinsically rewarding goal, rather than any conscious choice, career planning tactics or career life plan.

Essentially, the women interviewed in this study established highly successful careers for themselves without consciously setting rungs to achieve on the academic ladder, nor in many instances even ‘choosing’ academia. For them, it was more a case of enjoying what they did and the career subsequently evolving from that:
I’ve just taken opportunities as they’ve come along, so it certainly wasn’t [planned] (Prof.4).

It was the most natural thing for me -- I never really thought about working outside of academia (Prof.1).

I just went from one stage to the next, rather than having a very clear plan (Prof.3).

I wanted to do research and teach .... the career just happened (Prof.2).

I had no map as to what university was all about, but I did very well. When I graduated with first class honours I really didn’t have a clue what I wanted to do .... I don’t think I have ever had an intended career path. I have always just taken the next step which presented itself. When I felt comfortable that I was doing okay in that position, I have taken the next step (Prof.7).

It has all been fairly random. Just essentially doing what one wants to do (Prof.13).

I don’t want to say I drifted into it, I know a lot of women say that, but that’s not been entirely the case. But I think it has been very similar to many other careers, [where] you get into something, you do well at it, you get encouraged. It became an ongoing process (Prof.16).

I had not intended to be a career person at all, it is just the way it worked out. I would have said that when I married I expected to have six children and just relax! (Prof.6)

Two professors were also spurred on by resentment at seeing senior jobs being handled by males perceived to be less well qualified than them:

One spur to ambition, really, was seeing males, whom you thought were inferior to yourself being employed and promoted (Prof.2).

[Because] I had been in situations for so long where I had incompetent people above me ... I put myself forward more and more for management positions. I did this simply because I was tired of cleaning up other people’s messes or being in situations that I saw could be
done differently - so in that sense, yes, there was a conscious decision to get involved with the management side of the university (Prof.9).

Two of the professors also mentioned that they thought that male academics took a more planned and formal approach to their career development, with clear ideas of their targets and how they intended to achieve them. Their views echo Henning and Jardim’s argument that there are sex-differentiated perceptions of ‘career’, with women viewing a career as a focus for the “demonstration of competence and dedication”, and men seeing it as a “series of planned steps to a goal” (quoted in Acker, 1983:196):

*I remember (in my final honours year) comparing notes with a number of other students, all of them were male in fact, and they knew where they were going and I didn’t* (Prof.5).

*I had a conversation with a mentor, a male mentor, a few years ago, in which he talked about how ... he had always had a career path of getting a distinguished Chair in a particular area of [our discipline]. Now he has achieved that. I said that I had never had that sense at the beginning of my career that I knew where I wanted to go* (Prof.7).

**The Attributes of Success in Academia**

Sandra Acker (1983:191) notes that “if there is anywhere that women professionals should be successful, it is in the universities [for] we think of teaching as a woman’s forte and universities as meritocratic institutions”. Acker’s sense that this is not how things work out is confirmed by Harris et al.’ study, *Success, Gender and the Academic: Consuming passion or selling the soul?*, which focused on how academic staff and senior management perceived the attributes of success in a Western Australian university. Drawing on the views of the majority of female participants in their study, they suggest that a successful academic is seen to be:
a well-published researcher with grant money and the capacity to work long hours. If this person wishes to rise to a position of organisational influence, he or she must also be a strategist with important connections and a willingness to identify with senior management's definition of a 'university-wide perspective' (1998:18).

The research concluded that "in a profoundly gendered fashion, production is privileged over reproduction and output over process" (Harris, et al., 1998:18).

Anne Mathews’ study on Women and Leadership in Science (1999:187) found that the “ability to do research, …. success in research projects, and ability to sustain research” were key attributes required to succeed. She also identified a number of attributes which support those expressed in this study - “capacity to generate ideas … [a] strong curiosity and passion for understanding …. [and] determination” (187). Barker and Monks (1999:269), in their study of an Irish university, found that “men and the university were ad idem in relation to the importance placed on research, whereas women recognised the importance placed on research by the university, but did not place similar importance in their own self-assessment of success”. They also found that there was a high degree of agreement across the genders about the importance of “hard work, career planning, motivation, and luck” (271) in determining success. Against this, there were some important variations. The authors comment that “areas in which there was a significant difference in importance were teaching skills and relationship with students. These two were considered more important by females than any of the other three groupings” (271).

Massey and Milsom (1998:153) suggest academic women are not able to use such differences to their own advantage and create an alternative culture more conducive to their values. This, they say, would be “unrealistic in the modern university context, where the
major reward system is based on performance in research”. Farley, in her paper Women Professors in the USA: Where Are They? (1990:202), also asserts the dominance of research, with the suggestion that the successful female academic needs to "concentrate on your research at all costs. Scholarly publication and only that will get you promoted".

The observations made by the women in my study both supported and extended the literature cited above. As well as the ‘research and publication’ factor, the professors talked about a host of personal attributes, identifying commitment, creativity, empathy, energy, enthusiasm and passion. In addition, they mentioned the attributes necessary to ‘get the job done’ (being organised, independence, hard work); the capacity to succeed in a gendered environment (networking, support, self-confidence); and certain attributes demanded by the university environment (political nous, playing by the rules, entrepreneurial skills).

This collective view was neatly summarized by one professor, who offered the following recipe for success:

\[
I \text{ think that academia now requires a very high energy level to the commitment to the work; willingness to be able to juggle multiple priorities; extremely well developed organizational skills; a commitment to some area of research or scholarship that is relevant to society in some form; having strong communication skills that allow you to be an effective teacher – someone who can relay information in a meaningful way. I think it also requires a type of entrepreneurial skill, to be able to work in a much faster-paced workplace than academia used to be, so that you can work to identify strategic opportunities for research, for teaching, for industry partnerships and for collaboration with other institutions} \ (\text{Prof.12}).
\]
However, while a wide number of factors were linked to academic success, the majority of professors in this study support the literature which suggests that it is research and publication which are important above all. For one professor this was linked to political nous: *Success is being able to recognize what the rules are, and in academia publications are certainly one part of that .... You have to have a reasonably good research publication level to succeed* (Prof.4).

Others commented as follows:

*I think in the past the criteria have favoured research, and they still probably favour research* (Prof.16).

*As far as publications go, yes, it is important to do that for your career, but it is also very pleasurable: seeing that end product still gives me huge pleasure* (Prof.3).

*My academia is research, 100% research. No teaching, and really that is what is needed in many ways to get higher promotions in academia. I think a lot of people get wiped out by teaching; they don’t have the same opportunities as those who are purely research* (Prof.13).

*The reality is that the research comes first. The promotion criteria are heavily stacked on research* (Prof.8).

*However hard the universities push the teaching barrow, to get an appointment as a professor, even more to get promotion as a professor, without a strong international reputation you won’t get it* (Prof.14)

*Very sound scholarly preparation. A CV that looks impressive, not just in quantity, but in quality of publication. Research is important* (Prof.10)
These comments on research were supported and extended by reflections on personal qualities. In many cases these qualities clustered around organisation, motivation and hard work:

Attributes that a person would need to possess are being really well organised and being willing to say ‘yes’ to a challenge (Prof.1)

You need to be very much self-motivated, self-driven. You need to be willing and interested and a workaholic (Prof.5).

I think you have to work very hard basically (Prof.14).

Five of the professors talked about the importance of being ‘creative’ and having a ‘passion’ for the task in hand:

You need intelligence, but it is not just intelligence because there are different sorts of intelligence. It is the sort that is a love of ideas and creativity ....[And] you need empathy: if you are going to be a good mentor of people you need to understand where they are coming from, put yourself in their shoes (Prof.7).

You’ve got to really like what you are doing and you have to be creative and original. You have to have confidence in what you are doing (Prof.13).

A passion for what you are doing is essential (Prof.11)

You must do the things you want, fulfil the passion in you. I feel you cannot lock into worldly success and promotions and so on too much (Prof.2).

It helps to have a few brains, and by that I mean the creativeness, rather than the analytic. I think if you don’t have that, however you define it, no matter how clever you are that’s not going to give you academic leadership (Prof.15).
In other cases, professors commented on the strategic, even calculated, elements related to success:

The way academia is set up ... is about forwarding yourself in competition actively with other members of your discipline .... In the university system and for professors, it is constantly brought home to me that to have large national competitive grants, worth oodles of money is the way to go. I’m a qualitative researcher and that makes it difficult for me, but I know that is always put forward as the vanguard of successful work of a professor – bringing in the money .... National and international visibility .... [And] it’s about playing the game (Prof.10).

The success in becoming a professor is very tricky. The process of getting promoted has a lot to do with how much support you receive from people, encouragement from a network of people .... I think you need to position yourself, cultivate people, and acquire a supportive network and good influential contacts (Prof.16).

Bloody-mindedness! Political nous .... To become a professor it is very much the same as the PhD, and that is perseverance .... It takes time to build a record to be a professor. You need a personal life that has not had illness or injury or looking after relatives or children or disasters (Prof.9).

Success is being able to recognize what the rules are .... [You need] to look at what the rules are to get promotion. Those rules will differ in different universities, but basically I think universities are no different from any other job: you say “what are the rules to get promoted, what have I got to do” and ok, now I do that (Prof.4).

It’s also about playing the game (Prof.10)

Professors also commented on the difficulties of achieving success in the gendered environment of the university. One of the themes here was that women had to be better than men and a ‘superstar’ if they were to succeed:

[As a woman] you’re not going to get a Chair .... unless you are better than everyone else .... I mean, the university profile is that the men are at the top and women are at the bottom, so they [women] have to pull themselves up by their bootstraps .... Remember, women have to be more successful than men to get Chairs (Prof.11).
I think you have to be more committed than Mrs Average in other jobs if you are going to succeed in academia. You’ve got to be better than Mrs Average, and if you’ve got family as well, you just have to be Super Woman (Prof.11)

Another professor simply remarked that you needed:

Patience with the fellas! I think the grey suits are just so overwhelming. It has a lot to do with the concern of the grey suits for their own positions, and you realize how insecure they all are when you challenge them (Prof.6).

Teaching v Research: The Old Adage of “Publish or Perish”

In their study of Australian university staff, Anwyl and Bowden (1983) found that nearly all who responded were engaged in research with a view to publication. Over twenty-five years ago, the research of Williams, Blackstone and Metcalf (1974), in British universities, indicated a paradoxical situation with regard to teaching and research in that nearly all academic staff wanted time to do research, and many, more time than they had, but at the same time, as many as a quarter of participants believed that more time should be spent on teaching and less on research. More recently, this paradoxical situation has been observed by Clark (1987:98). Commenting on American faculty he argues:

The greatest paradox of academic work in modern America is that most professors [staff] teach most of the time, and large proportions of them teach all of the time. Professors themselves do the one and acclaim the other. Although the overwhelming majority of academics perform little or no significant research they still consider it [in survey after survey] the most meritorious effort to be contributions to the discipline.

He goes on to comment that within the American university system “[t]rustees and administrators in one sector after another praise teaching and reward research …. [and this]
type of work goes a long way in academia in determining the extent and form of authority” (184-185). However, the participants in this study thought that the lack of publication did not mean the end of an academic career; merely the lack of advancement.

In Australia, The Unified National System gives universities access to a finite funding resource and requires them to compete for their share of the pie. The Research Quantum places a special emphasis on research performance in the assessment of an institution’s overall performance. There is also a ripple effect, since a university’s success in attracting government funding may also influence its ability to draw research funding from other sources. Thus, increasingly, the reputation of a university is tied to its reputation for research.

With research and publication expressed as a very high priority in career development, I asked the professors in this study whether they thought it was still a matter of ‘publish or perish’ and how they viewed the teaching versus research debate. The majority of them appeared to agree with Clark’s findings, suggesting that without publications, you would neither perish nor advance. In this vein, one professor suggested that “you may not perish, but you will not get promoted if you don’t publish” (Prof.5), and another that if you “haven’t published anything at all, then you are not going to get there [promoted]” (Prof.14).

These comments were accompanied by observations about the importance of attracting the research dollar. Here one participant observed that:
Put it this way, it doesn’t attract any money to the research quantum of this university for me to be in the classroom for 50% of my work time each week. It’s not helpful to the university, or for me, to be teaching (Prof.10).

Another drew attention to the negative effect of the commercialisation of research:

*Most of your track record is assessed on the dollar value of your grants, which I think is an academic disgrace* (Prof.15).

In weighing up the balance between teaching and research, most of the professors came down on the side of research for the reasons cited above. Their views were most forcefully put by the participant who said:

*I really don’t care how many times people say that teaching is important – it is important, but it’s not important for a scholarly reputation* (Prof.7).

However, three professors challenged this view and emphasised the importance of teaching, or, at least a balance between research and teaching:

*In this university, in fact, you will not get promoted if you neglect your teaching .... It is very hard to move up the ladder if you haven’t got significant research, but you won’t get there if you’ve done that at the expense of your teaching* (Prof.6).

*Like so many women, I’ve been an all-rounder. Women who you see in the promotion process are nearly always all-rounders – they are good teachers and good researchers* (Prof.16).

*I don’t think I have ever sacrificed teaching. I have always thought that was an important part of what I do. Whenever I’ve applied for a promotion, I’ve always made a lot of my teaching [and] in fact, in most jobs I have had, teaching experience has been important* (Prof.3).
Motivation to Become a Professor

Athena Theordore (1986:55) provides a traditional, and perhaps somewhat idealised, even male-coded, view of the ‘rewards’ of being a professor when she writes:

The rewards of being a full professor go beyond those of tenure and job security. To be a full professor means added prestige, privilege, power, and opportunity. Monetary benefits are evident in the higher salaries; … a professorship enhances eligibility for research grants, consultanthips, and … honors [sic] and prizes …. Seniority also brings more recognition, deference, and respect within the campus boundaries …. Chairing important committees, and advising doctoral candidates – the undisputed prerogative of full professors – go side by side with reduced teaching loads and access to the inner circles of administrative decisionmaking [sic], as well as providing opportunities to influence the educational direction the department and entire campus will take.

Somewhat in contrast to Theodore’s depiction of the advantages of a professorship – and thus the factors which might motivate people to achieve one – the majority of participants in this study cited “self worth” and/or the capacity to be effective, to get things done and to be heard, as the driving force for becoming a professor:

_I felt it would give me an opportunity to show my leadership in the discipline. I have a very strong sense that it was necessary for me to be a professor in order to be heard, and in order for me to be effective_ (Prof.1).

_I need independence, need to feel that I can look after myself and am in control. I think for me my security has to come from my sense of self and achievement. I think a lot of the things I do are developing that sense of self_ (Prof.3).

_I saw it as an opportunity to make different things happen and more good things to happen, if you like, for [my discipline and my state] and me. This professorial Chair is very appropriate to my interests and it does enable me to move in other dimensions_ (Prof.13).
It was a step ahead. I was bored where I was [and] I felt I could make a contribution at that level. I was looking for a new challenge and got it (Prof.5).

Self-actualisation. The next rung on the ladder, so-to-speak (Prof.8).

One professor described how she felt it was more a matter of ‘justice’ than anything else:

A sense of justice. What I mean by that, is it wasn’t quite so much the status that goes with it, but the fact that I thought it was fair and just that I should have that position because I had done, for practically all the years that I was at [university], the work of a professor .... I found it very interesting that when I became a full professor it was actually a point at which I suddenly became acceptable in the system – I became a respected person .... There is the status [but] it is the acknowledgement, the recognition that I have made a contribution (Prof.16).

In one instance it was simply a case ‘If you can, I can’:

The reason I thought I could become a professor was when somebody who had been an honours student I had taught applied to be a professor. It took that relatively junior academic to make me see that the only way I was going to move forward was by my own hand (Prof.10).

In only two instances were monetary interests a consideration:

I have to say that the financial push was also there, because I have retirement looming, so obviously it is important for me to get as much as I can in my super fund for my retirement. Professor seemed the logical step up (Prof.8).

When you see the salary and know what you’ve been on, even as an associate professor, it makes a difference. Of course, depending on where you apply, there are all kinds of other incentives to woo you .... Certainly the superannuation scheme I’m now locked into as a professor is very nice (Prof.10).

Two respondents indicated that their professorship was an almost accidental consequence of the pursuit of their passions and interests. The title simply came with the work they wanted to do:
I focused on my passion, my interest in research, my interest in my profession and the intellectual stimulation that comes from being in academia which has propelled me forward .... I simply followed my curiosity and that has led me further and further along the path, with more publications and more work, and more grants. I think all of my achievements led me in this direction whether I knew it or not (Prof.12).

Actually I had no motivation to be a professor at all. It came with the job .... The position required the status. I didn’t care a fig about being a professor, what I wanted to do was [the job]. When my husband was made a professor we went out to dinner, when I was made professor I think we had fish and chips at home with the kids (Prof.11).

Finally, gender issues were raised, directly or by implication, in four interviews:

I don’t think I was particularly ambitious, but you get into the universities and you see people, mostly male people, around you who are being promoted and you know you are better than they are. If one of my male colleagues had got this job I would have resigned, I would not have worked under him (Prof.14).

The sense that you are fighting not just for yourself [provides the motivation]. Well, you are fighting in part for yourself; you think it is unjust that you are being treated in this way and feel angry about that injustice, so that keeps you going. But you are also fighting for other women; that narrow thinking persons are not going to keep the good women out of the university [or] make it so unpleasant that they all leave (Prof.2).

Maybe the duty thing [to other women] is part of it (Prof.1).

I felt I could do things differently. I find a lot of male management incomprehensible: it seems to focus on the peripherals and not focus on the important things. I found the ways that they [men] thought about things counterproductive, too often it was about their own goals, certainly not the goals I thought institutions should be involved with. So it was very much a desire to do things differently (Prof.9).
HAVING ARRIVED – The role of professor

Academics undertake a number of roles and these include what might be termed the “roles of knower and researcher-of-the-discipline, as well as colleague and employee” (Taylor, 1999:44). However, these roles and the way they are understood are changing along with the corporatisation of universities, unsettling traditional expectations, and making role-management more wide-ranging and complex.

In this section I describe the professors’ views about their respective roles. In this part of the interview I asked the participants whether they knew what they were taking on when they first became a professor; how they saw their role within their respective universities and communities; whether they saw themselves as leaders, and whether they had experienced any difficulties in being a leader. I also asked them if they believed they had some form of duty to the women who follow in their footsteps.

Did They Know What Lay Ahead?

Clark (1987:69) argues "academics themselves find it difficult to comprehend what academic life is like in its many corners”, and Anderson and Murray (1971:30) suggest that "learning how to become a professor ['an academic'] proceeds mostly on a trial and error basis with the end product unable to directly articulate the sequence to others and even uncertain about his [sic] own effectiveness". The interviews suggested that learning to become a professor was very much a case of ‘learning the ropes as you go’. This reflected
the fact that learning to be an academic continues to be a largely informal – on-the-job – affair as implied by the Dearing Committee (NCIHE 1997:para.14.5):

The skills associated with academic work: teaching, scholarship, research, and administration, have traditionally been acquired within higher education itself. Possession of a good degree and postgraduate research qualification have been the traditional entry qualification for academic staff.

With only two exceptions, the female professors interviewed in this study developed their understanding of their role from observing the university process and the behaviours of those already in the position. In this way they considered for themselves what the role should entail – a kind of informal “on the job training”:

*I had an idea what was required from observing the people around me in my previous jobs* (Prof.3).

*I’d been an associate professor at [another] university and I watched professor so and so (male) very closely …. I had a very good role model and mentor in him and by the time I actually got the job of professor, I had a good idea of what was expected of me …. There were no guidelines and I don’t know if there are now* (Prof.10).

One respondent described taking on the role of professor as quite daunting at the beginning:

*I had no idea what was expected of me. It was kind of terrifying. I knew that it meant being much more involved in leadership in my discipline, whatever that might mean …. I came in blind* (Prof.1).
In contrast to such comments, two professors spoke of formal job descriptions and having a clear picture of what was expected in the role of a professor. However, one also said that the job description was a practice that had only been in effect in recent years:

[Now when] applying for [a] professorship by promotion there is a lot of information spelt out to you; you understand what the university expects of you (Prof.2).

The Professorial Role

The professors in this study almost uniformly suggested that their role revolved around leadership and this leadership covered a multitude of areas: research, policy making, management, mentoring, teaching and being a role model.

The following two responses best articulate the views of the respondents on their roles as professors:

*I think my role should be providing leadership in a range of different areas in my chosen area of research. I should be playing a significant role in developing the ideas, issues and policies around [my discipline] .... Providing leadership as a teacher in terms of developing courses in that area and being a reflective teacher in that discipline. [And, providing] leadership in relation to being a mentor to other scholars in my area of expertise, but also to other scholars in my own faculty, not just to the ones working in areas relating to my own. In general, providing people with support, encouragement and help in terms of thinking about publications and whatever role I can play (Prof.7).*

*I see my role as offering leadership in my field and in the discipline area, primarily contributing through research; supervising higher degree students; being an ambassador for the university when it comes to the role of the university in the wider community; and I think being a mentor to more junior staff (Prof. 12).*
These comments reflect a traditional university ethos of leadership. Such a view is, for example, reflected in The University of Western Australia’s description of the role of a professor: “to provide academic leadership to his/her university, and exercise this responsibility primarily by demonstrating and fostering excellence in research, teaching, professional activities and policy development at a variety of levels within the academic discipline, the academic unit, the institution and the wider community” (www.acs.uwa.edu.au). Here, ‘leadership’ is understood as primarily to do with influencing people – with ‘good leadership’ seen to be “based on social influence, solving problems, building coalitions, stirring emotions, negotiating deals, mending fences, or by virtue of one’s position in the organisation” (Brehm and Kassin, as cited by Chrisler, Herr & Murstein, 1998:194). However, these sanguine views of leadership are perhaps under pressure in the more instrumental climate of the corporatised university.

McInnis (2000:118) reflects that “academics are now operating in a far more competitive environment, … [there is now a] drive to initiate and conduct research and consultancies to raise funds”. In his study for the Australian Higher Education Division of the Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) he found that “seeking funds to support academic work is a major influence on the work patterns of academics” (2000:125). His observations about financial and administrative pressures were supported by a number of the women in this study. As one commented in relation to her role:

*From a research perspective I run quite a big research group, so I see myself from within the department as bringing in money (Prof.13).*
The importance of the financial aspect of the professorial task, particularly in relation to obtaining funds from industry was also raised by the participant who said “More recently it’s been very much about where you get money” (Prof.14).

In four instances administrative and managerial roles (which include sitting on numerous committees) were mentioned. I note here that McInnis (2000) found that administrative work in the working lives of academics has substantially increased, with time spent on committee work topping the list:

*I see my role as being responsible for a particular program ... doing administration ...* (Prof.3).

*My role of professor is to provide ... and assist in the administration of the university* (Prof.5).

*As a professor you get called upon to do a lot of work in committee activities, chairing committees* (Prof.16).

In this context, one professor emphasised the problematic aspects of the managerial/administrative elements of the professorial role:

*My job now is essentially a managerial job, so I’m finding it very hard to do research .... This is one of the problems I see for all professors ... I think there are tensions with the word professor because I don’t know any job now where you have the luxury of being a professor - professing and researching* (Prof.8).
Are they ‘Leaders’?

All the professors interviewed in this study acknowledged they were leaders – if for no other reason than their position in academia assigned them as such. However, there was a marked difference in the way in which they did so. In the first instance there were a group of women who spoke enthusiastically about the subject:

Yes, I’ve always taken leadership roles. I enjoy it (Prof.6).

Oh absolutely, absolutely. My leadership varies according to what is required, sometimes I’m standing at the front carrying the banner, sometimes I’m walking in a straight line with everyone, and sometimes I might be behind pushing …. I tend to motivate by being a team member but I also take the lead when I have to. Yeah, I’m a leader, there is no doubt about that (Prof.10).

Yes. I really love the management side of things. I have to admit it doesn’t faze me; in fact I am pleased I am no longer teaching. I enjoy research but I really like leadership …. I think I have leadership skills, but I don’t think it is easy and you have to watch them all the time (Prof.8).

In contrast, I detected discomfort from four of the professors in applying the word ‘leader’ to themselves. In their book, *Carrying the Banner: Women, Leadership and Activism in Australia*, Eveline and Hayden suggest that for these women “taking a leading role means doing leadership very differently from the conventional approach of taking the limelight and leading the troops” (1999:39). The literature suggests that discomfort in wearing the mantle of ‘leader’ is not unusual for women in senior positions. Eveline and Hayden also note that the women in their book were concerned with “being labelled with a term which for them symbolised individualism, self-interest and domination” and suggest that the reasons given for the women’s lack of affinity with the notion of leadership “hinted at their need to countermand the relative powerlessness of women in a male dominated and
masculinist society” (ibid). Along similar lines, Sinclair (1998:10) notes that the women in her Australian study “generally found it quite difficult to talk about themselves, and themselves as leaders, describing it as ‘feeling self-indulgent’”.

The four women cited below reflected this reticence about endorsing themselves as ‘leaders’, at least in a traditional, malestream, sense:

_Probably, but it’s not a term I would use. I see myself as someone who can make decisions when most people can’t. I don’t like people making decisions in a direction I think is silly and that would be the driving force why I take leadership roles. I want decisions made in a direction I think are a sensible way to make them_ (Prof.4).

_I think so. It is … very hard [to say] …. I have tried … to ensure that there are people out there who have got the light in the eye about the discipline. I think I have succeeded in that. In terms of building an empire though I have been spectacularly unsuccessful. Partly because that didn’t seem to me to be what was needed, what was much more needed was to see the people_ (Prof.15).

_I find it difficult to think of myself as a leader, actually. I don’t work from a basis of ‘follow me’, but ‘let’s do’ something – I try to work much more with groups of people, respecting their skills – but I don’t always succeed in this, and that is because I put such a high value on it_ (Prof.2).

_I suppose so. It certainly would not be how I would see myself, but inevitably one has to be_ (Prof.14).

**Leadership Difficulties**

Women's leadership style, and whether it is different to that of men, has been the subject of much research, particularly in the United States (see Helgesen, 1990; Jardim, 1990; Rosener, 1990). Sally Helgesen's US study of female managers (cited in _Federal Glass_
Ceiling Commission Report, Washington, D.C., 1995:148) concluded that women "operate most effectively by being in the middle of things - listening, communicating, and empowering others to act". She coined the phrase "web of inclusion" to describe what she sees as an alternative to traditional “command-and-control”. Similarly, Karen Maley (1998:32) argues that women:

[A]re far less hierarchical than their male peers [in their leadership style]. Instead they prefer a much flatter organisational structure with a greater emphasis on teamwork and co-operation. Women are also seen as putting much more effort into communication, into consulting with their employees, easing tensions and building a consensus viewpoint rather than championing one view and ridiculing any opposition.

While all the professors interviewed in this study accepted, and some even welcomed, the leadership role that came with the status of professor, the majority of women spoke at some length about the difficulties they faced. A few of them started by commenting on difficulties relating to confrontation:

*I find it very hard to cope with people being annoyed with me and I am not a confrontationist. I think within the department it has been very difficult to exercise any leadership because things are so entrenched. I try to negotiate but this is often difficult.* (Prof.2)

*Confrontation I find scary, intimidating - but then it has to be dealt with. I don't like bullying, I do not respect it. When I meet it in other leaders I find it intimidating and I don't respect it. I am intimidated along with everyone else. I find it extremely hard to face up to that and sometimes one can avoid it, but when it has to be faced then it is faced but that is still extremely difficult for me* (Prof.1).
Some comments were quickly related to a broader gender issue:

At one stage I thought I should volunteer to be Head of Department because that is the sort of thing professors ought to do, but a group of men in the department made it very clear they didn't want me to do that so I put my energy into other things (Prof.2).

Since I have become an academic it is really the first time I have become conscious of these kinds of issues. I have encountered the classical situation where when you are reminding someone of what they are meant to do and you are a woman, you’re a bossy bitch but if you are a man, you’re strong and impressive. That’s really nasty – it’s a nasty aspect [and] you have to be indifferent to it. If you are sensitive to it, then I think you are done for (Prof.13).

It’s certainly true that in a Board room situation you say something and it’s not heard, and you say it again and it’s not heard and five minutes later somebody else round the table says it, and it is heard; that is, somebody male round the table says it, and it is heard …. I think it’s playing the meeting by the male rules (Prof.4).

Some women don’t like women as a boss, particularly clerical women …. it is not just men. Men find it enormously difficult. They hate being disciplined by a woman, they hate you saying “you’ve done a terrible job, and this is not good enough, and this is what you’ve got to do”. They hate anyone telling them that, but it is sort of salt in the wound if it is a woman doing it …. Things go wrong and you never know whether it would have gone wrong regardless of who it was, or whether it went wrong because you’re a woman, or for me, it went wrong because I’m a lesbian. You’ve got to realise that lesbians are even more unknowable than women, and there are a whole stack of stereotypes that sit around them ranging from they’re perverts to they’re unknowable and unfathomable. And also you can’t necessarily deal with women in exactly the same way, because when you are a heterosexual woman, dealing with a woman, then you know that you are simply dealing with that, but if you are a lesbian, you are not just simply dealing with heterosexuality, so it becomes much more complex (Prof.9).

These reflections on the dominant gender frame were accompanied by considerations of how women used, or could use, their own gender. These clearly illustrate the tensions and complexities involved:

I sometimes have the feeling that when women become Chairs of committees they are more innovative, more willing to take on more, and that means that they actually make more work for themselves than men. Men tend to leave a great deal to their secretaries whereas
women do not, they become more involved – more pro-active. I’ve encountered difficulties: some set you back, some you ignore and move on, and some you simply can’t overcome. There are difficulties, whether you overcome them I can’t say. They do leave a mark on you in terms of cynicism – you become cynical (Prof.16).

I think I am very lucky, because a lot of my research is about leadership and I know full well that if you are a woman you’ve got to perform at 110%, you’ve got to be strong, you’ve got to be assertive, but not bitchy and aggressive, so we walk a very fine line. I think it does help me in a way having a knowledge of the tensions, what to watch for, so I think I’m pretty lucky in that respect. Now, it is one thing being aware of it and another to practise it (Prof.8).

Every now and again I make use of “that woman” effect because they know I don’t give up, and I think that that can be quite effective. I think a woman’s voice is heard because it is different but some women won’t speak, and some women won’t go against the consensus if they can see it working, even though as a matter of principle it needs to be done. You have to not mind a bit of personal flak. I must say I haven’t had much of that although I have had personality things, but I don’t think they are sexed based (Prof.15).

In two cases, more mainstream administrative problems were also mentioned. These related to the difficulties which may arise in being accepted as a ‘leader’ when a person is moved in from the outside or elevated in the same department. The following comments illustrate both aspects:

When I first became professor I had a lot of difficulty with people accepting that I could just step in from side-ways and they had all clambered their way up through the ranks ... particularly from male associate professors. There was a lot of resentment about it .... I think they don’t like it really, but that’s their bad luck. It is not an issue for me [and] it doesn’t get in my way [simply] because of my position (Prof.12).

I have experienced difficulties of people struggling with me having the authority when previously we have had the same status .... I felt that there were people in my department who thought that because this person is a woman she would react in this particular manner, and when I wasn’t reacting in that manner, they had great difficulty coming to terms with it (Prof.5).
Finally, and in contrast to all of the women who have spoken so far, there were three professors who felt that leadership presented no problems for them:

No, no I haven’t. I think I haven’t had any trouble being a leader because I’m clear about who I am. I’ve had no trouble being a leader as far as I’m concerned, but whether other people expected me to do this differently I couldn’t be sure. I haven’t had any negative feedback but that might be because I’m so scary they can’t speak to me. I don’t think that’s the case (Prof.10).

I haven’t found any difficulties in this university, or any university (Prof.7).

No, I don’t think I have. I think that I’ve always been in some sort of leadership role wherever I have worked, and formed a leadership role within the role I’ve been in .... As a small child I was probably bossy and when you get to be an adult that’s a leadership quality – so it helps. But, no I didn’t find it a large transition for me or for others (Prof.12).

A Sense of Duty

A study by the US Office of Women in Higher Education (The American Council on Education, 1995) on women Presidents in US colleges and universities found that the participants believed that it was their responsibility to address the concerns of females on campus and that it was important for them to do so. Similarly, my study suggests that Australian female professors have a strong sense of responsibility toward assisting junior female staff and students in academia to pursue an academic career. However, this was viewed from varying perspectives.

Two professors saw it as primarily a gender issue – the need to promote women in academia:
I’ve got a responsibility to them .... Unless you bring some sort of feminist perspective into it – and not just get into a narrow research area, focusing on that and becoming the best in the world -- you are not going to have the social responsibility that you should have because of your gender (Prof.9).

I’ve always tried to give a lot of support to women at [my university].  I think early on I became an advocate for women (Prof.16).

Some did not see it so much as a ‘duty’, more a case of what comes naturally to them:

I think I should be passing on such help as they [other women] would like.  I don’t belong to the women’s network or anything like that.  It’s more at a personal level than big picture stuff (Prof.4).

I am conscious of a number of women who think/feel there is nothing they need to contribute to the welfare of junior female colleagues, I don’t feel like that.  But I’m not sure I would phrase it in terms of a duty.  It is just part of what I am on about, part of what I want to do (Prof.5).

Virtually all of the women interviewed saw themselves as role models.  And, for some it was in this capacity - acting as a positive role model - that they played out their ‘duty’.  They saw this as being part of their obligations as a professor and they carried out that role consciously and deliberately:

I have a duty to the women who follow me to show them that they can do it too.  To show them that they can be female and they can be powerful but they don’t have to play games that are divisive (Prof.10).

I try very hard to encourage other women to apply — I keep badgering.  However, most of them are so darn busy, they don’t even have time to spend a bit of time on self maintenance and put in these applications.  But I think it is crucial.  I see that as part of my role as professor, but I would also say, I would have done it anyway (Prof.2).

I have a responsibility and a pressure that I feel to do it well, to do it right, to be a good role model.  There is probably less room for error if I mess up, than if I were a male.  I think that there is that duty to make sure that my contributions are of a high standard and my integrity is beyond reproach, and that I am a good ambassador for my gender (Prof.12).
However, one professor, while she acknowledged a sense of duty to other women, warned against too strong an emphasis on ‘women supporting women’:

*Yes, but I don’t think it furthers the cause to have a female mafia too obvious. I don’t think it helps young women to have special pleading all the time. I think you protect someone who is in a difficult spot, but it worries me when girls want their cake and eat it too -- in the sense that they don’t want to pull their weight with the chores. Once that is allowed to creep into the system you get a double standard (Prof.15).*
HEROES, HELPERS AND DETRACTORS – Significant others

As outlined in chapter four, this study takes at least part of its theoretical impetus from symbolic interactionism. One of the principles of symbolic interactionism as formulated by Blumer (1962:2) is that: "human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them". Here Blumer uses 'things' to cover a range of factors from the concrete - that is, people, material objects and institutions - to the abstract, which includes the principles or ideals that guide human life. Critically, Blumer suggests that the "meaning of such things are derived from, or arise out of, the social interaction that one has with one's fellows" (ibid). In fact Berger and Berger (1972) contend that the whole history of individuals can be seen as the history of their relationships with others.

This theoretical framework recognises that it is ‘particular’ rather than ‘general’ others who figure in the unravelling of individuals’ total social histories. Authors thus talk about ‘significant others’, that is, those individuals who "occupy [a] high rank on an 'importance' continuum for a given individual" (Stryker, 1972:441), such as a parent, friend, spouse, teacher, or a well known individual (living or dead). These significant others support and influence our lives. These insights are clearly important to any understanding of the occupational socialisation process. In Pavalko’s words the "learning of occupational roles, the development of work styles, and the development of a new self-concept are the outcome of interaction with significant others" (1971:88).

As part of my study I sought to determine the importance and role of significant others in the process of becoming a professor and handling the pressures of the role. In so doing, I primarily concentrated on the positive aspects of role models and mentors. However, I also explored the potentially negative relationships which senior women may experience not
only with senior males, as previously canvassed, but also with other senior females. This is known as the “Queen Bee” syndrome: “the phenomenon of the sole, high-powered woman in the department who “has it made,” but has no desire to help other women to share her high status” (Silverberg in Collins et al., 1998:xii). As well as this, I asked the participants whether they experienced loneliness and isolation – and if so, who they turned to. The question of whether women found it more difficult than men to establish or become part of a workable male network was also canvassed.

**Role Models and/or Mentors**

As indicated above, role models and mentors play an important part as ‘significant others’ in occupational socialisation. Role models are persons, living or dead, whose personal characteristics, values and behaviours provide a standard by which we establish our own codes of behaviour and values; people who are admired and emulated. They need not have had direct contact with us personally. They are ideal but quite possibly remote. Mentors (as defined in this study), in comparison, are living examples whose behaviours and values guide and nurture our growth through life and work. They help mentees acquire the skills and knowledge needed for success, based on the mentors’ own work and life experience. They act as a guide and are close to hand (Sarros & Butchatsky, 1996).

There is an abundance of literature on the role of mentors and role models (for example Chrisler, 1998; Sarros et al., 1996; McKenzie, 1995; Caplan, 1994; Cullen & Luna, 1993; O'Leary & Mitchell, 1990; Aisenberg et al., 1988; Simeone, 1987). While the importance of mentors is emphasised, so is the individual’s own temperament and capacity, with the research generally indicating that "career success is as much a result of an individual's
precondition to work and challenge as it is the outcome of direct intervention by significant others, such as mentors" (Cox & Jennings, cited in Sarros et al., 1996:72). Park, though, suggests that despite the traditional view that academic success is attributable to individual talent and hard work, “moving through the system of rewards and status requires knowing colleagues who can provide the guidance, support and astute insights into the political processes of the institution” (1996:16). Somewhat in line with this, Spurling (1997) and Heward (1996) concluded that mentoring is vital to progression in an academic career. Furthermore, Aisenberg et al. (1988) found that their participants:

credited a mentor or other person with giving them that extra push to publish their first article or to go after a job or a promotion. This support was not provided by the university; rather it occurred through informal interactions, often among peers. (cited in Collins et al., 1998:224)

In line with this, Aisenberg et al. (1988:50) concluded that “the factor of support – received or not received – appears to be critical to the course of a woman’s professional development”.

A 1992 report by the US Merit Systems Protection Board, A Question of Equity, found that women derive more benefits from mentors than men do. This conclusion is supported by Australian research on mentoring (see McKenzie, 1992) with its finding “that women in particular benefit greatly from mentoring experiences … [and] that women who have had mentoring experiences get more opportunities in the workplace, are more visible and are more easily able to get recognition for the work they do” (McKenzie, 1995:1-2).

Similar conclusions are reached about the importance of female role models. Simeone (1987:107) contends that there is a “great deal of anecdotal evidence confirm[ing] the importance of female faculty as role models to female students”, and Gilbert, Gallesich and
Evans (cited in O’Leary, 1990:68) argue that women graduate students who “identify women professors as role models view themselves as more career oriented, confident and instrumental than students identifying with male models”. In the same vein, Simeone (1987:17) notes that: “if young women are not accustomed to seeing female role models in academia, then they may not even consider the possibility that they themselves have the ability and the perseverance to succeed”. In addition, it has been claimed that the number of career-successful women is “directly proportional” to the number of female role models in undergraduate institutions (Tidball, cited in O’Leary et al., 1990:68).

Acting as an important qualification to these studies is the literature that reminds us that women may find it more difficult than men to gain the support of an influential mentor. Olsen, Maple and Stage (1995:5) report that there has been “considerable speculation that women and minority faculty may be less successful within academe because … [they lack] a close working relationship with a mentor who guides and promotes”. Further, Ragins and Cotton (1991), when they controlled for experience, age, grade and tenure, found that women were more likely than men to have restricted access to mentors, to feel that others would disapprove (including the possibility that their advances would be misconstrued as sexual) and to fear that potential mentors would simply be unwilling to help. On a broader front, Aisenberg et al. (1998:51) are adamant in their conclusion that “the academic profession itself does not supply adequate support and guidance to young women”.

The professors in my study generally acknowledged the importance of formal and/or informal academia-based support, in the form of mentors or role models. One of the
notable things about the participants’ comments was that they were much less inclined to mention role models and mentors in relation to success, and much more inclined to dwell on attributes such as warmth, creativity and integrity. This was particularly true of the comments made about female mentors who, while proportionately few, were memorable:

*I didn’t know [her] so well, but everybody that I met talked about how wonderful she was as a professor with the staff and how wonderful she was with the students .... I had a few conversations with her, and that was very influential on me. When I became a professor, when I was thinking about where I wanted to end up, I knew that I wanted to be a professor like her. I wanted to be a professor in her mould: nurturing, visionary, capable and hospitable* (Prof. 1).

*There were some important academics who taught me and there would be different people at different times in my career. [The] professor who supervised [my] Honours and Masters Degrees, he has been very important ... he did give me a lot of good advice and got me through them both. [B]ut probably at the moment the most useful reference point, if you like, is a women professor at my previous job. It was a very well run department and she was/is a very inspirational woman, who was Head of Department for some of the time, but not all of the time. I think she has been a great inspiration to me. She was able to do all things such as teacher, researcher, administrator, but in a very warm way .... I would have to say, though, there have been more men than women who have had an influence on me because the structure of universities is such that there are more men in senior positions than women* (Prof. 3).

*I have had many, many role models - both male and female. Probably the earlier ones were female – women leaders, women who were nationally and internationally recognised for their work. I pay attention to how people function, who functions well, who do I respect, how do they achieve their goals, how do they treat other people, how do they maintain their own integrity and their focus in a demanding and complex system. And so I think I have taken from different sources approaches, methods and probably leadership styles that are probably more or less conscious in my own mind* (Prof. 12).

However, in four cases a different response was given. In these instances, the women either felt that the senior women who could have assisted them failed to do so or that they simply could not remember or pinpoint any role models:
On mentors:  I don't mean to say I have done it all by myself, because clearly I haven't.  I do feel pretty, I don’t want to say, 'bitter', but that's the word, about the lack of support I've experienced within the [university] .... There was a lot of literature and focus in the 70s and 80s suggesting that mentors were going to be the key to women's success, but for me, the mentoring scheme did not work - no reflection upon my mentor - it just didn't work (Prof.2).

On role models:  No, I haven’t really had any role models because I think I’m classed as the first generation of women who are getting into Chairs in [my discipline].  There were women before me but they were for the most part women who would deny that their gender made any difference to their experience of life and that is so far from my own experience.  I find it difficult to identify with them and look to them as role models (Prof.7).

More generally, three participants mentioned that the management or academic style of those senior to them acted as a ‘negative’ influence in that they did not wish to emulate the style in question:

It's been more negative.  If I could put it the other way around, I looked at what people were doing and I thought there must be a better way.  That inspired me a lot (Prof.9).

I've seen people I don’t want to be like and I don’t want to be like them because I never feel I know who they are.  Even when they have an opportunity to be ‘real’ with me, I sense that they’re not.  I sense that they’re holding their cards close to their chest for fear that if they may share something with me that will give me an advantage.  Now they’re the people I don’t want to be like.  As far as I’m concerned there is enough room, enough depth in our [field/discipline] of practice and scholarship to share it around and I cannot see any point in not doing that (Prof.10).

[The woman] I took over the Chair from ... was sort of a negative role model, because I didn’t want to be like her (Prof.14).
Negative Relationships with Senior Women

Perhaps because more is expected of women in terms of nurturing and/or of female to female relationships, the criticisms of women who ‘act like’ men are all the sharper. This type of critique can be found in the work of Staines, Travis and Jayerante (cited in O'Leary et al., 1990:65) in their discussion of women they label as “Queen Bees”. In the authors’ words these are "women who have achieved professional success and are anti-feminist. They are strongly individualistic and tend to deny the existence of discrimination based on sex" (O'Leary 1988, cited in O'Leary et al., 1990). Silverberg defines the ‘Queen Bee’ syndrome as: “the phenomenon of the sole, high-powered woman in the department who ‘has it made’, but has no desire to help other women to share her high status” and stresses that “women professors … must be all too aware” of the syndrome (in Collins et al., 1998:xii).

A recent study by Janne Chung reported in the Financial Review “Boss” Magazine by Hutak (March 2002), found a general bias, from both genders, against successful women in industry. Chung suggests that a possible explanation for the lack of feminist solidarity among the women in the study is due to the fact that “many senior women who have struggled to get to the top find they don’t like competition from younger women” (8). Of universities, Caplan (1993:85) notes that there is “so little power and praise given to academic women that, too often, we fight over it”. She warns her readers that “as members of at least one group that is less powerful than others in … [universities], women are at risk of turning their frustrations on each other, rather than recognizing that … [they] are often each other’s best potential allies” (85). Luke, writing on women in higher education management in Southeast Asia proposes that women are:
frequently ... the object of professional sabotage by other women ... Repeatedly women hinted at other women who ‘keep women down’: ... ‘If a woman is at the top you don’t find things any better. They are worse”; ... “Women are most unsupportive, most unkind” ... Apparently women’s personal and professional struggles up academic ‘merit’ ladders are with other women as much as they are with men and patriarchal academic cultures. (2000:301)

Similarly, Edwards (2000:326) states that women “can operate in ‘masculine’ ways – as what could be called ‘female patriarchs’”. She goes on to say they “can be just as intensely competitive as men, wedded to bureaucratic rationality, and act in coercive and patriarchal ways” (ibid). And in her study of women academics, Morley reports that “on the rare occasions when women do achieve senior status, they do not use their power to empower and enable other women, black or white” (1994:199). Interestingly, Edwards (2000:326) maintains that this type of syndrome pertains “especially in relation to the physical sciences”.

Generally, it is suggested that some senior women are not supportive because they fear that the success of other women would challenge their positions of power, positions maintained at the cost of other, lower status women (Kanter, 1977b). Park (1996), argues that if females in academia believe that they can only succeed by aligning themselves with powerful male academics, they will inevitably maintain a situation in which they are “in competition with each other and blinded to [their] common struggles” (Rich, cited in Park, 1996:15).

With the exception of three professors, who stated they had not come across it, those I interviewed were well aware of the so-called ‘Queen Bee’ syndrome. In one case the interviewee was quite direct and personal in her response:
You are describing [professor so and so] ... you are totally describing [her]. That’s why she didn’t want me to take over. She did shocking things to women. She has never supported any women and she was definitely of the view that she was never discriminated against, [but] of course she was. I know many instances where she was, but she denies them and believes she got there on her own (Prof.14).

However, the female professors were cautious in their condemnation. The word they most commonly used was “insecure”. Their underlying assumption was that, in a more gender-liberal academic society, this syndrome would diminish. Participants also reflected on the possible tendency of certain senior females to either believe that because they had ‘had it tough’, others should too, or to deny the importance of gender. The following comments illustrate these themes:

There are some women in senior positions who feel so insecure that they have to put other women down. It is a strange combination, power and insecurity .... Queen Bees are generally women who deny the importance of gender so that there is a double message (Prof.7).

The Queen Bee syndrome is out there in various forms, for sure. I’ve experienced that myself. It is disappointing. I think it probably reflects an insecurity on the part of those women in achieving what they’ve done – probably achieving what they have done for the wrong reasons. If you focus on status, holding on to status and your own power, then you are not too interested in fostering the network/the community that supports you. Yes, it is there. I think I read about it early, I was alert to it early, I could name it and you have to negotiate around it (Prof.12).

I have seen it happen at very close hand .... I know people who feel they had it tough and everyone else should (Prof.8).

I understand the syndrome that you’re talking about completely .... Women, it seems to me, have misunderstood the competitive thing and thought that all you had to do was to get to the top .... They’ve felt they have had to do it by themselves, and the way to do it by themselves was to climb up the ladder and kick everyone off the rungs coming below, and that doesn’t work. What it does, is produces a series of isolated and disconnected women who can’t work together and who can’t effectively pull in favours and sort things out the same way that men can .... Some of these women experience a certain jealousy. [They
think] that if the road gets a little smoother for the people coming up behind them, and they believe that they had it rough, then you’re going to get it rough from them. It is unfortunate. I would say these are women who are not feminists, they may say they are, but they are not (Prof.9).

I don’t know that one can call it Queen Bee, but it is quite interesting that some women who have come up through the sciences, who haven’t married, or have no children, married late, and have adopted that very strong scientific framework, are more likely to say they haven’t faced any discrimination (Prof.16).

**Dealing with Isolation and Loneliness**

American, Australian and British studies report that women academics are more intellectually and socially isolated within their institutions than their male colleagues (see among others Spurling, 1997; Deane, Johnson, Jones & Lengkeek, 1996; Wunsch & Johnsrud, 1992; Yoder, 1985). Within this context a number of writers have suggested that isolation grows with seniority. Deane (1996:11) for example, maintains that “as women rise in the university hierarchy, their peer support falls away and they become isolated from other women”. Speaking from personal experience, Faye Gale (the second Australian female Vice-Chancellor) notes that the more successful women are in academia, “the more pressured they are and the more they are expected to do. Life can be very lonely in such situations simply because there are so few women at the top and life is too busy to cultivate the friendships …. Loneliness is a major problem for senior women” (1999:292-293). Johnson, Timm and Merino, argue this exclusion generates:

A strong sense of uncertainty, frustration and alienation that plagues most women academics at one point or another in their careers and sometimes throughout their professional lives. Indeed, feelings of isolation and bitterness were reported in one study to be expressed even more by senior faculty women than by faculty women at more junior levels, perhaps in part because their numbers are even smaller at higher levels. (cited in Caplan, 1993:198)
Spurling’s study of women in British universities came to similar conclusions, noting that when women rise to senior positions they experience a high level of professional frustration, increasing isolation and exhaustion: “Exhaustion is inevitable for senior women” (1997:44).

The majority of women in this study acknowledged feelings of loneliness and a sense of isolation. The Professor quoted below described an occupational pattern shared by many others when she said:

My first ten years of academic life in [another country] I experienced profound loneliness and isolation. When I came to Australia I had other women who I could get support from. The most recent and third phase is the period during which I have been Pro-Dean and that has made more difference to me than being in a Chair, because I have felt isolated. I am now a manager, and I hold a position of authority in the School, and I have the power to make decisions that affect people’s lives and so all of the people who were previously my supports, who I would previously go to, now do not talk to me. So as Pro-Dean I have felt very isolated and have had to develop a support system outside the Faculty .... I have found it quite difficult not to be able to rely on my friends within my own Faculty (Prof.7).

Many of those who had experienced loneliness and isolation in their senior positions sought and received support from partners, family, friends and colleagues both in a senior and junior capacity – male and female. Husbands figured large in five of these responses:

My husband has always been my strongest supporter and mentor. [He] has really been a great source of strength to me. He is not an academic; he has never worked in academia. He gives me an objective view – he doesn’t know the personalities or the people and he really comes up with some good ideas from left field ... At times it can be isolating (Prof.8).

My husband. I suppose it has been a two man act. We have always worked at it together. I was actually a professor before him and for a long time I earned more money than he did. He is a very supportive person (Prof.6).

Certainly my husband. [He has] allowed me to be myself. He understood [about wanting a career and family]. I think sometimes it must be difficult for [him]. We have a deep
mutual respect. I really admire what he is doing with his company and I think he admires what I am doing (Prof.1).

My husband has been enormously supportive and I would get quite emotional if I talked about the kind of support he has given me .... Trying to juggle [our careers] has been really quite difficult. You see the normal pattern is one career and one job — the wife has the job, the husband pursues the career. [He’s retired now] and [I’m] actually looked after in a way that I was not for many years. I can get home and my dinner will be on the table, which is a very different scenario to some of the others (Prof.2).

My husband has always been very supportive and enthusiastic about my successes, which I think is quite unusual (Prof.13).

The importance of female support is another theme running strongly through the academic literature and the responses of the participants in my study. Caplan (1993:202) suggests “that the greatest antidote to feelings of alienation and isolation is the company and support of other women”. Similarly, Aisenberg et al. (1988:51) concluded that “women increasingly provide substantial support for each other. They seek and share practical advice, provide moral and emotional support, and even intellectual guidance”. In this study, eight participants, one way or another, stressed the importance of female relationships. These relationships included women in academia, some in a junior capacity to themselves, and women friends outside of academia, as well as daughters:

People outside my university and one person in particular here who is much junior to me, female, but we are good friends for non-academic reasons. Most of them are female (Prof.5).

My women friends on the whole .... I tend to turn to them for support more than anyone (Prof.11).

I ... have a circle of [women] friends, in my domestic life, you know, who one walks with every week or something, and frankly they have kept me sane as far as the balancing act goes (Prof.13).
My women’s network is incredibly important to me …. They are women who are really supportive and none of them are in [my discipline]. I tend to turn to [women for] support more than anyone. My daughters are also very supportive and they are increasingly more supportive for me, which I love (Prof.11).

The university librarian here, she and I have lunch on a regular basis because we share interests (Prof.6).

Academically over the last few years my main support has been a fellow female colleague …. I have had over the years very close, good friendships with a lot of my post-graduate students and tutors ... it is a network of women who give each other support (Prof.16).

Five participants also acknowledged that they sought and received support from male colleagues. In two cases this was as a direct result of the discipline the professors worked in, where there was a dearth of females:

When I’m feeling particularly stretched or maybe needing some support myself I would reach out ... to probably my male colleagues who understand this better. I don’t have parallel female colleagues who understand quite as well, except more recently, mainly in the last two or three years, but prior to this I’d usually be the only woman in a similar role, so that my peers would be men and I would reach out to them. I would usually reach out to a male who is similar in age, coping with whatever I was coping with in terms of family demands, work demands, uncertainties about how I’m doing, goals, etc (Prof.12).

Because I did [subject area] from age 18 onwards my colleagues have been male, so I’ve never expected to look to females either as friends or as colleagues, or as mentors or as anything else. It’s probably men who I would turn to (Prof.4).

In contrast to most of the responses so far, three women answered that the question of isolation and loneliness in their position as professor was simply not an issue. This was either because they valued aloneness or because the professorial position was not, in fact, experienced as lonely:
I’m not lonely - I’m not a lonely person. I treasure my aloneness ... I’ve been to the professors’ meetings ... The Australian Professoriate, and come away frustrated, because I think “why am I here, I don’t really need this” .... I’m never alone ... because of my sense of personal stability .... I don’t feel unsupported – I feel supported. If I didn’t feel supported, and if I felt alone, I think that the degree of anxiety I’d be experiencing on a daily basis would mean that this job and this money wouldn’t be worth it (Prof.10).

My work isn’t so lonely .... I think there is more a feeling of being everything to everybody, more than loneliness. You feel you are the well that everybody dips their cup into, for advice, for counselling, so that gets to be wearing (Prof.12).

I actually don’t mind being by myself. I quite like not always being with people. I don’t know that I do feel lonely (Prof.14).

Networking

A number of writers have stressed the importance of informal networks in career development. For example, Loden and Rosener (1991) suggest they help ‘empower’ individuals; Goode (2000) writes of their role in promoting ‘visibility’; and Baker et al. (1999) stress their importance in terms of career success. It is, therefore, all the more significant that aspiring women are often found to be excluded from informal networks “especially in a hierarchy composed of the ‘old boy’ networks” (Little, 1994:117). This, it is suggested, is one of the reasons for their under-representation in senior ranks. This is discussed by Professor Ramsay in her paper Gender Employment Equity for Women in Australian Universities (2000:8). There she cites an example of a recent American study conducted through the 1990s which established that “… networking is more difficult for women and … male discomfort is a critical factor in their exclusion”. Similar conclusions are reached by Bagilhole (1993) who reported that women academics in the UK found
themselves excluded from male networks and Gale (1999:292) who stated that “networks … seem to be there for the men without their needing to activate or initiate them”.

Some insights into this process are provided by Collins’ (1998:59) observation that “the competitive academic game is often played like a team sport, with networks making up the teams, and women are often at a disadvantage”. Simeone (1987:77) also reveals some of the mechanisms at work:

while an individual woman may see herself as simply another member of the group, her male colleagues are likely to perceive her as being quite different from themselves. This perception of difference, often coupled with denigrating attitudes if not indeed caused by them, results in women’s exclusion from the truly meaningful and important interactions with male colleagues and superiors.

The majority of women in my study agreed that it was difficult for them, and women more generally, to join the senior networks through which considerable, informal power was exercised. In talking about this, a number of the participants reflected on senior male academics’ orientation to their female colleagues:

*I think entry into the male network is difficult because of the tendency for men to always “other” the woman, the woman primarily being the only woman – hence you stand out, you are different, you are not part of the blokes, you are separate. The men in these situations are very careful not to offend; they follow the patriarchal structure …. The men find it quite complicated to talk to you* (Prof.16).

*I don’t think men have the concept of women as mates. They have the concept of women in lots of roles but not as mates. They have many concepts of what men are, men can be sons, or they can be competition, rivals, they can be your right-hand man, they have a whole series of categories that they allow men to approach them and to be involved with them. Women don’t fit into that. There is a real discomfort that I see when I am with a group of people at a comparable level and women actively start to network like women network, the
men look really uncomfortable. The men tend not to network with women because the
women don’t really know the game and the rules of the game, and it is sort of a betrayal to
explain it to them (Prof.9)

I think it inhibits men. I think when they go to the bar on Friday nights they expect to be
able to let their hair down, and for some reason they feel they can’t do that around women ....
They are not used to women, they don’t know how to act around them and they tend to
prefer to have their relaxation time with males .... I think it is quite hard to establish a male
network (Prof.6).

Against this, there were five professors who found they were able to network with males as
well as females. One of them suggested that that any awkwardness was an initial reaction
only: “Men might have some discomfort initially, but after they get to know you there is no
problem at all” (Prof.11). In other cases, participants emphasised being able to network
across genders:

I network with some females, but there are not a lot of them around .... I think in my area
and in research it’s more co-operative. I’ve never really found the female thing a problem.
Gender hasn’t been an issue in a research perspective .... I have some very strong
collaborations with males – very effectively over many years – it has been fantastic (Prof.13).

However, three of these women also qualified their view by suggesting that their
experience could be directly related to the field they worked in: “Maybe it has to do with
my discipline area ... [where] it is a team-orientated approach to work from the beginning,
so you are used to collaboration as a model, and you are working across gender barriers to
reach a goal” (Prof.12); “It would probably be very different in another field” (Prof.15)
and; “Perhaps it depends on the field you are in” (Prof.13).
There has been considerable work on gender differences ranging from management style, leadership, career planning, differences in how women and men think, to physical differences between men and women and a whole range of issues in between.

Gherardi (1994:594) argues that gender "is not just located at the level of interactional and institutional behaviour (the gender we do), but at the level of deep and trans-psychic symbolic structures (the gender we think)". She also maintains that at the second level of gendering the suppositions have stability to the "point where we conceive of them as universal and as historical concepts" (1994:594). Similar insights are provided in Burton’s observation that "gendering informs suppositions about what is fair and unfair, about what is natural, normal or right. It pervades perceptions of merit, successful performance, career, choice and authority" (1987:424-435).

In light of the abundant material on this subject, it seemed appropriate to ask the women involved in this research whether they thought female professors were treated differently from their male counterparts; whether responses to the two groups varied, and whether appearance and dress had different implications for male and female professorial staff. I start with some of their responses, and then return specifically to the literature on management and gender difficulties.

Through a Different Lens

The women interviewed were asked: In your experience, from observation, have you come to the conclusion that women differ as professors, from men? In response, there was
a high level of agreement that female professors have a very different way of operating to their male counterparts, with most interviewees pointing to women’s more caring and collaborative approach. The word “nurturing” featured widely in the responses, with the suggestion that this led to a stronger “team player” orientation. Women, it was felt, are more prepared than men to give credit to their colleagues, and to take real pleasure at the success of their team members:

Yes I do. I think women are effective, very effective as leaders. They know about nurturing, know about working in a team, they know all the things that effect change and they are generous and they share the glory. They enjoy the fact that somebody else whom they nurtured is then held up to the light instead of them. This is not understood, in fact, it is downgraded by a lot of male academics (Prof.1).

Yes — very much. Probably [because they are] less committed to 'success in career terms'. Women are probably more accustomed to working more co-operatively and less competitively; which isn't to say one isn't competitive. It seems to me, competing with oneself is a good thing. I think that makes for some difference. I believe most women in universities have put much more into their teaching (Prof.2).

I don't think there are exclusively masculine and feminine styles but probably women tend to be more along the continuum of combining leadership with caring, nurturing and mentoring (Prof.3).

Women are different because they are acutely aware of what you might call unhappiness or how people are getting on together and because they are collaborative. The process of how you do things is almost as important as the outcome, and that is a very female thing (Prof.11).

Female students tend to like to work with the female professors, perhaps it is that nurturing thing. Male students tend to look for a male professor first, but then come back to the women (Prof.16).

Women generally acknowledge the personal in the workforce and they provide those sorts of supports (Prof.7).
Whereas male professors, as viewed by one professor, operate in the reverse:

*I think the male ego is a shocker! Some people would rather destroy a system than lose an inch on it. I have seen it so often -- the setting up of empires which are just driven by male ego* (Prof.13).

Some participants suggested that one of the consequences of women’s more co-operative and nurturing role was that the achievements of female academics tended to be less “visible”, in that the products of their success were team products, shared by others:

*In some ways it means that the achievement of women is invisible. It is the way I would naturally work, it is the way I do work, but I don't know if it is good for women to have that invisibility. They need to be acknowledged* (Prof.1).

*The things that you do to help other people and do for the benefit of others, is just not part of the value system. So I think women tend to suffer a bit because the value system doesn’t measure all that they do* (Prof.6).

One professor expressed the view that some females lose their nurturing approach as they gradually acquire power and become more committed to the political environment:

*Women tend to be more collegial, although I have observed with interest my senior [women] colleagues who I see getting up in positions of power, if you like, that the soft collegiate side of them seems to diminish a bit. They become more politically astute* (Prof.13).

One professor suggested that senior female academics were different from their male counterparts because they were more prepared to take a stand:

*It is true. Because women are seen as ‘others’ they [tend to] stick their necks out, whereas men [generally] do not* (Prof.16).
The general pattern of responses suggests a feminine leadership style of teamwork and co-operation, seen to be different from that of their male counterparts. This line of argument finds support in at least some of the general management literature. Genovese (1993), for example, argues that males use a hard style of leadership, characterised by hierarchy, dominance and order. Females, she says, exercise leadership characterised by a soft style of co-operation, influence and empowerment. Helen Nugent (1998), Director of Strategy at Wespac Bank and Deputy Chair of the Australia Council, maintains that some of the characteristics now identified as important management skills across the board are traits that have been traditionally attributed to female managers (and come more naturally to women) such as the ability to be a team player and a good communicator. In contrast, Sinclair (1998) maintains that research studies produce conflicting results and that there is no clear pattern of difference between male and female senior executives.

With specific reference to the academic environment, Grant and Porter (1994) note that the lack of a critical mass of women in educational management means that the university hierarchy is masculinist in both orientation and its taken-for-granted assumptions, even though this situation is now being challenged by the presence of at least a few females. The case is put more strongly by Harding who suggests that academic males in positions of power “love appropriating, directing, judging and managing everything they can get their hands on” (cited in Brooks, 1997:38).

The view of senior women as more nurturing and collaborative than their male counterparts was, as we have seen, reflected in the majority of responses in this study. However, one professor expressed the view it wasn’t a case of whether women were more nurturing than
men, or more collaborative, it was simply a fact that “women are different from men, full stop”. She went on to say:

*I sometimes think that men belong to a different tribe and there are some members of that tribe that I really, really like, and they’re an interesting tribe and one would like to study them, but they are very different!*  (Prof.7)

Two professors, however, felt strongly that it was not possible to generalise and that it would be wrong to try and categorise men and women:

*Individuals differ from each other. I’m not sure that I would say that there is a difference between all women and all men, and categorise them like that. No, I don’t think you can do that*  (Prof.5).

*I think there are probably as many variations within the gender as between. There are so many factors that contribute in addition to gender, such as age, motivation for being in that role, and the field/area that you are in. I think all these things make a difference. I think it is hard to say [that women and men professors are different](Prof.12).*

In contrast to the pattern of responses discussed so far, two professors expressed the view that women in senior positions take on a male persona, thus eradicating any potential difference between male and female professors. Here they echoed Meg Stacey’s findings in her study *Women, Politics and Power* (1998), that women in a position of power will eventually find themselves behaving ‘like a man’ or ‘like a boss’.

*No, I’ve met women professors, who, apart from the clothes that they wear, are exactly the same in every way as the men*  (Prof.9).

*I think there is a spectrum and I think some model themselves, particularly if they come out of [a particular discipline] ... on the males*  (Prof.6).
A different slant on the same argument was put by the professor who said:

A friend of mine once said that she believed that you had to make up your mind whether you were going to be a mother or a father and I think she is absolutely right. The point is that there may be a difference in that most women more naturally decided that they are going to be the mother but there are women who decide they are going to be the father. And it is probably true of men that perhaps more men would want to follow the father model rather than the mother model but I wouldn’t say that’s absolute. I think that is a decision that you take. Not consciously of course. Often the people who get on take the father role. Such women take on a male persona (Prof.14).

Finally, one professor suggested that the first generation of senior female academics were forced to conform simply to survive in the overwhelmingly patriarchal society of which they had become a part:

I think that the women that have gone before me, they might be five or eight years older than me, seem to be different. I feel that there are generations within the female professoriate that are very different, and I think that that group (the older group) has had to be more male-like in order to succeed. It is not a criticism, more just probably a statement of sympathy of what they had to cope with in a more hostile environment than the younger group has coped with (Prof.12).

Pressure to Out-Perform Male Counterparts

A number of writers (for example Thomas, 1990; Lie et al., 1990) have suggested that in many higher positions females' confidence and achievement levels are undermined by male values, which results in women feeling pressure to be better than the men. In this vein Iceland President, Vigdis Finnbogadottir comments:

We all know that women have to do everything a little better than men. Women cannot afford to make faux pas. We're all so very, very tolerant when men make mistakes, but I don't know of any society that is tolerant when women make mistakes. (cited in Liswood, 1995:69)
This pressure to outperform men is all the more difficult as many senior females carry the
double burden of being both leaders and (typically) home makers and mothers. They thus
often end up squeezing two lives into one through superhuman effort, leading to the term
"superwoman" (Aisenberg et al., 1988:117). Mary Robinson, at the time President of
Ireland, expressed the view that:

If you take public and political life, women still have the main
responsibility for family, child rearing, homemaking, and that's
not shared in an equal and balanced way. And therefore there is
that additional need, to be either more assertive, or better, or more
determined, make more sacrifices, get up earlier, get to bed later,
or whatever it may be. (cited in Liswood, 1995:69)

In light of this, I wanted to know whether the female professors I interviewed experienced
a pressure to out-perform rather than simply match their male counterparts. The majority
(11) answered in the affirmative, although one professor qualified this by saying “I used to,
but I don’t think I do anymore. But I certainly used to” (Prof.6). A number of different
reasons were, however, given for the out-performance pressure.

One set of responses suggested that senior female academics had to shine in the “visible”
components of their work because so much of what they do is “invisible” – mentoring,
nurturing and committee work, for example:

I think that a lot of the work that women professors do is not acknowledged or even noticed
(Prof.7).

The job and responsibilities taken on by many female professors are much wider than that
accepted by many male professors. It is a huge generalisation, of course, for there are high
flying examples everywhere of men who do all sorts of things - wonderful, wonderful
achievers - but there are more men who are professors, so maybe on the average, women
professors take on a wider role. I don't know that a lot of the aspects that women accept, for example taking on a job as a role model for school students, or whatever, are taken into account in assessing the effectiveness of women by male academics. So that has got to be achieved on top of the other things, which are in fact measured, such as publications, presentations, being articulate in meetings (Prof.1).

Yes - very definitely. Furthermore, they [the men] neither see nor value the range of work (of a different kind) which we do. We all do lots of committee work but that's invisible in departments (Prof.2).

The voices of these women are echoed across the critical literature. In her study of UK and New Zealand academic women, Brooks (1997:45) found that "women academics frequently take on a wide range of responsibilities which are frequently unrecognised and unrewarded." She also noted that as a result of the smaller number of women academics in all areas of the academy, the level of representation women have on a range of departmental and university wide committees was unduly heavy. Allied to this, Caplan (1993:207) suggests there are different standards operating in the evaluation of female and male work, arguing "research shows that, regardless of academic discipline, work is rated higher when allegedly produced by a man than when allegedly produced by a woman" (207). She also suggests that "women who turn down committee assignments often are called 'ungrateful' or 'not interested in advancement,' whereas a man will more likely be treated with respect for refusing to sacrifice research time for busy-work" (209). From a different angle, but underlining the same point, Backhouse, Harris, Mitchell and Wylie suggest that "male faculty might be viewed as eccentric, they might be ridiculed or imitated, but they would never be attacked as incompetent. For women, the connotation of incompetence is always tacked on" (cited in Caplan, 1993:208).

A second reason given for the pressure of performance was the feeling that any perceived inadequacy would be taken as a reflection on females as a whole. This view was expressed by two professors:
I would imagine that if I wasn't seen to be performing adequately, it could be seen not just as an individual failing, but representing female professors. I can't think of any specific situation where I have felt that way. [But] yes, I would be worried that people would blame it on both my being a woman and me as a person (Prof.3).

It’s not yourself that has got to perform, it is the group. I think that is a problem. Same with politicians – a woman premier has to be doing a bit better (Prof.15).

The third reason was essentially an internal matter. Here the women expressed the pressure to perform at high levels as individuals in their own right, albeit confronting stereotyping and social norms. They felt the pressure of ‘being everything to everyone’ and an inbuilt anxiety of ‘not measuring up’. This view was articulated by six participants:

I think it is an internal [pressure] .... I think there is this striving, is it enough (Prof.12).

Yes, of course there is [pressure to out-perform]. And that's very difficult to come to terms with and to let go of and it means that you can destroy yourself if you don't let it go. You feel that you have to do everything (Prof.1).

Yes, because women are always measured differently. Age is just one factor of it. When you are old you are a leader of a nation if you are male, but if you are a female then you are a senile grandma who should go home and knit. So there’s a totally different expectation between men and women (Prof.9).

Yes, I think so .... I am particularly mindful that there is no way in the world that I’m [going to] fail .... I do feel I must make a good job of it (Prof.8).

I think that is true. I think you need to work very much harder than males (Prof.14).

I think there is an assumption that you won’t possibly match them and that, therefore, puts pressure on you to try and prove that that is wrong (Prof.5).
For the five professors who did not experience the out-performance pressure it was a case of self-confidence and a matter of simply not caring or seeing it as an issue: “I don’t care [and] if you don’t care, they really can’t get at you” (Prof.13); “In my particular area the male professors …were quite inferior in their overall ability. I was miles ahead of them in the things I had done” (Prof.16); “I don’t perceive it as a pressure because I don’t take it on” (Prof.10); “I’ve never felt that I’m in a competition with men” (Prof.11) and; “I don’t feel any need to outperform my male or female counterparts” (Prof.4).

Scrutinised/Reacted to Differently

Echoing many others, Greuvenstein et al. (1991) have suggested that the stereotyping of traditional gender roles, and the associated attitudes of both males and females, are the major factors underlying the variables which function at individual, organisational and societal levels, compounding and negatively affecting the position of females in the educational hierarchy. In line with this, Basow (1998) reports that women are commonly evaluated differently from their male counterparts, coming to the telling conclusion that “male professors are professors; female professors are female professors” (150). She goes on to say that female academics “have to earn their status, whereas men faculty simply assume theirs” (150).

I asked the professors whether they thought women were scrutinised or reacted to differently to male professors. On this issue they were virtually united. With only one exception they said, ‘yes’, they were. In the main it would seem that many people, men and women, within and outside academia, are, at this stage unwilling or unable to accept women at senior levels as a normal, equitable situation. Concern was also expressed that females are perceived differently to males, particularly in the early stages of a professional
relationship. Several professors said they frequently had difficulty being accepted as professors, some reporting they had been mistaken for the (presumably male) professor’s secretary:

_It doesn’t happen so much now; I think things must be changing. But for maybe the first 10 years of my life as a professor I would pick up the phone and the caller would ask for Professor [so and so] and I would say "speaking", and they would say "Professor [so and so] please", and I would say "I’m speaking" and they would say "I want to speak to Professor [so and so]", obviously assuming I was the secretary! It is still out there! It is a very funny change when someone becomes a professor, because while they are junior members of staff it is very easy for people to nurture them and to accept them in whatever group they are in. They can be held up and their colleagues say "look we have a woman such and such — it's good, we can fill in our equity form!" But then to change the whole status quo, to change the power situation, it is very difficult for a group of people to accept it and there needs to be a lot of goodwill. I mean you have to bend to prove yourself (Prof.1)

Yes - people react to you differently because you are a woman, you react to them differently. There are certain styles of behaviour. I still get people on the phone who have difficulty accepting this female voice as professor at the end of the receiver. We all get phone calls from people insisting they want to leave messages for "him". I joke that there is a default that assumes anyone senior is a male. I do find it incredible actually, that two outside committees I've worked quite hard on in recent times, neither can get straight I'm a professor. One made me an Associate Professor and one insists on calling me Doctor the whole time, even though you make a big joke and say "Well look, actually ..." — I think there is denial going on. These are women I am talking about who have this denial — that is, the female professor is not the real thing! (Prof.2)

_It's not just professors but even with the rank of doctor, people have an image that the person will be male. People seem to think that these ranks are more likely to be male and when they are confronted with someone who's not male they are taken aback (Prof.3).

People still assume that a professor is a male. I have had that happen to me. People still don’t acknowledge a woman’s title such as a doctor, professor – they prefer to refer to a woman as Mrs (Prof.16).

Well, the statistics still say women aren’t professors and they are secretaries so it’s understandable that people will react differently, meaning showing surprise at the female professor status (Prof.4).
It is not universal, but there is still a large element of people who think it is strange that you [a woman] are doing this, they don’t expect you [a woman] to be at this level, and therefore they react to you differently (Prof.5).

One professor suggested that acceptance of female professors was inhibited by fear of change on the part of the predominantly male establishment, with women being excluded from positions and functions where they could promote gender equity:

*I think they look for men who are doers or men who will not rock the boat and I think they look for women who will not rock the boat but they don’t want women who are doers because they’re aware that a woman’s agenda is not the same agenda as a male doer. I think feminism is still a very powerful force and it changes things. And I think that if you come through as a woman who is a doer and a feminist it is harder to get promotion and there is always the sense that feminism might be attached to you. If you notice most of the women who are very high up in universities are very pleasant women!* (Prof.9)

One professor commented that in the establishment there was always a question mark about how senior females achieved their position:

*I think there is a question about how did they get there, did they get a short ladder to get there because they were female, did they get there because they had nice legs, did they get there because they were married to somebody, you know. I think there is some of that. Yes, I think that’s the case* (Prof.12).

Two professors described how as women, they had been treated in meetings, in one case being completely ignored by the male Chairman:

*The first time I attended a high university committee meeting, the Chairman literally did not acknowledge that I had said anything. It was very embarrassing. I mean I’m not a person who speaks a lot in public; I’m not a very confident person, so saying something was quite brave. He did not react at all to my comment and the male professor next to me had to say “excuse me Chair, Professor [name] has said something”. It was a very strange experience. It is true, I think, that women do get treated differently* (Prof.14).
Yes, [women are treated differently] all the time. It is very interesting. It is almost at a subliminal level some of it. I’ve noticed at meetings that men are referred to by their title whereas women are referred to by their Christian names. Men take up more air space, as well (Prof.7).

**Appearance**

Aisenberg et al. (1988:141), suggest that with so few females holding public power, females must "act tough to achieve credibility, must behave in a way easily recognized as belonging to leadership. They must be like men”. They acknowledged that this puts women in a double bind as the belief is “not only that women cannot be tough, but that they should not be, that, though natural to men, it is a perversion of women's nature" (142). They go on to suggest that the ambivalence toward the conjunction of females and power surfaces in "current dress codes for professional women" (142). Along the same lines, Acker (1983:195), points out that it is hard work for senior women to dress and behave so as to strike the right balance between feminine and masculine attributes. Other studies of executive women and female politicians (for example, Fountaine, 1999) point out that women have to battle with a host of judgements based on their appearance. Florence Montreynaud puts it neatly: “women are never judged on the same basis as men. There’s always an element which identifies public women with their sexuality or with the way they look” (cited in Fountaine, 1999:62).

In this study, without exception, but for all manner of reasons and qualifications, all the professors acknowledged that dress and appearance were an issue.

One professor thought that it was an issue for both men and women alike, but that behind closed doors it was women who would be most likely to attract comments on appearance. She then went on to qualify this, by referring to her “everyday life as an academic”: 

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I wouldn’t be surprised if in the very senior environments where a lot of gossiping takes place they make comments about some women, about dowdy dress, too much make-up and so on. But in my everyday life, as an academic, it has not been an issue. All of us, whether it is male or female, with a few exceptions, would dress slightly differently for different occasions - if you are sitting on a selection committee, as a sign of respect for the applicants, you would dress slightly differently. But it is a subtle difference (Prof.16).

Another professor explained that it was not an issue per se, it was more an issue for her as an individual:

It’s something I do because I’m getting enough money to look good, and so I do. I enjoy coming to work in good clothes .... I guess it’s about first impressions. If a [student] walks into my office and I’m presented in a neat and tidy way, looking good -- obviously in my best clothes -- I think that tells that person that this job is important to me and I want to look my best while doing it. So I don’t feel like there is pressure coming to me to conform to a dress standard, I choose to have a very neat and smart look about me for my own sake .... I want to feel good at work because I spend so much time here (Prof.10).

The need to be accepted as ‘equals’ was reflected, in some cases, in a strong commitment to dress and comportment – the need to “look the part” or, at the very least, not to draw attention to themselves by being different. Thus there was a majority feeling among participants that they should dress formally in formal situations; not by natural choice, but rather to meet perceived expectations of them. For most of them, this meant that their dress codes were based on male 'norms' — the conservative male suit.

If your main focus is as a professor within your department, within your discipline, you can dress fairly casually, but as soon as you are on a committee outside the university or on a senior university committee, it is essential that you are at least almost indistinguishable from, or dressing to match, the dress of other people at the meeting (Prof.1).

If you go to a meeting which is mainly men, generally there will be a room full of grey or navy/dark blue suits and the person not wearing the dark suit will be noticed (Prof.3).

I think if you want to send out signals at a meeting where you are not already well known I think that is where dress really matters, because with people all they can see is what they
can see .... At university is not the place where that matters so much, it is when you are off
campus and if you are going to represent the university (Prof.15).

It is not an issue that I feel I have a lot of time to waste on, but having said that, I guess it is
an issue. I mean I feel I can’t turn up in jeans, I feel I must make a reasonable effort. It is
not power dressing but to a certain level. But it is more to do with what I’m doing on the
day – it is that public face – looking presentable in public (Prof.14).

I do on occasions conform to a dress code. I have my professor’s clothes in a corner of my
cupboard, which I will put on if I am going to be occupying centre stage. I think it depends
on the role you are going to be playing at a conference or meeting (Prof.5).

Absolutely! I think that the female appearance is an important factor in how people judge
women .... You don’t want to do anything that would just give yourself another hurdle .... If
you want to be taken seriously you’ve got to look serious, you’ve got to look conservative
even to be trustworthy, well groomed, you’ve got to be well put together, you’ve got to
look like you’re not going to cause any ruffles, you’re not going to be too seductive, you’re
not flighty looking, too girlish, you know, all those things (Prof.12).

One professor suggested that men could dress as they pleased but this was not possible for
women:

Men can have the crumbiest taste and they can wear shiny suites, they can look awful and
nobody notices. But if a woman turns up and her hair’s a bit of a wreck, someone will say
“are you all right?” .... Unless you are well presented then you are obviously a slob and
they comment (Prof.6).

Another argued that how you dress is important because it affords you credibility,
especially in the eyes of mature aged students:

I prefer to dress as if I’m heading up a business – I think it is important to dress
professionally. I feel a lot more academics should dress more professionally, particularly
when we have part-time and mature age students coming to the university straight from
work. I think it is the credibility factor. I’m conscious of it [and] I think dress can be an
issue (Prof.8).
The issue of credibility was tackled from an entirely different perspective by the professor who reflected:

*Because of my sexuality it is an extremely important aspect of it, because I think part of the dress code is also about sexual orientation. For example, I’m sure if I turned up to an Australian Research Council meeting, in full leathers, there would be a great deal of concern. There is a degree of latitude because of the field I’m in ....But obviously when I’ve gone for promotion I have been very careful about what I’ve worn because if you signal that you are too much of an outsider, then you’re not considered. I think dress is important because it is read by people in all sorts of ways (Prof.9).*

Arguing against the general trend, one of the participants said that becoming a professor had given her more latitude in relation to dress:

*Before becoming a professor I was dressing more respectably. Now I think, 'I'll wear what I like'. As a more junior staff member I would be careful to be appropriately dressed as a nice female in its skirt, and stockings and proper shoes. I think dress is extremely interesting. I feel you have got to know very carefully the social codes of the area, the expectations, and to know when you are conforming or flaunting them. Sometimes I think (I don't actually do this) I would like to have my hair cut short and have pink spikes in it and just walk round like that and see how people react (Prof.2).*
The low entry of women into the rank of full professor is of concern, not just in Australia, but globally. In Australia we are now at a point where female students outnumber males in almost all areas, and their academic performance and achievements are generally higher than that of their fellow male students. Women make up the majority of academic staff in Australia - nearly 65%. Yet in 1999 only 15.4% of women academics were above the academic level of C (that is, senior levels) (DETYA, 1999). The women interviewed for this study gave their reasons why they believe there should be more female professors now and in the future, and commented on why there may be so few female professors today.

More Female Professors and Why

Although participants provided numerous reasons for needing more female professors, their emphatic response to the need for more female professors boils down to one very simple reason — a waste of talent:

Yes — there should be more. Why? Because we are wasting talent if they are not there (Prof.1).

Yes - 50%. I think overall that there are, in the world, women and men who have got intellectual abilities that their countries need to support and encourage, to have their abilities used in institutions. We have got women students — undergraduates and postgraduates -- we are not using the best talents coming through because we've got all these obstacles to women's participation. So I see it as removing the advantages that men
have had, so that women get a fair go. I think we need much more diversity in the model of what a professor is so that there can be all different kinds of women professors, as well as men (Prof.2).

It would make sense that, when females make up over half of the population, we should be representative in that proportion in most sectors of society. The fact that we are so under-represented to our numbers indicates that there is probably a loss of good talent out there that is being under-developed or under-recognised, and society is missing out on good things (Prof.12).

One professor voiced the view that it is not just more female academic staff that are needed, but a greater diversity of staff within academia in order to better represent society as a whole:

Absolutely, but I also think we need not only more females, but more gay and lesbians, more ethnic people, people with disabilities, more Aboriginals because the professoriate should reflect the construction of the Australian population. We need to have a reflection of what the society is out there, not just the reflection of a privileged group who have been maintained in that role all these years (Prof.9).

Two other participants highlighted the need for more female role models, emphasizing their importance in inspiring women to move up the academic ladder:

I’ve been quite surprised at the confidence it [being a female professor] gives to other females coming up through the system. It opens the way for others. The role model thing is very important (Prof.13).

I think it is important for students to have role models as professors. I think it is important because we may have special, different characteristics. Why shouldn’t we be there? (Prof.8)

Other professors suggested that it would provide “a sense of normality” (Prof.16) and it would be “a lot less lonely” (Profs.5 and 11). Two others strongly expressed the view that universities would be run better if more women were admitted into the academic hierarchy:
We wouldn’t get into quite so many nonsensical situations that we get into if we had women because they are much more likely to have had life experiences that are closer to what the staff have experienced (Prof.6).

I think universities would be run differently if there were more women and it would be run better than it is by males (Prof.4).

Why Are There So Few

The reasons why senior women staff do not reflect the numbers of highly qualified Australian female graduates and undergraduates cover a wide spectrum of factors, from socio-cultural inequality to the influence of mentoring and networks (see amongst others, Gale & Goldflam, 1997). Probert et al. (1998) in their recent research on the relative scarcity of women at senior levels identify the importance of women, on average, having fewer years in university employment and a lower proportion of females than males holding PhDs. They suggest these reasons are linked to women's responsibilities for dependent children, responsibilities that are not shared equally between men and women, subsequently causing delays or interruptions to women’s careers.

In the interviews I asked the professors why they thought there were so few female professors, not just in Australia but globally. All the participants had strong opinions on this phenomenon. Comments were varied, ranging from females not thinking about becoming professors, the shortcomings of the university system and its policies on appointment, assessment procedures and women having more demanding lives outside of work, to historical factors such as male advantage and entrenchment.
Four of the professors felt that a key reason was a lack of career ambition on behalf of many women:

_A lot of people don’t put their hands up, and perhaps a lot of people don’t want to be the trail blazers_ (Prof.8).

_I have found that many women are not thinking about it_ (Prof.1).

_Women, I think, are more concerned with their daily contact with people. They tend to put more emphasis on their teaching obligations than many of the men_ (Prof.5).

_I think a lot of women are not motivated frankly to get up to that level - they’re really not prepared to. On balance it is not where they want to be. I know when I was asked to be a professor I had hit a very nice plateau, I had my research going, I had my family, it was all just as I wanted and I had to ask myself why on earth would I want to change it? I think most women don’t have ambition in that sense, i.e., for its own sake. They just want a circumstance that works for them. I know a lot of young women around me who just want something they can manage. They have kids, husbands and they’re not looking for promotion. They are looking for something that enables them to pick up their children from school, do some really good research and the rest; they aren’t looking for promotion and empty accolades. Most women don’t want to forfeit their comfort zone – this is ones with kids, I must admit. They want recognition for what they are doing but they don’t necessarily want promotion with additional responsibilities and work …. In the line of women who I know are more ambitious, I guess the opportunities are not there for them in many ways. Women are far less likely to move – go interstate or overseas – and distort their lifestyle for the sake of their career. I don’t know if it is any more than that?_ (Prof.13)

Five professors talked about the external factors inhibiting women’s progress. Their comments suggested that the university workplace is designed primarily for those who can devote themselves to it in a very single-minded way:

_Some people say that they would rather work part-time than full-time so that they can look after their children. That may well be true, but I think what it means is, most work places are not organised to meet the needs of different kinds of workers. I think this is also true of most universities. You are more likely to be a successful academic if you can devote yourself single-mindedly to your academic career without spending as much time on other parts of your life, like looking after children. The way a lot of personal relationships are often organised it is the woman looking after the male's career or looking after the male
ego, or whatever. It seems to me that often the majority of students are women but the further you go up into post-graduate studies, lecturing, etc. women are less represented. So it seems likely to me, that those women are not realising their potential for various reasons — perhaps the demands from other parts of their lives are making it too difficult for them to continue; perhaps they are not being encouraged to develop their careers in the same way that male students are (Prof.3).

I think it’s mainly because you don’t start your academic career until you’re 25/26 and so you’re starting late anyhow and if you want to have children and opt to break your career or even if you come straight back, and have the children looked after, you’re going to be tired, you’ve got etc. etc. to do, it’s got to take time out of your life and affect your career. Most people don’t get a permanent job until they are in their thirties. Women are starting to have families by then. I mean it can be done, you make the choice, I think you can have a full career and a full family life, but you’re not going to do anything else. I didn’t have children. I’ve done all these interesting and fun things and had a career, but I didn’t have a family. I don’t believe you can have all three (Prof.4).

The fact that women very frequently have multi demands upon their time and the old decision to be made between family and work is one of the factors that come into it (Prof.5).

If you combine motherhood and academic life your CV never looks as good. I mean, even if you don’t take time off work, the amount of time you have to be creative and to write and to have PhD students, all the criteria on which you are judged – so it is the publish or perish thing – is going to be less than the blokes. But usually you take time off. I mean most women I know take time out for their children, which is about the best thing they could do for their family. So you sacrifice your career for your family – that still happens. I think that is a major thing (Prof.11).

I think perhaps it is still easier for men to get the research out. It is a fact that you don’t get promoted unless you have published and I think it is still easier for men to get publications out simply because they don’t have the same responsibility for the kids as women do. The primary responsibility for children is still with women (Prof.14).

By far the most common reason provided for why there are so few female professors centred on the patriarchal system. Almost two thirds (10) of the women commented on this – and at some length. They were often forthright and scathing in their views on this issue, laying the blame for the imbalance clearly on male domination, with systems modelled and developed over time around the styles, capabilities – even wishes – of male academics.
This, as they said, makes challenging the system a difficult and often painful process for females. As the professors felt so strongly about this issue, I thought it important to record all their responses:

*Men are still in that privileged position and still moving forward quite nicely …. I think the value system we are using is quite masculine and until such time as we change that, nothing is going to change* (Prof.6).

*Men for centuries have had a lot of advantages and they have entrenched themselves. There are a range of historical factors: until recently women could not break the nexus between reproduction and sexuality (as men could); universities were founded for celibate men; and men have been allowed to view themselves seriously and have defined intellectual leadership in their own image* (Prof.2).

*I think you only have to look at the language. They talk about a Masters degree; they don’t talk about a Mistresses degree. The history of the university comes from a time when only men were able to study …. The reality is that when the medical profession in Russia became highly feminised it lost its status. When women flock into an area and fill it up, then it becomes devalued. When men move in, when men move into nursing, nursing becomes lifted up, because of the very nature of the importance of the male* (Prof.9).

*The selection panels, the recruitment and the head-hunting and all of that stuff that goes on at this level now, is male dominated still. So the male network prevails. They don’t think about it – it is not as if it is active discrimination (I don’t think – maybe it is?) but I would doubt that. I think, basically, the people that are head-hunted are the people known [and they] happen to be blokes* (Prof.11).

*I think it is all the things the literature tells you. I think it can be a hostile culture, although not necessarily, I don’t want to generalise for universities, [but] I think it is the culture, the norms, the usual things. I think it is the lack of role models, opportunities …. Even in promotion I think women’s success is attributed to luck rather than hard work* (Prof.8).

*Look there could be a lot of reasons for that. I think that chauvinism is alive and well in Australia. I think that equal opportunity has a long way to go. We have a tradition base in universities where bureaucracy favours men in many positions. The patterns in Australia are basically conservative. Look at the fact that the conservative parties always get back into power regularly. I think that as a nation we tend to be conservative, conservatives then cause male domination, male domination then follows every sphere of life, including universities* (Prof.10).
The short answer is discrimination. There has to be something in the system. Senior people choose clones of themselves – males. I also think that women have an unequal burden compared to men and it makes it much harder for them to achieve at the same rate as men. I also think that universities haven’t come to grips with indirect discrimination. I’ve sat on countless appointment committees where people have looked at two candidates, a male and a female candidate, and they have said “well he has achieved more over the same period of time” and I have said “Excuse me, but this is a woman who has had two periods of maternity leave and has three children. If you compare what they have achieved over time, instead of what they have achieved relative to opportunity, you are discriminating against women.” And that comes as quite a surprise. They’ve never thought of it that way and when they have seen it, they say “Oh! Of course that’s right” .... [That said] one of the things I’ve discovered now, playing a management role, is that there is a limit to how much an employer, a university, can do. You can work as hard as you possibly can to eliminate discrimination, in all its forms, including subtle forms, but what you can’t affect is what goes on at home (Prof.7).

Well, it is just a consequence of the history of women in career opportunities and in education. Women in my mother’s generation weren’t encouraged to pursue careers. Women were meant to do, not to think! .... It just reflects the role of women in society and how it has been a relatively new thing for women to be making the strides in academia (Prof.12).

Women are more likely to meet more barriers along the way. The age issue for women is interesting. Very often in the case of women the window of opportunity is actually limited, in that a woman who is 30 years old is obviously too young, and a woman who is 50 years old is seen to be too old. Whereas in the case of men it is different - a young man is bright and an older man has wisdom (Prof.16).

Professors are not young and you have to project that. I think you have to look at it socially. If you look at the base where you are going to select from, you have a problem. PhDs were only awarded in this university post war, to get a PhD you had to go abroad. Now financing that and at the stage where people do it was so hard for women. So I don’t think you should be surprised that there aren’t many because the field was just not there. So the discrimination occurred very early in life (Prof.15).
REFLECTION AND ADVICE

The women interviewed for this research represent a rich bank of knowledge and experience in the academic world. They are aged between 46 years and 65 years, have held their positions for various periods – some for more than a decade - and cover a disparate range of disciplines. Accordingly, it seemed fitting to ask them whether they felt they had affected debates on women’s issues in higher education, whether – with the wisdom of hindsight – they might have done things differently, and what advice they would give to females interested in a senior academic career.

Making a Difference

Watson and Watson-Franke (1985:203-204) contend that individuals, while in the process of changing their own lives, may “alter the environment for others and thus act as significant agents of change”. McCulloch (1998:202) argues that “even the isolated woman academic can make a difference once the possibility of change is accepted”. The women who participated in this thesis can only be viewed as individuals who have actively sought change and have accomplished a full professorship in a male dominated environment. But, do they believe they have altered, in any way, the academic environment for other females and thereby acted as a ‘change agent’?
In responding to the question: “Do you think your presence has made a difference to increasing the sensitivity to women’s issues in higher education?” only two professors gave negative or qualified responses:

*I don’t suppose I would consciously have wanted to do that. Perhaps, I don’t know* (Prof.14).

*I suppose it must have made some [difference, but] I can’t put a finger on anything that has changed during the [numerous] years I have been here* (Prof.6).

All the other professors felt that they had made a positive contribution, if only in a small way. Three of these gave concrete examples of how they were endeavouring to make a difference:

*I would hope so because I have consciously tried to do that .... My current fight is to stop older women from being thrown out because now there is an understanding that women in their 20 and 30s can make serious [academics], but women in their 40s and 50s are past it .... So I have been trying to assist older women, encouraging them and getting them to continue, to go right through the entire university system, whether that’s through promotion or through study* (Prof.9).

*Yes, I try to in practical ways – such as meeting times, parking arrangements for women with children who have to be taken and collected from school, and such. The key for women is having flexibility and I try to push that. That’s my mission on that field* (Prof.15).

*Yes, I think it has. I think I can point to some concrete examples. One of the things that I have done is to raise the issue of what being a family-friendly workplace means and to get people to talk about that. I speak as a motivational speaker to women and I have done presentations and training courses and that sort of thing within the university and people have given me feedback and said it is really good to have women doing what you are doing* (Prof.7).

Some felt they contributed by just ‘being’ in the position and thereby encouraging more females to progress in academia:
Yes, I believe so. From the feedback I get from women from all over the world, which always amazes me, yes (Prof.11).

I’ve been quite surprised at the confidence it gives to other females coming up through the system. It opens the way for others. The role model thing is very important (Prof.13).

I hope so …. I think it has, I really do. I stand up at conferences, I stand up in the School, I stand up around the world, when I get a chance, and as a woman I think that in itself couldn’t help but help women in academia (Prof.10).

I think you just have to be there and it makes a difference (Prof.7).

Still others, two professors, saw their contribution primarily in terms of challenging the stereotypes and preconceptions applying to women:

I think it has probably made men more wary of women, especially if a woman speaks her mind. I think men have a certain grudging respect for the capacity of women but that threatens them (Prof.6).

I would like to think so. I think that simply challenging some of the stereotypes of who can be in leadership, by being who I am in that role probably is helping in some way. I think the kind of values that I contribute to discussion and to meetings and to decisions are probably different because of being a female (Prof.12).

On Reflection

I wanted to know whether the women I interviewed would, in retrospect, have done things differently. While almost all acknowledged they had experienced tensions and difficulties, this did not necessarily mean they would have done things differently. One said that life was too short to worry about things like that and that if you did, life wouldn’t be any fun:

I don’t think so, but then I don’t think that way. I don’t know where I’m going, but then I don’t care about that…it wouldn’t be fun if I did (Prof.4).
Another took a similar view about the futility of imagining you could or should have done things differently:

In terms of a career, marrying and coming to [this State] was a very stupid thing to do, yet that's the most important thing that has happened in my life. I wouldn't change my life, but you see you wouldn't be in that same moment again anyway and you are what you've lived (Prof.2).

More emphatically, another took the view that she had been extremely fortunate to get where she is, so saw no reason why she would want to do it any differently:

No, I think I am fortunate. I mean, it wasn’t like I had a dream to become a professor; I didn’t have any goals of that ilk …. No, I wouldn’t have done anything differently at all. I think I have been unbelievably fortunate to have arrived at this position, which was completely unexpected. It has certainly opened up a huge number of possibilities that would never have arisen for me (Prof.13).

Reflecting Aisenberg et al’s. (1988:111) view that the choice between family and work poses a dilemma that “is sharp pronged and hard", seven of the professors in my study talked about how they had to choose between their personal and public lives. One commented that:

I might have had another child, instead of one. But that was a conscious decision because I didn’t think I could carry on working and have more children (Prof.8).

Another reflected on the influence of personal factors on geographical mobility:

Professionally I shouldn't have come back to Australia. I don’t regret it personally at all, because I came back for personal reasons. Perhaps I have done more good in academic circles in being here than I would have in another environment. But if you are going to say would I have contributed more to science, would I have had a more intellectual place on the path of science, I would certainly have stayed abroad. I think that is probably true of
almost all Australians who are expatriates; people almost always come back for personal, not professional reasons (Prof.15).

This sense of the persistence of difficult choices, with costs for family, career or both, and of their being little or no alternative to the paths taken, was further voiced by the following professors:

I would have taken more time off with my children. However, when I said that at a seminar we had, some people said “Well, you might not have got where you got”. So maybe that is true too. I mean now I can look back with a huge amount of equanimity and a sense of peace and calm about my [children] but there were times a couple of years ago when I thought if I had taken more time off when they were little we wouldn’t be where we are now. But I don’t know if that is true. I’ve known women who have had no work at all for the last 16 years of their lives and their kids are committing suicide. So it is hard to say that. But that is the only thing I would have liked to have done better. To be more relaxed, calm and not to have had so much on my plate when my children were so demanding …. I would have liked to have had more time for me, more time for my children, and more time for my friends. I didn’t do the balance well (Prof.11).

I regret a little bit that I was so career focused when they [the children] were babies, but I also know that I couldn't have been a successful, caring Mum if I had given up my career. I couldn't have done it another way (Prof.1).

I suppose it was not a terribly good idea to have a child in the middle of a PhD but on the other hand I certainly don’t regret having children. Whatever happens I never regret that I had the children, they make such an incredible change to your life. The academic women now who are getting professorships seem to be without children, but I would not have wanted to make that sacrifice. It is a major choice which men don’t have to make (Prof.14).

One participant, however, did more directly voice regrets when she said:

I would have asked for more help along the way …. I think I was probably trying too hard to do it all myself. I think I would have acknowledged earlier the limits to my role as a mother and that I can’t be super mother the way my mother was. I would probably have brought in more services earlier, instead of waking up to it a little late. I would have taken a big pail of water and thrown it over the guilt fire – a useless emotion. I would have been gentler with myself about my goals and what I could achieve. These are things I’m taking
on now in life, or trying to. Maybe a bit more compassionate about what it was I was asking myself to do (Prof.12).

Five of the professors acknowledged that, given their time again, they would have adopted an approach that focused more specifically on their career plans and aspirations. Here they spoke variously about focusing more directly on research and publication, networking or being less willing to take on teaching and committee work:

*Yes, I would have put more time into my own research and less time into the university. I would have spent less time on the committee system within the university* (Prof.6).

*The only thing I think I would have done differently would have been to prepare more broadly as a researcher. I think I would have prepared more broadly and practised more readily in mixed methodology. I think that in the foreseeable future it’s the only way to score on national competitive grants, the ones worth hundreds of thousands of dollars* (Prof.10).

*If I knew what I know now, when I finished my ... degree, I would have applied for a scholarship and I would have gone overseas and I would have done a Masters degree. And I would have applied for some post-doctoral research, and negotiated a lot harder around my teaching obligations. I would have preserved a lot more space for my own work. I would have been much more assertive about what could be dumped in my lap* (Prof.7).

*I think I would probably have said ‘NO’ to some of the more trivial things that took up my time along the way. I would certainly have served on fewer committees. I think I might have protected my time better and focused on my own work a little bit more* (Prof.12).

*Oh yes! I think there are a number of things that happened in my first two years of being a professor that I would have done a little bit differently. I would have spent more time on people, more networking. The networking thing is something that I have always fallen behind on. Maybe if I would have paid more attention to it, it would have worked better* (Prof.5).
To have avoided ‘conflict’ was the response from one professor:

*I would like to have avoided some of the big, big conflicts – very unhappy situations – how they could have been avoided I’m not sure. I’m certainly now more likely to withdraw from them, than I was then. More likely to say “forget it” and get on with other things. I feel now ‘I’ve been there, done that’* (Prof.16).

Finally, this professor may well have spoken for others when she said:

*If you are asking did I make mistakes – yes, I made huge mistakes and it would be wonderful to be able to go back and be an 18-year-old enrolling in university now, knowing what I now know – that would be fantastic. But life isn’t like that – this is not a dress rehearsal, this is the real thing!* (Prof.9)

**Advice?**

At the end of the interview, I asked participants what suggestions they would offer women attempting to achieve professorial status. They offered no blanket advice; although they seemed to share the view that potential female professors would need to demonstrate leadership, have a vision for their discipline and, a determination to succeed, with a passion for what they do. Here they talked about such things as: “being politically aware”; “publishing first, establishing the career first”; “networking”; “being strategic”; “if you decide on a married life, marrying late”; “concentrating very hard on research”; “staying with it”; “being focused”; “selling yourself”; “seizing every opportunity”; “developing leadership qualities” and, “trusting your judgement”.

Only one professor thought that teaching experience needed to be gained (and that was along with getting a post-graduate degree and publishing). Two professors actually advised against teaching, except on a minimal basis:
I would also suggest that they do a lot of administrative things, being involved in committees, initiating things. I think that is very important and sometimes overlooked, but I think it is a very powerful thing. I think teaching is irrelevant as far as I can see. Get the networking system going and don’t be afraid of taking on hard work or responsibilities (Prof.13).

If you want to get as quickly as you possibly can to a full professor what you need to do is prioritise your publications over everything else. Don’t spend time mentoring people, don’t spend too much time on your teaching, be strategic about which administrative roles you take on, and be a relentless self-promoter. Make sure your name is out there all the time, go to conferences, say “Me, I, look here, this is me, this is what I am doing” (Prof.7).

I would say pay attention to the kinds of performance indicators that are expected in an academic role and really understand the academic role. I would encourage women to pay attention to funding opportunities, to claim an area of research expertise, to publish, to make time for their work, value their work, say NO to requests that are going to side track them from their goals. I would encourage them to stay committed to their curiosity, to their interests (Prof.12).

Two professors specifically emphasised the importance of developing a careful strategic sense:

Be very careful about what you agree to do and make sure that your expectations of the position and the expectations of the people who are giving the position are the same (Prof.6).

Don’t try too soon. You can move on so many fronts at once, but if you haven’t developed your own base intellectually, no matter what political base you have, you’ll be unsuccessful (Prof.15).

And finally, three professors advised academic women to think about themselves – not to be too hard on themselves, as women so often are:

I think careers are a bit like swimming in the lanes, you need these minute adjustments as you are going along. Of course you are going to get to the end, but you cannot just set off on one course. You need to go with it a bit and take opportunities or decide that isn’t a good opportunity. I think nurturing the careers of younger women is actually quite a
careful, time consuming thing, so I wouldn't have any blanket advice, apart from being true to your own best aims. I also think a bit of common sense is needed. I see some younger women vulnerable to the endless, infinite demands of their students and they take no time to [further their careers and] themselves (Prof.2).

Apply according to a job description that you can fulfil. Play the game in university life. Know who the key players are and play the game, but don’t forget it is a game. Don’t invest your heart and soul so that when the tables turn you feel destroyed (Prof.10).

Don’t think that all the time you are at work you have to be at work and all the time you’re at home you have to be super mom. Have more time for yourself and be pleased with yourself. Women are much more critical of themselves than they need to be (Prof.11).

At the end of it all, though, there is no guarantee of success and the game has to be played for its own sake. This was acknowledged by the professor who commented:

If you want to have a job in academia, there is no guarantee of success. The experience that you gain in any part of your life is never going to be wasted. I mean you are never going make a wrong decision but you have to feel passionately about wanting to work in academia if you are going to 'sit out' the time and risk getting a job or not getting a job. But if you do want to do it and you think that it is something that you really want to do, just go for it — take the risk (Prof.1).
CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter provides a summary of the nature of the study and the research findings, and draws conclusions and reflects on some of those findings. The conclusions are discussed under four headings – The Profile of Female Professors and its Implications, Achieving and Managing the Role of the Female Professor, Gender and Organisation, and The Dynamics of Change. I conclude the thesis by advancing suggestions for further research arising out of the study.

Summary: The Nature of the Study

The context for this study is Australia and its public universities, and it is important to recall that Australian higher education has, over the last decade, faced unprecedented challenges. Higher education is constantly being challenged by budget cuts and the need to become self-funding; it is adjusting to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse student population; it is responding to the impact of global competition; and it is struggling to come to terms with the implications of new technology. Within the Australian context today a wide divergence in gender balance, both in terms of the academic staff as a whole, and the ratio between academic staff and the student population, is reflected. Females represent over half of all undergraduate students enrolled in universities. Paralleling the increase in
female undergraduates has been a significant increase in the number of females engaged in graduate study: females now account for half of total enrolments. But despite the adequacy of the current pool of potential female faculty, the history of their entry into faculty ranks on a full-time basis, and in particular to the rank of full professor, continues to be disproportionately low. Simply put, the higher the level in the academic hierarchy, the lower the percentage of females represented there.

The starting point for this thesis was provided by the twin central questions: “Who are the female occupants in the Australian professoriate and how have they managed their way through the academic hierarchy?” The aim of the study was to address these questions by developing a descriptive profile of current female professors participating in Australian universities (using quantitative research methods) and to provide an insight into female professors’ perspectives on how they managed their entry into the Australian professoriate (using qualitative research methods).

To address appropriately the first part of the central research question, that is, who are the female occupants in the Australian professoriate, a profile of the typical Australian female professor was compiled via a questionnaire. By constructing a profile the study is provided with a foundation -- a background from which to view the interpretative data -- and makes a contribution to the “social arithmetic” (Sloper, 1994) of higher education, by presenting, for the first time, systematic demographic information on female professors in Australian universities.
In response to the second part of the central research question: how did the female occupants in the Australian professoriate manage their way through the academic hierarchy, in-depth interviews were conducted. These interviews gave a ‘voice’ to the professors, which resulted in six major themes - career, role, significant others, gender, change, and reflection.

While the total number of female incumbents in the Australian professoriate is small, it does comprise the leadership group of a particular occupational class, at a specific point in time. Caution, however, should be exercised about interpreting the data in isolation from other information relating to both professors and to the contexts in which they operate. Also, it must be borne in mind that all conclusions drawn are based on the perceptions of the individuals in this study, and therefore the reader should view these conclusions as theories or guides for anticipating what may be found in other situations (Dimmock et al., 1997:164).

This research is brought to a conclusion by answering the questions posed at the beginning of this study in the Introductory Chapter. In relation to the ‘who’ question, these were centred on:

- What are the social, economic and cultural characteristics of Australian female professors? Where were they educated?
- What are their family circumstances, current and of origin?
• What is the distribution of female professors geographically and by university classification?

• What were the career paths of the present female incumbents within the Australian professoriate?

• What forms of family and occupational support, including mentoring, were available to the female professors?

These questions are answered in the section headed ‘Conclusions’, under the sub-heading ‘The Profile of Female Professors and its Implications’.

In respect to the ‘how’ question, answers were sought to questions as to whether, and in what way the phenomena identified in previous studies (which are remarkably consistent with this study) affect female professors. For example, male and female academics tend to have different work patterns and aspirations; they plan differently for their careers; women feel ‘shut out’ of senior echelons; discrimination operates in covert as well overt ways and is remarkably persistent; and academic work practices are increasingly ‘unfriendly’ to those with young families. To this end Chapter One questioned whether female professors are still subject to institutional discrimination or, having made their way to the top, do they feel ‘free’ or even become part of the problem? Did they plan their careers or, like other academic women, is it all more a matter of chance? What does it mean to be a female professor? What are the constraining and enabling factors? What are the implications for females generally and for female academics in particular? Answers to these questions are presented in the sub-headings
‘Achieving and Managing the role of the Female Professor’, ‘Gender and Organisation’, and ‘The Dynamics of Change’.

I believe the answers to these questions constitute the major research aim of this study -- to develop a descriptive profile of current female professors participating in Australian universities and to provide an insight into female professors’ perspectives on how they managed their entry into the Australian professoriate.

Conclusions

The Profile of Female Professors and its Implications

It would be naive for me to suggest that I can provide an identikit picture of the quintessential Australian female professor. Apart from the obvious fact that every individual is unique with their own idiosyncrasies, to a large extent all professors are hostages to tradition: hostages to the varied and enduring heritage of Western higher education, and more narrowly, to the recent history of their own institutions including that created by their predecessors. This acknowledged, and in an attempt to construct a profile of female Australian professors - one of the aims of this study - those professors surveyed could be generally described in the following terms: She is Australian by birth or otherwise of Anglo-Saxon background; aged somewhere between 51-60 years, currently living with a partner. She has raised one or two children, and both now and in the past often experiences conflict between her professional and private life roles. She is likely to have been educated
in an all-girls school in an Australian city, achieved a Bachelor of Arts or (less likely) a Bachelor of Science, with Honours, and then completed a doctorate on a full-time basis. At appointment to professor she was probably between 40-49 years, where she took up a position in either the Health Sciences or Humanities and Arts disciplines. Her career path has been a mix of industry and academia, spending typically 11-20 years in academia prior to being appointed professor, and has worked solely or primarily in Australian universities. She experiences feelings of isolation and anxiety, is hesitant to admit to direct personal discrimination, but is clear that women suffer from discrimination and that change is needed. She is actively involved in female causes and likely to think of herself as a feminist.

This analysis of female professors’ personal and social characteristics identifies a number of issues relevant to the advancement of gender equality in senior positions within the Australian university system. The more significant of these are noted below; some are not new and serve merely to reiterate and support past research, while others, I believe, are identified here for the first time.

First, the data indicates the current group of Australian female professors typically reached that rank in the age range of 40-49, but their age range is now bunched around the 51-60 range. If the population of female professors in Australia were increasing, with new professors conforming to the profile, the expectation would be that more professors would be in the lower age bracket. Two inferences can be drawn from these figures, neither of
them encouraging. Either new female professors are being recruited at a reducing rate, or the current wave of females is taking longer to gain acceptance to the rank of professor.

Second, there is the issue of diversity. Although 43% of professors in this study were born outside Australia, just over half of this group were from the United Kingdom or Eire: over 75% of professors have an Anglo-Saxon background. At the same time progressively more university students are being drawn from overseas, particularly from Australia’s nearest neighbour, Asia. For example, at Western Australia’s Curtin University, the proportion of overseas students from non-English speaking backgrounds is 23% and rising. It is to be hoped that over time this cultural pattern will be reflected in lecturing staff and progressively through the various levels to the rank of professor. This would ensure that students are provided with role models that reflect the diversity of the Australian community.

A third issue, which is not new, is that a very high proportion of professors (77%) grapple with the conflict they encounter between their professional and private roles. This is manifested in a number of ways – long periods taken out of the career path while young children are being raised; the physical pressures of, in effect, handling two jobs in tandem; and the emotional pressures of being perceived – by themselves if not by others – to be neglecting their traditional family duties. Referring to the issue of career and family – the personal and the public life – Aisenberg et al. (1988), suggest this is an issue never fully resolved for females.
Competing claims of the personal and the professional realms loom in prospect for the young woman, take a bewildering variety of shapes while a career is in progress, and finally form a pattern that prods the older woman to ask whether she had made the right choices …. [C]onfusion lies in the fact that the conflict between personal and professional claims sounds as if it is the same for all people in the professions, men as well as women …. And to a degree, of course, the issues are the same, but to a far greater degree they differ. For women, and not for men, the claims of “the life” include the claims, assigned to women by the old norms … of primary responsibility for the family. And those claims are so heavy, so long lasting, so fraught with serious consequence if ignored, that they make the choice between personal and professional realms a wholly different matter from the general conflict … experienced by men. (107-108)

Significantly, the majority of the professors who were interviewed acknowledged the very real difficulties of combining their personal and professional lives. The reasons for this were “traditional” in the sense that they affect women more broadly; in particular, the professors talked of forced choices and trade-offs between their family and academic lives. Most wished that things would have been otherwise; some expressed regrets, others felt no other realistic options were available.

It is worth noting here, Probert et al’s (1988) finding that the differences in status between male and female academics is due to the latter having fewer years of service and later completion of their PhDs. These two differentiating factors cause women’s different, and slower, rate of academic career progression and are themselves, the study suggests, direct outcomes of women’s child bearing and child rearing roles. In other words, the outcomes from their dual roles have been found to have tangible and identifiable consequences, more precisely identified in fact than for women in other professions, because of the relationship
between years of service, qualifications and publication productivity – all three of which have direct career implications for academics. It is clear that unless the special needs of women in the academic workforce are addressed, tensions and forced options may well continue to be an inhibiting factor in the progress of female academics.

Fourth the professors’ accounts also indicates the on-going nature of anxiety. The study shows that having reached the position of professor a large percentage (70%) of women still experience self-doubt and a sense that their professional lives are conditional. That such a high percentage of the female professors live with this anxiety should be cause for concern, both from the perspective of the professors themselves and the university sector as a whole.

Tied into the issues of role conflict and anxiety is the fifth issue, which concerns the sense of isolation, and the feelings of loneliness, experienced by the professors (63%). This finding supports the literature which argues that women academics are more intellectually and socially isolated within their institutions than their male colleagues (Johnsrud et al., 1991; Caplan, 1993; Deane et al., 1996; Gale, 1999). Tanton (1994:64), when discussing women in management roles, suggests that “… there has been an adverse effect – women have gained entrance into previously male-dominated areas at the cost of isolation and loneliness”. Within this context a number of writers have suggested that isolation grows with seniority: this study confirms these findings, demonstrating that feelings of isolation were increasingly experienced as the professors moved up the academic ladder. That such a situation exists should not be at all surprising, for as a woman rises in the ranks of the
university hierarchy she will become isolated from other women, as there are so few women at the top. A compounding factor is that the vast majority of women agreed that it was difficult for them, and women in general, to join the senior networks through which considerable informal power is exercised. In talking about this, approximately a quarter of the participants reflected on senior male academics’ orientation to their female colleagues, suggesting that there is a tendency for men to always “other” the women and exclude them from male networks. In contrast, a small number of professors emphasised being able to network across genders. However, some of these women qualified their view by suggesting that their experience could be directly related to the field in which they worked.

Finally, the data indicate that female professors continue to be drawn from those faculties traditionally perceived as female-orientated – the Humanities and Arts and the Health Sciences - yet the reality is that higher proportions of female students are making their way into a broader range of faculties and, across the board, are out-performing male students. Unfortunately, these students currently have no female role models to encourage them to consider an academic career path and, in particular, one that inspires them to think seriously about a long term academic career.

In many respects these issues are all inter-related. However the elements of role conflict, anxiety, isolation and loneliness are particularly intertwined – feeding off each other and stemming from the traditional norms that decree that women have prior responsibility for domestic needs and familiar relationships. In the current climate, heightened workforce expectations sit alongside long standing family responsibilities, placing considerable
burdens on those who do succeed and preventing many others from doing so. In this respect, there is clear need for institutional change. Institutions need to become more family friendly; it is emphatically not enough that successful women are equipped to survive in a masculinised (family unfriendly) environment.

More optimistically, it is important to acknowledge the importance of the formal female networks that exist within the Australian higher education sector to advance the opportunities of women. As discussed in Chapter Three, these are primarily the National Colloquium of Senior Women Executives in Australian education and the ATN Universities’ Women’s Executive Development Program. Both these bodies have an important voice within the sector. The peak sector body, the AV-CC, regularly seeks their (in particular the Colloquium's) views, advice and representation (Ramsay, 2000). These networks provide greater support for senior women, and as discussed in Chapter Six, the greatest antidote to feelings of alienation and isolation for senior women may well be found in women supporting women (Caplan, 1993). These bodies demonstrate the possibility and importance of women themselves taking the power, both from a personal and institutional perspective. As Dahlerup (1988, cited in Eveline, 1994) argues, a ‘critical mass’ of women will not in itself be enough to achieve transformative change; for this, ‘critical acts’ are needed both within and outside the organisation. Most crucial, according to Dahlerup, is “the willingness and ability of the minority to mobilize the resources of the organization or institution to improve the situation for themselves and the minority group” (cited in Eveline, 1994:159, emphasis in original).
Achieving and Managing the role of the Female Professor

Do female professors plan their careers or, like other academic women, is it all more a matter of chance?

It is interesting to note that the responses of the participants in this study suggest women in professorial positions were no more likely to plan their careers than their junior counterparts. Essentially, the women in this study have experienced highly successful careers which have not been achieved by consciously setting rungs to achieve on the academic ladder, nor in many instances even ‘choosing’ academia. It has been more a case of enjoying what they did, with the career subsequently evolving from that. A small number of professors were also spurred on by resentment at seeing senior jobs being handled by males whom they perceived to be less well qualified than themselves. In this respect, my research supports the current literature on female career development (for example Poole et al., 1997; David et al., 1998; Tight, 2000) and occupational socialisation in two main ways. First, none of the professors entered academe with a career plan. In all cases, career development was ad hoc, spurred primarily by the encouragement gained from success at each particular level. Second, the participants’ responses suggested that they entered academia through a desire to conduct research and to teach as an intrinsically rewarding goal, rather than any conscious choice, career planning tactic or career life plan.

The road to a full professorship for a female is undoubtedly a hard one, fraught with obstacles and a premium price must be paid for the privilege – much more so than for their male colleagues, as highlighted throughout this thesis. Therefore, the question must be posed why such a path would be taken. For most of the women in this study the motivation for becoming a professor was an issue of ‘self worth’ and/or the capacity to be effective,
the opportunity to get things done and to be heard. For a small number of women their professorship was an almost incidental consequence of the pursuit of their passions and interests or simply the title coming with the work they wanted to do. Significantly, by the time the stage had been reached of consciously seeking a professorship, the gender inequalities in the system proved a strong motivation for some of the participants. The need to show they were as good as their male counterparts appears to have been almost as strong a motivator as the desire to succeed in their own right. In only two instances were monetary interests cited as a consideration.

What does it mean to be a female professor? What are some of the enabling and constraining factors? (It should be noted ‘Gender and Organisation’ overlaps into this area.)

As far as the professorial role was concerned, the interviews suggested that developing professorial skills and behaviour learning was very much a case of ‘learning the ropes as you go’. This reflected, in a perhaps more acute fashion, the fact that learning to be an academic continues to be largely informal – ‘on the job training’. With only two exceptions, both of whom spoke of formal job descriptions and having a clear picture of what was expected in the role of a professor, the female professors interviewed in this study based their perception of the role on their personal observations of other professors in action. In this way they had to decide for themselves what the role should entail. The difficulties of this may well be more acute given that female professors are plotting their course in a relatively foreign and predominately male domain.
All the professors acknowledged they were leaders – if for no other reason than their position in academia. However, there was a marked difference in the way in which they expressed this. Two groups emerged – those who spoke enthusiastically about the subject of leadership and those who felt discomfort and were reticent about endorsing themselves as ‘leaders’, at least in a traditional male sense. This discomfort is not unusual for women in senior positions, as they perceive the term to symbolise self-interest and domination, traits usually associated with males. This can be explained by the fact that the word leadership has been defined in terms of masculinism: society’s most basic models of leadership are male and these models lie deep within our psychology. This applies equally to leadership models that have gained acceptance in education which have been largely developed by males (Court, 1994) and where it is argued that new leaders are often appointed in the image of the old (Edson, 1987). Females, because of their different abilities, positions, life experiences, special training and interests, may exhibit a leadership style that differs from the expectations of the male norm of senior positions in the field of education. As a consequence, according to Amanda Sinclair, author of Doing Leadership Differently (1998), women face resistance in leadership, and not just from their male peers. Eveline et al. (2000:42) make the further observation that those women who challenge the patriarchal structures by stepping into leadership roles in male-dominated organisations not only “encounter resistance, bias and a marked degree of isolation” but that the way of the woman leader can be a “dangerous experience”. They suggest that “the mere fact of stepping into a leadership role makes a woman appear subversive. She’s not supposed to be there” (42). Significantly, the questionnaire used in this study showed that 51% of professors believed it was more difficult for a woman when it came to managing a position of authority, and all but three of the professors interviewed spoke at some length about the difficulties they faced in having a leadership role. Some commented on the difficulties relating to confrontation, while others related the problems of leadership to a broader gender issue, including not being heard around the Board Room table, and the issue of
some people - both men and women - having difficulty reporting to a female boss. Significantly, this appears to follow the pattern of discrimination experienced at all levels of academia – they did not achieve these goals as a result of a reduced level of discrimination as they moved into the higher echelons.

In respect to mentors and role models, an overwhelming number of professors (85%) acknowledged the importance of this type of formal and/or informal academia-based support. The hierarchy of the university system at the time most of them were coming through the ranks makes it inevitable that many respondents referred to male influences, reflecting the lack of women in senior positions for this generation. These ‘significant others’ played an important part in providing advice and counsel, and being role models during the participants’ early career development and in their present role as professor. One of the notable things about the participants’ comments was that they were much less inclined to mention success, and much more inclined to dwell on attributes such as warmth, creativity and integrity. This was particularly true of the comments made about female mentors who, while proportionately few, were memorable. The implication here is that, had more female role models been available, they would have exerted an even greater influence – and, significantly, perhaps a different influence. The literature, as discussed in Chapter Six, indicates that same sex role models and mentors are important to students’ professional development and that women graduate students who identify with women professors as role models are more successful than those that do not (Lie et al., 1990). With the increasing number of females in higher education, it is only to be hoped that more females will hold senior positions within academia, thereby ensuring female students’ confidence and professional development. This, in turn, underlines the need to increase the
proportion of female academics at the highest levels, thus creating opportunities for those with the capacity for, and interest in, a professorship.

My study suggests that there is a definite, positive, counterpoint to the mentoring and role models that the women in this study experienced, in that Australian female professors themselves acknowledge a strong sense of responsibility toward junior female staff and students in academia, and a need to assist them to pursue an academic career. However, this was viewed from varying perspectives. Some saw it as primarily a gender issue – the need to promote women in academia. Others did not see it so much as a ‘duty’, but rather a case of doing what comes naturally to them. Virtually all of the women interviewed saw themselves as role models. And, for some it was in this capacity - acting as a positive role model - that they played out their ‘duty’. They saw this as being one of their obligations as a professor and they carried out that role consciously and deliberately. Thus, with a few exceptions identified under the “Queen Bee” syndrome, it is clear that emerging female professors become part of the solution to the problem of discrimination. In some cases, this is because they feel motivated to take an active role; in others it is because it is their natural, nurturing approach to their colleagues, and the recognition that some colleagues – primarily females – require more support than others.

Let us turn now to the issue of what is required for success in academia. Here my study suggested that while a wide number of factors were linked to academic success, the majority of professors support the literature which suggests that it is research and public recognition through publication which is important above all. Comments on research were accompanied by observations about the commercialisation of research and the importance
of attracting the research dollar. As discussed in chapter six, the Unified National System gives universities access to a finite funding resource and requires them to compete for their share of available funds. The Research Quantum places a special emphasis on research performance in the assessment of an institution’s overall performance. There is also a ripple effect, since a university’s success in attracting government funding may also influence its ability to draw research funding from other sources. Thus, increasingly, the reputation of a university is tied to its reputation for research. Hence, the role of academe and the way it is understood is changing, in that the ‘fit’ between corporate organisation and academic purpose are merging. As noted by McInnis in an earlier chapter, “seeking funds to support academic work is a major influence on the work patterns of academics” (2000:125). This requires academics to have not only different skills to those of the past, when a scholarly approach was the only approach, but also a more commercial mindset.

In addition to the ‘research and publication’ factor, the professors talked about a host of personal attributes, identifying commitment, creativity, empathy, energy, enthusiasm and passion. In addition, they mentioned the attributes necessary to ‘get the job done’ (being organised, independence, hard work); the capacity to succeed in a gendered environment (networking, support, self-confidence); and certain attributes demanded by the university environment (political nous, playing by the rules, entrepreneurial skills). Professors also commented on the difficulties of achieving success in the gendered environment of the university. One of the themes was that women had to be better than men if they were to succeed. This is discussed in detail later in the section entitled ‘Gender and Organisation’.

In summary, the common view among the professors – which echoes many of the comments that have come from this analysis – is that there are two prime requisites for a successful career in academia: passion and publication. Without a total commitment to the
chosen discipline and the publication of research, success is unlikely. They also suggested that a conscious effort should be made to develop and accumulate leadership skills, for example by seeking opportunities to represent departments or faculties on boards and committees. Essentially though, they thought that it was necessary to accumulate the trappings of academic success – a post-graduate degree (PhD), an extensive publication list and a strong senior network across genders.

**Gender and Organisation**

*Are female professors still subject to institutional discrimination or, having made their way to the top, do they feel ‘free’ or even become part of the problem?*

The ‘gender factor’, as I term it, was the topic on which the women in this study were most closely united. It appears that women who are finally successful experienced similar patterns of discrimination as those reported by junior colleagues during their career – that is, they were not a favoured few in this respect, and their success was achieved in spite of, rather than in the absence of, discrimination.

Academic institutions have a long record of failing to welcome females, partly because of the monastic life that gave rise to universities, and, linked with this, the fact that they were tailored to the needs of the males they served (Caplan, 1993). Equally, and more broadly, society positions men's lives as the 'norm' and women’s as otherwise. This is played out in universities as much as it is in any institution. “[G]ender is fundamental to the way work is
organised and work is central in the social construction of gender” (Game & Pringle, 1983:14). This construction of the relationship between gender and organisation has historically been biased towards men (Gardner & Boucher, 1998). Allport (1996:8) describes Australian universities as “highly gendered workplaces for all staff, and male culture based on male experience continues to affect the way women’s work is valued in higher education”. Eveline contends that:

This does not necessarily mean that men actively conspire to promote their interests against those of women, but it does mean that workplaces are largely organized as if the only interests involved are those which benefit male stereotypes. In Australia, for instance, this is evident in the dearth of child care facilities, in the lack of paid parental leave, and in the differential between time spent by women and men in unpaid caring and household work. (1994:158)

There is a strong gender factor at play in university life, for university cultures around the world tend to value and reproduce concepts of career, academic achievement, and institutional and intellectual work based on male life trajectories (Itzen & Newman, 1995) and the pathways to success tend to be built upon dominant male traits and characteristics (Izraeli & Adler, 1994). In a major study on women in Australian universities, Castlemen et al. (1995) concluded that the major factor accounting for the paucity of women in senior positions is management’s own masculine styles and practices, discounting factors such as merit or women’s disinclination to advance their careers, and family and domestic responsibilities. Gherardi (1996) suggests that women are seen as guests in male organisations, and it is argued here that the very nature of this thesis and its findings would support this statement in respect to universities. Certainly the literature suggests that the lack of critical mass of women in senior positions within the higher education system
results in it being masculinist in both orientation and in its take-for-granted assumptions (Grant et al., 1994; Thiele et al., 1997).

This gender factor manifests itself in many ways with the various practices of sex discrimination having now received official recognition. Contrary to popular belief, this study, along with many others (Benokritis, 1998), demonstrates that sex discrimination has not gone away; it has merely become more subtle. All universities in Australia can demonstrate they have equal opportunity and affirmative action policies in place and at least some staff to apply them. But is the system working, and does it have the active and energetic support of senior management? Eveline (1994:158) asserts that:

Despite the assumption that the aim [of affirmative action] is to extend to women some of the advantages which accrue to men, most of the bounties and privileges produced by affirmative action programs remain – with or without this active collusion – in the intrays of men and of management …. [And] whether affirmative action schemes take an approach which highlights the equal abilities of women and men – the sameness model – or one which focuses on the need for feminine qualities in the workplace – the differences model – women are characterised as ‘different’ to a male norm, and thus discriminated against.

In a similar vein, Cynthia Cockburn’s book, *In the Way of Women: Men’s Resistance of Sex Equality in Organisations* (1991), written from a British perspective, foregrounds men’s protection of their privileged positions as a major barrier to progress towards gender equity and hence, why EO policies and programs do not work better to achieve their stated goals.

The statistics in this research exemplify Eveline’s claims, with 73% of all the professors who participated in the survey believing there is ‘latent’ discrimination and 33% also believing that ‘open’ discrimination against women in universities still exists (refer back to
Table 29: Discrimination Against and For Women in Universities – multiple answers given). The broader comments in this research on negative discrimination cited general but non-specific manifestations such as: the “boys club”; male allegations of “pussy power”; traditional views; some men seem threatened by women; women do not automatically become part of the power infrastructure and homophobia.

There has been substantial research and discussion with regard to gender differences in management and leadership, with considerable evidence that there are distinctions between masculine and feminine management styles. The former is said to emphasise control, use of power to dominate others and separateness of personal and work issues, while the latter is seen to promote process, communication, integration, co-operation, openness and contact (O’Leary and Ryan, 1994; Gardner et al., 1998). The difference in working styles between males and females was acknowledged by the large majority of professors and, significantly, all believed female working styles to be positive in terms of their impact on academia. They saw women’s management styles manifest in a more committed approach to ‘the job’ - getting things done - than to ‘the career’ – than making personal progress in a competitive environment. There was a high level of agreement amongst those who were interviewed that women have a more caring and collaborative approach than their male counterparts. The word “nurturing” featured widely in the responses, with the suggestion that this led to a stronger “team player” orientation. Women, it was felt, are more prepared than men to give credit to their colleagues, and to take real pleasure in the success of their team members. An unfortunate downside of women’s more co-operative and nurturing role, as viewed by some professors, was that the achievements of female academics tended to be less “visible”, in that the products of their success were team products, shared by others.
However, it needs to be acknowledged that the difficulties and isolation women face in senior positions can lead to the perception that some women practise what is known in certain quarters as the ‘Queen Bee’ syndrome. Silverberg defines the ‘Queen Bee’ syndrome as: “the phenomenon of the sole, high-powered woman in the department who ‘has it made’, but has no desire to help other women to share her high status” (in Collins et al., 1998:xii). More than three-quarters of the professors were conscious of this phenomenon. On the whole, however, they were cautious in their condemnation and reluctant to adopt the somewhat facile ‘Queen Bee’ labelling. The word they most commonly used was “insecure”. Their underlying assumption was that, in a more gender-liberal academic society, this syndrome would diminish. Professors also reflected on the possible tendency of certain senior females to deny the importance of gender or to take the view that because they had ‘had it tough’, others should too. This said, and as identified in the previous section, the professors who took part in this study see themselves as part of the solution to the problem of discrimination, either through motivation to play an active role, or by virtue of their natural, nurturing tendencies. What’s more, in observing other female professors they suggest that the exceptions -- the ‘Queen Bees’ – are rare.

One professor suggested that we may be witnessing the early stages of evolutionary change in the difference between male and female professors. The first generations of senior female academics were forced to conform simply to survive in the overwhelmingly patriarchal society of which they had become a part. This sense of inhibition, the professor suggested, no longer exists to anything like the same degree, so there are some grounds for believing that, as the proportion of women professors increases (if that is, indeed,
happening), the rate of cultural change in our universities will also accelerate. In line with this, some literature suggests that significantly increasing the number of women in leadership roles will, of itself, change the way in which leadership and management is practised in an organisation (see Sinclair, 1995b; Affirmative Action Agency, 1996).

Kanter’s (1977:216) argument that a woman in a senior position does not have to work hard to have her presence noted but “she does have to work hard to have her achievements noted” is particularly relevant here. The female professors perceived a need to perform at least as well as – if not better than – their male counterparts, for failure to do so would attract a disproportionate degree of criticism. This pressure to out-perform their male counterparts is generally seen to be bound up with notions of masculine success, as well as carrying the double burden of being both a career woman and home-maker and mother. In this respect the participants in this study had experienced the pressure to out-perform their male counterparts, not just from an institutional, but also from a social and cultural context.

The gendered organisational culture also manifests itself in ways as disparate as the ‘default assumption’ that all senior people in academia will be male, through considerations of dress and comportment, to the lack of understanding that the disproportionately low representation of females in the higher ranks throws a heavy load on those concerned. For example, the equity rules require that specific numbers of women are represented on committees and, since there are far fewer women than men available for selection, it follows that those available will either be called upon to carry a heavy load or criticised for failing to accept their responsibilities.
On the issue of whether women were scrutinised or ‘seen’ differently from male professors, the women were virtually united. With only one exception they believed they were. In the main it would seem that many people, men and women, within and outside academia, are, at this stage unwilling or unable to accept women at senior levels as a normal, equitable situation. Several professors said they frequently had difficulty being accepted as professors, some reporting they had been mistaken for the (presumed male) professor’s secretary. It was also suggested that acceptance of female professors was inhibited by fear of change on the part of the predominantly male establishment, with women being excluded from positions and functions where they could promote gender equity, and, that in the establishment there was always a question mark about how senior females had achieved their position.

It was the clear view of the professors that the under-representation of women in the senior ranks meant that important talents available to the universities were being under-utilised or overlooked altogether – it came down to the simple question of “a waste of talent”. The reasons to which the imbalance was attributed were varied, ranging from females not thinking about becoming professors, the shortcomings of the university system and its policies on appointment and assessment procedures, women having more demanding lives and responsibilities outside of work, to historical factors such as male advantage and entrenchment. However, it was the entrenched male-dominated nature of university life which was seen as the primary reason for the imbalance. Almost two thirds of the women commented on this, and at some length - and this situation, the professors felt, made challenging and changing the system a difficult, and often painful, process for females. Notwithstanding this, a few of the professors felt the situation was changing slowly. One
agent of change was perceived to be the more business-like procedures being applied to selection processes for senior positions. These are modelled more closely on private sector procedures, with formal job descriptions and performance criteria. However, even in this changing scene there is scope for continued imbalance. For example, while publication remains a key criterion of success, women may be disadvantaged, since they are individually required to spend more time than men in work such as representation on departmental and faculty committees, because there are fewer of them to fill the increasing number of demands exerted by universities’ need to be seen to be gender equitable. Added to this women’s “lower publication rates are subsequently reinforced by the objective constraints which operate upon women with families” (Park, 1992:237). These elements result in what can be termed “time poverty” (Park, 1992:237).

**The Dynamics of Change**

An institution which aspires to greatness among its fellows and even more so, one that aspires to respond to the opportunities of the next decade, which will be increasingly international rather than national in its thinking, requires inspired leadership which, in a university, means the progressive creation of a shared vision and commitment across the heads of faculties, departments and administrative centres .... Change in any community with great traditions and not driven by crisis requires leadership that is inspired by a vision steadfastly held and pursued yet patient; strong yet sensitive; and, above all, able to create a will to change across the institution. (Dearing, 1998:36)
What are the implications for females generally and for female academics in particular?

Embracing the environment as described on the previous page means acknowledging, as reported by the Hansard Society Commission (1990), that it is “wholly unacceptable that … universities should remain ‘bastions of male power and privilege’” (cited in Brooks, 1997:38). In line with these sentiments, there is a general acceptance across the higher education sector in Australia that continuing gender inequality is a serious problem, and in this regard there is a level of activity directed towards the achievement of greater gender equality for staff in every university in Australia. As discussed in earlier chapters, the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee (AV-CC), in conjunction with the Colloquium of Senior Women Executives in Australian Higher Education, has developed an action plan for women in the sector to promote the achievement of gender equality in Australian universities. The literature and comments expressed by the female professors who participated in this study further reiterate the concerns of gender inequality in the professoriate: 91% stated that change was necessary.

Given the roughly equal numbers of men and women as undergraduates and postgraduates, one can only conclude that the huge preponderance of males as professors means that the academic hierarchy is "staffed by men of lesser ability than that possessed by the many women who have not been hired" (Dagg & Thompson, 1988:65). The women in this study concur with this comment, believing that talent is being wasted. They argue that the relative exclusion of women from senior positions is contradictory, since the literature suggests that successful leadership depends on team work, communication, a collaborative,
sharing leadership model (Sarros et al., 1996; Kotter, 1995); all attributes usually associated with female leadership (Maley, 1998; Helgesen, 1990; Jardim, 1990; Rosener, 1990). It would seem necessary to ensure the presence of females in senior roles not only in order for females to offer themselves for promotion in the interest of personal development and economic equality, but also so that students and colleagues see females in senior/leadership positions. In the words of Larwood et al. (in Edson, 1988:131), "by showing men that women can be successful, the traditional images of housewife and dependent female employee will be displaced in favour of the more realistic female co-breadwinner and colleague". Until females have as much power as men in the academic world, it is reasonable to assume that the narrow perception of what is considered normal -- that is the male model of leadership, generally seen as authoritarian rather than interactive -- will prevail.

While the need for increasing the number of senior female academics is well documented, and a recurring theme throughout this thesis, the findings in this research and the literature would suggest that the prospects for female faculty in the future are unlikely to improve significantly unless a great deal of pressure continues to be put on academic institutions and their policy makers. The literature (Allen et al., 1995; Probert et al., 1998) suggests that there are processes governing academic employment which favour males over females and exclude women from secure and senior positions, and therefore constrain the career advancement of females within the realms of academia. In particular, the nexus between academic career advancement and years of service and qualifications, and the differences between academic men and women with respect to these career-determining factors (refer
Probert et al., 1998). Gardner (1998:4-5) in her paper *Women in Australian Universities: Findings from Recent Research and Policy Implications* concluded that the “way an academic career is conducted is a significant barrier to the employment of women”. It is evident throughout the literature, and this study, that women have a tougher time ‘making it’ in the higher levels of academia as a result of the pressures imposed by a gender-biased workplace, and the actual or perceived pressures of being a home maker and perhaps a mother. Of the 91% of professors in this study who felt change in the position of women was necessary to enable them to play an equal part with men in society, 59% stated that a radical change in social attitudes and institutions was necessary if this was to be achieved.

Hence this study concludes that a major change in the status quo is required - overcoming the male academic norm and replacing it with an organisational climate that favours the interests and experiences of women equally with those of men. Our question now is how this can most effectively be achieved, for as Professor Faye Gale (1999), retired Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia, so succinctly points out, men are in a privileged position and we cannot expect them to willingly give up this advantage.

The professors in this study have clear and definite views on the most effective ways to increase the number of female professors in Australian universities. Their responses point to a more determinedly feminist approach within the university structure and in the broad concept of women supporting women. In day-to-day practical terms the professors recognise the need to remove – or ameliorate – the logistical barriers to the progress of females. Examples range from the improvement of child-care facilities on campus to the
provision of more administrative support to female professors (acknowledging their additional domestic workloads). They also want to redress the “CV imbalance” (whereby women fall behind because they take time out from their academic careers to raise children – refer Probert et al. (1998) on the negative career effects for academic women of career breaks) providing a wider definition of ‘success’, making allowances for career breaks, and providing support for research and publication where needed. As Gardner (1998:5) advocates, “there is a need to broaden the way performance in academic employment is developed and judged”.

It is clear from this research that universities would benefit from having more women in senior positions, and while there are a host of important equal opportunity measures in place to assist in achieving this, it is necessary to recognise the limitations of current equality legislation and acknowledge that the “realignment of the parameters which divide the public and the personal – a necessary precondition for equality between women and men – will not be achieved with present approaches” (Eveline, 1994:158). This study suggests that tackling the in-built biases of the university system, and promoting a more genuinely ‘two gender’ culture is fundamentally the most important issue. In tandem with this, universities, for the sake of men, as well as women, need to become more genuinely ‘family friendly’ places. This means re-considering the increasing hours of work expected of junior as well as senior staff, and envisaging one of the responsibilities of management as promoting ‘life in balance’ – work, family and community – for all members.
Suggestions for Further Research

The research undertaken in this thesis was particular to female professors, and the field for further work is extensive. In this section I take the opportunity to highlight a number of topics which I believe to be potentially worthy of further investigation.

First, a study similar to the one carried out here, applied to male professors, could provide comparative data on the backgrounds of typical male professors, their career paths and the challenges they have faced. Such a study could also throw light on male attitudes to the possibility of increasing numbers of female professors.

Second, the international data shows that three countries - Turkey, Finland and Portugal - have a higher percentage of female professors than Australia. Research to determine differences in policies and approaches could provide valuable lessons on achieving a higher degree of gender balance in Australia.

Thirdly, as far as this study is concerned, a decisive bottleneck for women comes between associate professor and professor. Why have not more female associate professors attempted and/or achieved the transition to the more senior level of professor? In this context it is important to identify the factors that are either actively discouraging women from applying for promotion and/or reducing their chances when they do apply.
Finally, this study has provided a basic database of information on female professors. It would be valuable to maintain quantitative research on an ongoing basis, using the preliminary findings as a benchmark. This could be achieved by developing a questionnaire to be applied to all new professors through the auspices of the AV-CC and the Colloquium of Senior Women Executives in Australian higher education, expanding on the AV-CC’s electronic Register of Senior University Women. Ideally, the research would be structured to provide an instant “snapshot” of the female professoriate that can be compared to the benchmark to measure progress. The new data would ideally embrace:

- Numerical data. Are the numbers of female professors increasing, both in absolute terms and as a percentage of all female professors?
- Background data. Are new female professors continuing to come from the same background as the benchmark sample?
- Areas of study. Are new professors continuing to emerge from the traditionally female faculties, or is their area of influence spreading?
- Age. Are women achieving the rank of professor at earlier ages?
- Demographic background. Are there changes in the marital status and family circumstances of new professors?

The quantitative research should be augmented at 3-5 year intervals by attitudinal research to examine and measure any trends in the attitudes of female professors towards their perception of their acceptance in academe and the barriers facing new and potential female professors.
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