

President's Report

The national school curriculum

Over the past few months I've been engaged in the work of the National Curriculum Board, which was established in February 2008 and is responsible for developing a national curriculum for all Australian students from the earliest years of schooling until Year 12, starting with English, mathematics, the sciences and history.

Its Director is Barry McGaw, who spoke to the Academy at its 2007 Colloquium about the work he did while Director for Education at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on the international measurement of educational outcomes. In his recent Cunningham Lecture he underlined the importance of a curriculum that will support educational excellence.



The four initial subjects will be followed by geography and languages other than English, so that the social sciences have a substantial involvement in the work of the Board. I was asked to lead the development of the history curriculum through the preparation of a discussion paper. The invitation was made in my personal capacity as a historian, and does not involve the Academy, but many fellows share my concern about what is taught in our schools, how it is taught, and how the social sciences contribute to school education.

The Academy and school education in the social sciences

Some fellows will be aware of the interest taken in the school curriculum by the Academy of Science; and older fellows might well recall that we too have been involved. Keith Hancock certainly will, for he was a member of a National Committee on Social Science Teaching created by the Commonwealth Department of Education and Science — as it was then named — in 1970. The Committee was chaired by Professor WF Connell FASSA and included several others fellows, including Jean Martin and Bob Parker.

The Committee was established in response to the changes in the school curriculum that accompanied the rapid expansion of secondary education. As more and more students stayed on to undertake senior secondary studies, there was a growing conviction that the traditional subjects of history and geography were poorly suited to the needs of the expanded cohort of students of a non-academic bent. Social studies, a subject with a strong civic orientation, had already been introduced at lower levels and some wished to extend it further into secondary education. Educational reformers championed social studies for its contemporary relevance and inquiry-based approach to learning.

Educationalists such as Connell sympathised with this approach but other fellows placed a greater stress on content. Percy Partridge of the ANU — a persistent and perceptive commentator — argued that the social sciences needed to be put on the same footing as the natural sciences. Just as students were expected to understand the principles of science, it was 'equally important that they should gain an accurate and as scientific a knowledge as possible of the social world'. To the existing coverage of history and geography he wanted to add anthropology, economics, psychology and political science in 'a more or less integrated course'.

This aspiration drew also on the experiments undertaken at the new universities formed during the 1960s, Flinders, La Trobe and Macquarie. They sought to overcome the narrow specialisation that was a hallmark of the Australian university and provide a broad, general education. Hence they adopted a school structure that spanned disciplines. As the founding vice-chancellor at Flinders, Peter Karmel declared: 'We want to experiment, and experiment boldly'. He asked Keith Hancock to design an Arts degree that would allow such experimentation, and Keith developed programs of study in the social sciences that would recognise what he called 'the complexity and interdependence of human affairs'.

The social scientists involved in these discussions nearly forty years ago had reservations about the move in secondary schools to social studies. Too often, they felt, it was 'loosely flung together without anything to provide an intellectual or theoretical skeleton' and 'usually intended unfortunately for weaker pupils judged incapable of meeting the supposedly sterner intellectual demands of the more prestigious disciplines'.

Doldrums

Their ambitions for a more systematic teaching of the social sciences foundered in the face of resistance from the educational authorities and curriculum officers in the states. Social studies prospered, the teaching of older disciplines was attenuated, and by the end of the 1980s, when the states and territories came together to seek agreement on national goals for schooling, they came up with Studies of Society and Environment as just one of eight key learning areas. Studies of Society and Environment (or SOSE) was a portmanteau category that allowed for the teaching of history, geography, civics, legal, political or business studies; in several states it was adopted as a subject in its own right.

Like social studies, SOSE incorporated elements of various disciplines into a contemporary and inquiry-based approach to learning. When it was well designed, well supported and well taught, SOSE could engage students in an integrated course of study that met the educational objectives of teaching for work and life. When it was not, it didn't.

It had a number of consequences for history, geography and other social sciences. They lost time in the school timetable, and without a prior grounding fewer students chose to pursue them in the senior secondary years — with clear implications for tertiary study. They lost priority in school staffing decisions, and SOSE came to be regarded as a subject that could be entrusted to other teachers. Similarly in our faculties of education there was a retreat from preparing teachers in the curricula and pedagogies of the social sciences.

They were also caught up in the campaign waged over the past few years about the perils of progressive education. Both the Howard government and the national media began to attack the state educational authorities and teachers for neglecting values and reducing academic standards. The assault on values was aimed at the public sector, and saw allegations about Chairman Mao's 'little red book', the introduction of chaplains and new requirements about flagpoles as a condition of federal funding. The campaign on the curriculum was prosecuted by seizing on particular passages in curriculum documents, or by selective readings of prescribed texts to claim that the literary canon was being sacrificed to popular culture or that pride in the nation's heritage and achievement was being replaced by the political correctness of 'Black Armband' history.

Out of this came the former prime minister's Australia Day speech in 2006, suggesting that school history neglected 'facts' in favour of a 'fragmented stew of themes and issues', and undertaking to lead 'a coalition of the willing' to undertake a 'root and branch' renewal of

Australian history. He assembled the coalition at a subsequent Summit, but strained it to breaking-point by imposing his own preferences over the advice of the Summit participants.

The way forward

The Howard government had decided that all states and territories would be required to adopt this history curriculum as a condition of funding. The Rudd government took a different approach when it established the National Curriculum Board, which is constituted by members drawn from the states and territories, to prepare a national curriculum by a process of consultation.

In drafting the discussion paper for history, I was assisted by a small group of teachers and education officers, as well as Dawn Casey (who now directs the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney), Tony Taylor (Associate Professor of Education at Monash and the key figure in history education) and John Hirst (a Fellow of the Academy with a strong involvement in the area). The paper was put before a forum with more than a hundred participants in September; then discussed at length with leading members of the History Teachers Association. The revised version was released for public consultation in November.

It proposes a systematic and sequential study of world history from the earliest times to the present, in which Australian history would be incorporated. This would allow the long human occupation of this country to be understood comparatively alongside the peopling of the other continents. It would encourage a better appreciation of how Australia was settled as part of a much longer process of European expansion, how the convicts might be understood as one form of a wider system of movement. It would mean that students would consider the Dardanelles campaign with an awareness of the far more momentous campaign waged 1500 kilometers to the north.

If only to equip students to operate in the world in which they will live, they need to understand world history. That history should have a broad and comprehensive foundation from which its implications for Australia can be grasped. It is only from such a foundation that the longevity and richness of Aboriginal history will be appreciated; that the dimensions of our migrant experience and cultural diversity will be intelligible; that our relations with the Asian region will be comprehended; that the ecological limits of our current practices will be grasped, and the distinctive as well as the shared and derivative character of our past will be revealed.

History sits across the social sciences and the humanities. Like the social sciences, it employs explanatory models and evidence to test hypotheses and reach conclusions about social behaviour. Like the humanities, it deepens our understanding of humanity, creativity, purposes and values. The imminent development of geography will augment the place of the social sciences in our schools.

All of this has further implications for the social sciences. There are many schools in which the teaching of subjects such as history and geography is allocated to teachers who lack the training and confidence to undertake the task. Hence successful implementation will require attention to teacher preparation: we need teachers who have undertaken a rich major as part of their first degree (and it is to be hoped that an increasing proportion will have also undertaken honours and postgraduate research) as well as attention to the subject in their teacher training.

That in turn affects the faculties and schools of education, which have been so poorly served by the tertiary funding system. The present government's 'education revolution' depends above all on improving the capacity, conditions and status of the teaching profession, and I hope that the Academy can make a substantial contribution to this vital objective.

Stuart Macintyre

The Gender Balance; or, whatever happened to feminism?

Disappearing Tricks

Marian Sawer

Disappearing tricks are one of the most spectacular forms of magic. Once you've mastered these tricks you'll be able to draw gasps of astonishment from your crowd as you make things appear and disappear right in front of their eyes.
(Ads by Google)

Was there a gasp of astonishment when the Australian Labor Party went to the 2007 federal election without a women's policy? This was the first time, since discovering the value of women's votes 30 years before, that the ALP had gone to an election without such a policy. And it was not because women had migrated to the main campaign document – the 'w' word had vanished altogether.

Perhaps the audience was distracted by the flourish of women in the leadership, particularly the Deputy Leader, now Deputy Prime Minister, Julia Gillard. But perhaps also, the disappearance of women from the subject matter of politics and policy had become normalised in 21st century Australia. University bookshops provide stark evidence of this. Women's studies and even gender studies have disappeared into cultural studies, while politics and history shelves groan under the weight of terrorism studies and military history. Publishers advise that books on women or gender studies just don't sell any more, 'there's no market so they're not publishing them any more'.¹

In terms of women and policy, Australia has performed a rather remarkable parabola since the 1970s. Thirty years ago Australia was regarded with amazement as a place where feminist expertise might be a job criterion in government. Feminists were recruited from the women's movement to help make government women-friendly. They were called femocrats, a word Australia gave to the world. It was the responsibility of femocrats to promote policy to meet women's needs and to ward off policy that would have detrimental effects. They played a key role in the development of childcare policy (at a time before government subsidies were diverted to for-profit chains), in the promotion of holistic approaches to women's health, in the development of equal opportunity legislation and pay equity policy.

Femocrats were often responsible for 'evidence-based' policy as contrasted with policy based on the untested assumptions of senior policy-makers or, more recently, the reactions of talk-show radio hosts. One example was research commissioned to investigate the assumption that families 'pooled' their resources. The findings helped to change the way government provided support for families – from tax benefits for breadwinners to cash transfers to primary carers.

Femocrats were also responsible for the development of across-the-board analysis of the gender impacts of policy in the Budget context – so-called gender budgeting. This was pioneered at the federal level in 1984 and was eventually adopted in all jurisdictions in Australia and then in many countries across the world. The Departments of Treasury and Finance were staffed by recent economics graduates unaccustomed to distributional analysis of economic policy. These departments were particularly resistant to the new requirement to disaggregate their data on the impact of tax or tariff policy so that the effect on women could be seen. A visit by Milton Friedman to Australia during International Women's Year (1975) had been a watershed, leading to a renewal of organised free-market advocacy. While femocrats

were introducing new forms of gender audit of economic policy, the ground was shifting away from distributional concerns towards an emphasis on competition and 'choice'.

Meanwhile, whole new occupations appeared, such as the job of the equal opportunity practitioner, responsible for identifying the barriers entrenched in organisational practices and organisational culture and developing plans to remove them. These plans were intended not only to clear away obstacles for women but to do the same for others, including migrants and people with disabilities, who did not fit previous organisational norms. Another new occupational group was those employed in women's services, whether women's refuges, rape crisis centres, women's health services, women's information bureaux or legal services. Collectives were established for the democratic delivery of these services and there were attempts (much contested by government) to avoid reproducing management hierarchies. After all, if violence, harassment and the abuse of women arose from inequalities of power, then the solution could not lie with services that reproduced such inequalities. Femocrats had an important role in ensuring that such innovative services were funded by government, even if some organisational compromises were required in the interests of accountability.

Part of the role of femocrats was to ensure that women in the community were consulted by government and were able to participate in the policy process. Often this meant seed money to help build organisations and ensure that groups like single mothers, Indigenous women, immigrant and refugee women or women with disabilities had a voice in policy debates. An even more valuable resource was operational funding to ensure that women's representative organisations were able to develop the professionalism and policy expertise needed to compete with well-established policy actors.

The presence of femocrats inside government and of funded women's advocacy bodies outside government meant that inequitable policies could be identified and opposed. This was particularly important with policies that were commonly assumed to be gender-blind but in fact had seriously detrimental impacts on women – for example, 'helping families' through family tax measures that raised the effective marginal tax rates on secondary earners. Raising the effective marginal tax rates on secondary earners was not only unfair to women but distorted their choices concerning labour market participation. For governments increasingly concerned about 'welfare dependency', it was also contradictory to encourage dependency among women who were 'one husband away from welfare.'

As the 1990s progressed, advice about the impact on women of the things governments wanted to do became increasingly unwelcome. The policy monitoring role of women's co-ordination units was weakened and they were now moved out of Premier's Departments. The major exercises in gender audit such as the women's budget statements, which had been so resented by the economic departments, were gradually abandoned.

Major shifts in industrial relations policy took place, starting with the adoption of the enterprise bargaining principle in 1991. Femocrats provided international evidence of the gender impact of decentralised wage bargaining and women's organisations intervened before the Industrial Relations Commission to present their case. They argued that women's lack of industrial muscle and the nature of the industries in which they worked, such as human services, would make it much harder for them to establish 'productivity' increases. Women benefited from centralised wage fixing

because wage increases flowed on to those who worked in smaller workplaces, were less highly unionised and performed work that was harder to quantify. Australia's centralised wage-fixing had moved Australia ahead of many other OECD countries in terms of pay equity, once the equal pay decisions had flowed through the system.

In the end, warnings of gender impact only succeeded in delaying the introduction of the enterprise bargaining principle by a few months. As predicted, female-dominated industries did significantly worse than male-dominated industries. With the Howard Government's subsequent push beyond enterprise bargaining towards individual contracts, the most deleterious effects were on women in the service industries, including the loss of penalty rates and control over hours.²

Governments often found it irritating to have public service units reminding them of the disproportionate effects on women of their favoured policies. This irritant was soon removed at the federal level: for example, the Women's Bureau, in existence since 1963, was abolished in 1997; the Equal Pay Unit was abolished in 1998; and the Work and Family Unit was removed in 2003. Gender expertise within government was rapidly lost as gender units disappeared across all portfolios. The United Nations concept of 'gender mainstreaming', intended to ensure that gender monitoring was built into all areas of government, was seized upon to justify the abolition of gender units. Rather than ensuring that all officers had the capacity and training to undertake gender analysis, gender mainstreaming in Australia meant the loss of, rather than the gaining of, whole-of-government approaches. The whole-of-government co-ordinating role of the federal Office for the Status of Women was already long gone by the time the Office was dispatched to the Department of Family and Community Services in 2004. This relegation simply set the seal on the new discourse of families, which no longer acknowledged the cognitive gap between 'his' and 'her' family.

But it was not just the government machinery responsible for gender audits that was being weakened. Increasingly, the advocacy of women's non-government organisations was also being muted and their policy capacity depleted. Organisations that were critical of government policy directions, such as the Women's Electoral Lobby, were de-funded. Those that continued to receive funding were subjected to increased government controls. So-called gag clauses were inserted in funding contracts, requiring advance notice to government of any media activity. There was a reduction in channels of access to government and a requirement to work through a corporatised system of representation. Four national women's secretariats were set up but their activity was closely monitored. For example, they were warned in 2005 that they would forfeit funding if they used it to sponsor micro-economic modelling of the impact of the government's social welfare reforms on different groups of women.³

The Howard Government also appeared to agree with the views of men's rights groups that feminists had enjoyed far too much policy influence. In 1999 Senator Jocelyn Newman announced that in order to address the 'gender imbalance in policy development' the government would provide two years operational funding for the Lone Fathers Association Australia, while simultaneously de-funding the National Council for Single Mothers and their Children (NCSMC). The de-funding of the NCSMC, representing the section of the Australian population most vulnerable to poverty, was only reversed after extensive public outcry.⁴ Despite the restoration of funding to the single mothers, it was the lone fathers who gained access to government and obtained substantial changes to the Child Support Scheme, the Family Law Act and family tax benefits.⁵

Men's rights groups also had substantial influence on domestic violence policy, vociferously opposing the depiction of men as perpetrators of domestic violence. They contested the validity of any community education campaign that did not start from the premise that women and men were equally violent. They claimed victory when a 'No respect, no relationship' government advertising campaign was cancelled just before Christmas 2003. Their influence was also evident in the de-funding of the peak body for domestic violence services, representing over 300 refuges and crisis services: the Women's Emergency Services Network (WESNET). Both WESNET and the peak body representing rape crisis centres, the National Association of Services against Sexual Violence, were denied operational funding and effectively excluded from the policy-making process.⁶ The lack of voice on the part of women's service providers (or, more accurately, the failure of government to listen) contributed to the under-funding of refuges and the general increase in turn-away rates for supported accommodation. By 2005–06 over 50 per cent of those contacting services had to be turned away.⁷

From having become known internationally as one of the two countries with the most comprehensive government response to the issue of domestic violence, in 2003 Australia prompted astonishment when it 'borrowed' money from its domestic violence and sexual assault programs to pay for mail-outs of anti-terrorism fridge magnets to every household.⁸ In the following year the federal government attempted to suppress a report it had commissioned from Access Economics that found that the cost to the economy of domestic violence was \$8 billion per annum. The report was only released after a successful Freedom of Information application by the *Australian* newspaper.

In 2006, the federal government's Women's Safety Survey (first conducted in 1996) was repeated. This time, it was called the 'Personal Safety Survey.' Interestingly, the executive summary accompanying the new survey's findings at first included misleading figures, which appeared to confirm the beliefs of men's rights groups that similar proportions of men and women engaged in domestic violence. It claimed that '38 per cent of women were physically assaulted by their male current or previous partner compared to 27 per cent of men who were physically assaulted by their female current or previous partner'. In fact, the figures referred only to the proportion of assaults by an opposite-sex perpetrator that were by a partner, and relatively few assaults on men are by an opposite-sex perpetrator. The actual findings of the survey were that 31 per cent of women who had been physically assaulted in the past 12 months had been assaulted by a current or previous male partner, while only 4.4 per cent of men who had been physically assaulted had been assaulted by a female partner.⁹ The misleading figures were corrected several days later, after extensive criticism on the e-list Ausfem-Polnet and elsewhere, but not before they had been seized upon by men's rights groups.

The Rudd Government has a greater commitment to 'evidence-based policy' on issues such as violence against women. Its commitments in this area include commissioning new base-line data as well as bringing women's services, with their front-line experience, back into the policy community. It has also acted on its commitment to ratify the Optional Protocol to the UN Women's Convention (CEDAW), enabling complaints of Convention breaches to be taken to the UN if all domestic remedies have been exhausted. These initiatives are not, however, part of a more general plan to address issues of gender inequality. The reluctance to mention women – paid maternity leave, for example, is presented as a way of helping *parents* of newborn children – does not bode well for a more equal future. Even domestic violence is more often spoken of in terms of its economic cost or its effects on children than its effects on women. Australia remains the only country to have renovated or replaced its

Constitution since World War II without incorporating any commitment to the equality of men and women – or even seriously discussing it.

So if feminist visions have faded, what has been lost? To take evidence from the breakfast table, it is worth inspecting a Canberra milk carton. In 2008 the ACT government, together with various community sector partners such as the Heart Foundation, the Cancer Council and Action on Smoking and Health (ASH), ran an 'Art in, Butt out' art competition. The winner of the competition created an image of a tattooed ankle and a high fashion shoe, butting out a cigarette. What was wrong with this image on a Canberra milk carton, clearly directed at an 'at risk' group of young women? Perhaps the fact that the shoe had heels of at least 13 cm, maybe more. Once upon a time, feminism pointed out that shoes of this kind caused damage to the feet, back and knees and were akin to the foot binding once inflicted on women in China. Stiletto heels were worn because they were regarded as making women more sexually attractive (and less able to run away). In fact they were commonly known as 'f... me' shoes. Today there appears to be nobody within government (or in its non-government 'partners') who could point out the contradiction involved in an anti-smoking health promotion campaign that encouraged young women to wear shoes harmful to the body.

Margaret Thornton has similarly written of her discomfort in being confronted with an issue of the Australian National University Law Students' Association journal, which used the depiction of a woman's breasts on the front cover to draw attention to an issue dealing with 'women's issues' such as honour killings and sex trafficking. The editors argued that the cover was intended to be provocative and ironic and they saw nothing wrong with the depersonalised depiction of female body parts for this purpose. As Thornton comments, key insights from second-wave feminism seem to be lost here: 'Can the sexualised depiction of a woman's breasts, *sans* head, in the context of a discussion of sexed crime really be liberating and empowering for women?'¹⁰

Feminist aspirations for transformative and democratic forms of service delivery, the hopes of the 1970s, too often collided with the private sector philosophies that came to pervade government. Competitive tendering for service provision made no room for democratic processes or for community education and advocacy. Commitment to the kind of labour market regulation needed to deliver pay equity or family-friendly working conditions was also hard to find. And while the Rudd Government removed the 'gag' clauses in NGO funding contracts, the revival of strong collective advocacy from outside is not yet evident either. There is more celebration of past victories than forceful claims on the future. And shop windows are full of those shoes with 13 cm heels that feminists once thought they had disposed of forever in the freedom rubbish bin. So while there may now be feminist firefighters, a whole raft of other issues remain as challenges for the next generation of feminists. Some of these challenges will be overseas, where the persistence of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, in particular, is ensuring some progress on implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women's role in peacekeeping and peacebuilding. And if WILPF, dating from World War I, can continue to bear fruit in the 21st century, the tree with the purple flowers is not yet dead.

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- ⁴ Sawer, Marian (2002), 'Governing for the mainstream', *Australian Journal of Public Administration*, 61, 1: 39-49.
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- ⁹ Flood, Michael (2006). 'Violence against women and men in Australia: What the personal safety survey can and can't tell us', *DRCV Newsletter* 4: 3-10.
- ¹⁰ Thornton, Margaret (2008). 'Feminism in the legal academy: A twentieth century aberration?', paper presented to 'Transcending the Boundaries of Law: A Feminist Legal Theory Conference', Emory School of Law, Atlanta, USA, 6-8 November.

In the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, not quite 25 per cent of the Fellowship of 487 are women. This unequal gender balance is, however, marginally better than that in the three other Learned Academies.

Poisons and Antidotes: Historicising feminism and equality in an age of rights competition

Ann Genovese

*'History has a more important task than to be a handmaiden to philosophy, to recount the necessary birth of truth and values; it should become a differential knowledge of energies and failings, heights and degenerations, poisons and antidotes.'*¹

Equality as feminist paradox

Feminist historians have long made the argument that equality owns particular meanings at particular times, but exists in a constant state of paradox for those who try to frame a women's rights agenda around it.² This is a well understood and theorised problem in feminist philosophy, both in law, where I research, and outside of it. Feminist theorists have very carefully demonstrated three variations of the paradoxical problems that arise when using rights frames that emerge from liberalism, and in relation to the modern state. The first is that rights are written already through historical identity, they are not neutral, and the identity they carry is culturally male. Rights then have historical meaning in terms of their content, and that content does not often enable their difference – either biological or social – that has contained and interpreted women as subjects of society, and more importantly, as subjects of law. This has serious implications for women seeking rights: women must redefine their campaign for rights – necessitated in the first place by their exclusion – to look like or sound familiar to those already experiencing the rights on offer. It is the idea that is discussed so effectively by writers like Carol Pateman, Susan Moller Okin and others about the problem of contracting into a society that is premised for women on a sexual and familial contract, not a civil one.³ It is also the key idea at the heart of much of the feminist legal thinking of the 1980s and early 1990s, when feminist legal thinkers struggled to come to terms with the differential between substantive and formal equality as legal concepts and bases for reform.⁴ It is also the source of the very political problem that consumed feminists since entering the bureaucracy in the 1970s, and feminist lawyers since the 1980s.⁵ This was the historical moment when in larger and larger numbers women started emerging from law schools and confronting the hard places where political questioning meets practice, and the question became whether feminists should stand at the door of the court (or more aptly in Australia, the bureaucracy and academy) to preserve their difference to men, to make a point about their inherent exclusion in liberal discourse, or to be in there fighting, using men's notions of rights, like formal equality, like a sword.⁶ Often it was argued that women lawyers should do both.⁷ But that did not detract from the very real implications for women as subjects before law that occurred when equality was framed as a reform precept. US feminist legal thinker Martha Fineman, for example, has long argued that effects on women and children of endorsing 'gender-neutral' (ie, formally equal) divorce law reforms were devastating, as they reinforced the unequal economic and social status of men and women that are perpetuated socially and culturally, and thus continue after divorce.⁸

The second problem that feminist scholars have identified when women want to deploy rights-based language is that a concept like equality, which is used to give shape to rights, has a particular Marxist and neo-Marxist meaning in contemporary feminism. This is the idea that if we view society as inequalitarian, which most feminist politics of different persuasions suggest, based on gender, rights will 'differentially empower different social groups'.⁹ That is, despite the ideal of using a universalised woman as a

political and philosophical corrective to universal man in rational thinking, not all women are born equal. This, again, invites questions for feminists about how we view woman as subject of law or politics. The needs and rights of Indigenous women, for example, presume differential campaigns and engagements than those of white middle class women, who often have the language and tools to engage in the public spheres of debate in the first place.¹⁰ What this has meant, if thinking about feminism as epistemic, has been a turn to the psychoanalytic to work out, intellectually, how to conceive of bodily and culturally determined difference.¹¹ But as Australian feminist legal scholar Margaret Thornton has presciently noted, it has also signalled, in conjunction with the politics of embodiment suggested by the equality/difference debate, a focus in feminist thinking by the 1990s on 'the capillaries'. By this she suggests that trying to work through conceptually difficult problems with increasingly complex theoretical language is a philosophical necessity for figuring out equality issues *apropos* women themselves, but this has meant that a focused eye was taken away from the public engagement of feminist theorising, based on more universal or essential ideas about women, with immediate political problems.¹²

The third recurring paradoxical problem for feminists and the idea and use of equality is that of rights competition, which is very much centred on immediate political – and legal – problems. This is the idea that 'certain rights are exercised not only against the state but against one another in economic arrangements in which some gain at the expense of others'.¹³ This is a problem that becomes reified in times where the state offers no market or ethical commitment to collective responsibilities or egalitarian notions of communal sharing based on class (or other) need. This is particularly a problem in the contemporary moment, and from my perspective the most pressing paradox offered by rights discourse as it relates to a whole range of what we would traditionally (or if not traditionally, in the language of social liberalism) call marginalised, collectively identified groups, and their claims for justice in, or against, the state. The collision between neo-conservatism and neo-liberalism that has occurred over the past twenty years, and that dominated economic and cultural agendas under the Howard Government, has had a manifestly detrimental impact on collectively self-identified movements like feminism as it has actively enabled rights competition, and sought out agents for blame for state assistance in a time of mass economic individuation. This is exacerbated by the drawing away of feminist theory's attention to the 'capillaries', to deal with the other, more internal, aspects of the equality paradox, and its current dimensions. The paradigmatic shift in the nature of liberalism *qua* the state has meant that the reform opportunities the state afforded women in the 1970s and 1980s belong to the past. The rise of neo-liberalism has resulted in older style feminism being cast as 'an elite' – detached and removed from 'real' social values and priorities – yet at the same time demanding state assistance, maintaining a negative social space as a 'rent seeker.' Political scientist Marian Sawer describes the sentiment stirred against feminism in this way as 'populist anti-elitism'.¹⁴

Equality and rights competition

It is this aspect of the equality paradox that I see writ large today, and lies at the base of the two divergent ideas about feminism that are circulating in our newspapers, talkback radio, Senate committees and our courts. Both these ideas are not only entrapped by the conundrum of paradox as a problem without obvious resolution, and one that always changes over time, but are also caught in the trap of an historical presbyopia. Presbyopia is the inevitable loss of ability by individuals or communities to focus on what is nearest to them, in all its messy dimensions.¹⁵ This presbyopia creates public discourse and rhetoric about feminism that demands we give a score

card to feminist praxis in terms of 'success' and 'failure' over the past thirty years, without bothering to understand the historical dimensions and context of that praxis. Both ideas about feminism today are also fixated on 'the family', (and its corrective when families fall apart, family law) as a key site for gendered social and cultural change about public and private spaces for men and women, the meaning of care, maternalism, and the nature and economic recognition of work, inside and outside the home.

The first version of feminist equality that exists in this public family law space is voiced in a language of resentment: enabled by the neo-liberal idea of new class elites. This is the idea that feminist campaigns for equality have been too successful, particularly in public arenas where rights discourses are enacted, courts and legislatures. Feminist initiatives around reforming family law, based on substantive equality and responsibilities that attach to rights, and identification of differential experience of the law based on violence, is particularly easily categorised as marginal, outdated, or devoid of reality in this context.¹⁶ This is the song sheet of men's rights groups, for example, who argue, especially in relation to the always gendered jurisdiction of family law, that decisions that favour women are biased, and that the Family Court is reprehensible in denying fathers their rights to children.¹⁷ At the same time, the burgeoning fathers' rights movement has utilised equality rights discourse itself to gain unprecedented access to the family law reform agenda. I have written elsewhere about the dimensions of fathers' *ressentiment*, and their role in creating the culture of rights competition in which feminism finds itself. It is worth reiterating here however that the ways this rhetoric about feminist equality surfaces in family law arguably create the most prevalent domestic legal problems facing women today.

In 2006, the *Family Law Act* was amended to introduce 'friendly parent criterion' with new provisions creating a presumption for courts when deciding child residence matters of equal shared parental responsibility: a 50/50 split. These latest reforms build on previous amendments to the Act in 1995 which favoured explicit referencing of individual rights (ostensibly attached to children, but manifesting in parental competition). The rights of the child have become about the rights of the parents *to* the child, which has eclipsed the responsibilities that fall to them as a consequence. The legislative and Committee context which debated and produced the reforms contains not-so-subtle intentions of dismantling any assumptions about primary carer responsibility, despite the continuation of the baseline purpose of the Act in relation to children, which is that any legal outcome must be in their best interests. The recent reforms require parents to cooperate, to communicate effectively as the child moves between homes. Appropriately, they take account of histories of violence to protect children and their mothers from continued exposure to that violence, by creating a ground of exception to these presumptions. This is a position long argued and fought for by feminist academics and law reformers, and first introduced into the list of considerations as to what is in a child's best interest in the 1995 reforms. Violence against women (and as witnessed by children) then appears as a differential exception to the rule.¹⁸ But the idea that those provisions are necessary is publicly resisted as a feminist plot, a sign of bias, of being out of touch, disproportionate, unfair and allowed to undermine the formal equality of the shared parenting principle. Any criticisms of the new provisions from feminists groups, such as the hard working and under funded Women's Legal Service in each state, and the National Association of Community Legal Services, that forcing parents who have suffered violence and manipulation and threats from the other party into compulsory mediation (another requirement in the new Act) or shared parenting, brings criticism of breaking the equality rules of the rights

competition. Feminism is seen in this discourse as once again successfully running roughshod over majority sentiment, and forcing an 'elitist' agenda, as well as being 'out of touch' with men, and women (who are not feminist). Michael Green QC, president of the Shared Parenting Council of Australia, exploded in *Online Opinion* on this issue in the following way:

...feminism has done a disservice to women. It has sought to portray them as poor, suffering creatures that need protection from men and from paternalistic institutions...Such thinking is a grave insult to the majority of women...Ask any experienced mediator who carries the power in mediation: almost inevitably the mother with the children. The government is to be congratulated on having the courage and energy to effect a new system.¹⁹

The other side of this coin is that feminism 'failed' – the lament from the chorus of women who are often my age (30s), disgruntled that somehow not enough was delivered by older women. This is a very middle class panic about fertility and markets. It is a tale of alleged failures of feminism in somehow telling women they could 'have it all', without any attendant attention paid to the role of the state, or men, or the economy, or now forgotten ideas of class about work in enabling or assisting a different kind of family realm. Anne Manne's recent essay, 'Love and money: family and the free market',²⁰ is an excellent example of how this rhetoric operates, especially as it was published in *Quarterly Essay*, which is the current masthead for what is accepted by the mainstream as a venue for sensible but critical debate. Manne's position fits very squarely in the 'feminism was a failure' side of the ledger. Her general argument is that the neo-liberal market, with its focus on capitalism as individualism, has been wrong footed, unsympathetic and damaging, as it has both motivated and ensnared women, taken away choices about their families, and ignored their maternalism, their need to care. These conclusions about the market and its impact on family life are not controversial, and are an important stimulus to debates about care in our culture, regardless of where one sits on the care/work spectrum. The diagnosis of the current state of society, however, which causes difficulty for many women, brings with it a need to examine where the demand for work by mothers (and women generally) comes from. Manne very clearly thinks that 'feminism' gains its moral authority from being 'universal', and that the 'universal' woman of feminism that exists in modern society is ruled by a self interested desire for work, and public participation. This idea of universal feminism is the creation of an 'elite' group, who argued that 'equality is interpreted as meaning sameness with men'. The equality seeking feminism, a feminism of sameness, of equal career opportunity, thus 'imposed' its properties on everyone else, forced the exclusion of all women who chose a different path, ie, staying home and being valued as carers. This is the source of her gloomy and dangerous instance that feminism sets the stage for a 'farewell to maternalism'.²¹ Manne uses this interpretation of a universal feminist intent to allege there is a 'twinning', or collusion, between the use of equal work opportunities as the sole and key arena of feminism since 1970, and the rise of the neo-liberal market: 'Upon what tracks have feminist ideas run? The answer is: market tracks'. This enables her to argue that although it wasn't feminism's goal to deny the right of women to care, it was 'inadvertent' that this is where feminism obsessed with public self interest and performance has taken women, and that the victims are maternally deprived children, and the victors are the childcare industry. She argues: it is 'vital to see that two revolutions – the transformation of women's roles and resurgence of free market ideals – occurred at the very same moment in history'.

What is important to highlight is that firstly, these positions (as exemplified by Green and Manne) are contradictory and apocryphal: equality as a tool for justice as developed by feminists is viewed today as both a terrible success and terrible failure. Secondly these positions are a correlative of the paradox problem: what they share is presbyopia about the past, a blindness to, or certitude about, recent feminism. Because they fail to understand the paradoxical relationship of feminisms to equality, both see feminism as using equality as the weapon of choice, and that it carried with it a singular meaning, to get even (with men), or get out there (to work). Contemporary popular Australian rhetoric seems to blindly accept this narrow view of feminism, which had a dominant effect on equality based reform programs. Such rhetoric presumes that the categories 'feminism' and 'equality' were always straightforward and coherent, that they carried with them none of the problems and debate I have sketched briefly, and as such were capable of shaping society in an indelible way. Feminism is rendered today as a poison, capable of derailing rights, telling lies, delivering nothing.

History as antidote

The historical presbyopia of these positions demands a particular kind of antidote. As an historian and a lawyer, I believe it is absolutely imperative to tell the complexity of the immediate past, both to offer a strategy for current feminist thinking (which often is rightly too preoccupied putting out fires to untangle the epistemological strands of how we got where we are), and also to offer a strategic corrective, to place into public discourse an *anti* to anti feminism. This is difficult, especially for the legally trained. Part of this problem is the tendency of law to be legocentric, or view the only sustainable historical narratives as those of law itself: common law, stages of legislative reform, legal theory. Law, when reflecting on or summarising what has been achieved or what has not worked as it should in terms of reform, does not relish looking outside itself to the communities and cultural contexts in which it interacts, to look for explanations. It especially does not easily view that external history as of importance to itself.²² The other difficulty is a more general one: the problem of 'seeing' the very recent past as the past, and thus as worth interrogating as a history of ideas with resonance in the present. Despite the important recent work of feminist historians in Australia (like Margaret Henderson, Zora Simic, and Natasha Campo), the 1970s in particular is all too often under-theorised in this way. It is rejected by many contemporary scholars as not of interest for the very fact that 1968 preceded it, and rejected as 'not history' by others as it remains part of their own experiential narrative. This is why we currently encounter the wilfully misrepresented or glossed versions of what feminism 'did' or 'didn't' do. Yet the 1970s provides a frame through which to understand why and how we face the challenges of our own time, for the simple fact that it carries lightly on its skin the scars we now bear.

I want to give a sample of what such an antidote, such a history of the present, would look like as a response to the equality paradox as rights competition that prevaricates in any discussion of feminism and of feminist justice, in the present moment. There are two strands to such a history. One is a narrative about the relationship between feminism and law, and the ways in which the coalition between lawyers and others in the broader feminist movement waned, both for disciplinary reasons, and as a direct result of the nature of the battles needing to be waged in criminal and family law in particular.²³ The other is the historical narrative I want to sketch, using Manne's essay as an exemplar of the form presbyopia takes, that I believe clouds proper debate. What Manne taps into but fails to discuss openly, or fairly, is the ongoing philosophical problem of women trying to access rights – like equal pay and work participation – that are designed to exclude them. This allows her to make feminism into a straw

philosophical argument: easy to blame, as part of the corrupting influence of the modern state. She is right to argue that today's family life is shaped by new market economics, as she is in arguing that feminism has been 'put to work to lend legitimacy' to interests that it may not have fully intended. But she is mistaken to think that feminism *desired* a universalised working subject that wanted a 'caste' system of care givers that would make feminism a moral agent in forcing children into institutional care. By explicitly arguing that feminism entered into a 'dangerous liaison' with capitalism, Manne fails to give an 'account of the twists and turns in feminist argument', and Australian history more generally, that would let us see 'the contingency of feminism and the discursive nature of feminist agency'.²⁴

Equality has an (Australian) history of ideas

Let us begin with the history of social movements in Australia. The 'liberal feminism' that has such a commitment to and complicity with the 'capitalist revolution' of the 1980s started, if we must seek origins, in the late 1960s. Feminism in Australia of that period was not called 'feminism'; that emerged later.²⁵ Early on, the social movement and politics was still known as Women's Liberation. The emancipatory politics of early Women's Liberation, particularly in Sydney, with its anarchist traditions, and Andersonian libertarian precepts and experimental living, was about freedom. This could be seen in the collective anti War Movement in the late 1960s, but individual freedom, in those traditions, was focused on sexuality, rather than work, as self expression. For women, through a broad curricula of ideas provided by Marcuse, and Laing, and later Firestone and Greer,²⁶ this evolved into a focus on male sexuality, and the damage that caused to women's autonomy. This generated alternative ideas about relationships, and women's role in them, and developed, as the movement grew and diversified, into a critique of the social ideas in currency about 'normal' family life. This inherent critique of traditional heterosexual relationships enabled, then, an alignment with less radical and more socially reformist ideas, like those of US feminist writer and activist Betty Friedan, who argued specifically that marriage and the suburban ideal of the housewife/mother was an oppressive structure for women.²⁷ From this historical vantage point, it would be poor analysis, both chronologically and in terms of histories of ideas, to view the individualist and emancipatory strands that unarguably exist in Australian feminism as 'twinned' with neo liberalism. This blindness to the character and ideas that motivated feminism as a social movement is a grave error, as it opens 'feminism' up to being a politics capable of carrying seeds of destruction, for example, in terms of the blame apportioned to it as a new class elite.

Viewing feminism as devoted to self interest (thus able to morph into a market force aligned with neo-liberalism, without qualms) also ignores another key aspect of the recent past in Australia, and feminism's role in it. This is the shift in ideas about equality as a social good, and the role of the state (and later, law) in realising those ideas. Alongside more radical libertarian thinking, early Women's Liberation in Australia tracked not along market lines, but those set down by Marxism. Many in the emergent social movement in the early 1970s came from New Left politics, and explored the inequality of women in society, a sexual inequality, as a product of capitalist oppression.²⁸ The idea of inequality, as a negative condition for women that needed explanation, was strongly grounded in class structures. It is this use of the concept that lay at the heart of women's struggles in the preceding decades, for equal pay, for example, that came directly from socialist organisations and the Union of Australian Women.²⁹ As a positive concept, equality was a tool of *class* justice, and 'women' as a collective social and cultural group began to define themselves as a class that could use that idea to affect change to material conditions of their existence.

This position meant that work like that of US feminist trail blazer Kate Millett, whose *Sexual Politics* (1970) was very important to the development of feminism of this period world wide, was particularly relevant in Australia. This was because it was not antithetical to, and helped realise in material ways, the emancipatory political strands that already underlay Women's Liberation, as opposed to the older style union politics of struggle. It was Millett who introduced patriarchy as a material base to women's social and cultural position, 'an institutionalised rule of women not men', and the term was used variously to describe governing ideology, and institutions, like the state, and the family.³⁰ This developed later into a problematic politics for many feminists, as already identified, in terms of the claims of universalism and how that played out as equality paradox.³¹

This diversion into patriarchy is important, however, as its acceptance by feminism was premised on the broader received meaning of 'equality' in 1970s Australia. Equality came then from a clearly socialist/social liberal frame of reference, not that of a classic market liberalism, nor even the formalist equality of law that has come to dominate as the rights competition in our society today and increasingly means a competition in the door of the court. Equality and 'equal opportunity' at that time required instead an active role by the state in regulating the labour market, to mitigate 'inequalities and to provid[e] social infrastructure to enable all to participate in the life of the community'.³² As Marian Sawer notes, equality as an aspect of liberalism shaping Australia was very different to the earlier forms of liberalism in the US, which focused on freedom and contract, and 'negative rather than positive liberty'.³³ These grounded bases, part of Australian political intellectual history, were fundamental to the formation of the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL). WEL is often argued to be distinct from Women's Liberation as a political force, as it was focused from the very start not on revolution but on reform, with a 'vested interest in the public sector'.³⁴ The idea however that these groups were completely distinct, in terms of intellectual grounding or membership in Australia, is not sustainable. The received precepts of equality that underpinned Australian society at the time can be traced in a range of seemingly diverse political or social groupings, including of course a resurgent Labor Party (ALP) in the 1970s. As Sawer notes, this was a time when the ALP was broadening its own views and 'equal opportunity' was extended from class to cover 'different forms of disadvantage, whether arising from gender, race, ethnicity or disability'.³⁵ It was this convergence – of the aims of a *social liberal state* and of feminism – rather than US ideas of *neo liberal market* and feminism – that enabled a modicum of cooperation between law, state and women's political agendas. The point here is an important one, and one we often gloss over. If we want to deal fairly with our Australian past and present, we have to remember our story is different from that of the US; that this was not a story of being shut out, of having to rely on stricter formulations of sameness feminism, or using the 14th Amendment to affect rights based gains through the courts. Australian feminism in the pivotal movement of the 1970s was still able to carry an ethic of care, and a commitment to economic recognition of that care, an awareness of more than equal workforce participation. Our feminism could learn from and build on ideas coming from the US, but remained different, grounded and distinct. The convergence between feminist aspirations and the social liberal state in Australia, however, carried its own version of the equality paradox, hotly debated at the time. For women to be offered a seat at the legislative and treasury table meant entering into a decidedly fraught relationship with institutions that had been designed to exclude them. But in giving up earlier, utopian ideas of revolution, and embracing the 'equal opportunity' frame social liberalism allowed, there was achievement on the 'equality as

justice for women' front, that we can still access today, albeit in much watered down ways: the homemaker contribution provisions in the *Family Law Act*, domestic violence legislation at state level and the *Sex Discrimination Act*.³⁶

Feminist mothers and caring fathers

Part of this transformation process for feminism in Australia was the importance of thinking about mothering. Emerging from the earlier radical ideas about alternative family structures, transforming the family meant challenging the idea that women had to be 'stuck' in marriage, not, necessarily, that they escaped their children, or rejected their maternalism.³⁷ Many international 1970s feminist texts, like those of Chodorow, Firestone and Rich had a near obsession with the biological, emotional and psychoanalytic perspectives of mothering. These had resonance with many women in Australia, particularly those not engaged in formal politics, figuring out how to live their own lives, differently.³⁸ Feminists of all stripes grappled with the distinctions and limits of equality and freedom that presented themselves to women within the family.³⁹ In the first edition of the Australian feminist newspaper *Mejane* in 1971, Ann Curthoys gave an account of an early Women's Liberation conference in Sydney where this issue of the constraints of housewife status as economically determinant for women was hotly debated. But, within her critique, she indicated that 'some women did argue that the nuclear family as it existed did provide emotional sustenance of an intimate kind rarely found elsewhere in society. Mothers did form close relationships with their children. Any alternative [communes, extended families, childcare centres, preschool education] would have to also be able to provide close personal relationships'.⁴⁰ Freedom, in 1970, ironically, did not necessarily mean abandonment of nurture, and seeking equality, as a person, did not mean abandonment of commitment and emotional submergence to, or desire for, one's child. So critiquing a singular notion of feminism for failing the family – the endgame of allegedly liberal self fulfilment – is an illusory aspect of the history of equality. In 1970, Rosalie Stephenson, in her book *Women in Australian Society*, asked a key question for many women who were not part of the radical counter-cultures of Balmain and Carlton: 'Can a woman work and bring up a family?'⁴¹ Stephenson's working women are not middle class, tertiary educated, or careerist (or, as men's rights groups would argue, radical separatists). They wanted to work, because it *paid*, and enabled them a degree of financial independence, and assisted in providing material benefits for their children. Yet she also acknowledged women were often unable to 'undertake jobs equal to their full capabilities because they are unwilling to neglect their families'. Australian society, Stephenson argued, was doing little to make it easier, via assistance with late night shopping hours, let alone crèche or better organised shift work, to enable women to work. The problem was clear that industry needed to change to a frame of work that was less 'masculinist': she argued this 'was in the national interest', and should not be regarded as 'a feminist heresy or at best, an irresponsibly feminist attitude to employment'.⁴²

By the 1980s there were literally hundreds of articles and books about the family, women and work, and the key issues boiled down to care of children: who did it, how to do it better, how to do it differently, how to get the state and community to help. Many feminists were arguing that to focus separately on barriers to women's public exclusion in labour markets, and the expressions of motherhood, was missing the point. Their solution, based very firmly in a critical Marxist frame, was to provide a range of quality care that included, importantly, a new role for fathers, and a different approach to men's work. Ann Curthoys, for example, described the debate about work/care/family – presciently if we think of the recent changes to the *Family Law Act* – like this: 'It is up to the women's movement to attack the problem, for if we leave it up

to men it will never be solved. For all the talk of the joys of parenthood, men do not find childcare sufficiently enjoyable to seize it for themselves. They will have to have it forced upon them'.⁴³

Consideration of these struggles with what equality, family, self fulfilment and a woman-friendly state meant for feminism in the near past, is completely absent in Manne's argument about individualism and markets; as it is absent, or swallowed or sidelined, in the contradictory rhetorical viewpoints about feminism and its goals. The latter refuse to acknowledge that the most dominant social forms of feminist expression in the 1970s and 1980s came from women with children, often married, often championed by WEL, trying to find ways to manage their lives differently by demanding some cultural and social acceptance of what we would call now their 'double shift'.⁴⁴ They also miss the point that the clearest moment of economic and cultural exposure to the market came when those marriages broke down, and into that space feminist legal thinkers and lawyers had to try their best to straddle the sometimes different needs of women and their children. Most tellingly, they fail to understand that questions about personal and familial equality in our recent past by necessity involved and implicated men, about which feminism, as it related to most women in Australian society, was not blind. Ironically, we have reached a point where feminism of the 1970s, as it has played out in family law, and family policy relating to the market generally, has become both cause and symptom of the politics of gendered distrust and disavowal. We forget the ethic of care that underscored the state and that allowed a possibility of cultural change, of feminist mothers and caring fathers.⁴⁵ It was not *feminism* that failed the family, circa 1975. If we are looking for a culprit, for a source of blame for why 'mothers [are] feeling coerced, silenced and undervalued while fathers feel powerless and aggressive',⁴⁶ we should use the roots of both our state traditions, and the Marxist dimensions of our feminism, as a lens through which to do so. We should look to the global economic ideology that dominated the post-1989 world, and the way that transformed the Australian traditions of equality and fairness that had been embedded in the state and its legislative expression. It was the shift of the market to the Right that enabled, for example, the child support reforms of the late 1980s. These reforms provide a key moment when the politics of the ethical state began to be dismantled, when support of children became excised from the public and became a private concern. If nothing else, privatising support for the nation's children exposed the lack of economic equality in Australia between genders; it fed the resentment of men, who as the better paid and full time worker before family breakdown, were the ones the state designated as capable of carrying the cost when the dream was over.⁴⁷

History as an antidote to the presbyopia about the recent past is important: it reminds us that we should be wary of the idea of equality (either formal or substantive) as a straightforward or determinate tool for rights gains and justice, especially in family law, and in areas dominated by family policy. We need to pay attention to our own past and to our social movements. They can help us work out where strategic campaigns for justice are appropriate in the present, and help us to understand that the meanings of equality, both for feminism, and the nation, *do not remain constant*. It is essential to remember that equality and rights-based claims have history and meaning outside of law. We need to reject false rhetorical and historical revisionism that is forced upon feminism, as it refuses to acknowledge the importance of political frames that predated the anti-feminist fixation on 'liberal feminism': frames based on class, on parity, even on libertarianism as a form of personal freedom. Forgetting these influences on Australian debates about justice disallows more creative understandings

of how rights might be used and understood, not just for women of the law, but more importantly, for all women subject to it.

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- ¹ Foucault, Michel (1977). 'Nietzsche, genealogy, history', in Rabinow, Paul (ed) *The Foucault Reader*, Pantheon, NY: 76-100, 90.
- ² Scott, Joan W (1996). *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French feminists and the rights of man*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge: 5-6; Brown, Wendy (2000). 'Suffering rights as paradoxes', *Constellations* 7, 2: 230-241, 238.
- ³ Pateman, Carole (1992). *Sexual Contract*, Polity, Cambridge; Moller; Okin, Susan (1989). *Justice, Gender and the Family*, Basic Books, NY.
- ⁴ See for example Smart, Carol (1989). *Feminism and The Power of Law*, Routledge, London; Morgan, Jenny and Graycar, Reg (1990). *The Hidden Gender of Law*, Federation Press, Sydney.
- ⁵ For a general discussion of this point, see Eisenstein, Hester (1996). *Inside Agitators*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW; Watson, Sophie (1990). *Playing the State*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW.
- ⁶ For a history of this development and the ideas that feminist jurisprudence generated and debated in Australia, see Thornton, Margaret (1996). *Dissonance and Distrust*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne; and Armstrong, Susan M (2004). 'Abstentionists and sceptics', *Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 20: 43-6. See Joanne Conaghan for similar historicist overview in (2000) 'Reassessing the feminist theoretical project in law', 27 *Journal of Law and Society*: 351.
- ⁷ Matsuda, Mari (1989). 'When the first quail calls: multiple consciousness as jurisprudential method', 11 *Women's Rights Law Reporter* 30, has famously expressed this idea; discussed recently in Davies, Margaret (2003). 'Legal theory and law reform: some mainstream and critical approaches', 28 *Alternative Law Journal* 168: 170.
- ⁸ Fineman, Martha (1991). *The Illusion of Equality: The Rhetoric and Reality of Divorce Law Reform*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- ⁹ Brown (2000) *op cit*: 231.
- ¹⁰ See for contemporaneous with the ideas in this essay, and now classic examples of this point, Williams, Patricia J (1991). *The Alchemy of Race and Rights*, Cambridge University Press, Harvard; Behrendt, Larissa (1993). 'Aboriginal women and the white lies of the

feminist movement: implications for rights discourse'. 27 *Australian Feminist Law Journal* 1: 27-44.

- 11 The 1990s saw the identification of the 'man of reason' argument develop into a much wider debate within feminism about how to interpret, and link, equality and difference through a rethinking of what the body meant, and how and whether feminism could incorporate both. See for discussion of this shift in Australia, Thornton, Margaret (2004). 'Neoliberal melancholia: the case of feminist legal scholarship', *The Australian Feminist Law Journal*, 20: 7-22; and generally, Fraser, Nancy (1997). *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Post Socialist' Condition*, Routledge, NY and London. The reading of and connections to French philosophy, particularly Lacanian and feminist psychoanalytic philosophers was crucial to these developments in Australia, especially around the biology/culture debates. For representative examples, see Morris, Meaghan (1988). *The Pirate's Fiancée: Feminism, reading, postmodernism*, Verso, London; Grosz, Elizabeth (1989). *Sexual Subversions*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW; and Curthoys, Ann (1988). *For and Against Feminism*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW for critical discussion in context of these developments in Australia.
- 12 Thornton (2004) *op cit*.
- 13 Brown (2000) *op cit*: 232.
- 14 Sawyer, Marian (2004). 'Populism and public choice: turning equality-seekers into special Interests', in Hindess, B and Sawyer, M (eds) *Us and Them: Anti-Elitism in Australia*, API Network, Australia Research Institute, Perth WA: 33-56, 33.
- 15 Thornton (2004) *op cit*: 20.
- 16 See for example the veiled exchange on gender politics and family law research agendas in *Family Matters*, the journal of the Australian Institute of Family Studies, after the publication of research on the impact and success of the 1995 reforms. See Rhoades, Helen, Graycar, Reg and Harrison, Margaret (2001a). 'Family law update: the first three years of the Family Law Reform Act', *Family Matters* 58, Autumn: 80-83; Parkinson, Patrick (2001) 'Letters', *Family Matters* 59 Winter: 78; and Maloney, Lawrie (2001). 'Researching the Family Law Reform Act: a case of selective attention?' *Family Matters* 59 Winter: 64-68; Rhoades, Helen, Graycar, Reg and Harrison, Margaret (2001b). 'The authors respond', *Family Matters* 59 Winter: 69-75.
- 17 Genovese, Ann (2006). 'Family histories: John Hirst vs feminism, in the Family Court of Australia', *Australian Feminist Studies* 21, 50: 172-196. The argument that follows relies heavily on this earlier work.
- 18 For full discussion of the legislative intention, judicial interpretation, social and cultural impact, critique and support of these reforms, see: Chisholm, Richard (2007). 'Making it work: the Family Law Amendment (Shared Parental Responsibility) Act 2006', 21 *Australian Journal of Family Law*: 143-172; Parkinson, Patrick (2007). 'The values of parliament and the best interests of children: a response to Professor Chisholm', 21 *Australian Journal of Family Law*: 213-231; Kaspiw, Rae (2007). 'Empirical insights into parental attitudes and children's interests in Family Court litigation', *Sydney Law Review*, 29, 1: 131-162.
- 19 Green, Michael (2006). 'The myths about shared parenting', *Online Opinion*. Posted 3 February, <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=4126> ; accessed 15 September 2008. The piece was also submitted as the basis of individual submissions to the Senate Committee on the Shared Parenting Bill. Green also mentions explicitly, and uses for the focus of his critique, the NALC and submission to that inquiry: http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/legcon_ctte/completed_inquiries/2004-07/family_law/submissions/sublist.htm
- 20 Manne, Anne (2008) 'Love and money: the family and the free market', *Quarterly Essay*, Issue 29, Black Inc, Melbourne. All following quotes from Manne come from this publication.
- 21 *Ibid*: 10-15.
- 22 See Gordon, Robert W (1975). 'Introduction: J Willard Hurst and the common law tradition in American legal historiography', *Law and Society*, Fall, 9-55; and commentary on this idea for the Australian context in Curthoys, Ann, Genovese, Ann and Reilly, Alexander (2008). *Rights and Redemption*, UNSW Press, Sydney: 140-143.

- 23 Some of that story I have started writing about elsewhere, Genovese, Ann (2000). 'The politics of naming: '70s feminisms, genealogy and domestic violence' in Walker, R, Brass, K and Byron, J (eds) *Anatomies of Violence: An Interdisciplinary Investigation* (RIHSS, University of Sydney): 115-129; (2002). 'Madonna and/or whore? Feminism(s) and public sphere(s)', in Thornton, Margaret (ed) *Romancing The Toms: Popular Culture, Law and Feminism*, Cavendish, London UK: 147-164; (2006) *op cit*; and (forthcoming 2009). 'Writing the past as politics', *Lilith*. I hope to continue the development of these concerns in future work.
- 24 Lake, Marilyn (1999). Review of *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French feminism and the rights of man*, Joan W Scott and *English feminism, 1780-1980*, by Barbara Caine, *Signs* 24, 2 (Winter): 504-506.
- 25 For general historical discussion of the social movement politics and intellectual antecedents of the 1970s WLM in Australia, see Curthoys (1988) *op cit*; Lake, Marilyn (1999). *Getting Equal: The history of Australian feminism*, Allen and Unwin, St Leonards, NSW; and for critical reflection on these and other feminist texts chronicling the period, see Henderson, Margaret (2006). *Marking Feminist Times: Remembering the longest revolution in Australia*, European University Studies, Peter Lang, Bern.
- 26 Marcuse, Herbert (1969). *An Essay on Liberation*, Allen Lane, London; Laing, RD (1967). *The Politics of Experience*, Pantheon Books, NY; Greer, Germaine (1970). *The Female Eunuch*, MacGibbon and Kee, London; Firestone, Shulamith (1970). *The Dialectic of Sex: The case for Feminist Revolution*, Morrow, NY. For a discussion of the New Left in general, reflecting on their intellectual antecedents and politics, and a contemporaneous assessment of John Anderson's influence on Push politics and agendas, see Docker John (1974). *Australian Cultural Elites: Intellectual Traditions in Sydney and Melbourne*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney. See also Gordon, Richard and Osmond, Warren (1970). 'An overview of the Australian New Left', in *The Australian New Left: Critical Essays and Strategy*, William Heinemann Australia, Melbourne: 3-42.
- 27 For example, Friedan, Betty (1965). *The Feminine Mystique*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth; UK; Oakley, Ann (1974). *Housewife*, A Lane, London.
- 28 Mitchell, Juliet (1971). *Woman's Estate*, Harmondsworth, UK; Millett, Kate (1970). *Sexual Politics*, Hart Davis, London; Curthoys (1988) *op cit*, 'A Short history of feminism, 1970-1984': 79-94.
- 29 See Ryan, Edna and Conlon, Anne (1975). *Gentle Invaders: Australian Women at Work*, Penguin, Ringwood, Vic.
- 30 Millett (1970) *op cit*; Curthoys (1988) *op cit*. 84.
- 31 There was also a problem for many women who had emerged from a classical Marxist understanding of capitalism and class that the economic bases for oppression that cut across gender were not removed, or addressed, by Millett's patriarchy. For the Marxist critique of feminism and Marxism, see as primary theoretical examples: Barrett, Michele (1980). *Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis*, Verso, London; and Hartman, Heidi (1979). 'The unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism: towards a more progressive union', *Capital and Class*, 8.
- 32 Sawyer, Marian and Radford, Gail (2008). *Making Women Count: A History of the Women's Electoral Lobby in Australia*, UNSW Press, Sydney: 51. See also Reid, Elizabeth and Altman, Denis (1973). *Equality: The New Issues*, (essays published from Fabians Winter Lecture Series: Equality Under Labor) Victorian Fabian Society, Melbourne.
- 33 Sawyer and Radford (2008) *ibid*: 51. This point is fully developed in Sawyer, Marian (2003). *The Ethical State?* Melbourne University Press, Carlton.
- 34 Sawyer and Radford (2008) *ibid*: 77.
- 35 *Ibid*. This idea of equality, then, was in circulation beyond women's campaigns for justice. It can be seen as deployed strategically, for example, in the 1967 Referendum by FCAATSI. See Attwood, Bain and Markus, Andrew (2007) (2nd edition). *The 1967 Referendum: Race, power and The Australian Constitution*, Aboriginal Studies Press, AIATSIS, Canberra.

- ³⁶ For a discussion and examples of the fraught politics of equality paradox in relation to law reform (and in general) at this time, that form the basis of my analysis see Eisenstein (1996) *op cit*; and Armstrong (2004) *op cit*.
- ³⁷ For an excellent example of the polemical radical language on this point see Jones, Beverly (1970) 'The dynamics of marriage and motherhood', reproduced in Morgan, Robin (ed) *Sisterhood is Powerful*, Vintage Books, NY: 46-61.
- ³⁸ Firestone (1970) *op cit*; Rich, Adrienne (1977). *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as experience and institution* (first published US 1976), Virago, London; Chodorow, Nancy (1978). *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender*, University of California Press, Berkeley. These texts challenge in many ways the nuclear family's construction of women, but at the same time attempt to understand the desire and choice to mother. Chodorow, for example, argued that the reproduction of mothering is a patriarchal problem: but 'equal parenting' a solution. These texts were reproduced in journals and newsletters, in extract, throughout the 1970s and 1980s: see for example *Refractory Girl* October 1980: 56. For examples of the views of working women on this point, see Wearing, Betsy (1984) *The Ideology of Motherhood: A study of Sydney suburban mothers*, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney; Sharpe, Sue (1984). *Double Identity: The lives of working mothers*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, UK .
- ³⁹ US philosopher Jean Bethke Elshtain, for example, argued in the 1970s that the traditional economic and physical disempowerment of women through marriage restricted women's freedom, and that was ripe for change. But she also argued, along the lines offered by Rich, that involuntary ties, like those to children, nourish freedom, as they fulfil needs for intimacy and security of purpose: Bethke Elshtain, Jean (1982). 'Feminism, family, and community', *Dissent*, 29, 4: 442-449. See also, for an earlier exposition of the need to treat 'equality as a contested political concept with moral implications', Bethke Elshtain, Jean (1975). 'The feminist movement and the question of equality', *Polity* 7, 4: 452-477, 452.
- ⁴⁰ Curthoys, Ann (1971). 'Housework', *Mejane*, 1, reproduced in Curthoys (1988) *op cit*: 13-19.
- ⁴¹ Stephenson, Rosalie (1970). *Women in Australian Society*, Heinemann, Educational Australia, Pty Ltd, Sydney: 126-127.
- ⁴² *Ibid*.
- ⁴³ Curthoys, Ann (1976). 'Men and childcare in the feminist utopia', *Refractory Girl*, March: 3-4. See also Sharpe (1984) *op cit*, Wearing (1984) *op cit* and Segal, Lynne (ed) (1983). *What is to be Done about the Family?* Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, UK for examples of the nature and range of books on this topic through the period.
- ⁴⁴ See for example: Sawyer and Radford (2008) *op cit*; Sharpe (1984) *ibid*.
- ⁴⁵ This flaw in Manne's work is also something Pru Goward, in her role as Sex Discrimination Commissioner, has noted in relation to Manne's earlier book, (2005) *Motherhood*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, which rehearses many of the arguments in *QE* about self interested feminism. The absence of fathers, Goward argues, is telling, and she suggests, as Curthoys had somewhat differently, 30 years before, that 'so long as the debates about childhood development and fertility are framed as women's issues we are at risk of overlooking some very obvious solutions', Goward, Pru (2006). 'Oh no children, we forgot motherhood did we?' *Australian Review of Public Affairs*, 30 January, <http://www.australianreview.net/digest/2006/01/goward.html>, accessed 2 June 2008.
- ⁴⁶ Smart, Carol and Neale, Bren (2003). *Family Fragments?* Polity Press, UK: 89.
- ⁴⁷ Genovese, Ann (2007). 'Miscast and manipulated: representational femocrats, child support and the new class'; paper presented at 'Mainstreamed and Muzzled: Feminism in the Academy' Conference, Melbourne, November; currently being developed for publication.



The Sexual Revolution as Big Flop: Women's Liberation lesson one Susan Magarey

Foreplay

Some years ago, the Australian Research Council funded research towards a History of the Women's Liberation Movement in Australia. Other projects interrupted what had initially been designed to be a smooth transition from research to writing. However, I am now engaged in writing that History, and, herewith, its beginning. I had expected that my story of the resurgence of feminism in Australia in the late 1960s and early 1970s would start by linking the origins of Women's Liberation with the Sexual Revolution that followed from the appearance of the Pill on the mass market in Australia in 1961. But I have now decided that the connection between the Pill, the Sexual Revolution and Women's Liberation was not so simple. First, the Sexual Revolution had been brewing for longer than the few years between 1961 and, say, 1968. Second, there were two kinds of uneven development: the Pill did not simply 'appear' on the mass market: its dissemination occasioned controversy and conflict and took some time; and its distribution was patchy. Let me elaborate, briefly.

Explanations for all manifestations of what has been called the cultural revolution of the West – from the student movement to new concerns with ecology, including the sexual revolution and Women's Liberation – usually have three elements. One is economic growth and an associated expansion of domestic markets as, to quote Stella Lees and June Senyard, 'Australia became a modern society and everyone got a house and car.'¹ A second is the beginnings of the communications revolution with the appearance of television. The third is expanding education, especially tertiary education. I have written such explanations myself. Now, I would like to add to that mix two other factors.

One comes from the work of sociologists Ann Game and Rosemary Pringle. Considering the making of the Australian family, focused on sex and the suburban dream, they argued that the 1950s and 60s saw not only an expansion of consumption but also its sexualisation, targeted specifically at women. Advertisers, journalists and educators developed and spread the view that women – housewives – were to form love relationships with their homes, to have an emotional investment in the wellbeing of their furnishings. They set about persuading the housewife that her sexuality, her allure, her attractiveness would be enhanced by her maintenance of a well-stocked pantry, or her acquisition of a hills hoist.² Schooled by reading Michel Foucault, I want to add to that analysis an equal and opposite understanding of precisely the same phenomenon, that is, the commodification of sex. Such advertising also led the housewife – and other women as well – to believe that the pinnacle of a happy life was sexual satisfaction, her most prized acquisition a good orgasm. Publications multiplied: Alfred Kinsey's *Sexual Behaviour of the Human Male* appeared in 1948, followed by his *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* in 1953 – works which shocked the United States and inspired Hugh Hefner to launch *Playboy* magazine in 1953 – Masters and Johnson's *Human Sexual Response* in 1966 and culminating with their book called simply *The Pleasure Bond* in 1975. Bookshops created whole new sections of shelf-space for the plethora of new sex manuals. 'All You Need is Love', we sang, along with the Beatles. Germaine Greer's demand that women cease being eunuchs and develop an active sexuality of their own was merely a logical extension of these two developments, both of which had been underway since the end of the 1940s.

By the 1960s, women's enormously enhanced desire for sexual satisfaction could lead some of them to engage in free-wheeling sexual encounters, just as men did - *if* they had reliable contraception. Former professional soldier, Barry Billing, at home from Vietnam, encountered the marches in protest against Australia's participation in the war he was fighting. 'Everyone gets horny', he recalled recently, and afterwards 'the testosterone's up and the birds are hot'. He discarded his uniform to go on marches 'looking cool' because, then, he said, 'you'd get a root'.³ The Pill did not cause women's heightened libido. But as a reliable contraception, it did make it possible to indulge that libido.

The sexual revolution was never going to be sexual liberation for all women, though; the laws of uneven development appear clearly. The importance of campaigns for the legalisation of abortion during the first years of Women's Liberation testifies to the numbers of women still not using the Pill. As a doctor's prescription was necessary to obtain the Pill, its appearance reinforced the authority that doctors – still predominantly male – could exercise over what could be seen as women's sexual morality; some doctors refused to prescribe the Pill for women who were not married; some doctors refused to prescribe it for any women. When the researchers for the History of the Women's Liberation Movement interviewed former Legislative Councillor, Anne Levy, she told them about being on the Board of the Family Planning Association in Adelaide, and the opposition that they encountered from the medical profession: they didn't want the Family Planning Association giving out the Pill, only family doctors should be allowed to do that. 'We had lots of fights with the AMA', she noted. The Pill was also subject to a seventeen per cent luxury tax throughout the 1960s, limiting its availability to those who could afford it. Melbourne author, Joyce Nicolson, told our researchers that in the early days of Women's Electoral Lobby, with only about six months to the federal elections, they went to election campaign meetings. 'We all got up and asked questions about contraception' and asked for the sales tax to be removed. It was, on the Whitlam government's third day in office in 1972.

Even then, not all women – not even all feminists – saw the Pill as contributing to sexual revolution. Sydney feminist, Catharine Lumby, a generation younger than Anne, was 'getting ready to enter First Form at Newcastle Girls High' in 1973.

In 1973, nice girls kept their legs together and their options open. ... Lounging on the hockey field ... the good girls dreamed of surfer boyfriends with peroxide-blond hair and a Sandman panel van. Actually daring to get into a panel van was a different matter. ... Girls who got into panel vans ended up pregnant and expelled. As far as we knew, they deserved it.⁴

Achieving orgasm?

When Melbourne feminist, Laurie Bebington, went from school to Melbourne University in 1972, she was elected to the newly-created position of Women's Officer in the national Australian Union of Students. The first and major imperative for that position was, it emerged, to collect and distribute information in four key areas. One was 'sexuality' which was, she explained 'health, really. Women's health and women's sexuality together'. 'I remember', she told our researchers,

... reading in 1971, before I even got to university in 1972, this revolutionary article by Germaine Greer in a Monash University paper about the clitoris. And quite literally I think many women at university in the early seventies didn't know about the clitoris.

Sydney feminist, postgraduate student L, was but one of many in Women's Liberation to have encountered American Anne Koedt's electrifying piece, 'The Myth of the

Vaginal Orgasm' and its unequivocal assertion: 'It is the clitoris which is the center of sexual sensitivity and ... is the female equivalent of the penis'.⁵ '[I]t knocked me out' L told our researchers. A, a student at Adelaide University at the time, printed 'all these extra copies of the cover of the pamphlet "The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm"', she said,

and I was going around the campus putting them up on trees, advertising where you could get them. And there was this group of Engineering students walking behind me ripping them off. They were just outraged that you would use the word 'vagina' and 'orgasm'.

Some women missed it, though. In about 1972, I was part of a conversation in which a feminist postgraduate student in the Canberra Women's Liberation group, a young woman who had had several heterosexual affairs asked how far away her clitoris was from her vagina. If reproductive control was – as so many of us believed – vital to the liberation of women, then understanding how our bodies worked was vital too.

In Canberra, Women's Liberation acquired a copy of the Boston Women's Health Book *Our Bodies Our Selves* first published in 1971, typed the chapter on 'Sexuality' onto a stencil – these were the *samizdat* days of Women's Liberation – and roneoed off about a hundred copies to distribute. Another Canberra feminist wrote an article on masturbation for the Australian National University student newspaper; it occasioned some stir when it was published in February 1973 because its author had, by then, stopped tutoring in Philosophy and become Women's Advisor to Prime Minister Gough Whitlam. In Bathurst, Kay Schaffer was one in a group that organised a conference on 'Women's Changing Roles' in 1974. No fewer than two hundred and fifty women turned up, she said, from all over the central west: 'from Dubbo and Orange and Forbes and Wagga'. The session that gained the most attention was on 'Female Sexuality' to which women from Sydney presented 'a kit of contraception material, contraception advice'. Kay and her friends thought this 'particularly important for the girls at Bathurst College because they had no access to the Pill. The two Catholic doctors in town would not prescribe it'.

And then there were the consciousness-raising groups.

Melbourne feminist Jean Taylor, a young mother in the early years of Women's Liberation, described them. In a consciousness-raising group there would be about a dozen women, she said, which meant that at any one meeting there would be about eight or nine attending, an 'ideal number' for a group if 'you want to get things done and still maintain intimacy'. She went on to explain:

The main things that differentiate a consciousness-raising group from an ordinary discussion is that we did very in-depth stuff on a topic around our personal lives, and then we would put it into a political context ...you'd hear other women talking about ... their relationship with their mother or how they were told about their first period. Some of the stories were hysterical. Most of our groups we'd laugh. It would be really, really funny. And by that time you'd have built up a whole – that intimacy, that friendship that was built up in, I'd say, every CR groups was absolutely unique'.

Some consciousness-raising groups moved from talking to something more physical. One in Sydney was once treated to a lesson in how to treat period-pain with an exhibition of sisterly massage of the afflicted belly. C ventured into a consciousness-raising group when she was in London in 1973-74, but beat a hasty retreat: 'They were all into having speculums and looking up themselves', she said. 'I thought this was a bit much'.

Sometimes such discussions put what Adelaide feminist Y described as 'enormous stresses on my relationship with my husband. All that resentment that had been sort of not able to be expressed suddenly found expression. Everything was legitimised. And I had a language ... to talk about these things'. They were not always an occasion of strife, those discussions. C talked about 'working through the little rituals of ... heterosexual Australian life. All their little marking points. Trying to do it in a feminist way'. This meant that when she and J married in 1971, C did not change her name. But, she said, when 'we rang up the Registry Office and asked about it ... they just thought we were weird and couldn't really answer'. They had even more difficulty when they had a son and wanted him to have C's last name. But those discussions could lead – by logical extension if not by personal testimony – to pressure for pioneering legislation. In South Australia for instance, legislation was passed in 1975 outlawing rape in marriage – a result of collaboration between Deborah McCulloch, Women's Advisor to Premier Don Dunstan, and Carol Treloar, Personal Assistant to Attorney-General Peter Duncan – legislation so radical that it focused world attention on Adelaide.

Sometimes such discussions opened up new sexual possibilities for women. 'It looks like a classic Women's Liberation story' S told our researchers about her own life: 'Got involved in Women's Liberation, ended a marriage and started having sexual relationships with women. It's almost like a cliché, but it ... didn't feel like a cliché'.

For women like W, who had already decided she was gay and disliked the role-playing she found in the gay scene at the Elephant and Castle in Adelaide, Women's Liberation was an emotional and intellectual delight. 'It turned my life absolutely upside down', she said. 'It was painful but it was incredibly stimulating, and it was emotionally very exciting'. Sydney feminist U was also already gay and said 'I guess Women's Liberation didn't appeal to me because it didn't appear to have anything to say about lesbians'. But then she encountered the early issues of Sydney Women's Liberations' newspaper, *Mejane*, and, she said, 'an article by R that started off with a wonderful sentence something like "in the interstices of society lurks the lesbian", or something like that. So that's how I got involved'. Consciousness-raising among lesbians could revolve around rules for lesbian relationships. Melbourne feminist, D, was a mother of four and becoming aware of her Aboriginality when she first contacted Women's Liberation to help her with her divorce. Once she had become involved with Radical Lesbians, however, she encountered a new set of rules which concerned monogamy versus polygamy: 'And there was a big push for polygamy', she told us. 'Monogamy wasn't on ... "We shall be polygamous. Everyone's our sister. We love everyone", when the reality was that we certainly didn't'. Here, perhaps, there is just a trace of sexual liberation's moment at the end of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Post-coital tristesse

(post coitum omne animal tristis est: Galen, 130AD)

Some people in the Libertarian Push in Sydney could be seen as forerunners of the sexual revolution. After all, the Push, which dated from the beginning of the 1950s, held that women were equal to men ('if they "came up to scratch" intellectually'). Germaine Greer had been one of the Push women for a time, while she was tutoring at Sydney University. So Push men were willing to accept some aspects of her attack on the current state of heterosexual relationships. But they objected strongly to her attack on Freud. They insisted that there was no difference between a male and a female orgasm. They even wrote papers on the subject. But some Push women had to resort to backyard abortions to remain the freely-relating individual of the Sydney Push's –

thoroughly masculine – expectations. And when Push women – finally – began to discuss Push men's sexual performance, their descriptions were less than enthusiastic: they described them as "workmanlike", "threadbare" and with a "lack of foreplay".

In Melbourne, the 'Push' was a definition confined to Carlton, according to N. It was just like life depicted in Helen Garner's novel, *Monkey Grip*, she said. 'I mean, everyone slept around with everyone else'. And Helen Garner's heroine suggests as early as page one of that novel what was wrong with sexual liberation for women. Her lover, 'knowing perhaps in his bones that nothing would be the same again', says to her, 'I wish I could – you know – *turn you on*.' He does, that time. But it is nevertheless the end of the affair.

It was not only people in a 'push' involved in the sexual revolution. There were the academics, and there was the Left. Adelaide feminist artist, P, dates her involvement with Women's Liberation to the time when she went to the very new Flinders University in the early 1970s. 'During my time [at university]', she said, 'I fell in love with who I shouldn't have, my professor, and had a baby'; her professor was at the time married to someone else with whom he had children. In Sydney, L was, she said, 'probably having on and off, you know, sort of one night stands or whatever with various blokes around the Left'. A was also in Sydney, by then, having left her husband. She said she used to go to the pub every night, 'trying to pick up blokes'. She had, she told us, 'a lot of one-night stands, or one month stands, or whatever. A lot of very short term relationships, but nothing serious'. Wary of the Left, as she would have been, after watching the Students for Democratic Action in Adelaide:

You could certainly see, you know, a lot of sexual and other sorts of exploitation on the left, and it was true that men would have all the glory and the women would be making the tea and making the flags and running the Gestetner and all of that.

L said that she thought the girls made the tea 'because they wanted to get off with the boys'. A went on, at least temporarily, to a relationship with a woman, which lasted many months longer than with the blokes she picked up. Maybe the girls did want to get off with the boys. But they clearly did not enjoy themselves enough to go back for much more from the same individual.

H, another Sydney feminist, had been a child bride, married at the age of twenty in the mid-1960s. In the days of the sexual revolution the couple kept their distance because, she said, 'even then we had a very clear sense ... sexual liberation was going to bring a great deal of exploitation with it'. T went to the Women's Health Conference in Brisbane in 1975. There had been, she observed, 'a sexual free-for-all between [university] students and staff', and, she went on, 'I think many of us were starting to see that, you know, the women had got the raw end of that'.

Conclusion

Catharine Lumby has recently published a book called *Alvin Purple* in which she maintains that the film of that name, on Australian screens in 1973, but R-rated, 'reflects and refracts so many of the cultural, political and sexual anxieties and realities of its time'.⁶ It is all there, she writes, 'the nudge-nudge humour, the anxiety about where female sexual desire fits into heterosexuality, the electricity of burgeoning cultural and political change'. But not for everyone. N was having her first experience of a demonstration in Bourke Street in Melbourne at the time when this film was screening. Young women from Women's Liberation were directing the march. They would shout through their loud-speakers 'What do you want?' and the marchers would

reply 'We want equality!' 'When do you want it?' 'Now!' And as they reached the movie-theatre, the young women shouted 'Fuck *Alvin Purple*!' 'I remember' said N, 'we all shouted "Fuck *Alvin Purple*!" Well, I'd never used the word "fuck" in my life'. But by now, she was well beyond nudge-nudge humour and anxiety about female desire. N had been brought up very strictly and never even thought of sleeping with anyone but her husband until she was forty-five. 'Then', though, she told us, 'I began to do it with great enthusiasm'. For her, sexual liberation came with and from Women's Liberation, not from either the Pill or the sexual revolution.



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[This is an updated and edited version of a paper presented at the Network for Research in Women's History section of the Biennial Australian Historical Association Conference in July 2008. This article is based on research that included interviews, and the interviewees consented to be identified. Because it was not possible for the Academy to ensure that others who might be identified from their testimony consented to its publication, the Academy has removed names.]

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- ¹ Lees, Stella and Senyard, June (1987). *The 1950s ... How Australia Became a Modern Society and Everybody Got a House and a Car*. Hyland House, Melbourne.
 - ² Game, Ann and Pringle, Rosemary (1983). 'The making of the Australian family' in Bottomley, Gill and Jools, Penny (eds) *The Family in the Modern World*. Allen & Unwin, Sydney; 'Sexuality and the suburban dream', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 15, 2: 4-15.
 - ³ Barry Billing, quoted in *Weekend Australian*, 5-6 January 2008.
 - ⁴ *Weekend Australian*, 14-15 June 2008.
 - ⁵ Koedt, Anne (1971). 'The myth of the vaginal orgasm' in Tanner, Leslie B (ed) *Voices from Women's Liberation*. Signet Book, New York.
 - ⁶ Lumby, Catharine (2008). *Alvin Purple*. Currency Press, Strawberry Hills.

Feminism in the Hearts and Minds and Words of Men: Revisiting men's cultural remembrance of Australian feminism in the new millennium

Margaret Henderson

Nearly forty years after the beginnings of the Women's Liberation movement the battle over second wave feminism's legacy and past (and hence its present and future) continues unabated in Australia, indeed, appears intensified, as evidenced in recent books such as *The Great Feminist Denial*, *The F Word: How We Learned to Swear by Feminism*, and *Wonder Woman: The Myth of 'Having It All'*.¹ As my earlier study of Australian feminist cultural memory, *Marking Feminist Times: Remembering the Longest Revolution in Australia*, showed, it is not only women who actively construct memories of the Australian women's movement, but men as well.² These narratives of feminism from 'outside' the movement are important signifiers of feminism's translation and diffusion throughout culture, suggesting the ways in which cultural memory is gendered, and how fundamental social upheaval is made sense of by those who are positioned as being either a part of the problem, decentred from its main emphases, or arguably, with the most 'to lose'. This essay analyses Australian men's memories and narratives of feminism in the period 2006-2008, and compares their memories with those from the mid 1980s to 2001 (discussed more fully in *Marking Feminist Times*). Given the constraints of space, I focus on non-fictional genres in the print and on-line media – specifically, books, newspaper articles, on-line news sites and magazine editions, and men's magazines – to suggest the current sites and typical shapes of men's cultural memories of feminism in popular culture.³ I argue that the differences in men's cultural memory between now and the 1980s-1990s provide one answer as to where feminism is currently located, politically and imaginatively – a location influenced by a decade of conservative federal government and a well organised men's rights movement

First, I briefly discuss the nature and function of cultural memory and its relevance to feminism, followed by an outline of my methodology and a synopsis of my findings regarding men's cultural remembrance from 1986-2001; I then examine men's cultural remembrance from 2006 to 2008. Cultural memory is 'memory institutionalized through cultural means,' and 'refers to people's memories constructed from the cultural forms and to cultural forms available for use by people to construct their relations to the past'.⁴ Cultural memory, then, is 'about' the images, codes, and symbolic structures by which we make and know the past, and to whom this past is addressed.⁵ It is comprised of texts, rituals and places, and therefore includes history, memory and fiction; official and unofficial accounts; and individual and collective narratives. Further, cultural memory is shaped by the needs of the present, an important factor when considering the ways in which feminism is remembered.⁶

The function of cultural memory explains its significance for feminism. Pierre Vidal-Naquet notes that 'society is concerned [. . .] with organizing the memory of each one among us' to maintain social cohesion and to legitimate the social order, and cultural memory is one crucial method of doing this.⁷ By constructing a repertoire of stories, images, and understandings of the past, cultural memory is 'identity constructing and identity maintaining'.⁸ It is not only the state which does this; as Maurice Halbwachs observes, each group in society, whether family, ethnic, religious, or class, has its own set of memories, many of these relying on cultural forms, which fulfils a similar purpose.⁹ As a consequence, we can identify various memory communities, with feminists being one example.¹⁰ Feminists, however, are also subject to other memory

communities' versions of how radical political movements did and did not happen, hence this essay's focus.

Despite western feminism's intensified production of historical narratives since the 1990s,¹¹ and an increasing use of the term 'postfeminism' as an historical descriptor, studies of the women's movement as subject and object of cultural memory are rare.¹² While feminists have produced much research into the representation of, and hence meanings attached to, feminism in the news media and in popular culture,¹³ little research has been done in Australia that analyses a 'men on feminism' discourse and men's cultural memories of feminism. Moreover, if cultural memory is partly shaped by the needs of the present, then how will those memories be enabled and shaped by a context of a decade of conservative government with its mix of economic neoliberalism and social conservatism?¹⁴

To allow a comparative analysis of men's cultural memories of feminism I examined a range of Australian popular culture non-fiction texts, print and on-line, which are male-authored and were published between January 2006 and October 2008.¹⁵ I analysed books, newspaper articles, men's magazines (namely, *Zoo Weekly*, *Ralph*, *Men's Health* [Australia], and *FHM*), selected websites, and on-line magazines and news sites (see Table 1). I focused on texts that contained a remembrance of feminism – texts that reference the feminist past and its impact on the present – and examined them in terms of the types of rhetoric and themes used, and the emergence (if any) of textual patterns. This approach allows me to identify where cultural remembrance is occurring, to compare modes of remembrance by genre, and to consider the influence of generic conventions. Technological changes in the media since my initial study in *Marking Feminist Times* made it necessary to include on-line news sites such as *Crikey!* and *Australian News Commentary*, on-line magazines like the National Civic Council's *News Weekly* and *AD2000*, and websites that offer links or access to magazine and newspaper articles, for example, the Men's Rights Agency site and the Endeavour Forum. I did not intentionally target conservative, men's movement or fathers' rights sites, however, as I discuss below, these are prominent locations for men's cultural remembrance (and are testimony to these groups' resources). To answer my question regarding the nature and degree of change in men's remembrance between 2001 and the period covered by this analysis I then compared these findings with those in *Marking Feminist Times*. I conclude this essay by offering some possible causes for the shifts.

Quieter memories from an earlier time

The following is a summary of my findings on men's remembrance of the Australian women's movement from 1975 to 2001 in terms of timing, generic locations, characteristic shapes, and typical narratives. There is a parallel synchronicity of feminists' and men's cultural remembrance of Australian feminism. Similar to feminism's belated remembrance, it takes until the mid 1980s for historical narratives about the Australian women's movement from men's perspectives to appear.¹⁶ As was the case with feminist remembrance, men's remembrance originates from, or relies heavily on a supposed crisis, although for different reasons – for men, that the women's movement has 'gone too far', and men and boys are suffering. From 1991 on, as feminist remembrance increases and as the masculinity in crisis discourse emerges, men's remembrance of feminism also increases. In this period there has been a men's movement or 'men in crisis' type book published nearly every year, and three released in 1994 and in 1997.¹⁷ Whether inadvertently or not, this shared synchronicity means that men's memories and an emergent discourse of masculinity in crisis serve as counterpoints to the narratives feminists produce in this decade.

In this first period, men's remembrance occurs in a variety of cultural forms, though largely in texts of the 'real,' rather than the creative or the fictional (hence my focus on non-fictional texts for the 2006-2008 study): in various masculinity studies or men's movement texts, general political and historical accounts, therapy and self-help books, the occasional poem, educational theories, and men's health texts and programs. Prevalent sites are those where there is an exploration of the supposed crisis for men and boys. Two genres of men's cultural remembrance are the most prominent in, and symptomatic of, this period: the interview collection – for instance, Kevin Childs' *Men on Women* – and the therapeutic/self-help book, such as Steve Biddulph's *Manhood*.¹⁸ Their prominence can be explained thus: at the time male-authored academic and high cultural texts rarely showed interest in the feminist legacy¹⁹ whereas popular culture has always been interested in the women's movement.²⁰ Further, the interview collection has been a staple of popular culture as a means of engaging with and mediating social change.²¹ Interviews have the immediacy of 'authentic' voices, the appeal of auto/biography and, with little analysis or theory, are accessible to a wide audience. The prominence of the self-help text can be explained by a combination of factors: it is a response to the damaged men of masculinity in crisis discourse, and the 'avowed therapeutic intentions' of one sector of the men's movement,²² as well as linked to the rise of the self-help book as a cultural genre.

The memories or historical narratives of feminism rarely take an extended form or are the key issue – even if feminism is supposed to be the topic. Rather, they are fragmented, dispersed, interspersed with other concerns, or form a semi-silent context for the issues under discussion. Their generic location and fragmentary and minor nature are significant. Most obviously, the shape suggests the difficulty of men speaking or thinking feminism (or more specifically, the feminist past), whether because of a lack of interest, disavowal, the political etiquette of not speaking for the 'other,' or lack of knowledge. Second, the spread of memories across a number of fields signifies feminism's dissemination into society in general, even if in a limited and stereotypical form.

The contents of this early men's remembrance are not stridently anti-feminist; hearteningly, they reveal a growing acceptance of the fundamental shifts of feminism. More significant is the limited and repetitive nature of the memories, and their reliance on clichés and stereotypes, as in the following bundle of recurring stories: feminism was necessary but has gone too far, the extremists/lesbians are the problem, men as well as women have been victims of feminism. Any attempt to think gender outside of sex role theories or 'commonsensical' essentialism is absent; few texts/interviewees write/speak about feminism using a serious political language, or understand gender in terms beyond personal experience. Accordingly, mentions of feminist campaigns to address the public realm of inequality are rare. Instead, in the case of the interview collections, we have a preponderance of bourgeois political discourse with its anti-revolutionary notions and valorisation of equilibrium, an avoidance of discussing the women's movement, and a vague notion that 'change is out there somewhere'. The therapeutic/self-help books stress the men in crisis discourse, draw heavily upon archetypes or biological essentialist notions of gender identity, and offer personal transformation as the solution to a gendered malaise (either overtly or covertly attributed to feminism). Underlying both genres is an emotional register comprised of emotional repression and nostalgia for pre-feminist times, and an intellectual framework in which men and women are understood as being naturally opposite but complementary, a setting that is necessary for social equilibrium.

This limited range of stories men use for remembrance suggests that their contact is with a circumscribed form of feminism, of the lived and personal kind, and with various media-generated popular stereotypes. Feminism features as a set of personal attitudes and behaviours, ones that are easily accommodated within the Australian discourse of egalitarianism, rather than as a political movement or a systemic critique of gendered inequality. Meanwhile, the mass media have provided the store of images, phrases, and stories to explain and define the women's movement in recurrent terms of sensationalism, celebrity, and freakery. Given these frameworks of memory and understanding, it is predictable that the feminism that features in men's remembrance is a version of liberal feminism, while a more radical feminism can only find demonisation or erasure. Overall, this overview suggests men's ambivalence about the feminist legacy: there is a sense of realising but not always wanting to acknowledge fundamental social transformation, which takes form in the problem of remembering/thinking/writing feminism.

Men remembering: 2006-2008

The contemporary period of men's cultural memory displays some continuities with the previous two decades but also some significant changes. We see a similar range of genres showing memory traces of Australian feminism: again, the therapeutic/self-help book and the interview collection feature as do newspaper articles; they are joined by on-line news sites and magazines. Noteworthy is men's lifestyle magazines lack of interest in feminism as past or present phenomenon.²³ This can be attributed to these magazines' function as a 'commodification of masculinity' and hedonistic fantasy space for young men;²⁴ as such, politics in any shape is absent. The sites with the most interest in the feminist past are print and on-line newspapers and magazines: in less than three years there were around fifty relevant articles (a complete list is in the Appendix). This quantitative dominance is related to the speed of production; the increasing popularity and accessibility of on-line news sites; the ways in which these forms of media respond quickly to other media, political, or social events, such as the visit of Ariel Levy (author of *Female Chauvinist Pigs: The Rise of Raunch Culture*); and in changes to journalism itself: '[i]n the shift from reportage to interpretation gender relations have become perhaps the prime topic of "news"'.²⁵ Feminist discourse seems to be constantly elicited by the news media and used to frame diverse events.

Print newspaper articles

As Susan Sheridan, Susan Magarey and Sandra Lilburn observe, the Australian press has been fascinated by the women's movement since its beginnings.²⁶ My findings show this interest continues, and increasingly takes the form of 'men on feminism' feature articles, in which male journalists or interviewees give a man's perspective on what feminism achieved and where it is now. In comparison with the earlier period, these types of articles are more frequent and suggest that men are now less reticent about commenting on feminism's impact; this is repeated in the on-line news and magazine websites. Articles may only briefly refer to feminism, however, it is positioned as the causal factor in whatever issue is under discussion. As was the case in newspaper articles of the 1980s and 1990s, the feminist legacy is explored through a wide range of topics, from 'serious issues' to more 'light-hearted' ones, ranging across the public and the private spheres.

A brief summary of the articles gives a sense of this range: affirmative action in the workplace; men's confusion regarding what women want in their lives and work; men's confusion regarding social etiquette; the loss and reclamation of muscled physiques and bodybuilding by men; feminism leads to poorer health for men and women; the

rise of raunch culture; women's increased unhappiness; feminism is finished and out of date; the unchangeability of gender roles; independent women now leaving men behind and not forming relationships; a critique of the feminist response to Kevin Rudd's 2020 summit; feminism's flaws regarding fashion; Family Law reform; men and the fertility crisis; diminished status of fathers; the more relaxed codes of masculinity; women and sexual banter in the workplace; the need for a men's movement; Mark Latham on the decline of male culture in Australia; Maureen Dowd on 'are men necessary?'; and what men and women really want, regardless of 'the feminist dream of the 1960s'.²⁷ These topics signal that feminism has made its presence felt most prominently in the realm of families and relationships, followed by the workplace. Also, as the list shows, feminism becomes a method of responding to various media events: for example, the release of Mark Latham's book, *A Conga Line of Suckholes* and its provocative comments regarding the decline of male culture, functioned as a 'spark' to ignite more public debate regarding feminism.²⁸

The articles typically use the following techniques and rhetoric to construct their narratives. Most popular is the use of humour: 'Is there anything these days that men can do better than women? . . . Girls have now become the king (or is that queen?) of sexual banter. They are trashing our once sacred territory'.²⁹ Also prominent is the citation of Australian or international university research to justify claims: 'The results [of a Swedish survey] showed a strong link between gender equality and levels of sickness and disability for both men and women'.³⁰ They might base the article on interviews with ordinary and expert men;³¹ or they may take on the 'voice of reason' approach – serious and analytical: 'A woman who professes an interest in fashion runs the risk of being regarded as one who is actively betraying feminism, or else as a dupe passively suffering false consciousness'.³² Compared to the on-line newspapers and magazines, the tone is more restrained and less splenetic, and humour is the primary means to discredit feminism: 'The advent of feminism and so-called equality for women ushered in a stressful time for us chaps. To hold the door open or not?'.³³ The actual phrases 'women's movement' or 'women's liberation' are virtually never uttered; the preferred terminology is 'feminism' or 'feminist', and it is overwhelmingly associated with negative and often violent imagery: there is, for instance, the 'full flood of feminism',³⁴ 'militant feminism', the 'subsequent war on masculinity',³⁵ or 'the jaws of feminism'.³⁶ The recurrent themes emerging from the articles are: feminism has 'gone too far', the problems created by feminism, men changing, and the opportunities created by feminism.

The themes and language suggest men's responses to feminism are anxiety driven, particularly concerning a loss of status in families and intimate relationships, and changes in the codes of masculinity. Predictably enough, the articles construct an overwhelmingly negative legacy for feminism, with only a rare defence or positive judgement of its achievements.³⁷ Print journalism repetitively narrates where feminism got it wrong, especially for men but for women as well: 'Resurrecting the call to feminist arms . . . is driving another wedge where it's just not needed. It was a disservice to women . . . and men';³⁸ or, 'So instead of men finding someone to hate and buying them half a house, women are finding nobody to hate and keeping their house'.³⁹ Given that the worldview of gender in a majority of these articles is based on interrelated notions of essentialist sex roles, traditional conceptions of the family, and a valorisation of 'balance', such a narrative is inevitable. Nostalgia for pre-feminist times is masked by humour and the frequently cited 'university research': 'According to British research, most men want a traditional wife – and women are often only too happy to oblige'.⁴⁰

On-line news sites and magazines

Of all the genres examined, on-line news sites and magazines show the greatest interest in the feminist past, a characteristic that can be explained partly by the ideological orientation of many of the sites. As Table 1 demonstrates, six of the sites that feature relevant content are conservative and/or associated with the men's rights movement, and these reveal a greater interest in writing about feminism than do the independent or progressive sites. To give a more complete picture, we should note two further aspects of this seeming ideological split: first, women make numerous anti-feminist contributions to the conservative sites (but were excluded from this study); and second, in the independent and progressive sites women do most of the feminist commentary (and it is typically pro-feminist). Feminism, it seems, is of major interest to conservative men; a related effect is that on-line journalism is marked by the most vitriolic remembrance of feminism analysed.

Table 1: List of on-line news sites and magazines examined

On-Line News Sites and Magazines	Number of relevant articles
AD2000 (Roman Catholic Church)	2
Australian News Commentary	0 (articles by women)
Centre for Independent Studies	Nil
Crikey	1
Endeavour Forum	3
Eureka Street	0 (articles by women)
Get Up!	0
The Independent Australian	0
Kitten News	8
Men's Rights Agency	6
New Matilda	1 (plus articles by women)
News Weekly (NCC)	5
On-Line Opinion	5

These sites operate by either republishing articles with or without a commentary, and/or feature original journalism, and use similar techniques to print journalism. For example, they cite university research to explain gender: 'new research shows that media portrayals of gender have largely done an about face in the past decade or so. . . [T]he main target of discrimination is no longer women, according to research – it is men'.⁴¹ They use reasoned discussion: '[some fathers] continue to have serious concerns about the entrenched anti-male bias throughout every level of the family law industry'.⁴² Humour and ridicule (though far more vicious than in the print media) feature strongly: 'I think men have been an outstanding success. It's only since being engulfed by feminism that all the problems of their social engineering have arisen'.⁴³

It is interesting to compare the different topics according to the ideological orientation of the site. Conservative sites (namely, *Australian News Commentary*, *AD2000*, *Endeavour Forum*, *Kitten News*, *Men's Rights Agency*, and *News Weekly*) publish articles that discuss the feminist legacy in terms of abortion, mothering, fathering,

paternity fraud, family law, schools and political correctness, violence against men, domestic violence and misandry as a cultural phenomenon. Articles from the independent and progressive sites discuss feminism's legacy through the topics of women's unhappiness, political correctness, misandry, the state of the family, and feminism as a failed new social movement. The difference in topics between the two, that is, the conservative sites' emphases on abortion, fathering-related issues, family law and domestic violence, reflect the agenda of men's rights groups and, to a lesser degree, the influence of conservative Christianity.⁴⁴ It is significant that both the conservative and independent-progressive sites both feature articles on the topics of misandry, the decline of the family and political correctness, similarities that will impact on their versions of the feminist past and legacy.

The rhetoric and tropes featured are correspondingly powerful and colourful. We read about 'militant feminism', 'the gender police', 'family law orphans', a 'pro-feminist judiciary and a misandrist prosecutor', the 'war against boys', 'anti-male bias' and 'feminist-left subterfuge'. Article after article narrates the perils of political correctness; the power of feminist social engineering; feminism's dangerous alliance with either, or all of, multiculturalism, environmentalism, Marxism; and a culture under siege. For example, '[f]eminism has been by far the most significant destructive force behind the breakdown of the family, and just about every statistic you can point to will reveal that the family (and consequently the birthrate) has fallen in inverse proportion to the rise of the women's movement'.⁴⁵ The humour and restraint of print journalism are replaced by palpable anger and sarcasm: 'Do any of these academics acknowledge that human suffering and injustice has increased tenfold in the last few decades, coincidentally along with feminism and Marxism?'⁴⁶

As was the case with print journalism, the term 'the women's movement' is rarely mentioned, therefore obscuring the image of feminism as a collective and political movement. Instead, 'feminists' and 'feminism' are often modified by an adjective, for instance, we have 'leftist feminists', 'radical feminists', 'militant feminists', 'feminazis' and 'Feminist-Marxists', which highlights the supposed ideological extremism of feminism, and symbolises the frequent association made in these texts between feminism and Marxism, whereby feminism is seen as a sub-sect of Marxism. In effect, the communist bogey is updated and replenished. Accordingly, the shape given to the feminist past, regardless of ideological orientation, is that feminism was a powerful, corrupting, extremist movement that had far-reaching and unambiguously decadent effects. These vitriolic attacks enabled by modern technology leaves me with the question: is cyberspace now the royal road to men's political unconscious?

Books

Three subgenres of non-fiction books are prominent in contemporary men's cultural memory of feminisms: the therapeutic/self-help book and interview collection (both present in the earlier period), are joined by the 'social analysis' text. Titles are listed in Table 2. Unlike the 1980s and 1990s, feminism is a very minor presence in non-fiction books (though we need to consider the shorter time frame under analysis).⁴⁷ As I show, subgenre plays an important role in determining how men articulate feminism.

The most extended commentary on feminism appears in the works of social analysis, which also feature the most overtly political language to describe feminism, as in phrases such as Mackay's 'gender revolution' and 'oppressed' women,⁴⁸ and Salt's 'women's liberation'.⁴⁹ Of the books analysed, Mackay's *Advance Australia . . . Where?* gives the most detailed and sympathetic historical narrative of the Australian women's movement, devoting a lengthy chapter to feminism's impact. He discusses

the effect of the women's movement on the workforce, family, marriage, and men, and importantly, he reminds the reader of the discrimination faced by Australian women in the workplace before the women's movement.⁵⁰ The resultant analysis of the feminist legacy is overwhelmingly positive and quite nuanced, for example, 'Liberated women had hoped to be able to liberate the corporate culture as well, rather than simply conforming to "the ways things have always been around here"' yet employers have been reluctant to change.⁵¹ He notes also men's 'silent resistance' to the early period of the women's movement, describing their response as 'slow, uneven and reluctant'.⁵²

Table 2: Male-authored books that include feminist remembrance, by subgenre

Title	Subgenre
Patrick McNally, <i>How Men Stuff Up Relationships . . . and How Women Help Them!</i> 2006	Self-help
Michael Morel, <i>Are All Men Dickheads?</i> 2006	Self-help
William Phillips, <i>Tell Me Dad: A Life/Sex Education Story for Boys and Dads that Everyone Should Read</i> 2006	Sex education/self-help
Maggie Hamilton, <i>What Men Don't Talk About</i> 2006	Interview collection
Chris Barker, <i>The Hearts of Men: Tales of Happiness and Despair</i> 2007	Interview collection
Bernard Salt, <i>The Big Picture</i> 2006	Social analysis
Hugh Mackay, <i>Advance Australia . . . Where?</i> 2007	Social analysis
Bernard Salt, <i>Man Drought</i> 2008	Social analysis

In contrast, Salt's two accounts of recent Australian history and society are curious affairs. Given their titles – *The Big Picture: Life, Work and Relationships in the Twenty-First Century* and *Man Drought: And Other Social Issues of the New Century* – one would assume that feminism would feature prominently; however, because of Salt's methodology it receives only brief mentions.⁵³ He uses demography and generationalism as explanatory principles of social change; for instance, he associates categories like the Baby Boomers and Gen Y with particular qualities and values to explain social shifts.⁵⁴ As a result, feminism is part of a larger story of the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, and changes in gender roles are assumed or attributed to shifts in values rather than political struggle. Indeed, Salt's remembrance of feminism is almost postfeminist in the way in which a radically altered landscape caused by feminism is largely assumed and unremarked.⁵⁵ For Salt, women are now rather unproblematically liberated, educated, and working. When feminism makes a brief appearance in *The Big Picture* its achievements for women in the workforce and education, and the effects this has had on motherhood and relationships are emphasised, and Salt is nonjudgmental.⁵⁶ *Man Drought* contains a few scattered references to the feminist past – Germaine Greer, wedding rings for men, and political incorrectness – these reveal a fairly simplistic and stereotyped mode of imagining the

women's movement. Salt keeps his feminist past largely invisible or simple and easily digestible.

The remaining two sub-genres are only minor examples of men's remembrance of feminism, a significant shift from the 1980s and 1990s, thus my comments will be brief. The two interview collections, Maggie Hamilton's *What Men Don't Talk About* and Chris Barker's *The Hearts of Men: Tales of Happiness and Despair*, show a limited engagement with the women's movement.⁵⁷ Feminism is articulated by the interviewer's reflections rather than by their respondents, and these reflections are guarded and indirect, as if the authors do not wish to appear anti-feminist. It seems, as was the case in the previous decades, that the impact of feminism for the interviewees is either irrelevant, repressed, or felt indirectly. For the authors, however, feminism has changed men and their relationships. As Barker puts it: 'Today, our justifications for maintaining a relationship have to be constructed in the light of women's claims to equality'.⁵⁸ It seems that the interview collection continues its tendency to think about feminism in personalised ways.

My three contemporary examples of self-help texts similarly contain either very brief or coded references to the feminist legacy – perhaps because the men's self-help genre no longer needs feminism as a rationale, unlike in the previous decades – and continue the conservatism found in earlier self-help texts.⁵⁹ All recognise dramatic changes for men in terms of gender roles, families, and relationships; for Michael Morel this is a good opportunity for men to stop being 'dickheads'. In contrast, Patrick McNally and William Phillips see the women's movement as, at best, unsettling, or destructive, a response that can be related to their reliance on biology-derived sex role theory (and McNally also draws upon evolutionary psychology). For both, feminism has changed supposed natural and long standing patterns of family and social structure.

I will use McNally as an example of the self-help text's return to patriarchy. Similar to the previous decades, McNally uses a universalistic and simplistic historical understanding of the pre-feminist gender order to explain why relationships fail: 'Way back in the old days, males were designed to hunt, feed the family and be part of the breeding process, i.e. have sex. . . . Generations ago, the wife cooked breakfast for the family, sometimes every day. . . . How many households worldwide do you think this happens in today?' Now, however, in his unstated aftermath of feminism, 'we have broken marriages, broken families and young boys who often have no male role model to look up to'.⁶⁰ His understanding of the past and present gender order thus continues the themes of the crucial importance of fatherhood on which Biddulph bases his work.⁶¹ Therapy pressed into the service of patriarchy is unambiguously clear in the following: 'Let me remind you once again: decades ago, when families all over the world spent time together and lived with and respected each other within the family, there was only *one father*. We need to re-establish this pattern if we are to build strong, happy family units once more'.⁶² These are the 'knowledges' and 'healing-speak' that Phillips, a general practitioner, and McNally, a psychologist, offer readers: nostalgia for an imagined past of orderly gender and social and personal balance.

Feminism in the hearts and minds and words of men, then and now

The five years that have elapsed since my earlier analysis have seen a number of significant shifts, but equally important are the features that don't change in men's cultural remembrance of Australian feminism. The repression of feminism and nostalgia for pre-feminist times that marked the earlier period is replaced by men now having plenty to say about the feminist legacy, particularly in print and on-line journalism, and by a noticeable change in emotional tenor: incomprehension and overt

nostalgia is replaced by sardonic humour, criticism, and sometimes anger. The prevalence of debates in print and on-line journalism denotes mainstream and popular culture's ongoing interest in feminism, even as it tries to contain it or delegitimise it. Similar to the 1980s-1990s, (with the exception of *Advance Australia . . . Where?*), non-fiction books reveal limited ways of thinking about feminism: its effects mainly registered in the intimate and familial spheres, rather than feminism operating as a political movement, or in the public sphere (with the significant exception of the paid workforce). Consistent with the earlier analysis, all genres base their theories of gender identity on 'commonsense' essentialist or biologicistic definitions of gender roles; noteworthy is the rise of evolutionary psychology as a framework and its understanding of hardwired, gendered brains.⁶³

The shapes taken by feminism and the new themes that emerge are where the critical differences lie. In contrast to the earlier period's recognition of liberal feminism and demonisation of radical feminism, contemporary remembrance figures feminism only in militant terms, as a form of 'social engineering', or as a sub-sect of Marxism. The feminism articulated here is therefore an implicitly authoritarian and totalitarian phenomenon. Stories are no longer framed in terms of celebrity, sensationalism, or freakery; instead, feminism is frequently processed by humour, and framed as an unsettling and, for a significant number of commentators, a destructive force, particularly in the private sphere. Correspondingly, new themes are used to recount feminism: domestic violence, family law, fathers, misandry, families, and the unhappiness of women. It seems that feminist past is now strongly associated with a crisis in family life as well as a crisis in masculinity, and these themes also suggest an attempted reclamation of traditional masculinity and men's roles.

There may be some cause for optimism in the emergence of a 'new' genre for men, which requires further research. A significant number of books we could term etiquette guides for men that have been published in the last three years, for example, *The Man Manual*, *Building a Better Bloke*, and *The Ultimate Self-Help Guide for Men*.⁶⁴ These books are rarely misogynist, contain a nice vein of self-deprecating humour, and suggest that the assumed audience of younger men are no longer taking the codes of masculinity, or men's desirability, for granted. Whether this phenomenon can be attributed to feminism or to consumer culture is unclear, but it does seem that perhaps the men in crisis narrative is now joined by a 'postfeminist male under reconstruction' narrative.

So how to explain the changed nature of men's cultural remembrance of feminism and particularly its increased vituperation? As already mentioned, cultural memory is shaped by the present context and its needs, a feature that is readily apparent in this era of men's remembrance. First, in comparison with the rather thin memories characterising 1986-2001, more time has elapsed since the beginnings of second wave feminism, allowing for a stronger and wider sense of feminism's impact and aftermath. Second, the emergence of the themes clustered around men and family breakdown (namely, misandry, domestic violence, and fathers) can be linked to the rise of well-organised men's rights and fathers' rights groups in Australia and their concerted campaign against the Family Law Act and the Family Court.⁶⁵ This cluster can also be interpreted as a parallel phenomenon to women's 'blaming feminism narrative' articulated through the theme of motherhood.⁶⁶ Note too that these groups and other anti-feminist commentators tap into men's rights groups internationally (and particularly the United States) for articles, discourses and concepts.⁶⁷ Clearly, web-based technology has facilitated the proliferation of anti-feminist groups and discourses. And third, these memories are deeply shaped and strengthened by the

updating of essentialist understandings of sex roles – now taking the guise of evolutionary psychology – that have proliferated in popular culture, and which appeal to commonsense notions of gender and the power of science, and help to explain the fractures in the gender order.

Equally important, however, is the impact of ten years of conservative federal government and its reactionary form of cultural leadership. Arguably, the Howard Government's weakening and dismantling of institutional support for women's rights;⁶⁸ its championing of the Culture Wars, Australian mateship and traditional family values; its loosening of 'political correctness'; its anxieties surrounding fathers and boys; and its discourse that Australia has experienced too much social change⁶⁹ have been key contributors to a very altered context for feminist remembrance, and have provided the major frames for thinking about gender and feminism. Different ways of thinking and writing and a different set of issues and themes become justified, encouraged, and legitimated.⁷⁰ It seems no accident that during a period of intensified neoliberal policies, the family and codes of gender are prime sites for some men to attempt to reclaim a sense of control and status. The feminist past constructed in the texts examined here suggests that the feminist legacy, and its present and future, are currently in a very bad place and time – not so much a postfeminist but rather a resolutely antifeminist era.



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Appendix: List of print newspaper and on-line articles

Print Newspapers	
Article title	Topic
Andrew Bolt, 'Ladies Who Lecture', <i>Herald-Sun</i> . 8 February 2006.	Affirmative action
Stuart Sherwin, 'Calling Dr Love – Dateless dudes transformed into Romeos at weekend crash courses', <i>Courier Mail</i> . 16 September 2006.	Men's confusion re: dating etiquette
Mark Latham, 'Honest Talk Lost – We're too bloody polite', <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> . 25 September 2006.	Decline of Australian male culture
Peter West, 'A Survival Guide for Men', <i>The Age</i> . 27 September 2006.	Decline of traditional Australian masculinity
Martin Newland, 'The Return of the Muscle', <i>Sunday Times</i> . 17 December 2006.	Men's muscularity and gym culture
'Feminism is a Health Hazard', <i>Courier Mail</i> . 27 March 2007.	Gender equality impacting negatively on health
Paul Sheehan, 'Rights Stripped Bare as Dark Ages Reign', <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> . 28 April 2007.	Global attack on feminism
Kevin Ains, 'Sass to Sleaze: New Girl Power', <i>Sun-Herald</i> . 29 April 2007	Rise of raunch culture
Graham Readfearn, 'Open the Door to Manners', <i>Courier Mail</i> . 11 July 2007.	Men's confusion re: social etiquette
Graham Readfearn, 'Sheds Encourage Sense of Community', <i>Courier Mail</i> . 9 August 2007.	Men's sheds and masculinity
Glenn Milne, 'Sounds of Silence from Women of Left', <i>Sunday Mail</i> . 26 August 2007.	Rudd's visit to a New York strip club
James Foster, 'OK, So there are Good Women, but Hands Off', <i>Sunday Herald Sun</i> . 25 November 2007.	Men being left single
Michael Vaughan, 'We Don't Need Feminism to Fight Inequity', <i>The Age</i> . 11 December 2007	The failure and irrelevance of feminism
Toby Green, 'Women as Women', <i>Sunday Tasmanian</i> . 18 November 2007	Relationships and financial equality
Helen Hawkes, 'Boys do Cry', <i>Sun-Herald</i> . 11 November 2007	Men and their emotions
Jacob Saulwick, 'Fun is Hard Work for Those Still on the Chain', <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> . 5 October 2007.	Women's increasing unhappiness
Keith Austin, 'Modern Love', <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> . 13 September 2007.	Men's confusion re: social etiquette
James Foster, 'For Richer, Not Poorer, Not in Sickness, But Wealth', <i>Sunday Herald Sun</i> . 24 February 2008.	Relationships and financial equality

(contd)

Allan Thieu, 'Society Grooms Men Who Blush', <i>Sydney Morning Herald</i> . 27 February 2008.	Relaxed codes of masculinity: men wearing make up
Shaun Carney, 'Gender Bender', <i>The Age</i> . 1 March 2008.	The 2020 Summit and poor women's representation
Kenneth Nguyen, 'Feminists Take Note: Fashion is not the Enemy', <i>The Age</i> . 8 March 2008.	The feminist critique of fashion
Erin O'Dwyer, 'Trapped in the Middle', <i>Sun-Herald</i> . 9 March 2008.	Family law reform
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- ⁶ Wachtel, Nathan (1990). Introduction, in Bourguet, Marie-Noelle, Valensi, Lucette and Wachtel, Nathan (eds) *Between Memory and History*. Harwood, Chur: 6.
- ⁷ *Ibid*: 14.
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- ¹³ For example, Sponberg, Mary (1993). 'If she's so great, how come so many pigs dig her? Germaine Greer and the malestream press', *Women's History Review* 2, 3:407-19; Sheridan, Susan, Magarey, Susan and Lilburn, Sandra (2006). 'Feminism in the news'. in Hollows, Joanne and Mosely, Rachel (eds) (2006a) *Feminism in Popular Culture*. Berg, Oxford: 25-40; or Thornham, Sue (2007). *Women, Feminism and Media*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh. Joanne Hollows and Rachel Mosely argue that popular culture is the source of most people's knowledge of feminism, in Hollows and Mosely (2006b). 'Popularity contests: the meanings of popular feminism', in Hollow and Mosely (2006a) *ibid*: 2.
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- ¹⁵ I also included newspaper articles and books that were female-authored but which included interviews with men. The men's 'voices' were my primary interest.
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- ¹⁸ Childs (1986) *op cit*, Biddulph, Steve (1994). *Manhood: A Book About Setting Men Free*. Finch Publishing, Sydney.
- ¹⁹ RW Connell, Bob Pease and Bob Lingard are pro-feminist and notable exceptions.
- ²⁰ Hollows and Mosely (2006b), in Hollows and Mosely (2006a) *op cit*: 26.
- ²¹ Miller, Toby (1988). 'Men on feminism', *Meanjin* 47, 1: 118.
- ²² McKee, Alan (1996). 'Men and how to love them', *Social Semiotics* 6, 2: 277.
- ²³ *FHM's* Bloke Awards did, however, name Germaine Greer as their 2007 'Woman of the Year' for her comments on Steve Irwin's death and on Princess Diana, and in the same year *Zoo Weekly* ran a 'Search for Australia's Sexiest Feminist' competition.
- ²⁴ Edwards, Tim (2006). *Cultures of Masculinity*. Routledge, London: 43.
- ²⁵ Gill, Rosalind (2007). *Gender and the Media*. Polity, Cambridge: 131.
- ²⁶ Sheridan, Magarey and Lilburn (2006) *op cit*: 25.
- ²⁷ *Sunday Times* (2008). 'Retro man the ideal', 31 August.
- ²⁸ Comments made in the book's introduction received widespread press coverage, including in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Associated Press*, and the UK's *Daily Mail*. According to Latham, we are witnessing 'the decline in Australian male culture – the loss of our larrikin language and values' which he attributes to 'the rise of Left-feminism in the 1970s and 1980s, with its sanitising impact on public culture' as well as to neo-conservatism. The result is that 'Australian mates and good blokes have been replaced by nervous wrecks, metrosexual knobs and toss-bags. . . . It's the revenge of the nerds, John Howard-style', in Latham, Mark (2006). *A Conga Line of Suckholes: Mark Latham's Book of Quotations*. Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Victoria: vi.
- ²⁹ Foster, James (2008). 'If sexual banter be the food of love, speak up, girls', *Sunday Herald Sun*. 27 July.
- ³⁰ *Courier Mail* (2007): 'Warning: feminism is a health hazard'. 27 March.
- ³¹ Hawkes, Helen (2007). 'Boys do cry', *Sun Herald*. 11 November.
- ³² Nguyen, Kenneth (2008). 'Feminists take note: fashion is not the enemy', *The Age* 8 March.
- ³³ Austin, Keith (2007). 'Modern love', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 13 September.
- ³⁴ Sherwin, Stuart (2006). 'Calling Dr Love – dateless dudes transformed into Romeos at weekend crash courses', *Courier Mail*. 16 September.
- ³⁵ Newland, Martin (2006). 'The return of the muscle', *Sunday Times* (Perth). 17 December.
- ³⁶ Readfearn, Graham (2007). 'Sheds encourage sense of community', *Courier Mail*. 9 August 2007.
- ³⁷ Thieu, Allan (2008). 'Society grooms men who blush', *Sydney Morning Herald*. 27 February.
- ³⁸ Vaughan, Michael (2007). 'We don't need feminism to fight inequity', *The Age*. 11 December.

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- ⁴¹ Macnamara, Jim (2006). "'Dissing" men: the new gender war', *On Line Opinion* 15 September, <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=4907>. Accessed: 17 October 2008.
- ⁴² Patel, Ash (2007). 'Divorce laws: Aussie dads still in dark about family law changes', *News Weekly*. 15 September, http://www.newsweekly.com.au/articles/2007sep15_d.html. Accessed: 30 October 2008.
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- ⁴⁴ For a good account of the ways in which men's rights and fathers' rights groups organise around issues of family law and domestic violence see Flood, Michael (2008). 'What's wrong with fathers' rights?', in Tarrant, Shira (ed) *Men Speak Out: Views on Gender, Sex, and Power*. Routledge, London, New York: 212-218.
- ⁴⁵ McCauley, Patrick (2007). 'All hail the male lesbian', *Crikey!* 10 April, <http://www.crikey.com.au/Politics/20070410-All-hail-the-male-lesbian.html>. Accessed: 9 October 2008.
- ⁴⁶ 'Miss Stella' (2006) *op cit*.
- ⁴⁷ Arguably, feminism's influence is indirectly apparent in these books' emphases on better intimate relationships, the need for improved communication between men and women, and an implicit assumption of gender equality (of the equal but different variety).
- ⁴⁸ Mackay, Hugh (2007). *Advance Australia ... Where?: How We've Changed, Why We've changed, and What Will Happen Next?* Hachette Livre Australia, Sydney: 42, 46.
- ⁴⁹ Salt, Bernard (2008). *Man Drought: And Other Social Issues of the New Century*. Hardie Grant Books, Prahran, Victoria: 224.
- ⁵⁰ Mackay (2007) *op cit*: 42.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid*: 38.
- ⁵² *Ibid*: 50, 49.
- ⁵³ Salt, Bernard (2006). *The Big Picture: Life, Work and Relationships in the Twenty-First Century*. Hardie Grant Books, Prahran, Victoria.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid*: 98.
- ⁵⁵ Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra define postfeminism as the 'supercession' and erasure of feminism, rather than its outright rejection, which fits Salt's schema. See Tasker, Yvonne and Negra, Diane (2007). 'Introduction: Feminist politics and postfeminist culture', in Tasker, Yvonne and Negra, Diane (eds) *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture*. Duke University Press, Durham, NC: 5.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid*: 256.
- ⁵⁷ Barker, Chris (2007). *The Hearts of Men: Tales of Happiness and Despair*. University of New South Wales Press, Sydney; Hamilton, Maggie (2006). *What Men Don't Talk About*. Viking, Camberwell, Victoria.
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- ⁵⁹ McNally, Patrick (2006). *How Men Stuff Up Relationships . . . And How Women Help Them!* Exisle Publishing, Wollombi, NSW; Morel, Michael (2006). *Are All Men Dickheads?* Starburst, Regency Park, South Australia; Phillips, William (2006). *'Tell Me, Dad' . . . A Life/Sex Education Story for Boys and Dads that Everyone Should Read*. Joshua Books, Maroochydore, Queensland.
- ⁶⁰ McNally(2006) *Ibid*: 24, 25.
- ⁶¹ Biddulph diagnoses contemporary society as suffering from 'father hunger' in Biddulph (1994) *op cit*: 30.
- ⁶² McNally (2006) *op cit*: 26.
- ⁶³ Gill (2007) *op cit*: 215 notes a similar phenomenon in her analysis of contemporary British media.

- ⁶⁴ Shippide, Steve (2007). *The Man Manual: 100 Brilliant Ideas for Being a Top Bloke*. Woodslane Press, Warriewood, NSW; de Brito, Sam (2008). *Building a Better Bloke*. Penguin, Camberwell, Victoria; Novella, Joe (2006). *The Ultimate Self-Help Guide for Men*. Temple House, Hartwell, Victoria.
- ⁶⁵ See, for example, McInnes, Elspeth (2003). 'Compulsory child distribution and the politics of fatherlessness', *Just Policy* 31, December: 54-55; Genovese, Ann (2006). 'Family histories: John Hirst vs feminism, in the Family Court of Australia', *Australian Feminist Studies* 21, 50: 187.
- ⁶⁶ See Campo, Natasha (2005). *op cit.* for a full account of feminism's supposed anti-maternalism voiced in the press.
- ⁶⁷ If we wish to see the future of Australian anti-feminist discourse then look no further than American men's rights websites such as *Men's News Daily* (<http://mensnewsdaily.com>).
- ⁶⁸ These attacks included cutting the budgets and/or limiting the powers of the Office for the Status of Women, the Affirmative Action Agency, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, and the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission; and the abolition of the Women's Bureau in the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs as well as of the Women's Statistics Unit in the Australian Bureau of Statistics. See Summers, Anne (2003). *The End of Equality: Work, Babies and Women's Choices in 21st Century Australia*. Random House, Milsons Point, NSW: 121-41.
- ⁶⁹ Megalogenis, George (2008). *The Longest Decade*. Scribe, Carlton North, Victoria: 165.
- ⁷⁰ Regarding Howard's campaign against political correctness, George Megalogenis observes that '[t]he argument switched from what you couldn't say under Keating to how much people could get away with under Howard', *Ibid*: 213.



Paid Maternity Leave: A late delivery?

Deborah Brennan

A period of paid absence from work around the time of birth or adoption of a child is an established entitlement in all western countries, other than Australia and the USA. At least seven countries have provided paid maternity leave since before the First World War.¹ Maternity leave is supplemented in many countries by a range of other benefits and services that enable adults to combine paid work and family care. Sweden and Germany, for example, have introduced measures to encourage greater involvement by fathers in the care of their children; France and Finland have experimented with long 'child rearing' leaves; and in some other countries there is interest in reframing family leave to cover contingencies such as extended absence from work to care for the elderly and/or disabled.

Despite the absence of a nationally legislated system, some women (and men) have access to a short period of paid leave around the time of birth as a result of employer or company policy or enterprise bargaining. But access to such leave is 'patchy and unfair'.² Those most likely to benefit are employees in the public sector, including universities, or in large firms. Having a high status, well-paid, full-time job is a good predictor of having access to paid leave. The self-employed, casual workers and part-time workers are least likely to have paid leave; when they do have it, it is likely to be of short duration and to be based on restrictive eligibility criteria such as working for the same employer for two years. But, despite decades of lobbying and advocacy, very few Australian women have even the 14 weeks paid leave considered by the International Labour Organisation to be the minimum required for the health and wellbeing of mothers and their babies.

Why is paid maternity/parental leave such an intractable problem for Australia? The main reasons, I believe, are to be found within the historical traditions of the Australian welfare state and the distinctive industrial relations regime that prevailed in this country for most of the twentieth century. The absence of social insurance in Australia is also a significant factor. In this short paper I review the background to the current debate about paid maternity and parental leave and assess the prospects of the introduction of such a scheme by the Rudd government.

Financial support and industrial protection for mothers have a long history in Australia. In 1912, following sustained advocacy by Labor women, the Commonwealth introduced a non means-tested Maternity Allowance. The Allowance (one of the first such payments in the world) was equivalent to several weeks' wages for a woman factory worker and was seen by women as partial recognition of their 'maternal rights'.³ It was also an expression of Australia's preoccupation with increasing its white population or, in the words of the *Australian Medical Gazette*, 'breeding ... a stronger and sturdier race'.⁴ The fact that the Allowance was paid to unmarried, as well as married mothers caused extensive and heated debate. The exclusion of Aboriginal and Asian mothers 'went largely unremarked'.⁵

In the 1940s, in the aftermath of the Depression and World War II, the Commonwealth introduced widows' pensions and unemployment benefits. Based upon similar principles as the age and disability pensions introduced in 1908, these were means-tested, taxpayer funded benefits, paid at a low, flat rate. In the 1920s and 1930s, the possibility of moving towards European-style social insurance requiring contributions from employers and employees was raised. Such schemes were promoted by the conservative side of politics, but resisted by a coalition of the ALP, the labour movement, the self-employed, and various welfare organisations.⁶ To this day,

Commonwealth-funded income support such as unemployment and disability benefits, payments to low-income sole and partnered parents, and old age pensions are means-tested on family income and paid at a low flat-rate.

The election of a Labor government in 1972, following 23 years of conservative rule and coinciding with the efflorescence of second wave feminism, led to a surge of interest and activity in policy areas relating to women's domestic and employment circumstances. Child care, equal pay, access to education and employment and protection from domestic violence were central issues for the new government.

Maternity leave was not a flagship issue of the period, but it was the subject of quiet, sustained attention from the Women's Bureau, a small section within the federal Department of Labour and also by Elizabeth Reid, the Prime Minister's adviser on Women's Affairs. In 1973, the Whitlam government introduced 12 weeks paid leave and 40 weeks unpaid leave for female Commonwealth public servants, and two weeks paid paternity leave for men. Several State governments had already introduced similar measures but the Commonwealth provisions exceeded these.⁷

Unpaid maternity leave, adoption leave and carers' leave were gradually extended to the private sector workforce through 'test cases' heard in the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.⁸ However, activism around *paid* maternity and parental leave took longer to emerge. When, in 1983, the Australian government ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) it entered a reservation to the provision concerning maternity leave, stating it was 'not at present in a position to take the measures required...to introduce maternity leave with pay or with comparable social benefits throughout Australia'.⁹ Australia had also ratified ILO Convention 156, 'Convention Concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities' in 1990.

Women's organisations and trade unions were keen for the government to withdraw Australia's reservation to CEDAW and to give full effect to ILO Convention 156. In 1994, family policy and gender equality were propelled into the centre of national political debate, partly because the year was designated as 'International Year of the Family' and partly because of the prominence given to the 'social wage' in the context of the Accord (the series of agreements between the ACTU and Labor in which wage restraint by the unions was traded for improvements in the 'social wage'). In June 1994, Prime Minister Keating announced that the government would introduce a maternity allowance 'in the spirit of ILO Convention 103'.¹⁰ This matter was considered by the Council of the International Year of Family, chaired by Professor Bettina Cass. The Council noted that in many other countries the costs of paid maternity leave were met through a combination of government funding, employer and employee. This was not an option for Australia, given the absence of a social insurance tradition. Accordingly, the Council recommended that Australia introduce 'a maternity/parental allowance for early infant care for 12 weeks, as an addition to family payments in the social security system'.¹¹ The Council recommended that no means test or labour force participation test be applied.

In 1995, announcing its 'Agenda for Families', the government introduced a means-tested lump sum payment, known as the Maternity Allowance (but quickly dubbed the Baby Bonus), equivalent to six weeks of the Parenting Allowance, payable to women regardless of their previous workforce status.¹² According to the government, this was 'a landmark achievement' and 'a truly innovative measure'. The ACTU accepted the Maternity Allowance as a step towards paid maternity leave, although key women's organisations objected strongly to seeing the payment conceptualised in this way.¹³

They argued that maternity leave was a workforce entitlement, like annual leave and sick leave and that extending it to all women diluted its purpose (and, possibly, reduced the quantum). While most women's groups supported measures to support mothers who were not in paid employment, they objected to the government's reluctance to acknowledge (and fund) maternity leave as a workforce entitlement. The Women's Electoral Lobby was particularly affronted by the means-testing of the benefit, arguing that this was 'not a principle the ACTU should embrace lightly' and that the payment should have been available to all women workers.¹⁴

The politics of paid maternity leave took a new turn with the election of the Howard government in 1996. Prime Minister Howard was known for his support of the male breadwinner family and his hostility towards feminism and feminist-inspired policy. Among the first acts of his government were cuts to childcare funding and the re-shaping of family payments to benefit households with a stay-at-home parent while penalising those in which paid work and care were shared. The renewed campaign for paid maternity leave thus took place against the backdrop of a conservative government determined not to 'advantage' women in paid employment in comparison with women in the home. Prime Minister Howard drew on the argument of the UK sociologist Catherine Hakim, that women fall into one of three groups: home-based, work-centred or adaptive.¹⁵ Hakim was invited to Australia to meet with policy-makers and to address a major conference. The message taken from Hakim's work was that the government should eschew measures such as paid maternity leave that were said to benefit only 'work-centred' women.¹⁶

Determined to avoid paid maternity leave, but aware of the importance of shoring up the incomes of women who withdrew from paid work to care for young children, Howard introduced the First Child Tax Rebate – one of the most short-lived and heavily criticised social policy instruments in Australian history. The rebate was designed to return to the mother a portion of the tax she had paid in the previous year, but only if she stayed out of the workforce. The greatest benefits were directed to those who had the highest incomes before the birth of their child and who remained outside the workforce for the longest. Mothers who had a low income prior to the birth received reduced benefits; those who returned to work full-time got nothing. In Patricia Apps's words, 'This [was] a classic Howard Family Tax Policy. The single-income family receives a benefit, which is withdrawn if the mother works'.¹⁷ Two years later, the First Child Tax Rebate was replaced by another version of the Baby Bonus – this time, a payment made to all mothers, regardless of income or labour force status. The confusion about the social and economic goals of different forms of support for the parents of newborn children was reflected in this rapidly changing array of policies.

The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) has been a major source of institutional support for paid maternity leave. Established in 1986, this independent statutory authority has the job of fostering and protecting human rights and overseeing the implementation of various laws. These include the Sex Discrimination Act, which gives effect to Australia's international obligations including CEDAW and ILO Conventions. Given this remit, HREOC has taken a strong interest in women's employment, especially ways of combating discrimination in employment. A HREOC report on pregnancy and work noted that the limited availability of paid maternity leave was a major problem for women in paid employment and urged the government to look further into this issue and to consider removing the reservation that Australia had entered to CEDAW.¹⁸

In 2002, under the leadership of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, HREOC again entered the maternity leave debate, publishing a carefully researched

discussion paper exploring the issue of paid maternity leave¹⁹ and following this with consultations around the country. At the end of this process, HREOC put forward a proposal for a government-funded maternity leave scheme that would meet the minimum ILO standard without putting pressure on business. Under the proposal, employed mothers who were not eligible for employer-funded paid maternity leave, including self-employed, casual and contract workers, would receive 14 weeks pay at the minimum wage rate, funded by the Commonwealth government. The proposal was deliberately minimalist because, in the words of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, 'the debate had made it clear that Australia was still struggling with the concept of mothers working as a moral issue; there was no point in muddying the waters further by devising a scheme that could be dismissed because it was 'unaffordable'.²⁰

In lieu of paid maternity leave, the government reinstated the Baby Bonus – a cash payment to all women on the birth or adoption of a child. During a post-budget press conference, the Treasurer linked the maternity payment to the economic implications of population ageing, and to the promotion of fertility, urging Australians to have three children, 'one for your husband and one for your wife and one for your country'.

To the dismay of many trade unions and women's groups, the Labor Party's initial response to the Baby Bonus was broadly supportive. In the 2004 election campaign, Labor advocated a Baby Care Payment, similar in structure to the government's measure but subject to a family income test. Such a scheme, it proclaimed, would 'deliver on Labor's commitment to introduce 14 weeks paid maternity leave'.²¹ Yet the structure of the proposal, the level of payment and the fact that it would be means-tested on family income, all undermined this claim. The contrast with other work-related leave entitlements was stark. The leadership of the ALP appeared to have accepted the argument for 'equal treatment' of women in the labour force and those outside it – a principle that undercuts the notion of leave as a workforce entitlement and that would never be tolerated in respect of the forms of leave from which men benefit the most (eg, annual leave).

A genuine paid maternity leave scheme must recognise labour market attachment and provide leave from employment. It needs to be built around recognition of the costs incurred in withdrawing from paid work. A cash grant provided to all new parents cannot achieve the same goals. We can readily see this by performing a 'thought experiment' in relation to annual leave. What would be the reaction if government were to replace paid annual leave for employees with a cash payment for every adult regardless of labour force status? While some might welcome the recognition such a scheme might make to the range of contributions adults make to society both in paid work and outside of paid work, it is unlikely that workers would be willing to accept this as an alternative to paid annual leave which is based on full wage replacement, sometimes supplemented by a 'leave loading'. Paid absences from work (for reasons of illness, temporary disability, annual leave, long service leave and so on) are hard-won entitlements linked to labour force participation. To suggest that any of these be replaced with cash grants unrelated to workforce participation completely misses this vital point.

Meanwhile, the Howard government advocated workplace bargaining, rather than national legislation, as the key to extending paid maternity leave. But, unsurprisingly, the individual agreements that the government promoted in place of collective bargaining, were an ineffective vehicle for achieving paid maternity leave. In 2004, only 11 per cent of Australian workplace agreements contained any reference to maternity leave, and only 7 per cent referred to *paid* maternity leave.²²

A late delivery?

Labor's election platform in 2007 included a commitment to 'a paid maternity leave scheme for all mothers with no cost burden to small business'.²³ Labor had no policy about how such leave would be funded, who would be eligible or what level of support would be provided. Following a recommendation from the National Foundation for Australian Women, the government referred the question of paid maternity, paternity and parental leave to the Productivity Commission, asking it to identify the costs and benefits of such leave and to identify models of provision that would be appropriate for Australia.

The draft report of the Commission, issued in September 2008, conceptualised paid parental leave as a workforce entitlement, not a generalised form of support for parents with newborn, or newly adopted, children. Commissioner Robert Fitzgerald (a former president of the Australian Council of Social Service) noted: 'Our proposal is designed to deliver three main goals: better child and maternal welfare; greater workforce participation by women; and improved work-family balance and gender equity. The proposed measures give immediate support to parents of newborn children in the paid workforce, but ultimately benefit all Australians'. The Commission advocated 18 weeks leave, paid by the Commonwealth government at the minimum adult wage to 'primary carers' who have worked for an average of ten hours per week in the preceding twelve months. Eligible parents could share the leave between them, with an additional 2 weeks paid leave available if fathers or other partners shared the leave. Those who shared care would have a total of 20 weeks paid leave. Since many parents already had access to some paid leave, the Commission estimated that 'the vast majority of children' could be cared for exclusively by their parents for at least the first six months after birth. Employers would be required to pay superannuation contributions on behalf of employees on paid parental leave. Those outside the labour force, and employees not eligible for paid parental leave, would receive a maternity allowance equal in value to the current Baby Bonus.

The draft report of the Productivity Commission has had a mixed reception. On the whole, unions and women's organisations have welcomed its proposals, but those who advocated a longer period of paid leave and/or a higher level of remuneration, saw them as too cautious. Conservative politicians attacked the recommendations for distinguishing between mothers in the home and mothers in the paid workforce. The Opposition spokesman on families, for example, claimed that paid parental leave would create 'first and second class mothers'.²⁴ This claim was echoed in *The Australian* by a commentator who claimed that paid parental leave would create 'two classes of families and two classes of mothers'.²⁵ The Prime Minister initially declared that paid maternity leave was 'an idea whose time has come' but his pronouncements, and those of other senior ministers, have been increasingly tempered by caution as the economic crisis has deepened. In addition, senior women such as Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard, and Minister for Families, Jenny Macklin, have voiced concern about measures that differentiate between women in paid work and those caring for children at home.

The government has greatly raised expectations about paid maternity leave through its election commitment and its referral of the issue to the Productivity Commission. The Commission will present its final report in February 2009. It is highly likely that a statutory paid parental leave scheme will be announced within the next year or two (although the implementation of the scheme may be delayed or phased in). The characteristics of such a scheme – in particular its coverage, level of remuneration, conditions of eligibility – are, however, far from clear.

Aspects of the male breadwinner tradition continue to be embedded in Australian culture and institutions. Australia is a long way from achieving a system of paid parental leave that recognises men and women as equal (or potentially equal) partners in the workplace and in the home. Nevertheless, even a modest scheme of paid parental level will be a considerable advance on current arrangements, especially for low-paid women.



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What Should We Do with Our Girls?

Meditation on a recurrent problem

Beverley Kingston

One day last summer I was walking through Hyde Park when I became aware of the two girls strolling in front of me. They were probably in their late teens, dressed casually in brief shorts and sandals. Both were carrying bottles from which they took a swig from time to time. It was the bottles, however, that really attracted my attention. They were not those ubiquitous plastic bottles of water, but brown glass bottles of beer, one of the recently released Blonde brands, obviously designed with girls like these in mind. Fifty years ago, I thought primly, girls of that age would not be seen in the city dressed so casually, and they would certainly not be carrying bottles of beer, much less consuming them in public. Until probably some time in the 1970s when fast takeaway food began to become common, eating or drinking while walking in the street was simply not done. Even surreptitiously consuming a chocolate bar while hurrying to catch the train seemed embarrassing, when I was a student in the 1960s.

A few weeks later on the afternoon train, I noticed two girls sitting across the aisle, initially because I could not help hearing every word they were both saying into their mobile phones. From time to time both paused to take a swig from bottles of Vodka Cruiser. They each had a six-pack in a bag on the seat facing them, and during the hour before I left the train they had each emptied two bottles and were on to the third without any evident deterioration in the quality of their phone conversations. Some things don't change. In my youth, vodka mixed with pineapple juice to disguise the alcohol was the preferred method of getting girls tipsy, or even drunk, at college dances.

In recent months there have been many newspaper columns devoted to 'binge drinking' by young girls, and now an advertising campaign warning against it. The serious advice is that it may do irreparable harm to nervous systems that are still not fully developed and expose young women to more dangerous drugs and unprotected sex. Likewise the increasingly early sexualisation of young girls has been causing considerable dismay. Sexy clothes, sexy dancing, sexy behaviour among girls not yet old enough to be at school runs into the rising fear of paedophilia on one side and arguments about freedom of expression on the other. Because we know our girls are the source of the next generation, 'daughters and mothers of Queensland to be' we sang at school, we also fear for their fragility and vulnerability.

It was ever thus. As early as 1800 with the assistance of his wife Anna Josepha, Governor King took steps to establish an orphanage in NSW for girls who were destitute. Various levies, taxes and fines were directed towards the upkeep of his Female Orphan School. Because women (and girls) were in short supply in the colony, there were in fact very few motherless or destitute girls who were not quickly offered a home provided they were willing and able to work as 'shepherdesses or house helps', but the real concern was for the moral wellbeing of all girls in the colony, especially those whose parents were thought incapable of setting a proper example.¹ The belief was that 'moral females must necessarily improve the habits of their consorts' and this was the best way of ensuring that the convict population produced a decent, law abiding second generation. This belief lay also behind the provision of equal access to primary education for girls and boys. Though it was more likely that girls would be kept

home from school to help with childcare and housework, understanding of their potential as a moral influence remained strong (the idea of God's police). When education was made compulsory in primary schools later in the nineteenth century, the compulsion applied equally to girls and boys.

It soon became clear, however, that although girls were now being educated to read and write, they were no longer learning essential skills such as household cookery, basic hygiene or simple childcare. Before the advent of compulsory education most girls had served a *de facto* apprenticeship 'helping' their mothers at home or as nursemaids and servants in other homes. In his letters on town life in Australia first published in 1883, Richard Twopeny observed that most colonial girls knew something of basic housework, could cook some sort of dinner and cut and sew a dress.² Despite their experience of primary school, however, the girls employed by Ethel Turner to help after the birth of her first baby in 1898 left a great deal to be desired. She found most of them unreliable, slovenly, and unteachable.³ In fact they were probably all going through that difficult phase that seems to affect adolescent girls and is discussed further below.

By the early years of the twentieth century, classes for girls in sewing, cookery, domestic economy, and simple childcare were being advocated as part of the public education system. The main obstacle to the proper introduction of these subjects was cost, not only the cost of equipping schools with working kitchens and laundries in which lessons could take place, but cost of the ingredients for cooking lessons and materials for sewing classes. If parents were asked to pay for the cost of ingredients and materials (which were likely as not to be spoiled or wasted), girls from poor homes were unlikely to be able to afford the lessons, while girls who could afford them were more likely to opt for superior subjects like music or languages. Lack of status and the cost of acquiring expertise continually dogged the teaching of household skills to girls. And even when there was an attempt to resolve the status question by establishing a chair in domestic economy at the University of Sydney, the degree was so difficult – it required an initial science major – that only two graduates ever completed it.

In a study of adolescents in Sydney published in 1959, Connell, Francis and Skilbeck noted that 'the adolescent girl of 1955 is relieved of many tasks associated with the care of her young brothers and sisters which formerly inducted her into the responsibilities of child rearing and house hold management'.⁴ They also noted that the availability of welfare payments and services meant that it was less likely that a boy would have to leave school to help support his mother or siblings. Education became so vocationally oriented that boys who were not academically inclined became bored and left school as soon as possible. Any kind of job, however, could be a step towards their future as economically independent adults. Girls, on the other hand have found it increasingly difficult to learn about the things that will be vital in her future as an adult. Feminism, for good reasons, has long emphasised economic independence as essential to equality for women. So there has been a tendency to see an earlier focus on marriage and motherhood as a trap. Even where some training in subjects like childcare, cookery, and household management is available, it is more uni-sex than vocationally oriented.

The shrinking size of families has affected girls more than boys. In times past, large families meant that older girls had plenty of practice in both childcare and household management, simply through helping their mothers. Younger ones were likely to be exposed to similar experiences through their older sisters' young families. There were plenty of opportunities to learn about, or to discover that one was not suited to,

motherhood and household management (hence the determination also of first wave feminists to open access to education and other vocations for women). Working class girls were able to work as servants and nursemaids. This was a kind of apprenticeship in which they had a good chance of learning better and more modern ideas about both household management and childcare. Of course it didn't always work like this. The women who employed them were not necessarily good household managers nor skilled as wives and mothers. And the girls were not necessarily interested in or capable of learning. However, the possibility was there, and the incidental evidence is that it worked, in a rough kind of way.

The question 'What shall we do with our girls?' has never been far from the surface in Australian society. Concern about the kind of education and upbringing given to girls in Australia has always been of a slightly different order to the kind of education and upbringing provided for boys and young men. Boys have always been educated broadly, through school and youthful participation in the workforce for their future as adult citizens and breadwinners. Part of the struggle for equality for women in the past hundred and fifty years has been for equal access to education, employment and citizenship, and much has been achieved, though increasingly what was a simple premise for earlier generations, *viz* that women were responsible for the reproductive future of society, has been repressed in favour of fostering equality. Unwanted or undesirable pregnancies these days can be avoided by easy access to contraception through the pill, or if that fails, abortion. There is some financial support available to young girls who become pregnant and wish to keep the baby. Illegitimacy is no longer a disaster for mother and child. So in these ways we support young mothers and the fear, stigma, and extreme hardship that once made protecting young girls from casual sex important should no longer prevail.

The problem of how to bring up girls has been transposed into something else. Some of the recent books of advice written for girls and/or their parents are interesting for what they say (and what they don't say), especially if read alongside the etiquette books and sociological studies of earlier generations.

According to the old etiquette books, for example, respectable women didn't drink alcohol at all or imbibed very discreetly if they did. The public bars or hotels were closed to women, while 'Ladies' Lounges' were expensive and unattractive. Alcohol consumption at dinners and parties was controlled either by employing a barman to mix and serve the drinks (sherry or cocktails) or a waiter to pour the wine at dinner. Bottles were never placed on the table for the guests to help themselves. Alcohol barely appears, and only in relation to boys, in Connell *et al* in the late 1950s. In 1978, John Collins and Juliet Harper noted that under age drinking among girls was rising. Alcohol and drugs were seen as related problems, connected to delinquency, though alcohol was less worrying since it was legally available to adults. Therefore it was not necessary for children behave illegally in order to acquire it.⁵ Since then there has been a tendency to legalise or decriminalise many other drugs as well, in practice if not officially. At the same time there has been an immense change in our attitudes to alcohol that is only partly reflected in relaxation of the licensing laws. On almost every occasion where once a cup of tea would have been offered, now it is a glass of wine. Newspapers carry full-page advertisements for astonishing quantities of alcohol. Wine catalogues fall through the letterbox at frequent intervals offering bulk buys, of what is essentially an addictive drug, at bargain prices. It is not surprising that young people aspiring to adult pleasures have taken to consuming alcohol on such a scale.

The fear of unprotected sex and its consequences lies behind anxieties about excessive drinking among young girls. Female sexuality has long been treated as a possession by men, and as such is now contested by feminism. Much of the writing on feminism is focused on sexuality and the right to assert it – even, in the view of Emily Maquire, to be a ‘slut’.⁶ The assumption now seems to be that men must learn to live with overt female sexuality, and that women should not be at risk for doing what comes naturally to them, and that men should basically ignore what historically has been seen as sexual display. This debate goes back at least to 1990s and the furore caused by Helen Garner’s *The First Stone* (1995), but much of it reflects generational change within feminism and the desire of the young to rebel.⁷ The absence of historical perspective in the debate has been quite problematic. Though there are still women (and men) who can remember what the world was like before safe and reliable contraception was easily available and when venereal disease was untreatable and incurable, most contemporary discussion of sexuality proceeds on the basis that from a health perspective it is simply problem free. And perhaps eventually the once natural links between human reproductive urges, procreation, and sexual attraction will be severed entirely, and reproduction will become a deliberate (even clinically engineered) process, perhaps carried out entirely in laboratories. Meanwhile confusion abounds.

Contemporary advice manuals on girlhood and female adolescence written by (and for?) adults are now inclined to assume sexual activity as normal among teenagers but to attack the increasingly early sexualisation of girls who are too young to understand what they are doing but are driven by what they see in the media, in advertising, and by the consumer culture in general. There is no doubt that our culture has gone in the space of fifty years from being intensely, fearfully secretive about sex to what sometimes seems like a shocking level of saturation. At the same time the age of puberty in western societies has been falling. This may be a consequence mainly of our very high standard of living (especially nutritionally), but the increasing sexualisation of young girls must also have something to do with generally more relaxed attitudes to female sexuality fostered by feminism, and it certainly reflects the growing importance of sexuality to the advertising industry and mass consumerism.

Adolescent female sexuality undoubtedly lies behind what Michael Carr-Gregg memorably labelled in 2006 ‘The Princess Bitchface Syndrome’.⁸ Yet as early as 1959 in their study of Sydney adolescents, Connell, Francis and Skilbeck noted

the years 14 and 15 are frequently marked by a rudeness, disturbing to the parents, which jeopardises the status of the girl. Even at 17 an occasional reprimand is necessary, but from this age the mother has little need to fear bad-mannered behaviour.⁹

Collins and Harper devoted considerable attention to the family shape, size, structure, and its impact on the development of adolescent girls.¹⁰ Since those studies were done, there have been significant changes in family structure and they probably have quite seriously impacted on the perceived bad behaviour of adolescent girls. Carr-Gregg noted, in addition to the earlier onset of puberty, a decline in social connectedness through church, family, school and community and a corresponding rise in peer contact and influence, the rise of divorce, the often absent father, and increasing access to recreational drugs. Smaller families now mean potentially more intense relationships between parents and children with greater expectations being placed on each child. They also mean more intense sibling rivalry or less opportunity for siblings to influence and moderate each other’s behaviour, and small families are

much more likely to have only girls or only boys. This in turn has opened the possibility of quite different relations between mothers and daughters, and fathers and daughters where there are no boys to be considered. Relations between mothers and daughters are potentially more fraught, especially as mothers struggle to manage work, home and ageing parents themselves. Mothers who have struggled to achieve their own liberation may be inclined to hold out unreal expectations for their daughters. And whereas once daughters were seen as an economic liability for fathers, requiring protection until they were satisfactorily married, now daughters can follow in their fathers' footsteps in many occupations and professions. The graduate or business partner may have replaced the debutante or the bride in reflecting her father's pride in her achievement. Today's smaller families have also assisted in the characterisation of the young girl as a princess, derived perhaps from some kind of debased Disney-style version of the traditional fairy story. None of this of course has any bearing on the problems of the teenager grappling with her burgeoning sexuality, yearning for love, romance, security, perhaps even for motherhood, bewildered by her parents' divorce and resentful of their expectations that she should settle down and do well at school.

The recent books of advice have practically nothing to say on what will be, regardless of the advance of feminism or ideas of equality, the most common vocation for women, *viz.* motherhood. There is plenty of advice on sexuality, avoiding pregnancy, even on abortion. Kaz Cooke's *Girl Stuff* is almost confronting in its honesty and thoroughness, including useful guides to sound websites and helpful organisations.¹¹ Had I had access to a book like that when I was in my late teens and early twenties, many hours, days, weeks of anguish might have been avoided. On the other hand, given the levels of secrecy on sexual matters and the primitive state of the available contraceptives at the time, I'm not sure I would have understood it. Nor am I sure that the girls I saw drinking in the park and on the train would be likely to know about its existence or be bothered to read it if they did. Its value is most likely to be in reinforcing the arguments of girls and parents who want to resist peer pressure when it comes to alcohol, drugs or sex. And even though Cooke outlines the problems likely to confront the teenage mother, the idea that motherhood will eventually be a significant occupation for most women is not admitted as part of the great world of choice.

Many questions now affecting young women are being tackled but not from their perspective. As more women enter public life practical problems such as the provision of childcare or maternity leave, are becoming matters for public policy. But how long will it be before motherhood is recognised as a 'calling' like medicine, or a special skill like musical or sporting ability which a girl can choose, train for, specialise in? Or will the time come when only trained mothers are allowed to reproduce? Perhaps there should be a subject something like 'The history and theory of motherhood' early in the post primary curriculum for those girls (and boys) who are interested or feel a vocational attraction towards motherhood and/or childcare as a profession. Or perhaps motherhood could be treated as a serious vocational option for girls along with social work, nursing, media and publicity. In my youth, the options for girls who were not academically inclined, that is, the majority, were secretarial work, nursing and kindergarten training. The latter was very popular and included all forms of working with young children. It was the obvious choice of girls who felt themselves strongly drawn towards motherhood, and various forms of post school training were available. Increasingly, however, unlike domestic science which failed to turn itself even into more high powered home economics, early childhood education became professionalised, the entry levels were raised, and now it is largely inaccessible to the girls who most need it because it has university degree status.

According to Maggie Hamilton the problems facing our girls today are quite frightening.¹² She makes *Puberty Blues*, the shock-horror revelation of sexual behaviour among teenagers on Sydney's southern beaches in the 1970s, look like a Sunday school picnic.¹³ Yet there can be no going back as Maggie Hamilton would have us, to a simpler, more innocent world. To focus on what is happening to girls is to focus on the symptoms rather than the more significant changes taking place in society as a whole. Rather than burden our girls further for growing up, we could take a longer, broader, more relaxed view of ourselves, and try to admit them more helpfully to their adult responsibilities.

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Books

Roma the First: A Biography of Dame Roma Mitchell.

By Susan Magarey and Kerrie Round. Wakefield Press: Kent Town, South Australia. 2007.

Is it possible for a woman to remain so *unconflicted* at a personal and private level, while pursuing the staggering public achievements tracked in this recent biography of Dame Roma Mitchell (1913-2000)? Susan Magarey and Kerrie Round have detailed the extraordinary life (and times) of Australia's first female Queen's Counsel, Supreme Court judge, University Chancellor, and Governor of a state. It's a thrilling read in trail-blazing, and all the more timely as the country's first female Governor-General steps into the role in Canberra. But whereas Magarey and Round emphasise the



contradictions of Roma's life – as, for example, an observing Catholic who made it to the top of a Protestant establishment, an ardent British traditionalist though fervently Australian, a woman of authority in a man's world, a feminist as well as a conservative – what struck me most in reading this book was the figure of a person who apparently suffered little interior struggle with the demanding public life she led in law, academia and the civic realm. No whiff of ambivalence. No trace of ambiguity. She had the self-assurance to take on an appeal case in the High Court at the age of a mere 25, and later on, such difficult appointments as a royal commission into a police commissioner's dismissal in the 1970s. All, it seems, that she wanted from a young age was to be a barrister like her grandfather and short-lived father.

We learn from Magarey and Round's account that the more she excelled in that role, the more sure-footed she became in

the many distinguished roles and jurisdictions the law afforded her. With no partner or children to potentially buffer (or distract) her from life's challenges, Roma was a committed professional with a richly self-styled life. This took in enjoyment not only of work, but also the arts, music, dancing, dressing and self-presentation, the good humour and companionship of many close friends, as well as intensive care for her proud mother. An 'individualist' through and through, she had a sharply logical mind that steeled her from the excessive forms of male exclusion she encountered over many decades. She had a singular way of making such practices – for example, in the male-only Law Student's Society at Adelaide University, the deeply gendered detail of family law, the exclusionary cultures of sociability in the law profession, and mundane matters of toilet provisioning for QCs in court buildings – appear not only invidious, but ridiculous.

Magarey and Round succeed in their aim of rendering Roma's intensely South Australian story in terms that register the national/international significance of her life story. The authors depict a Roma deftly engaging the dramatic cultural, economic and political changes of the 20th century, including: the Depression of the 1930s (when she developed a keen sense of social justice); World War II; the waves of feminism in the 1940s and 1970s; the declining rigidities of class; the reforms of the Dunstan era (some of which she, herself, initiated as chair of the South Australian Criminal Law and Penal Methods Reform Committee); the rise of Aboriginal rights (a cause to which Roma rallied in seeking to redress the glaring over-representation of Aboriginal offenders in gaols) and the more general institutionalisation of human rights (an ethic she embraced as founding chair of the Australian Human Rights Commission). One detracting aspect of the author's presentation of material is the inclusion of long italicised sections of speculation and commentary inserted in the body of the text. In addition to compromising the flow of the text, these sections also risk making the book appear too long and off-putting to readers. This would be a shame, because the carefully researched subject matter is both gripping and rewarding.

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Making Women Count: A History of the Women's Electoral Lobby.

By Marian Sawer. University of New South Wales Press, 2008.

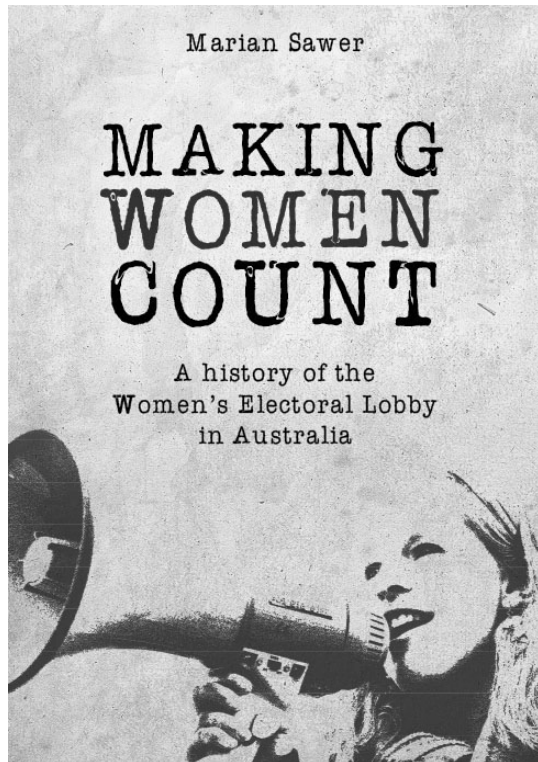
Understanding the life cycle of social movements remains a perplexing conundrum for scholars in the field. When do we know if a movement is over? How do we document movement abeyance? And what do we make of the persistence of social movement organisations long after the peak of mobilisation has passed?

It is this latter question that frames Marian Sawer's excellent and extraordinarily detailed history of the Women's Electoral Lobby (WEL). Based on the rich vein of data mined for the ARC funded WEL History project – including survey and focus group data and archive material from all over Australia – Sawer has been forensic in her documentation of the emergence, development and decline of WEL. The history she recounts is one of extraordinary women doing extraordinary things in extraordinary times. With few resources and an enormous weight of expectation on their shoulders, the women of WEL from the 1970s to the 1990s engaged in successful policy advocacy and social and political reform.

In many ways, WEL is emblematic, or at least symptomatic, of the struggles faced by the majority of social movement organisations over the last forty years. Challenges of organisational structure, diversity of membership, and changing political opportunities are not unique to WEL. To better illustrate the wider nature of these challenges Sawer weaves the language of social movement theory through this history. The analysis of repertoires and framing, for example, suggest the many ways in which this study will be useful to a field wider than those with a particular interest in WEL or feminist politics. Sawer seeks to tell a largely celebratory tale, and indeed there is much in WEL's history that should be celebrated. But as someone who has been a WEL insider for much of the last decade it seems that at some points this celebratory nature of this history tends to gloss some of the internal tensions that, perhaps perversely, make the organisation's successes all the more remarkable. For example, while Sawer acknowledges the difficulties involved in deploying a strategic universalism – that is making claims on behalf of 'women' as a mainstream politics demands – she has a

tendency to underplay the intensity of interpersonal conflict that this sometimes generated.

More significantly, as long time WEL activist Joan Bielski observes in the book, the challenge for WEL has been to 'redefine and modernise its role' – a challenge that most observers would say the organisation has failed. The decline in the capacity of an organisation like WEL, particularly in terms of its fundamental failure to attract a new generation of women to the feminist struggle, raises new questions about the life cycle of social movements. What, if anything, will fill the void left by an organisation like WEL when the small core of volunteers who keep it going today finally take a well-earned retirement? What can we learn from the life of this organisation that will inform both activism and the study of activism in the future? Sawyer argues that WEL is part of a women's movement that has persisted over time and is likely to re-emerge in the future, but leaves open the question of whether organisations like WEL will survive to be a part of this feminist future.



The work of women in WEL and in the wider women's movement has transformed the Australian social and political landscape forever. Although some important gains have been wound back – with the women's machinery of government the standout example here – other changes are indelible. Never again will Australian women have to quit their jobs when they marry or become pregnant. Never again will Australian women need a man's signature to gain a mortgage or a business loan. As Sawyer notes, women involved with WEL in the early days found that 'their ways of thinking about themselves and about the world had shifted irrevocably.' The generations of women who have followed them have inherited these changes, although perhaps not with the same degree of commitment to carry on the struggle as these pioneers might have hoped.

There is still much that remains undone and much that needs to be recovered after the backsliding of the last dozen or so years – paid maternity leave, pay equity and a sustainable child care sector are just three challenges that continue to make the lives of Australian women unnecessarily difficult. The question one is left with at the end of *Making Women Count* is whether it will be organisations like WEL that take up these struggles in the future. It seems unlikely. It remains to be seen what new forces, frames and repertoires will emerge in response to these challenges.

Sarah Maddison

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The Great Feminist Denial.

By Monica Dux and Zora Simic. Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 2008.

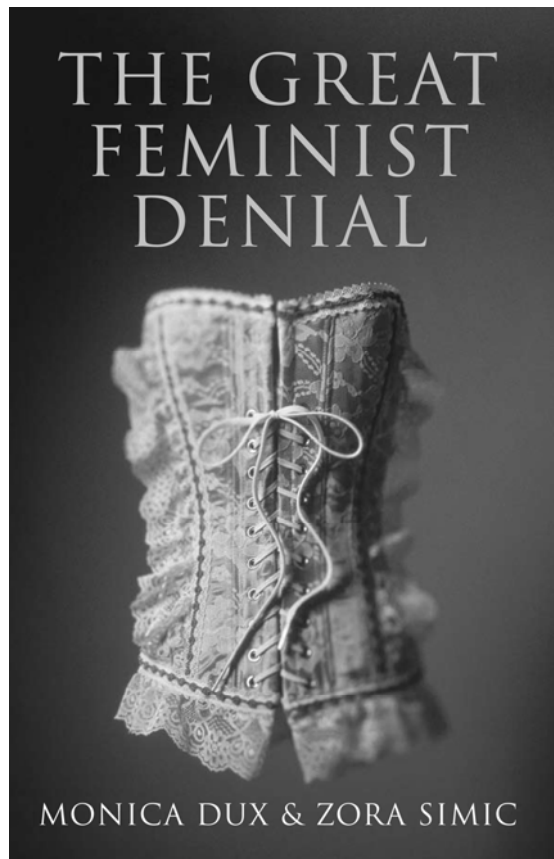
After a decade of unrelenting 'feminist bashing' it is heartening to see the emergence of a number of books that seek to reclaim feminism from its detractors. However, where others (Jane Caro and Catherine Fox come to mind here) seek to rename and repackage feminism and appoint themselves its new spokeswomen, Dux and Simic make no such grand claims. Rather, they confidently and convincingly unpack the most harmful caricatures of feminism, while at the same time making a case for a return to feminism's original, yet simplest, of demands: the eradication of sexism.

Like others, the authors trace feminism's 'image problem' to the 1990s and the actions of an 'unlikely duo' of villains: author, Helen Garner and former prime minister, John Howard. Both contributed to feminism's downfall, the former by creating divisions between feminists (over the issue of sexual harassment), and the latter by slashing funding to childcare and dismantling the women's affairs machinery. Just as feminism gained some power it was repositioned as either overblown 'political correctness' or redundant – we all remember Howard's refrain that we are in a 'post-feminist' era.

They find evidence for feminism's 'image problem' in their informal interviews, where 'The Hairy Legged Lesbian' still functions as a cautionary example. The most virulent anti-feminist rhetoric, however, has come from women who claim to be speaking on its behalf and it is these 'faux feminists' (Miranda Devine, Janet Albrechsten, and Angela Shanahan are the prime culprits) that the authors most stridently attack, while also debunking the four main caricatures of feminism's 'victims' these women have produced: lonely single women, overworked mothers, raunchy teenage girls and Muslim women in headscarves.

Where faux feminists blame feminism for the plight of lonely, single women, Dux and Simic show that while patterns of human relationships have changed, this is a result of neo-liberalism and its

insistence on intense individualism, not feminism, which only ever encouraged economic independence not singledom. Similarly, where faux feminists insist that 1970s feminists 'forgot about mothers', the authors demonstrate how it was feminists who identified the misnomer of the 'independent, carefree worker' and argued for structural changes to enable both men and women to share in productive and



reproductive labour. Again, the villain here is neo-liberal economics and employers who talk about 'work/life balance', but expect the (female) worker to change, not the workplace itself.

The latest attacks on feminism have been about 'raunch culture' and Islam, and it is in their deconstruction of these debates that the authors move from their chatty, informal tone, to a more considered approach. Where feminists have been blamed (somewhat ridiculously) for the popularity of pole dancing, they have also (and more seriously) been accused of ignoring the plight of Muslim women and the threat of terrorism.

Implicit in this assumption (made most vocally by the late journalist and faux feminist Pamela Bone) is that western feminists have the right to speak for all women and that 'The War on Terror' was made on Muslim women's behalf. Contrary to the rhetoric of 'the coalition of the willing', however, war of any kind does not 'liberate' women but further condemns them: poverty, violence and rape in Iraq and Afghanistan are the result of war, not Islam. Given feminism's 'patchy history of racism', the authors argue, to speak for Muslim women – to 'rescue them' – would be another form of 'imperial arrogance'; they must be allowed to speak for themselves.

In their final chapter the authors re-package the four caricatures of feminism's failures in new and innovative ways. They replace the overstated problems of the lonely, single career woman with the real issues facing older women who, due to career interruptions to raise children or care for elderly relatives, lack superannuation and face the prospect of an impoverished old-age. Similarly, mothers, they argue, face more serious problems than being 'forgotten' by feminists. From the moment of conception, mothers lack real 'choice' (or more importantly 'rights') – around childbirth (they mention the disturbingly high rate of caesarian sections in Australia), around childcare (there simply aren't enough quality childcare places to go around), and, of course, around employment (Australia still lacks a paid-maternity leave scheme). In terms of raunch culture, rather than worry about pole dancing, we should be concerned with the growing rate of child sex slavery. Finally, if western feminisms are to blame for abandoning their Muslim sisters then surely we are all guilty of abandoning Indigenous women. Indigenous communities are in real trouble, but the faux feminists never position this as a feminist issue because to blame white feminists would be to implicate all non-Indigenous Australians in the same crime and we are not ready for this exposure of our collective guilt.

The authors conclude that while feminists don't always get it right, they are still needed. Unlike others, however, they make no evangelical pleas for 'new' versions of feminism, as if simply giving the movement a makeover will render it more popular. They return to their original definition of feminism as 'the recognition that women face specific injustice because of their sex' and argue that while this remains true, feminism still has a place. It certainly does.

Natasha Campo

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Women's Movements: Flourishing or in Abeyance?

Ed Sandra Grey and Marian Sawer. Routledge. 2008.

This is a book that engages with social movement theory to reflect on the changing visibility of women's movements and forms of feminist activism. It emerges from a roundtable organised by Marian Sawer held in conjunction with the International Political Science Association Congress in Japan in 2006. It is timely in its injunction 'to

understand how the activism of groups seeking greater autonomy for women changes in terms of repertoires of action and modes of organising' (p 1), noting a social and scholarly tendency to 'lose interest when movements disappear from the streets' (p 2). The subtitle, *Flourishing or in Abeyance?* poses alternatives in which to talk about women's movements that directly intervene in popular media myths that feminism is dead and gone.

The book begins, appropriately, with a lively discussion in a fascinating preface by Verta Taylor and Leila Rupp, who were looking for metaphors in the mid-1980s to describe the work of ageing activists from the suffragette movement, maintaining their rage in the 1950s. This contextualises the continuity of women's activism despite changes in movements, preoccupations, methods and language. They suggest that feminist activism features trajectories of 'resurgence, retrenchment, transformation, and survival' (p xiii) in the ensuing chapters, a movement unable to be understood through the concept of waves which 'features the cresting waves but ignores the troughs between' (p xiii). I suspect that the search for models in which to frame reflection is probably just as important as the material available for reflection.

The book is divided into three sections. Part I contains five chapters applying social movement theory to the particularities of women's movements in Britain, New Zealand, Australia and South Korea (comparatively); Canadian and Australian women's health activism; and backlash politics in the United States and Japan. The comparative chapters are instructive, as indeed are all of the chapters in their survey of movements nationally. Fiona MacKay points out that such surveying and reflection is less frequent since the turn of this century. She finds that 'British' feminism has often stood for 'English' feminism, which appears to have languished since the 1980s mass protests of Greenham Common and the Miners' Strike; her analysis of women's involvement in Scottish home rule reconfigures the form of British feminism, which proves to be highly active. Kyungja Jung's account of South Korean feminism as preoccupied with gaining democracy until the late 1980s goes on to suggest they are following the Australian experience by establishing a femocracy, and asks what can be learnt from Australia's past. In her outline of Australian feminism, however, Sarah Maddison suggests that the habitual focus on femocrats and legislative success ignores the more radical cultural activism that has changed the shape of everyday life for women in Australia. This is a refreshing and much needed approach and yet culture remains muted in this chapter, and without it indigeneity, ethnicity and sexuality largely disappear from the movement. Sandra Grey's New Zealand chapter more assertively combines culture and institutional politics by naming campaigns, tactics, books and media. This section of the volume is the most substantive and insightful, and I wonder why it didn't continue similarly with contributions from other continents.

Part II has four chapters that work across national borders to focus on an eclectic cluster of issues: global governance, campaigns for gender quotas, women in cities, and cyberfeminism. And Part III features one-page statements by eight 'young' activists who seem to be paired from the same seven nations represented in Part I. They are all 'born in or after the time when street activism by women's organizations was at its height' (p 143) and, as noted, many came to feminism through its institutionalisation as Women's Studies at university. Curiously, though, Women's Studies figures little as a mode of ongoing activism elsewhere in the volume, invoking that old nugget that positions theory versus practice.

The aim of this book is ambitious, in charting women's movements and their current state across the world, and it is provocative, thoughtful and highly informative. It is a book that has emerged from political science and inevitably reflects the concerns of

that field and its intellectual heritage. As important as that is, I nevertheless yearn to see my own disciplinary interests included as part of that social movement history: maternity activism included in women's health; cities conceived as more than simply places of safety or danger for women; feminist ethics, embodiment, and cyborg culture as part of cyberspace; and cultural production named and so perpetuated in collective memory. As the editors note, 'the picture presented in this book appears bleak', but I'm thinking this is partially the result of its disciplinary frame. My optimism is renewed by the Women's Studies students I teach, whose level of literacy in issues of gender, race, class and social justice is a direct product of decades of feminist thinking and writing, and who will, perhaps, generate more 'new voices'.

Alison Bartlett

Women's Studies, University of Western Australia

Aborigines and Activism, Race, Aborigines and the Coming of the Sixties to Australia.

By Jennifer Clark. University of Western Australia Press, 2008.

This fascinating and meticulously researched book examines the forces behind the groundswell of racial consciousness in Australia in the 1960s. Clark places the struggle for Aboriginal rights in the framework of the international movements that have come to define this era. Her study begins with the horrific repression of anti-apartheid activists in Sharpeville, South Africa, and ends with the emergence of the Tent Embassy just over a decade later.



One of the most interesting themes of the book is the nexus between Australian foreign policy and Aboriginal policy in the 1950s and the 1960s. Fear of international criticism and Cold War paranoia were often far more potent agents for the repeal of racially discriminatory legislation than questions of morality. Clark's analysis of Menzies' views on racial issues is also timely, given the current rumination over the legacies of the Howard era. Menzies' refusal to condemn South Africa over the tragedy of Sharpeville, for pragmatic and selfish reasons, finds resonance in Howard's persistent refusal to apologise to members of the Stolen Generations. On a more basic level, Howard shared Menzies' personal distaste for discussion about race.

The powerful influence of the American civil rights movement on Australian activists of this era is also one of the underlying themes of the book. The tactics of non-violent protest were adopted by the students who participated in the Freedom Rides. Years later, the disappointment with the slow gains of the civil rights movement that fuelled the emergence of Black Power in America, would find resonance in the establishment of the Black Panther Party of Australia.

The revelation that student outrage was directed against racial oppression overseas, before their attention was drawn to injustices suffered by Aboriginal Australians, is one of the most interesting aspects of Clark's study. It is also timely in light of the Academy's relatively low key reaction to the Northern Territory Emergency Response;

a matrix of racially discriminatory laws that have effectively created a system of apartheid. In spite of some positive advances, the gulf between life in middle class Australia in the 1960s, and the disadvantage pervasive in Aboriginal communities, has narrowed only slightly.

Clark's work is an important contribution to our understanding of this turbulent era, but it is not without fault. The sheer breadth of her study has resulted in the personal accounts of the Aboriginal leadership being relegated to the background. The powerful voices of Aboriginal activists appear only infrequently, although this changes in the latter part of the book when the focus is placed on Black Power. I don't think that it was Clark's intention to undervalue the contributions of Aboriginal activists, but that is one possible result of her methodology. Overall however, this book is engaging and well-timed.

Nicole Watson

University of Technology Sydney.

The Trouble with Theory: The Educational Costs of Postmodernism.

By Gavin Kitching. Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 2008.

Gavin Kitching, Professor of Politics at the University of New South Wales, has written what promises to be a bestseller in tertiary and some secondary education circles: a plainly written but authoritatively argued extension of that popular sport among what passes for Australia's intellectual elite, namely postmodernism-bashing. Kitching's critique is directed primarily at the poststructuralist contention that social reality and individual identity or subjectivity are 'socially constructed' (p 8), this being 'the heart of postmodernism' that he sees as 'very poor, deeply confused and misbegotten philosophy' because of its 'radically incoherent ideas about language, meaning, truth and reality' (p xi). To illustrate the horrendous errors and nefarious consequences of this fashionable nonsense (postmodernism and poststructuralism being identical in this regard), Kitching takes a selection of recent undergraduate Honours-level theses from his own School of Social Sciences and International Studies that were based on postmodernist theory and awarded a mark of 75 per cent or better. Using extensive quotation and an elaborate system of anonymity protection (see pp 11-15 and the lengthy quotation appendices on pp 149-199), the author joins interests already explored in previous books by employing the empirical and utilitarian language philosophy of the late Wittgenstein to expose the false bases of poststructuralism and to show how a language free of unnecessary theory (as opposed to a theory-laden 'discourse') can join up with traditional Marxism to advocate worthy causes more convincingly than any Althusserian or Foucauldian post-Marxist deviations. Kitching thereby vindicates the 'Enlightenment project' of establishing empirical truth whatever the consequences



(pp.107 ff) over a postmodernist 'politics of truth' (p 110) for which truth is a variable related to cultural and political norms (p 121).

One name missing from the book is Saussure. This is not surprising, given that Kitching follows the Wittgenstein of *Philosophical Investigations* in believing that 'language gets its meaning from its use (ditto "discourse") not from its "structure"' (p 104) because individuals use language in the same way they use tools to make kitchen cabinets (p 90). Poststructuralism, however, cannot adhere to this common-sense view of language (or 'discourse') because it starts out from the Saussurean idea of the essential arbitrariness of the sign, wherein the gap between word and meaning can only be closed artificially (by extra-linguistic circumstance as in everyday conversation, or by pre-determined means as in the creationist ideology of biblical literalness). The use-value approach to language assumes an easy connection of meaning to intention, whereas the Saussurean view suggests that, whatever the intentions of the producer of a piece of language, its meaning will be decided by those who receive or read it. Many of the typical strategies of poststructuralist thought—and much that is difficult or unfamiliar in the art and literature labelled postmodernist—arise because their creators were among the first to work on the assumption that they themselves could not control the meaning of what they wrote or made.

One consequence of such thinking is what, in bowdlerised form, becomes the 'social construction of reality'. If meaning cannot be guaranteed in advance, the relationship of language or discourse to the reality they are 'about' becomes problematic. 'Language creates reality' and 'language uses people' (as two students have it) are undoubtedly crude bastardisations of the complex ambiguities poststructuralism explores in the relations between discourse and the world, but such issues are not met by Kitching's aggressive reassertions of an empiricism that simply does not address them at all (pp 36-8, 48-51 and 59-60).

A second consequence is the diminished authority and status of the 'I'. The poststructuralist 'I' looks to write a 'decentred' self whose sovereignty, legitimacy and authority are seen as already compromised by external forces that contribute to its formation. Tacitly rejecting or ignoring the challenge in such postmodernist thinking, Kitching dismisses the dehumanisation that makes impersonal theory look like an instrument (pp 20-27 and 86-90) as one more outdated leftist theory of false consciousness (p 141), its existence blamed on Althusser ('a uniquely, almost farcically, low point in the history of high intellectual French Marxism' [p 85]), with Foucault and Deleuze only slightly less culpable (p 87). Once again, an outline of the deficiencies of certain solutions is made to seem equivalent to proof that the questions are wrong-headed or meaningless.

Kitching laments the dangers of the trickle-down effect of complex, ill-digested ideas on vulnerable students (p 10). But I wonder whether he himself is not another victim. Having used as his database versions of poststructuralism that are reductive to the point of parody, Kitching, like other detractors before him, constructs a postmodernist straw man only too easy to demolish with one further restatement of long-cherished pieties elevated to the rank of unquestioned common sense. I doubt whether Wittgenstein read Saussure, but it's high time his followers did.

Stephen Gregory

University of New South Wales

Academy News

Research Program

ASSA/ABS 2006 Census Research Project

Three papers in the *Occasional Paper Census Series* have now been published. They were launched on 20 November at the 2008 NatStats Conference. They are: *Creative Australia: the arts and culture in Australian work and leisure* (David Throsby FASSA); *Lives of Diversity: Indigenous Australia* (Maggie Walter); and *Housing: mirror and mould for Australian society?* (Andrew Beer). Copies are available for download from the Academy website.

ARC Funding for a project commencing in 2010

The Call for Expressions of Interest for a research project commencing in 2010 is now open. Each year the Research Committee selects one Expression of Interest from those received to be drawn as a full application for funding under the ARC's Linkage Learned Academies Special Project. The Academy has a 100 per cent success rate for applications for projects up to 2008.

A specific date for the receipt of Expressions of Interest is not yet fixed, but will be no later than 30 March 2009. More information can be found at:
<http://www.assa.edu.au/Research/call.htm>.

Policy and Advocacy Program

Forthcoming policy roundtable

Following two successful collaborations with the Institute of Public Administration of Australia (IPAA), the Policy and Advocacy Committee has agreed to assist in convening a policy roundtable, to be held early in 2009. The Committee is pleased that in light of its previous contributions on Federalism (see *Dialogue*, 26, 2) and the Public Service (see *Dialogue*, 27, 2) it has been invited to contribute to the planning and organisation of an event which will address health policy in Australia. Jane Hall will represent the Committee on the planning reference group.

International Program

Social Science Collaborative Research Projects (SSP)

(Australia-France Joint Action Program)

Representatives of the French Embassy met with representatives of the Academy in September to discuss the applications received for the SSP Project in 2009. It was agreed the following proposals be funded:

- 'Innovative methods for forecasting the size and demographic structure of ageing populations': *Dr Sophie Pennec* (INED, France) and *Associate Professor Heather Booth* (ADSRI, ANU). Visits in September 2009, July 2010.
- 'Investment planning in catchment areas that are used for drinking water supply to large cities': *Dr Robert Lifran* (France) and *Dr Tihomir Ancev* (Sydney). Visit in January 2009.
- 'Good or bad trees? Social and ecological debates over neo-Australian landscapes in Madagascar': *Dr Jacques Tassin* (CIRAD, France) and *Dr Christian Kull* (Monash). Visit in June 2009.
- 'Indentured labourers in the Pacific' (2nd year of funding): *Alban Bensa* (France) and *Dr Bronwen Douglas* (ANU). Visit May-June 2009.

A report on progress for the project 'Indentured labourers in the Pacific: race, classification and social outcomes in colonial and post-colonial contexts (Australia, New Caledonia, Fiji)' has been received from the leaders, Alban Bensa (L'École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris) and Bronwen Douglas (Australian National University), researcher and Postdoctoral Fellow, Benoît Trépied (EHESS / University of New Caledonia) and associate Chris Ballard (ANU, Canberra).

The original proposal was as follows:

This socio-historical project will compare the social conditions of immigrant indentured labourers and their descendants in Queensland (Australia), New Caledonia, and Fiji from 1850 to the present. By locating these groups in relation to particular variants of the coloniser/colonised and White/Black cleavages that underpin such social systems, we shall elucidate the social and racial logics of the construction of multicultural societies in the contemporary Pacific region. We shall examine both the historical production of the category of immigrant labourer and the actual experiences of individuals thus defined. A monograph in French and English will be the major outcome.

The SSP grant 2008 was entirely dedicated to research trips by Benoît Trépied to the Division of Pacific and Asian History, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies (RSPAS), The Australian National University (Canberra) from his post at the University of New Caledonia in Noumea. We are delighted to say that our collaboration has been and will be even more productive than we had initially hoped. During his first stay in Canberra, Dr Trépied familiarised himself thoroughly with the relevant resources available at the ANU and the National Library of Australia and made a wide range of very useful contacts. His research was then mainly dedicated to an intensive bibliographical survey on the historiography of indentured labour in Australia and in the Pacific, with a particular focus on Queensland, New Caledonia and Fiji.

Simultaneously, Trépied had many discussions on various aspects of this historiography with the leaders of the project and with other researchers in RSPAS. On such occasions, he shared his specific knowledge on the mostly French written historiography of indentured labour and race relations in New Caledonia (with the notable exception of Dorothy Shineberg's *The People Trade*, 1999). On the other hand, these discussions were essential for him to understand fully the social, political and academic contexts of the debates and controversies on indentured labour elsewhere in the Pacific, which mainly took place within RSPAS, as the most important research centre on the Pacific, and in its scholarly journal, the *Journal of Pacific History*.

Drs Douglas and Ballard were particularly delighted with the initiative, diligence, and highly honed critical faculty Trépied brought to his reading of much of the published literature available on this topic. In this brief period, he gained a thorough grasp of this material and began to probe the archival resources available in Australia. While tackling more specifically the issues of racial categorisation in the context of indentured migrations within the colonial societies of Queensland, New Caledonia and Fiji, he contributed an important, but different perspective to the collective effort led by the research team working on the history of race and the constitution of human difference in Oceania under the direction of Douglas and Ballard.

This collaboration reached another level during Benoît Trépied's second stay in the Division of Pacific and Asian History. On 18 November, he gave a public seminar on the articulation between political activities and race relations in New Caledonia through a micro-historical ethnography of the commune of Koné in the 1950s and 1960s, when former native subjects (*indigènes*) and indentured labourers (*Javanais*, *Tonkinois*,

Hébridais, Japonais) became French citizens and started to participate in electoral competition. This presentation offered a renewed perspective on the complex colonial and racial legacies that structured Caledonian society and politics, which was deeply appreciated by the audience. It was thus decided that Trépied would produce a written English version of this paper to be submitted to the *Journal of Pacific History*, as an original case study on the transformations of the practical and discursive uses of the notion of race in the Pacific in the mid-twentieth century.

In the course of his second stay, Trépied participated in an ongoing workshop on 'Reading/Writing Oceanian Histories' run by Douglas and Ballard for colleagues and postgraduate students. He derived considerable benefit from the readings and discussions and his contributions were much appreciated by the other participants.

Moreover, Trépied has now finished the bibliographical survey he started in June on the historiography of indentured labour in Australia and the Pacific. The result of this work is a very useful and precise statement on the current debates and issues on the matter. Given the relatively short research period available to Trépied at this stage, we have collectively decided that he needs to give his investigation a rigorous focus. He therefore plans to produce two scholarly articles from this bibliographical work: one in French (probably for the *Journal de la Société des Océanistes*) that will make the Anglophone historiography on indentured labour known to French scholars; and one in English for the *Journal of Pacific History* that will make the French historiography and his own ethnohistorical research on indentured labourers and their descendants in New Caledonia known to Anglophone scholars.

At present, Trépied is concentrating his research on the first of these historiographical articles and his writing on the second. Simultaneously, he will try to complete the primary research needed for his planned monograph on the comparative social conditions of immigrant indentured labourers and their descendants in Queensland, New Caledonia and Fiji from 1850 to present. He is also working on the translation of his other article for the *Journal of Pacific History* on politics and race relations in the Koné area.

More broadly, while problematising labour, politics, and the uses of race in the colonial history of Oceania, these three articles (two in English and one in French) represent a major effort to connect very much separated Francophone and Anglophone academic research and scholarly traditions on the Pacific. From this perspective, our common collaboration through the SSP grant is of primary intellectual importance. Through the case of the historiography of indentured labour, Benoît Trépied is currently building new links between methodologies, epistemologies, and problematics constructed and discussed in Australian (as well as New Zealand, Fijian and Hawaiian) research centres and in French (and New Caledonian) universities. This particular aspect of his work within our common collaboration deserves strong support, and legitimises and confirms the renewal of the SSP grant awarded to our project for 2009.

Australia–Netherlands Exchange Program

The call for proposals for travel to the Netherlands in 2009 closed in July. Eleven applications were received: Whilst this is a joint program with the Australian Academy of the Humanities, and the number of applications includes researchers from the humanities, the consistently high level of applications for this scheme also reflects the increasing popularity of the Netherlands as a location for research collaboration in the social sciences.

Two applications were selected for funding in 2009:

- *Associate Professor E Anne Bardoel*, Deputy Director on the Australian Centre for Research in Employment and Work at Monash University, will travel to the Netherlands in April-June 2009 to visit the Nijmegen School of Management at the University of Nijmegen. She will consult with Dutch researchers on a cross cultural comparison of determinants of employer involvement in flexible work arrangements.
- *Dr Nonja Peters*, Director of the Migration, Ethnicity, Refugees and Citizenship Research Unit at Curtin University of Technology will travel to the Netherlands in May-June 2009. She will study maritime, military and migration research, heritage studies and digitisation with a view to constructing a virtual web and portal for the preservation of Dutch Australians' cultural heritage.

Dr Toby Burrows, Digital Services Director, ARC Network for Early European Research, University of Western Australia, spent two weeks in the Netherlands in October 2008. 'The purpose of my visit was to investigate the application of Semantic Web technologies – ontologies, vocabularies and reasoning techniques for user and context modeling – in the provision of cultural heritage information across libraries, museums and archives.

The Department of Computer Science at the Vrije Universiteit (VU) Amsterdam, through the courtesy of Professor Guus Schreiber, provided me with office space and access to computing facilities. The Centrum Wiskunde and Informatica (CWI) provided administrative support for my visit. I held discussions with Dr Jacco Van Ossenbruggen (CWI/VU), Dr Lora Aroyo (VU) and their colleagues about their current projects. I was given a briefing on the way in which the results of the MultimediaN e-Culture project are being adapted to provide the pilot for the *Europeana* Web service, scheduled to be launched in November 2008. I also attended a meeting at the Rijksmuseum of Dr Aroyo's CHIP project group (funded under the NWO's CATCH program), which is exploring aspects of personalised access to museum information using Semantic Web technologies. While at the VU, I was invited to present a seminar for members of the Semantic Web interest group, about the issues and semantic challenges arising from my work on developing digital services like *Europa Inventa* for the ARC Network for Early European Research. I also sat in on a regular session presenting new projects by members of the group. I also took the opportunity to visit the Virtual Knowledge Studio, a major digital research group hosted by the International Institute of Social History (IISG) for KNAW. I was briefed by Dr Charles van den Heuvel on various different projects, including a project recently initiated by the VKS and the Huygens Institute, on the semantic analysis of 17th-century scientific correspondence.

I also travelled to the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (Royal Library) in The Hague, where I met members of the European Digital Library team and the Manuscripts Department, and discussed the Library's digital services – especially those of relevance to medieval manuscript collections. I met with Dr Antoine Isaac and his colleagues to look at their work on the application of ontological frameworks to library vocabularies, which is being carried out as part of the STITCH project under the NWO's CATCH program.

As a result of my visit, I am much better-informed about Semantic Web developments relevant to cultural heritage in Europe. I have strengthened existing contacts and made important new contacts. I hope to be able to support a return visit to Australia by one or more of the researchers involved. My visit has already resulted in a proposal for a national ontology service in the humanities in Australia, developed with Professor Jane Hunter (University of Queensland) for consideration by the NeAT committee. I am also using the knowledge gained during my visit to expand and strengthen the proposal being developed by a group within the European medieval studies network CARMEN, involving the application of Semantic Web technologies to research on medieval

manuscripts. I am a Chief Investigator on a research grant application in this general field which is being submitted to the Australian Research Council's Linkage-Projects scheme. I expect to draw on the results of my visit for further grant applications in 2009.

This visit was an extremely valuable opportunity to discuss a range of innovative projects in depth, and to see them demonstrated in detail. I am most grateful to the academies for making it possible'.

Australia-China Exchange Program

Jan Pakulski FASSA, University of Tasmania, has been nominated by the Committee to receive the 2009 grant. Professor Pakulski will visit the Institute of Sociology of the CASS, in Beijing, in the second half of 2009 to research political transformations and elite change.

Dr Mark King, Centre for Accident Research and Road Safety-Queensland (CARRS-Q), School of Psychology and Counselling, Queensland University of Technology visited China in September. A summary of his report follows:

The original application stated a primary purpose and some means of achieving it, which can be paraphrased in terms of the following aim and objectives.

Aim: To establish cooperative research on road safety, focusing on the transfer of road safety knowledge and expertise and the development of local road safety capacity in fostering practice and research in road safety.

Objectives: To participate in meetings and seminars in which information and expertise will be shared and to build on existing relationships in order to develop collaborative research proposals to funding bodies, with the ultimate aims of improving road safety in China and developing local road safety capacity.

The second objective refers to existing relationships which have developed over several years. These have resulted largely from my efforts to pursue the research and practice developed in my PhD studies, on the transfer of Western road safety knowledge and expertise to less motorised countries, which has coincided with CARRS-Q's interests in pursuing greater international engagement. Discussions with Professor Shi Kan, Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS), and a delegation from the Zhejiang Public Security College (now Zhejiang Police College, with university status) when visiting Australia showed that road safety was considered to be an important and growing issue for which China was seeking assistance in building capacity. Further visits both from and to China led to increasing collaboration with Chinese scholars, and the decision to visit China with the following aims:

- further steps which could be taken in pursuit of a road safety centre in China;
- resolution of intellectual property issues in relation to our course material;
- discussion of publication and reporting of our PhD student's work;
- identification of other opportunities for research collaboration; and
- discussion of a proposed change to the approach for a formerly unsuccessful joint funding application.

In addition, my thesis involved the proposal of a model for analysing the context of particular road safety issues in less motorised countries according to the economic, institutional, social and cultural factors influencing it, as a first step to understanding what kinds of intervention might be expected to have a net beneficial effect. The data collection process involved secondary source analysis, interviews and observations, and it was intended to undertake data collection during the exchange. In particular, I hoped to get away from Beijing and into the countryside, as there is a lot of information

which points to a large contrast between the heavily trafficked highways of the major cities and the very basic transport and road conditions in rural areas. However, there were quite limited opportunities for observation of road user behaviour and safety, confined to Beijing. An opportunity to see the situation in rural areas did not arise.

Collaborative discussions were held with scholars in the Department of Social Psychology, Institute of Sociology, CASS, the School of Management, Graduate University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, and the Institute of Psychology, Chinese Academy of Sciences. In addition I made presentations to the School of Management, Graduate University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) on 'Young Adult Road Users, and to the Institute of Psychology (CAS) on 'Traffic Psychology and Research Projects at CARRS-Q'.

It is very important that researchers on exchange have an existing relationship with the host organisation. This implies both knowledge of the exchange researcher's work, and an expectation that the host will benefit in some way, so that there is a reason for investing effort into the development of a program. Exchange researchers also need to be aware that they may have to take some initiative themselves in organising their programs. Not only holiday periods, but periods either side of them should be avoided where possible. Finally, everyone in academia is always busy, so being able to offer something (seminars, potential collaboration) is an important way of gaining assistance in achieving one's own objectives. In broad terms the aim and objectives of the exchange were achieved, although not to the depth that had been hoped. The kindness and generosity of the hosts and their practical support was much appreciated.

Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils (AASSREC)

ASSA International Program manager Will Douglas and Executive Director John Beaton, in his honorary role as Secretary General of the Association of Asian Social Science Research Councils attended the 2008 business meeting of AASSREC held at the National Research Council of Thailand's offices in Bangkok. ASSA provides the secretariat for AASSREC's fourteen nation association, the presidency of association moving to a different partner nation on a biennial basis. Current AASSREC President, Professor Ahnond Bunyaratvej, chaired the meeting which decided the title for its 18th Biennial Conference would be *Multiculturalism in a Globalising World: Views from Asia-Pacific*. The theme of the conference supports contributions from regional social scientists on ways to build the fundamental social structures that promote national and international harmony. The biennial conference will be held from 26-29 August 2009 and in conjunction with a major annual event, the Thailand Research Expo. ASSA will be seeking a paper contributor for the event. AASSREC is undergoing some changes, with a new adhering body, The Iranian Sociology Association which will provide broad disciplinary local networking in that country. After a hiatus, AASSREC is very pleased that New Zealand has rejoined the association with the NZ Royal Society becoming the member. The 2007 Conference observer countries, Laos and Cambodia, are anticipating becoming full members, and AASSREC is seeking links with other continental and global social science organisations. In 2009 the Presidency will move to Indonesia and be held for the two year term by Professor Dewi Anwar Fortuna. The 19th biennial conference will take place in Indonesia.

Public Forums Committee

2009 Hancock Lecture

Thomas Lemieux, from the Department of Economics at the University of British Columbia, Canada, has accepted the Academy's invitation to give the inaugural

Hancock Lecture and will come to Australia in the latter half of March 2009. He will give a lecture at Flinders, with possible visits to Melbourne and ANU.

Workshops Program

Recently Completed Workshops

'Religion and Politics: Australian Cases and Responses'; convened by Dr Marion Maddox (Macquarie) and James Jupp FASSA (ANU).

'The Great Risk Shift? Institutionalisation of Individualism'; convened by Dr Greg Marston and John Quiggin FASSA (Queensland).

Workshops 2009-2010

The Call for Proposals for Workshops to be held in the financial year 2009-2010 closed on 8 August. The Workshops Committee met in September and agreed to fund the following Workshops:

'Consolidating Research in Australian Teacher Education'; convened by RW Connell FASSA (Sydney), Bill Green (Charles Sturt) and Marie Brennan (South Australia). To be held at the University of Sydney, July 2009.

'Religion and State Intervention and Opposition: Regional and Global Perspectives'; convened by Jack Barbelet, Adam Possamai (Western Sydney) and Bryan Turner FASSA (National University of Singapore).

'Philanthropy and Public Culture: The Influence and Legacies of the Carnegie Corporation of New York in Australia'; convened by Kate Darian-Smith FASSA, Julie McLeod (Melbourne), Glenda Sluga (Sydney) and Barry McGaw FASSA (Melbourne). To be held at the University of Melbourne, 30-31 July 2009.

'Privatisation, Security and Community: How Master Planned Estates are Changing Suburban Australia', convened by Lynda Cheshire, Geoffrey Lawrence FASSA, Peter Walters and Rebecca Wickes (Queensland). To be held at The University of Queensland, 28-29 September 2009.

'Energy Security in the Era of Climate Change: A Dialogue on Current Trends and Future Options'; convened by Joseph Camilleri FASSA (La Trobe University). To be held at La Trobe University, 18-19 July 2009.

'Ethics for Living in the Anthropocene'; convened by Katherine Gibson FASSA, Deborah Bird Rose FASSA (Australian National University) and Ruth Fincher FASSA (University of Melbourne). To be held at the Australian National University, November 2009 or February 2010.

Reports from workshops conducted under the Workshop Program, including policy recommendations, are published in *Dialogue*, usually in the first issue following the workshop.

National Academies Forum (NAF)

The National Academies Forum (NAF) has a new officer, *Virginia Jane Rose*, who is employed part-time to raise NAF's profile, and to deal with NAF administration and accounts, as well as looking after ASSA's media requirements. Virginia has a background in co-ordination, management and bookkeeping, and a wide range of work experience. She is a playwright, and has also recently received a mentorship with NSW Women In Film and Television (WIFT) to assist her to complete her film about people working in theatre and film in Burkina Faso, West Africa.

Reports from Workshops and Roundtables

Kevin07: The 2007 Australian Election

Marian Simms

This project is the latest in a series of post-election workshops and books that the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia has supported. Previous workshops have all resulted in books which have been well received by the academic and general communities. The purpose of these projects has been to bring together a team of around 22 to 25 comprising academics and practitioners to present and debate their points of view about the national election. The unique value of the Australian National University location is that it provides useful synergies between town and gown, and facilitates practitioners providing important data, eg, their own quantitative and qualitative survey research, and receiving feedback from academics about the relevance of party research in terms of intellectual agendas. Equally academics benefit from learning about the internal decision-making processes of election campaigning, and from accessing some of the internal party research findings, which provide useful insights that is often beyond the scope of academic research. Normally workshops have been held 6-8 weeks after the national election when memories are still fresh and some data are available from empirical surveys.

Election studies have become more, not less important. The 2001 election was considered a watershed election because of the salience of foreign policy agendas and the role of the US alliance in particular. In 2001 the media had a crucial role in pressing the significance of terrorism, and other threats to Australia, including those potentially posed by asylum seekers. The 2007 election was significant given the likelihood not just of a change of government, but of a consequential foreign policy agenda shift. Bearing in mind the lessons from 2001, the convenor and her Advisory Group decided to expand the discussion of the media by including new papers/chapters on the role of television, including the Leaders' debates. Authors of papers on political leadership and political culture were asked specifically to include talkback radio, which is pivotal in rural campaigning in remote States such as Queensland.

The team

The Workshop included selected academics who are experts on the politics of their States, others who are leading experts on key interest groups and social movements, especially unions, business, migrants and women, writers on political leadership, political culture, campaigning, media – print, electronic and 'new', and opinion polls, and the National Election Study team. The team included the leading specialists such as Marian Sawer, Jim Jupp, Clive Bean, John Warhurst and Malcolm Mackerras, as well as emerging scholars, such as Peter Chen (Monash) and Lucas Walsh (Deakin). Party directors or their nominees from all parties with parliamentary representation were invited.

The presentations

The two-day workshop to discuss the federal election of 24 November 2007 was held at University House on 19 and 20 January 2008. The workshop commenced with an informal welcome by James Jupp (ANU) and an overview by Professor Marian Simms, the convenor.

The two morning sessions were on 'Leaders, Ideologies and Polls' and 'The Media'. Papers were presented on 'The Leaders' and 'The Ideological Contest' by David

Adams (ANU) and Carol Johnson (Adelaide); and on 'Political Cartoons', 'The Print Media' and 'The Electronic Campaign' by Haydon Manning (Flinders), Marian Simms (Otago) and Lucas Walsh (Deakin) with Peter Chen (Monash) contributing by Skype computer telephone, from Canada). Papers on Opinion Polls (Murray Goot, Macquarie -) and Leaders' Interviews and Speeches (Geoffrey Craig, Otago) were tabled.

Much of the lively discussion at those sessions related to the role of the Labor Party's new leadership team, Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard, reasons for the failure of the Howard team to retain its previous popularity, and the loss of the Prime Minister's own seat of Bennelong.

The first afternoon session featured a presentation by the ALP Research Director Nick Martin, on behalf of its National Secretary Tim Gartrell. Nick provided an interesting overview of the ALP campaign, and fielded many questions regarding tactics and strategies, thus confirming the value of such sessions for academics that research and teach on elections. Apologies were received from the Liberal Party Director and the Australian Democrats' Deputy Leader. Written papers were received from the ALP, the Liberals and the Democrats for inclusion in the edited volume.

It is interesting that this current series of post-election studies commenced in 1996 – with a change of government. The (then) Director of the Liberal Party, Andrew Robb, attended that workshop, presenting an overview of the Coalition's strategy and research. The National Secretary of the Labor Party did not attend, and former NSW Minister and political journalist, Rodney Cavalier presented the Labor perspective, through an 'outsider's' lens.

In 2008 Rodney Cavalier presented on the same parties' panel as in 1996, but on this occasion provided an interpretation of Labor's victory centred on Kevin Rudd's leadership challenge, and the overall role of the union movement.

The next session was the first of two panels presenting research on the campaigns, issues and results in the States and Territories. Papers were presented on New South Wales (Elaine Thompson), Victoria (Nic Economou, Monash), South Australia and the Northern Territory (Dean Jaensch). The importance of Labor's good showing in NSW was emphasised as well as the variability of the swings across Australia. Papers on Queensland (Ian Ward, Queensland) and Western Australia (Narelle Miragliotta, Monash and Campbell Sharman, UWA) were tabled.

Sunday morning commenced with the second 'State and Territory' panel, with presentations on Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, and Rural and Regional Australia by Tony McCall (Tasmania), Malcolm Mackerras (ADFA) and Jennifer Curtin (Auckland) with Dennis Woodward (Monash), respectively. Labor's gains were in rural and regional Australia, and this election saw the National Party shrink to 10 seats from 12. Brian Costar (Swinburne) discussed his draft paper on the new electoral laws.

The second Sunday session was a very lively panel on 'Social Constituencies' with presentations by Marian Sawyer on Women, James Jupp on Immigration and Ethnicity, John Wanna (ANU) on Business and Unions, and John Warhurst on Religion. James Jupp's analysis of the role of the Chinese vote in the defeat of John Howard in Bennelong was interesting; and overall, unlike 2001 (the 'Tampa' election), immigration and ethnic issues played little part in the campaign itself.

The final session on Overview and Results included discussion of the state of Malcolm Mackerras' pendulum and the variability in the swing across the country. It included commentary by Peter Brent (ANU).

The Workshop concluded with general discussion regarding the next stage of the project. The discussion throughout was lively and interesting, and drew upon over 20 papers that had been circulated in advance of the workshop. A publication based on workshop papers is in press.



War, Commerce and Ethics in British International Political Thought

Ian Hall and Lisa Hill

Introduction

The workshop was held in the School of History and Politics, University of Adelaide, on 21-23 July 2008. It was opened by Wilfrid Prest FASSA, who welcomed the participants to Adelaide and thanked the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia and the Australian Academy of the Humanities for their financial support, as well as that of the University.

The workshop brought together 18 participants drawn from a number of institutions in Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Denmark, mixing historians with political theorists and specialists in international relations. This interdisciplinary approach was designed to foster better dialogue between intellectual historians and those in politics and international relations researching thinkers of the past; it also sought to heal, at least partially, what one of the participants (David Armitage) had earlier referred to as the 'fifty years' rift between international relations and history', the end of which, he surmised, would signal 'the maturity of the history of international thought as a subfield of intellectual history' and the opening up of 'new conversations between historians, political theorists, International Relations scholars and international lawyers'. Without doubt, the critical and fruitful exchange of ideas that took place over the duration of the workshop suggested that this rift had begun to close and that it will continue to do, particularly if further such collaborations attract the kind of support and encouragement that we received from our sponsors.

The objectives of the workshop were:

- To further interdisciplinary perspectives in the history of international thought and international theory, drawing upon expertise in history, politics, political theory and international relations;
- To further collaborative initiatives between Australian-based and international scholars in the important fields of international politics and ethics;
- To examine a range of thinkers and texts that have hitherto be neglected or (arguably) misinterpreted in the discipline of International Relations;
- To produce an edited volume of essays on British international thought.

Rationale

In the past twenty years, the study and the practice of international politics has been transformed by re-engagements with the history of political and international thought. Reconsiderations of the work of Immanuel Kant, for instance, stimulated the development of the 'democratic peace theories' that have informed, in various ways during the post Cold War period, the foreign policies of the United States and European Union states. Recent work on classical 'realism', from the history of Thucydides to Machiavelli to Carl Schmitt, have provided grounds from which to criticise both liberal and neoconservative theory and practice in international affairs.

The growing interest in classical and Renaissance republicanism – exemplified by Andrew Bacevich's *American Empire* (2002) or Daniel Deudney's *Bounding Power* (2007) – is set to have an equally significant effect. The study of the history of ideas has, in other words, had a profound and lasting impact on research in international politics.

British thinkers have made a significant, indeed perhaps even disproportionate, contribution to the study of International Relations. They have set out some of the most fundamental concepts in the field, developed central arguments, and even lent their names to whole schools of thought. The notion, for instance, that the relations between sovereign states resembles that of the anarchical 'state of nature' is derived from the work of Thomas Hobbes. Likewise, the idea that states might, nevertheless, form an international society amidst international anarchy has been attributed, by twentieth century 'English school' theorists, to another Briton, John Locke. In the writings of David Hume we may find some of the first and best explorations of the 'balance of power'; in Adam Smith's thought we see the first systematic – as well as the most influential – elaboration of economic cosmopolitanism; in that of John Stuart Mill, a seminal study of the principle of non-intervention. British international lawyers were at the forefront of that field's development in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, while British historians (and diplomats) played critical roles in the drafting of both the Covenant of the League of Nations and the United Nations Charter.

Proceedings

The workshop opened with a discussion, led by Ian Hall, of the contexts and character of British international thought. There was considerable debate about the utility of the idea of 'character' and especially of 'national character', despite its prominence in the work of past British thinkers like Hume and Namier. David Armitage, in particular, suggested that the notion of 'national character' persisting over time and exercising an influence over successive generations of thinkers was deeply problematic. There was general agreement that, while each paper might consider how its particular thinker conceived the relation between 'Britishness', Britain and international relations, the participants would not pursue any further the idea of national character and that it would not be a central or unifying theme of the edited collection.

The second day heard and discussed papers by Haig Patapan (on Thomas Hobbes), David Armitage (John Locke), Renée Jeffery (David Hume), Lisa Hill (Adam Smith), Richard Bourke (Edmund Burke) and Andrew Fitzmaurice (Travers Twiss). Ian Tregenza, Bruce Buchan and Richard Devetak acted as chairs and discussants.

In his paper, Haig Patapan argued that a purely historical approach to Hobbes' thought leaves important questions about the implications of his work for international politics incomplete. His treatment of glory-seeking on the parts of sovereigns suggests that empire is its inevitable fulfilment, but that Hobbes was aware of that danger, and sought to limit, through political education, sovereigns' tendencies to pursue glory. David Armitage, for his part, argued that recent interpretations of Locke's work have not done full justice to his writings or to his practical experience in international affairs. The paper also drew distinctions between Hobbes' and Locke's accounts of the law of nature, pointing to the means by which the latter tried to distance his account from that offered in the *Leviathan*. Renée Jeffery and Lisa Hill, speaking on Hume and Smith, concentrated upon the ethical visions of international politics to be found in their respective works. Jeffery explored the possibilities for contemporary international ethics inherent in Hume's account of the moral sentiments. In her exploration of Smith's economic cosmopolitanism and his accompanying critique of mercantilism and

British imperialism, Hill disputed both realist and idealist interpretations of Smith's international thought and challenged retrospective attempts to impose late modern international relations tradition categories on a system of thought that resists easy categorisation.

The third day began with three papers: Duncan Bell (on Leonard Hobhouse), Jeanne Morefield (Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson) and Ian Hall (Lewis Namier). Bell argued that Hobhouse stands on the cusp of a more self-conscious liberal tradition in British international thought, and that his work offered a far more profound account of international politics than has hitherto been recognised. Morefield's paper sought to offer the first full account of the thought of a pivotal thinker: Lowes Dickinson having coined the term 'international anarchy' and offered the first analysis of how the structure of anarchy creates the conditions for outbreaks of war between states. Morefield sought to interpret Lowes Dickinson's thought in the context of his classical training and teaching. In his treatment of Namier, Hall attempted to sketch the tension between the historian's exhortations to eschew ideology in the formulation of foreign policy and the conduct of international politics, on the one hand, and his acute sensitivity to the role that ideas actually play in those realms. The paper suggested that Namier's stark portrayal of the power politics that supposedly drive international relations masked a deep-seated moralism, clear in his commitment to Zionism in particular.

The workshop closed with a general discussion of the idea of a 'British international thought' and the particular contribution of British thinkers to international relations. It was asked – by David Armitage – whether the edited book to follow the workshop ought to include further chapters. Duncan Bell and Richard Bourke argued the case for a chapter on John Stuart Mill, as one of the most obvious omissions from the program. It was agreed to ask Georgios Varouxakis (Queen Mary, University of London) to contribute a book chapter on Mill. He has since agreed to this proposal. The other major issue raised, again by David Armitage, was the problem of bringing the book up to the present – of the coverage that ought to be given to other and later post-war thinkers. It was suggested that Ian Hall add some discussion of these developments to the introduction, as well as an explanation for ending the book with Namier.

In conclusion, the workshop was asked to consider what further work might be done in this field and what wider implications the work already done might have. The participants agreed that further work needed to be done, after the book was published, on the history of international thought, and that, in particular, greater efforts needed to be made to explore the uses of intellectual histories of this kind for contemporary theory and practice. While no specific policy recommendations were made, it was concluded that there were considerable resources available, especially for the ethical evaluation of international politics, in the work of Hobbes, Locke, Hume and Smith, as well as of the later liberal thinkers.

Outcomes

The papers from the workshop will be published in a book edited by Ian Hall and Lisa Hill entitled *British International Thinkers from Hobbes to Namier*. The book will be published by the New York branch of Palgrave Macmillan in September 2009 as part of their 'History of International Thought' series edited by Dr Peter Wilson at the London School of Economics. The book will have global distribution. The editors are also examining the possibility of publishing draft chapters on the internet.

The organisers and participants would like to thank both Academies for their financial support, as well as the University of Adelaide.

Policy Roundtable

ASSA/Skills Australia Policy Roundtable

Phil Lewis

On 10 September a policy roundtable was held in Sydney, jointly convened by the Academy's Policy and Advocacy Committee and the advisory body Skills Australia, recently established by the Commonwealth Government to guide planning and policy for skills formation in Australia. Skills Australia has a focus on trades' skills, but is conscious of the need to place these in the context of wider education and training, including university training for professions and general advanced capacities.

In line with the goals of the Academy's Policy and Advocacy program, the general aim of the roundtable was to focus on the contribution that social science research can make in an examination of the nation's skilled workforce needs and requirements, as they are widely defined. A selected group of Academy Fellows and other researchers from a range of disciplines expert in labour market and training studies met with the Board members and secretariat for Skills Australia with the specific objective of conveying the nature and significance of relevant social science research for determining policies on skills formation for Australia. Three key areas were identified:

- Forecasting the demand and supply for skills as an aid to the allocation and prioritisation of training funds;
- Take-up of training, and how training is best provided; and
- Workforce development and the use of skills, and the return on skills training.

The roundtable was convened as a morning symposium, held prior to a Board meeting of Skills Australia for the afternoon of the same day. This format allowed research insights gained to feed directly into planning decisions by this new advisory body for Government.

The dialogue was timely, occurring as it did in a time of far-reaching and increasingly rapid changes in the employment landscape. These changes have been spurred on by a multitude of factors, not least of which are a long period of economic growth and extensive microeconomic reforms under two preceding governments. Developments in the employment landscape over the last fifteen to twenty years include a changing industry mix, and the changing composition of employment types, including a move from full time employment with 'regular hours' to part time and casual employment, as well as a rapidly evolving education and a training sector. In this context, the morning's discussion was structured around the presentation of four brief papers.

The *first short paper* addressed forecasting demand, and the use of forecasting in planning the supply of skills. Issues raised included:

- The problems arising from the general procedure of forecast models categorising employees, or their set of skills, by either their occupation, or their qualifications, when in practise there is often a poor match between these two factors.
- It is in fact very difficult to measure skills, and instead most measurements are of a proxy; qualifications.
- Workforce planning has a history of models which have not been particularly successful. Even Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) predictions of the total labour force, which is the measure of total supply, have actually been found to be quite inaccurate.

- In planning for training there has tended to be an over-emphasis on what employers say they want, with comparatively insufficient attention being paid to the preferred options of students when planning the supply of education and training.
- The demand side of the labour market is also difficult to predict, with the labour market in effect being composed of very many labour markets, each with their own supply and demand.
- An important characteristic of this multitude of labour markets is *substitutability*: Although it is common, particularly in the professions, to think of occupations being rigidly defined, in practise there is a great deal of substitutability between workers.
- There can be a role for this sort of modeling and forecasting the demand for labour, in the circumstance of clearly defined occupations for which it takes a long time to train people; it makes less sense to make detailed projections of occupations where people can actually move quite easily from one to another.

The *second paper*, and resultant discussion, examined the demand for places in training, covering the following:

- There is little unmet demand for education and training places at the moment.
- VET (Vocational Education and Training) places are very highly subsidised, with between 75 per cent and 90 per cent of the cost of a place being met by the government.
- This cost structure is based upon the situation where student places in the current system are either publicly funded with delivery costs highly subsidised (up to 100 per cent in many cases), or they are 'fee for service' courses offered by providers (assume a private contribution of 100 per cent in most cases), with the split of the incidence of the two types being roughly 75-25.
- The opportunity cost for students is a crucial variable when examining students' decisions to study for a VET place: For a person who has a job, to attend a VET course full-time would have a very high opportunity cost, but this would be much lower for part-time students (who comprise 9 in 10 of all VET students). There is thus both private and individual investment in training.
- The match between training and the labour market is invariably very loose. While an individual may train in a particular area there is no guarantee that they will then work in an occupation that matches their training in a narrow sense.
- This is emphasised by the fact that, with the notable exception of licensed occupations, employers rarely require job applicants to hold a non-school qualification, instead usually specifying a set of skills, experience, and personal attributes they expect an individual to have: While all jobs can be assigned into an occupation, the extent of pure occupational labour markets which are characterised by a required qualification is limited.
- A related observation is that informal on the job training is a very important path for skills acquisition.
- When there is considerable public investment in education, and particularly VET, the question naturally arises as to what should be the role of government and how much should government investment there should be?
- The reasons for non-completion of courses, and particularly VET Certificates, are many. Importantly, these reasons include the realisation upon commencement of a course of study that it does not represent a worthwhile investment in terms of their ability to get a better job; and, achieving the skills required before completion of the course (and in turn achieving increased pay, a promotion or getting a new job), with the result that it becomes an optimal decision to actually leave the VET system. Nevertheless, it was agreed that the area of completions and success rates was a

very important one and therefore a greater need exists for research into what determines completions and how the completion rate could be improved.

The *third presentation* examined workplace development and the use of skills. In the course of the discussion it was observed that:

- Workplace development, in the context of this dialogue, refers to those arrangements where people, through the course of paid employment, gain new competencies necessary to become economically [more] productive beings.
- There has been a long tradition in society of an equivalence between the site of work and the site of training. This follows from a long-held view among labour economists that labour markets are different to other markets. When a firm hires a worker it is not simply the purchase of a commodity, since labour services cannot be separated from the worker. Labour is the only input which cannot be separated from its contributor or owner. The worker has control over the quality of the delivery, whether they work hard or not, co-operatively or not, show initiative or not, and so on
- The primary emphasis in the training debate should be on the political and economic forces determining skill formation and use: The preoccupation to date has been with what might be termed 'second and third order issues' such as measuring the competence or otherwise of particular units and the targeting of traineeships and apprenticeships.
- Recommendations proposed in relation to workplace development included:
 - Firstly, the need to link industry and economic development with skills development;
 - Secondly, the importance of 'quiet time'—defined as time which is non-working, but nevertheless productive; and
 - Thirdly, that businesses have become 'welfare dependent' on government for training, a situation which should be remedied.

The *final paper* summarised recent research on rates of return to education, and particularly VET education. Conclusions flowing from this research were that:

- There are no significant annual earnings returns to Certificate I/II qualifications.
- There are no significant annual earnings returns to Certificate III/IV qualifications for those who have finished Year 12.
- The productivity returns are greatest for school and university.
- The participation benefits are greatest for school and VET (though the latter may be subject to selection bias).

There is also significant evidence of the increase in earnings and economic returns in general which arise from raising cognitive skills such as numeracy and literacy – for example, in Australia, a one standard deviation increase in literacy and numeracy scores increases hourly wages by 4 to 7 per cent and decreases the unemployment incidence by 1 to 3 per cent. The conversation was therefore focused on the conclusion that there are substantial returns to a general education, and this should be the focus of public funding.

The dialogue entered into was productive and beneficial for both researchers and policy makers present. *Several conclusions were drawn* from the morning discussion. It was recognised that while there are limitations to workforce planning, it is also the case that some form of workforce planning would always be part of the agenda in terms of education and training. There remains insufficient evidence of the extent and type of skills development that occurs at the workplace. An ageing population requires a focus on replacement demand.

The roundtable was also productive for both researchers and policy makers present in that it identified a series of key questions and issues on which more work could and should be done in order to improve the Australian policy outcomes in the area of skills development and training.

A more detailed report of the roundtable discussion, including suggestions for potential research raised by the roundtable, can be found in the forthcoming Academy *Occasional Paper 6/2008*, by Professor Phil Lewis of the University of Canberra.

Academy *Occasional Papers* are available for free download from the Academy's website, www.assa.edu.au.

ASSA reviews its structure, systems and processes

In 2005 ASSA was invited to provide a submission to the *Review of the Learned Academies in Australia*. Arising from that Review were a number of recommendations, one of which was that ASSA review its structures, systems and processes to ensure that we are operating efficiently and effectively.

In responding to that recommendation the Executive has recently asked Professor Ian Palmer to undertake this review of the Academy. The terms of reference for the Palmer Review are as follows:

1. Does the Secretariat provide adequate support to the Committees and to the Fellows?
2. Does the ASSA administration (Executive Committee and Secretariat) articulate and communicate effectively with the Fellows?
3. Is the Committee structure effective in capturing the activities of the Academy and engaging with the Fellows, collaborating institutions and individuals?

The Palmer Review will follow a three-step methodology:

1. In-depth interviews with Secretariat staff (December, 2008)
2. Executive half-day structure-strategy workshop and focus group with follow-up individual interviews (March/April 2009)
3. Fellows focus groups and selected interviews complemented by on-line survey for those unable to participate (May/June 2009)

It is expected that the Palmer Review will be completed by September 2009. I would be grateful to all Fellows if you would extend your support to the Palmer Review.

According to his RMIT biography Ian 'conducts research in the broad fields of organisational change and organisational design and has gained \$1.9m in research grants including 3 ARC Large or Discovery Grants and 2 ARC Linkage grants – the current one with the Victorian Police and the Australian Crime Commission on flexible forms of organising. He has published 4 books, 37 journal articles and provided 110 conference papers and presentations. He was selected by the Federal Government in 2007 to chair the RQF Panel 10 for Economics, Commerce and Management and in 2008 was elected to the Executive of the US Academy of Management's Organisational Development and Change Division (ODC). He is an ex-President of ANZAM and has been awarded Life Membership, one of only eleven awarded in the history of that organisation'.

John Beaton, Executive Director