



GENDER AND SKILL IN AUSTRALIA : A CASE STUDY OF BARMAIDS

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STATEMENT

This dissertation contains no material which has been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any University.

To the best of my knowledge and belief this dissertation does not contain any material previously published or written by another person, except where due acknowledgement is made either in the text, or in the list of references.

Wendy Bastalich

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SYNOPSIS

This study focuses on gender segregation in the Australian labour market and constructions of skill. Women's work is often defined as unskilled by conventional definitions of the term and is, by implication, regarded as less valuable than men's work even when differences between the nature of the work performed do not exist. This is because definitions of skill have been historically and socially constructed in the process of industrial struggles involving male owners of capital and designers of machinery, powerful male dominated worker's organisations, and the male dominated arbitration system. Women's experience in the workplace has often not been represented in skill debates due to their lack of political and trade union power. Women have also been excluded from areas of 'skilled men's work'. As a result 'skill' often reflects masculine characteristics. Aspects of work associated with women's 'femininity' are often considered to be 'natural attributes'. In this way the social definition of skill does not describe the content or task difficulty of jobs in an 'objective' manner. Women are not clustered in 'unskilled' occupations because of a universal lack of skill but because the social definition of skill discriminates against them.

The assertion that skill is historically rather than technically or biologically determined in this study, is developed in three parts. A review of the theoretical literature examines the conceptual debates around skill. Conclusions are then given context in a summary of Australian history, with specific reference to the role of Arbitration, employers and trade unions in setting the minimum wage, equal pay and comparable worth determinations and Award Restructuring principles. The final chapter examines the past and present experience of a particularly marginalised category of workers in the hospitality industry - female bar attendants in the small hotel trade.

The way skill is defined is of paramount importance in the present context of industry and award restructuring which offers, in theory, the opportunity to recognise worker's skills not previously identified. Women's vulnerable position in the labour market means they have the potential to win or lose substantially in this process. Women in the service sector have received very little feminist research attention particularly those in the hospitality industry. It is therefore crucial for feminist research to direct its attention to debates surrounding skill.

INTRODUCTION

The most notable aspect of the Australian labour market from a gender perspective is its sex segregated nature. This is true both in relation to comparisons between industries but also within industries where women perform the less valued tasks. There is abundant evidence that the sexual segmentation of the labour market is closely connected to the undervaluing of women's work, most notably in the form of comparative wages and conditions. A range of definitive characteristics, both actual and prescribed, correspond with the sexual divisions in the labour market. For example while men's work is associated with productivity, militant unionism, full-time hours and skill, women's work is usually associated with the service industries, is less well industrially organised, is often part time or casual in nature and is not usually defined as skilled. Curthoys notes that although a vast literature has emerged which aims to conceptualise, measure and explain the production and reproduction of the sexual segregation of the labour market, very little progress has been made (1986:319). As Milkman says 'an adequate theoretical account of the continuous reproduction of job segregation by sex in capitalist societies has yet to be developed' (1982:366). The breadth of this study is such that it cannot aim to propound nor substantiate a theoretical framework which wholly explains why we have a sex segregated work force. Instead I want to critically examine from a feminist perspective one important facet of the sex segregated work force, namely sexual divisions based on skill. Skill has become a central index of work value in the industrial world and women's failure to capture skill labels is pivotal to their position in the labour force. This is certainly true of barmaids whose work constitutes the empirical base of this study. Barwork is traditionally performed by women and the level of skill associated with the work has been undervalued, although attempts are being made to rectify this situation as part of the Award Restructuring process. The first step in this process is an appraisal of the skills barmaids perform in their work, including those which have not already been accredited. The outcome of this process for

barworkers will, in many ways, be dependent upon how skill is defined by those involved in the accreditation process.

Skill has been defined as 'special ability in a task', 'ability acquired by training' and 'manual proficiency' or as 'expertness, practised ability, dexterity, (and) facility in doing something'. In theory then, skill should be 'objectively' quantifiable by comparing the length and level of education workers have received and their ability to perform the tasks which constitute the work. Indeed this represents conventional understandings of the term. In practice however, women's work is typically defined within official classifications as unskilled, even when the content of the job or the training required to perform it is comparable to that of a job deemed highly skilled but dominated by men. The question arises, 'if skill is not objectively quantifiable in terms of training and ability, on what grounds has it been recognised?'

Far from representing a neutral category whose meaning can be taken for granted, 'skill' is at the heart of a highly contested stretch of theoretical ground. Both radical and conventional theories¹ about the nature of work have centred on particular understandings of the concept skill, although these are often assumed or implied within a larger analysis of labour trends. Feminist contributions to this debate have been critical of accepted definitions of skill, although not in any unanimous fashion, and have emphasised its role in reproducing the sexual divisions in the labour market.

In discussing the significance of gender in relation to skill this study confines its focus to the workplace and the industrial system itself. This is not to deny that the devalued status of women's work cannot be attributed to causes external to the labour market - for instance, a lack of access arising from women's reproductive role - but to highlight the processes within the system of production which act to replicate sexual divisions at work. This study highlights two central processes which have been responsible for segregating women in unskilled areas of work. Firstly, women are refused access into skilled occupations and the training routes which lead into them by the exclusionary tactics of mainstream unions who have sought to monopolise as many skills within their awards as possible. Secondly, female dominated occupations have, until very recently, failed to win skill labels for themselves, chiefly because they have lacked political power. In this way skill only meaningfully describes differences between the power of men and women in our society

¹ These terms will be clarified in chapter 1 of the study.

and not differences in the value or content of jobs. Definitions of skill are historically constructed in the process of industrial struggle and primarily reflect the interests of capitalists, male dominated trade unions and the state. At every level the struggle has been characterised by gender conflict, not least of which has been between men and women workers. The role of trade unions within this process is crucial because these organisations are constantly engaged in protecting and constructing skill labels. Powerful trade unions have frequently excluded and marginalised women.

Since 'skill' is most often found in male dominated industries or occupational classifications it has also become strongly associated with men and cultural definitions of masculinity. Similarly work which is performed primarily by women has come to reflect cultural definitions of 'femininity'. This work often constitutes, or is thought to constitute, aspects of the unpaid work women do in the home. For example, it may be service oriented, require a great deal of speed and dexterity or the ability to communicate with others effectively. Women are often considered to be innately suited to these forms of work which supposedly do not require 'skill' so much as an extension of their 'feminine' natures into the workplace. In this way the notion of skill plays a crucial role in the gendering of jobs which contributes to the reproduction of sexual segregation in the labour market.

The argument proposed here stands in opposition to both Marxist and Liberal academic theories which imply that skill levels are the product of 'objective' technological developments within production and the labour process. A similar tendency exists within some of the feminist literature which associates skill with technological knowledge and women with a lack of this. It is important to clarify at the outset that an acceptance of skill as 'objectively' quantifiable, in this case by the worker's level of 'technical proficiency', prematurely denies an acknowledgement of women's possession of skill by failing to provide an analysis which unequivocally recognises the political significance of skill (see chapter 1). The political significance of skill can be illustrated in an examination of the historical forces which have produced sexual divisions in the Australian labour market. In Australia the public nature of arbitration provides a backdrop upon which these political and economic forces are reflected and reproduced. The link between the political power of workers and their skill status is far more evident in Australian industrial history, than that between workers' ability and training, 'technical' or otherwise, and the skill attributed to their work (see chapter 2).

The historical and conceptual exploration of political constructions of skill undertaken in the first two chapters are designed to support the underlying aim of this study. This is to demonstrate that the inferior value popularly associated with barwork, and corroborated in its low skill status, is not due to the application of 'objective' measurements of the work, but rather the effects of historical and political forces which have discriminated against women workers. Current attempts to upgrade the skill status of barmaids will not be successful unless they take into consideration the nature of the gender bias which is inherent in the concept skill and the historical forces which have given it meaning (see chapter 3). The final chapter includes the presentation of comments by barmaids themselves regarding their perceived skill levels and working conditions, and an account of the historical forces which have laid the social and industrial foundations of the trade. The historical material is specific to South Australia wherever possible.

How is Skill Defined? : Conceptual Debates

The academic literature on skill can be broken into two basic groups. First there is the conventional or what Bennett calls the technicist view (1984:118). Skill is accepted as an objective fact and women are seen as unskilled based upon technical variables like the level of task difficulty required by the job. This approach sees the over-representation of women in unskilled jobs as the problem and blames this on a number of social factors external to the labour process, such as women's responsibility for managing the household and caring for family dependents, and the accessibility of apprenticeships (Gaudron and Bosworth, 1979 and Alexander, 1980). The most obvious problem with this approach is its assumption that the removal of educational barriers and increased access to child-care and other domestic services will allow women to enter skilled areas of work alongside men. Phillips and Taylor point out the 'naivety' of this view considering the rigidity and depth of the sexual segregation of work (1986:55).

A second group of writers form the basis for the discussion to follow. This group have argued convincingly that the segregation of work along skilled and unskilled lines has been determined in the world of production by the organisation of capitalist and patriarchal forms, and that skill is therefore not an objective category. An important distinction needs to be made between these theorists in terms of their understanding of technology and its relationship to gender and skill. Orthodox Marxists in the 'masculine' tradition², the most notable being Harry Braverman, tend to rely on commonly held assumptions of skill within a broader analysis of labour trends. They discuss the way technology is used by capitalists to manipulate labour and how labour responds by resisting technology. This contrasts with the conventional position which fails to penetrate beyond an 'economic rationalist'

²This refers to those theorists whose work betrays an assumption that 'workers' are male and/or which provides an analysis of class but not gender.

understanding of technology as the outcome of laws of demand and supply. For Braverman, and his Marxist critics, skill is the by product of technology because it is either eroded or retained depending on workers' success in resisting mechanisation. In other words these writers provide a useful critique of the relationship between workers and employers within capitalism and the level of technological sophistication in the society, but do not fully explore relationships between gender, power and technology.

Socialist feminists have questioned the deterministic primacy of Marxist categories, problematising notions of skill previously accepted uncritically. Indeed most feminists agree that existing definitions of skill reflect a gender bias - that is, a systematic undervaluing of work traditionally performed by women in comparison to work traditionally performed by men. Moreover feminists generally note that there is not a clear-cut relationship between tasks and the level of training or expertise required to perform them (Pocock, 1988:10-11). In the words of Phillips and Taylor

the classification of women's jobs as unskilled and men's jobs as skilled or semi-skilled frequently bears little relation to the actual amount of training or ability required for them. Skill definitions are saturated with sexual bias. The work of women is often deemed inferior simply because it is women who do it. Women workers carry into the workplace their status as subordinate individuals, and this status comes to define the value of the work they do (1986:55).

Feminist commentators also tend to agree that the political power workers possess is critical to their ability to tie skill labels to the labour they perform. There is however a level of ambivalence among feminists regarding the extent to which skill can be 'objectively' identified by the relationship workers have to technology. Many have emphasised the way technological intrusions in the workplace favour male workers who, by virtue of their political power and control, possess a knowledge of machinery women workers are less likely to achieve. In this way male workers are presumed to have more skill than women workers. More recently feminists have asserted that there is no 'objective' measure of skill in terms of the content of the work, be it technical or labour intensive in nature.

An understanding of the way skill is defined and how it discriminates against women is a central requirement of informed political action. For instance, if skill is an objective fact and women's lack of skill is based upon impediments arising in relation to their private role and their access to training, then those impediments must be removed. If developments in technology can be linked to upgrading workers' skills and this to increases in the value attributed to the work, then improvements in technology should be encouraged. If skill is determined by the workers' level of technological know-how and if technology is gradually

degrading women's skills, then technology must be opposed by feminists. Furthermore if skill equals technical competence and women lack these skills, then feminists need to focus on strategies designed to increase women's participation in jobs and training routes which are technically oriented. On the other hand if there is little or no 'objective' connection between technical competence and the social definition of skill as argued here, any amount of 'technical expertise' will not win women skilled recognition. Should skill levels primarily reflect the power of workers' organisations, a primary goal of the women's movement must be the organisation of women workers industrially so that skill may be successfully fought for on grounds dictated by women themselves.

In order to discuss the stance taken here it will be necessary to review in detail the theoretical positions briefly introduced thus far to consider the ramifications of differing conceptualisations about what constitutes skilled work and the value assigned to women's work.

FLEXIBLE SPECIALISATION THEORY

The conventional position will be presented here by reference to 'flexible specialisation theory', or the 'upgrading thesis', which has emerged in the context of contemporary Liberalism during the 1980's. Flexible specialisation theory reflects the concerns and conclusions of a wider social debate occurring between business people, trade unionists, policy makers and the media in response to economic problems in the Western world which have emerged since the mid 1970's. It describes the rationale behind many government policies on employment and labour practices in most industrialised countries, including Australia (Wood,1989:1).

In their book *The Second Industrial Divide*, Piore and Sabel predict and advocate the replacement of the system of mass production with flexible new technologies which will lead to the demand for a more highly skilled workforce (1984). They argue that factors such as the increasing ability of Third World countries to provide mass produced goods and a more sophisticated demand in industrialised countries for customised products has led to the decline in manufacturing. A growing emphasis on 'craft production' means that workers will need to be able to specialise across a range of tasks in a technological context of constant innovation. There will be an increase in multi-use machinery and job rotation, workers' groups will be smaller and have greater responsibility over the regulation of the production process. In general workers will experience greater control over the terms of

their labour. Some among the flexible specialisation advocates have gone so far as to predict greater trust and co-operation between workers and employers (Michelsons, 1989:429-430 and Hirst and Zeitlin, 1989:3).

Piore and Sabel's conception of skilled workers is confined to those possessing a high degree of technological know-how which can be adapted to a range of productive processes. But this does not describe much of women's work on the factory floor which often requires the speedy performance of a narrow range of tasks and only a rudimentary knowledge of machinery. In this context the Australian Metal Trades Award contains hundreds of male classifications but refers to only two areas of female work - process worker and machine operator. Furthermore, the assumption that skill labels are awarded on the basis of the tasks performed in the job has been questioned by many commentators (Braverman, 1974 and Phillips and Taylor, 1986). O'Donnell points out that the numerous classifications in male areas of employment often reflect the workers ability to assert skill and not a wide variety of jobs (1984:20). In addition it is important to note that the skill levels of some jobs are overestimated in comparison to others. Child-care workers have usually been considered less skilled, and have consequently been awarded lower pay, than parking attendants (O'Donnell, 1984:18). The problem may not be a lack of skill, but rather a problem in recognising and accrediting the abilities of workers already demonstrable in the workplace.

Many of the weaknesses of flexible specialisation theory arise because its proponents often do not base their description of changes in work practice on any understanding of sex segregation in the labour market. A number of questions therefore remain unanswered. Will men constitute the core positions in the labour market monopolising the benefits flexible specialisation theory outlines for full-time, secure employment, while women continue to dominate the unskilled and casual workforces? Will government spending on training and other forms of recognition for skilled workers leave those defined as unskilled out in the cold? Critics of the theory have predicted increasing unemployment, income polarisation and a weakening of the labour movement (Jenson, 1989:141). Women's vulnerable structural position in the labour market does not bode well for their prospects in these conditions.

LABOUR PROCESS THEORY

Labour process theory focuses upon changes in work patterns and the experience of workers. This approach locates itself firmly within the Marxist tradition and has reached conclusions in direct opposition to flexible specialisation theory. A shared theme within the former position is that the degradation of work is pivotal to an understanding of the way modern capitalism functions (Thompson, 1983:4).

Harry Braverman's book published in 1974 represents an attempt to bring the labour process into radical debate and has inspired fresh comment from thinkers in the Marxist field (Wood, 1982:11). Braverman's central thesis describes a gradual deskilling of workers due to the efforts of employers whose desire is to control the labour process. The phrase 'labour process' implies in Marxist terms that work is organised in ways which reflect the relative powers and antagonistic interests of those involved in production. Both workers and capitalists are viewed as seeking control over the labour process. Employers want to increase productivity rates at minimal cost to secure an ever increasing surplus while workers fight to retain control of their labour power which, for example, will determine the speed and quality standard at which goods are produced. However employers own the raw materials and tools - the 'means of production' - which workers require to perform their work. In this context technology is not an inevitable nor progressive outcome of human innovation in the drive for economic 'efficiency', but a capitalist mechanism which both cuts costs and wrests control over production from the hands of workers. It is also perceived that the introduction of specialised machinery and the advent of mass production is leading to a general deskilling of the labour force as work becomes more boring and routinised. A number of authors have entered into this debate (Wood, 1982; Kelly, 1982; Littler, 1985; Knights and Wilmott, 1986; Edwards, 1986; and Thompson, 1989). According to Braverman all work becomes increasingly 'feminised' and homogenised. Some commentators have argued that this will involve a gradual breaking down of the barriers between men's and women's work. Liff, for example, foresees increasing levels of technology in the work place acting to integrate women throughout the labour process (1986:75).

What is useful about Braverman's analysis and those of others in the Marxist tradition is their insistence that the nature of work, be it be defined as skilled or unskilled, is shaped by the capitalist motive for profit and the control of labour. Nevertheless, the extent to which capital is solly responsible for skill definitions is arguable. Critics of Braverman within the 'masculine' tradition have pointed out that his attention to craft work has obscured the

existence of a range of jobs within the industrial population which were outside of the manufacturing sector and were not comparable in nature. There has also been comment upon Braverman's 'romanticised' account of the skills held by craftworkers. (More, 1982 and Cutler, 1978). Feminists have developed this point in some detail but for the time being it is enough to note that debates about the labour process are useful because they have highlighted the way work is defined by the competing efforts of both labour and capital in an historical context. Of particular importance is the observation by Braverman and others that the skill attributed to work within formal classification structures does not always reflect the actual task difficulty of the job since workers will fight to retain their skill labels even when the work itself has been substantially eroded by technology.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

From a feminist perspective the major weakness with both Braverman's and flexible specialisation theories, as outlined above, stems from their emphasis upon the rise of mass production and its resultant displacement of the often uncritically celebrated 'skilled craftworker'. The deskilling argument is based upon the notion of craft based industry which existed before the advent of mechanisation and scientific management in which the worker supposedly enjoyed substantial power and control over their labour product from conception through to production (Rubery, 1980:256). Within this framework skills can only be upgraded or integrated in the aftermath of mass production as Piore and Sabel contend, or eroded and fragmented as labour process theory argues. Both rely upon reference to the same ideal, that is , the skilled craft worker. Significantly a number of empirical studies have found that labour has not exhibited any uniform tendency toward either deskilling or upgrading (Wajcman, 1991:31). In relation to this a British study by Webster found that the introduction of word processors into the same workplace simply reinforced existing skill divisions between women workers. The simplification and standardisation of tasks performed by clerical workers was exacerbated by the new technology, while secretaries found that word processors took over some of their routine tasks giving them extra time for the wider range of more difficult tasks they already performed. (Webster, 1989). In this way trends toward increased complexity and simplification of tasks have been found to co-exist in the same workplace in response to the introduction of identical forms of technology (Wajcman, 1991:31). Furthermore feminists have challenged the notion that work is becoming increasingly homogenised, since the segregation of work according to gender has remained intact despite the intrusion of technology into the workplace. The failure of these theories to reflect accurately the nature

of industrial reality is, from a feminist point of view, due to their inherent gender bias. The work of both Braverman and Piore and Sabel betrays the assumption that 'workers' are male and women are the dependents of men. Women, when they are not entirely invisible, are treated as marginal participants in waged work. Their ongoing commitment to the labour market is overlooked even when it is as great as men's (Jenson, 1989:144). For instance, one of Braverman's central assertions is that women are pulled into the new deskilled 'feminised' occupations thus forming a 'reserve army of labour' for capital to draw on. However the 'reserve army' thesis appears uncertain. Female employment, especially part-time employment, has actually risen such that women have not experienced the economic recession in the same way that men have (Walby, 1989:127). Feminist responses have shown that it is impossible to understand trends in the labour market and patterns of control without also examining forms of stratification in a wider cultural context.

Technology does unsettle the existing stratification of work but it does not do so in an indifferent manner. What is of importance is the way technology is tempered by existing power relationships between men and women. Cockburn has argued that 'the technical competence that men as a sex possess and women as a sex lack is an extension of the physical domination of women by men' (1985:7). Cockburn agrees that capitalism introduces higher levels of technology into the workplace as a strategy toward achieving greater control of workers, but focuses on the gender dynamic inherent in the introduction of new modes of production. She suggests that women have a different relationship to machinery than men do. Men fix, design and prepare machinery for women who become the manual operators. She argues that this contributes to an erosion of women's work and men succeed in this outcome by continually sub-dividing jobs into hierarchies of value so that they can monopolise the positions at the top (1985:11-13). This analysis is useful because it exposes the role of class and gender in predetermining the repercussions of technology. Cockburn's work also curbs the tendency to attribute men's relationship to technology to any pre-given, biological disposition (Williams and Lucas, 1989:149).

However her analysis possesses an inherent weakness in as much as it assumes that women lack skills which can be measured in politically neutral terms by comparing men's and women's technological competence in relation to machinery. This highlights an ambivalence within the feminist literature regarding the extent to which skill can be 'objectively' quantified. Much of the feminist research around skill has tended to assume that men's work is, at least occasionally, more skilled than women's work because men

have successfully protected their work from the degrading effects of technology, or have become the technical masters of the machinery in their work places by excluding other workers particularly women³

A problem common to these kinds of feminist arguments is that they tend to assume that technology always simplifies work - unless the work involves a knowledge of, and control over, machinery. Skill is linked with technical competence, 'requiring considerable training and aptitude' (Barrett, 1980:167). Women's work is thought to be unskilled in an objective sense because often what women do and know is 'not technological' (Williams and Lucas, 1989:149). There are two central issues associated with this standpoint. First, there is a lack of empirical support for the assertion, inherent in Cockburn's analysis (for example), that the label 'technical work' identifies an integral aspect of the job (Williams and Lucas, 1989:149). The question must be asked whether women actually lack 'technical competence' in terms of their knowledge and interaction with machinery, or if this is a cultural construction about women's work which does not reflect the reality of their experience in the workplace. Nevertheless Cockburn does provide a useful description of the role ideology plays in enabling men to retain dominance in the sexual division of labour. For her 'the ideology of groups that have power tends to be hegemonic - a vehicle of their power' (Cockburn, 1985:165). Besides producing goods and services at work people also 'produce culture' so that 'work becomes a gendering process' (1985:167-168). The interaction between the practical content of the job and the gendered identities people reflect in their work has developed historically such that the material and ideological elements of production are not meaningfully distinguishable. In other words work comes to reflect gender stereotypes because people bring their genders to work, but they also identify themselves according to the kind of work they do. Work is divided along the lines of sex, and class, and plays an important part in teaching us about who we are. Cockburn's workplace studies revealed that men identify themselves with technology and therefore skill. Femininity, which is based on its otherness in relation to masculinity, was considered incompatible with machines and mechanical skill.(1985:198). It is possible therefore that 'women's lack of technological skill' is only apparent with reference to cultural stereotypes about work and is not necessarily related to what they actually do at work Nurses, for example, must complete a long period of training comprising a substantial technical component, and yet their jobs are not considered 'technical' (Wajcman, 1991:36).

³ This is a feature in the work of Barrett, (1980) and Pringle and Game, (1983).

The second issue related to the logic that technology simplifies work, evident in many feminist approaches, is the assumption that workers thereby become unskilled. Hence it is accepted that skill is equivalent to task difficulty and popular conceptions about what constitutes skilled work remain relatively unchallenged. This is particularly important in light of the fact that task simplicity does not always correspond to highly specialised unskilled work. For instance

anyone who has attempted, or carefully observed tasks which are called semi-skilled' or 'unskilled' will realise, that as performed by experienced workers, they usually involve a high level of skill (Seymour, 1966:3).

Certainly most women who have worked in factories and aimed to reach a particular quota, or output-related bonus, will comprehend the difficulty and experience involved in carrying out the tasks which form the basis of their unskilled labour. On the other hand skilled workers have not typically justified the exclusion of untrained women from their occupations on the grounds that the work was too difficult because many of the tasks involved could not be found to require any particular degree of expertise (Bennett, 1984a:124). In regard to training, Gaskell has pointed out that neither the length of training associated with a particular job nor the material covered necessarily corresponds to the level of difficulty involved in the work (1986:367). The acceptance by many feminist commentators of a construction of women as lacking skill on grounds which are assumed to be 'objectively' true is problematic unless a thorough critique of conventional definitions has already been provided. The construction may be simply a consequence of the fact that 'women's skills are not recognised as such in the definition of their jobs' (Game and Pringle, 1983:18). Women perform a broad range of valuable activities at work which may, or may not, be encompassed within definitions of skill unless a reconceptualisation of the term occurs.

Bennett has argued persuasively that debates about skill in the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Court have not been centred on the technical competency of workers but on the *range of tasks* workers perform in their work (1984a:120). This occurred precisely because there was no 'objective' criteria which could be identified to distinguish the difficulty involved in one form of work from that in another. Bennett points out that the lack of skill-based differences would have seriously undermined strategies by craft unions based on individual task difficulty (1984a:120). By concentrating on the breadth of tasks performed skilled workers could increase their political power in several ways. Bennett summarises their position as follows :

Adaptability reduced the risk of individual unemployment; it meant a greater share of the work for a particular group, it minimised the impact of adverse technological change, increased the potentially disruptive power of the union, and, in conjunction with apprenticeship controls, could help prevent overstocking of the relevant labour market (1984a:121).

According to Bennett the ability of a particular group of workers to secure a wide range of tasks within the ambit of their award was dependent on their political power, the organisation of their work and their facility in resisting technological change. Craft status was more easily secured by industries which produced an ever-changing product or one whose demand was small. In these instances the introduction of technology would be incapable of producing the wide array of adaptable techniques possessed by the workforce or too costly overall to improve profit margins in the face of a low demand for the product (Bennett, 1984a:121). In this way the nature of the work, its vulnerability to subdivision and market demand for the product, influences, in part, the ability of workers to retain and win skilled status.

Women's work has felt the impact of technology more harshly than men's work due to a number of political factors. Most notable has been the low wage value assigned to their labour. The technological assault on women's work has been pronounced for three major reasons. Firstly, industries which were able to subdivide were also more likely to employ women. Changes in technology which enabled employers to replace expensive skilled male workers with cheap unskilled and non-unionised female labour have been particularly attractive (Wajcman, 1991:41). Second, in female dominated areas of work there is less need to develop new technologies designed to cut costs because wages are already low therefore new machinery will be introduced into these areas more slowly (Wajcman, 1991:41). Technical changes have been likely to take the form of allocating particular workers to particular tasks. This form of specialisation also reduced the union's ability to fight for training on the basis of required skills (Bennett, 1984a:122). Thirdly men selectively design tools and machinery to match their existing technical skills (Wajcman, 1991:41). For instance machines are often geared toward a particular body size and strength which presupposes a male operator (Jenson, 1989:150). In this way technology installed in the workplace often reflects male power. Hence women are more vulnerable to technology and its effects on their work than are men. This does weaken women's chances of securing recognition for skill in their work. However, this is not because it leads to an inevitable degradation of 'technical' skills, but because the form and effects of technological innovation are themselves the outcome of an historical struggle between the interests workers and capital. The political significance of skill is therefore a far more

important consideration than their actual content in 'objective' terms. As Bennett says 'there is no *a priori* or natural reason why certain characteristics of work or workers should be valued above others' (1984a:119).

The definition of women's work as unskilled is also due to the exclusion of women from industries which did exhibit the characteristics of craft status and skill. Bennett points out that since skill has become increasingly associated with breadth of tasks and claiming skill on these grounds has increased workers' ability to secure the label, it was increasingly necessary for the survival of the status of particular occupations that workers secure a monopoly over as wide a range of tasks as possible (Bennett, 1989:124). Women's cheap and marginalised labour threatened organised male workers' ability to secure control over specific tasks. One of the most effective means of limiting access to a particular occupational category has been to differentiate the requirements associated with it from those possessed by the workforce in general (Mumford, 1989:96). Skill has been utilised very effectively in this way. O'Donnell points out that this strategy not only effectively excluded women but also helped to protect male wage rates. By claiming that their work required high skill levels male workers were able to justify bids for wages and longer training periods, even when the latter were unnecessarily long for the requirements of the job (1984:17). By contrast women's access to education and training has been restricted. Skill has become inextricably linked to apprenticeship, especially in the mining, manufacturing and construction industries which effectively excluded women (Pocock, 1988:15). Gaskell discusses the 'image' of skill pointing out that by restricting access to training powerful workers have successfully mystified the 'skills' they are supposedly taught (1986:378). Bennett also discusses the important role played by arbitration in imposing legal regulation upon the exclusion of women from the skilled trades (1984a, 1984b, 1989) This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2. Besides salvaging existent 'skills', powerful male dominated unions have been able to win skill labels for new tasks, or for work which was previously defined as semi-skilled (Van Acker, 1990:4). Moreover whether women were present in the industry or not male dominated unions have failed to represent them within the Arbitration system where skill definitions have been conventionally constructed (Van Acker, 1990:5).

As a result of the factors discussed thus far women have been segregated in low skilled industries characterised by low pay and poor working conditions. For workers in female dominated areas of the labour market the primary obstacle to the acquisition of skilled status for women in these industries has been their lack of industrial and political clout. The

structural features of the industries which employ them, especially in recent times, have often made organising strong trade unions particularly difficult. For instance the part-time or casual nature of work in these industries makes industrial organisation difficult. The duration of employment is temporary and prospects for promotion are typically limited. Where women have not been prepared to act as cheap and docile labour they have often been discarded (Thompson, 1983:204). The requirements legislated by the Arbitration Commission regarding trade union organisation have also made it difficult for women to form and maintain their own trade unions (Ryan and Prendergast, 1982:268). Women have also been subject to destructive competition from mainstream male dominated unions (Summers, 1975:310). Their lack of industrial strength has made it difficult for women to penetrate male dominated occupations or create a more secure working environment for themselves (Mumford, 1989:97). As a result traditionally female dominated industries in the present tend to have flatter career paths and fewer award classifications than male dominated occupations (Women's Bureau, 1990:4).

In summary then the lack of skill recognition in female occupations and industries has not always or primarily been because their work is organised differently from men's work. Technology has not made a significant impact on the hospitality industry for instance, which continues to be labour intensive in nature (Charlesworth, 1983:21). Despite its low status, the work of barmaids has involved the performance of a broad array of tasks. They are required to communicate with customers, pour beers, order and serve meals, answer the telephone, operate betting and lottery machines, book guest rooms and so on. Nor could it be said that these tasks are not difficult. As one barmaid has put it, 'pouring a beer isn't as easy as it looks' (interview 1/ appendix 1). These women like many others have not been able to take advantage of notions of skill because they were not strong enough industrially to make their demands felt. The male dominated hierarchy of their own union often failed to represent their interests and excluded them from skilled areas of the industry. As a result employers have found it relatively easy to exploit these workers.

'FEMININE' SKILL?

The conceptual debates around skill have preoccupied themselves with changes in the nature of work in industries which are either dominated by men or where technology has made significant advances (Wajcman, 1991:30). This is no doubt reflective of a male dominated academy as well as the tendency to link skill trends with technological developments and skill with technical know-how. In Australia about 74% of the total

workforce is in the service sector (Women's Bureau, 1990:13). There is a positive and prominent correlation between the expanding service sector and women's increasing participation in employment in most advanced industrial economies, including Australia (Women's Bureau, 1990:4). Service industries including the financial services, retail trade, the human services, public administration and hospitality all employ higher percentages of women than men. Work which involves a high degree of social contact is also more likely to be culturally constructed as 'feminine' work because it is seen to resemble the unpaid work of women within the home. The assumption that women are innately suited to this facet of the work has often precluded an awareness of the need for a recognition of its value on the grounds of skill. A further problem therefore arises from the fact that women have not been strongly represented in skill debates : work characteristics which are associated with women have rarely been promoted in terms of skill.

The literature refers to a number of characteristics which are associated with popular conceptions of skill and which often reflect cultural constructions of what is considered 'masculine'. Important among these are experience and training (Curtain, 1987:9). Thompson notes that skill is based on 'knowledge, the unity of conception and execution, and the exercise of control by the workforce' (Thompson, 1989:92). Flexible specialisation looks for 'all-rounders', workers who can perform a broad array of tasks (Van Acker, 1991:7). Skilled work is often also associated with problem solving and accepting responsibility and authority. These characteristics are often unrecognised when women do have them, are reserved for men via training arrangements and the apprenticeship system, or are not facilitated by the structural features of female dominated industries. It is difficult for instance for process workers continually repeating the same task to demonstrate 'flexibility' which has been linked to skill.

Women are recognised for their 'natural' or biologically pregiven talents rather than for their acquisition of skills (Jensen, 1989:155). These usually include features of labour performed predominantly by women like 'coping with the dreariness of factory work, intense concentration and speed' and 'nurturing' (Van Acker, 1991:5). If women exhibit maturity, stability, tact or counselling ability, they may be seen as 'sentimental' or 'caring' rather than skilled (Van Acker, 1990:9). For the purposes of this study, traits which facilitate smooth interpersonal communication can be referred to as feminine because, although men will certainly also practice them in their work, they are the kinds of skills which are strongly associated with women. Not surprisingly they remain the most unrecognised 'skills' within conventional definitions of skill. Ironically when these, or

other skills associated with women's domestic role appear in the workforce they become 'skilled'. For instance jobs such as cooking or managing a house are considered 'unskilled women's work' when performed in the home but 'skilled men's work' when performed in the workforce (FLAIEU, 1989:140). This reflects the tendency in our society to value work which is performed for wages and which produces things above other forms of work. On the other hand when men perform interpersonal and caring skills which are not seen as natural expressions of masculinity they usually receive more credit for them than women (Kaplan Daniels, 1987:409).

Kaplan Daniels argues that the interpersonal skills of women are seen as 'natural' and therefore not deserving of reward because of the 'expectation that emotional interpersonal gestures are natural expressions that come spontaneously' (1987:410). A number of feminist researchers have argued against this supposition. Hochschild introduces the term 'emotional labour' into her socialist feminist account of the productive process (1983). Her research on female flight attendants shows that emotion, far from being an instinctual response, is managed by individuals who intercept stimuli and express versions and degrees of sentiment compatible with cultural expectations. Reason and emotion, in other words are not clearly separable internal processes. Furthermore Hochschild argues that the emotional responses of individuals come to be managed by employees in the interests of capital accumulation and workers become alienated from their emotional services in the same way they might be alienated from the tangible products of their labour. Emotional services therefore have characteristics in common with other kinds of recognised labour. Hochschild's definition of the positive aspects of 'emotion work' are summarised concisely by Kaplan Daniels. The following description of elements of work performed by air hostesses also resemble forms of labour performed by women in the hotel industry, particularly item (4).

(1) attending carefully to how a setting affects others in it - through taking the role of the other and feeling some of the same feelings; (2) focusing attention through ruminating about the past and planning for the future; (3) assessing the reasonableness of preliminary judgments by checking over the behavior of all respondents in an interaction - just as good hostesses do when they look for signs of how well people are enjoying a party, whether or not anyone appears ill at ease or left out; (4) creating a comfortable ambience through expressions of gaiety, warmth, sympathy and cheerful, affectionate concern for or interest in another (Kaplan Daniels, 1987:409).

The contradiction for women is that although these 'natural' abilities are not rewarded on the basis of skill, women are often expected to possess them and to demonstrate them at work (Kaplan Daniels, 1987:410).

In sum, 'feminine' labour is seen as 'natural', unskilled women's work, which is unpaid and often performed in the home. The value and contribution of much of women's work in the paid workforce is often overlooked for these reasons (James, 1989:22).

CONCLUSION

Skill is not a neutral category because skill labels often have very little to do with the complexity of tasks, length of training or other requirements for the job. There are differences between male and female areas of work with respect to technology but these do not always correspond with the skill labels applied to the work. This is because 'technical competence' does not reflect the social definition of skill. The significance of differences between male and female industries, where they can be identified, is not the comparative value of the work but the political power of the workers themselves. Skill has come to reflect the characteristics of work associated with powerful trade unions who were able to resist attempts by male owners of capital to cut costs by introducing new technology or cheaper forms of labour. This did not always mean that the actual content of the work remained unchanged but that the skill label associated with it was retained. Male workers' organisations excluded women from male dominated trades in order to protect their wage value and craft status and to justify their claims for skill. Similarly women have been barred from entering training routes which lead into the skilled areas of work. Finally women's weak industrial position means that they have been unable to fight for skill labels. As a consequence skill definitions have come to reflect the masculine gender and do not include important aspects of women's experience in the workforce. In short, skill has come to be defined in the process of an industrial struggle involving male owners of capital and designers of machinery, powerful male worker's organisations and the arbitration system. Women or other marginalised workers have also been represented within this struggle. However women's lack of political and industrial power is reflected in the sex segregated workforce and largely male defined skill labels.

A rejection of the term skill on the grounds that it constitutes a limited way of understanding work is desirable but unrealistic in the context of existing job hierarchies and male dominated industrial structures. A comparison of jobs for ranking purposes seems antithetical to a feminist vision of the future but it will be necessary if the value of women's labour is to be effectively recognised on any practical 'objective' grounds. The strategy of arguing for equal pay for work of equal value is therefore an important one. Part of the

feminist task will also be to remove the barriers to women's entry into skilled or male areas of employment. However 'work-value' in terms of existing definitions of skill, will only lead to a recognition of 'masculine' skills. Feminists must also therefore draw attention to areas of women's work which can provide the basis for new or broader definitions of skill. This will involve discovering what is peculiar about female work so that it may be valorised and employed in arguments proposing that areas of women's work previously overlooked should now be recognised as skilled. Theoretically this should also facilitate a breakdown in the gender stereotyping of jobs since skill will no longer be a useful term for differentiating between male and female occupations.

Before looking at barwork in detail, I want to examine the position outlined above in relation to Australian industrial history. The history of arbitration is an important and unique aspect of Australian industrial experience. It also provides a backdrop upon which to contextualise industrial struggles thus outlined in largely abstract terms.

INTRODUCTION

The wages and conditions most Australians work under are covered by awards made by the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission or one of the various state government Industrial Tribunals. State and federal laws like Anti-Discrimination, Affirmative Action and Occupational Health and Safety acts also impinge on conditions of work. Any explication of skill as a socio-historical category in an Australian context must therefore consider not only the role of unions and employers, but also the role of the state (including federal and state government tiers) in reproducing sexual divisions in the labour market. The compulsory nature of arbitration makes it a significant player in the process of industrial struggle. The power of unions and employers manifests in political strength or economic coercion while the state legitimates its actions by recourse to the authority of law (Kirkby, 1989:346). The process of arbitration is particularly important from a feminist point of view, not only because of the role it has played in history, but because future demands for industrial justice must be heard in this forum. A number of authors have also noted that the public nature of wage-fixing in Australia from a purely methodological standpoint, affords a view of processes underlying work-value agreements which are obscured in many other countries (Bennett, 1984:120, Women's Bureau, 1987:).

The state's determinations in fixing the wages and conditions of work have primarily reflected the political and economic pressures brought to bear upon it. This has occurred in a contradictory manner. Although the state's actions have usually effected a strengthening of the sexual divisions in the workplace, it has also deliberated in women's favour at various points in history. This chapter examines the role of employers, trade unions and the arbitration system in reproducing occupational segregation and constructions of skill which

have marginalised women in Australian history. The focus is narrowed to an explanation of the economic, political and cultural forces behind the setting of the 'family wage', equal pay and comparable worth determinations and, more recently, the principles of award restructuring.

THE MINIMUM WAGE : 1900 TO WORLD WAR II

The increasing agitation and politicisation of the Australian labour movement at the beginning of the twentieth century was provoked by the 1890's depression. The response of the union movement to the great losses suffered during the crisis, was to organise in the form of Labour parties. The increasing excursions these parties began to take into the economic and industrial life of the country took shape in structures like the Commonwealth Arbitration Court and the centralised wage fixing system (O'Donnell and Hall, 1988:2-3). At this time in history, unions were almost entirely the exclusive preserve of men (Ryan, 1984:49). They were also able to dominate the agenda of the Labour parties so that issues revolved around the needs of working people including a regulated labour market, improved labour conditions, social welfare and a political system which could be responsive to the working class (Turner, 1978:49). In 1907, the famous Harvester Judgement at the federal Arbitration Court enshrined in law the minimum wage which was legitimated in terms of the necessary weekly earnings required for an unskilled (male) worker to support a wife and three children. Margins above this rate were paid on the basis of skill. Women were not considered by the Arbitration Court, except as wives, until 1912 when they were awarded 54% of the male minimum rate (Short, 1986:316). Despite the rhetoric about the need for a 'family wage', rates of pay set by the Court primarily reflected current wage rates and not the needs of 'average' male employees supporting families (Bennett, 1984b:26). Two significant conditions underlay the development of the male basic wage, that is, low rewards for women's work and the exclusive behaviour of mainstream unions.

Historically, women's overwhelming responsibility for child-care and other domestic services has been an important explanation for their weak position in relation to wage labour by comparison with men (Curthoys, 1986:337). In the first instance this has meant that their participation in paid work has been lower than men's. For example in the 1870's married women in NSW gave birth to an average of seven children. In the 1920's this number had declined to three (O'Donnell and Hall, 1988:3). Women's childbearing and rearing role has meant that they were often absent, or irregularly present, in industrial

debates between unions, government and employers, which have tended to focus on issues concerning male workers. The effect of this disadvantage for women when they were present in the workforce, was felt in terms of poor rewards for their work and a lack of unionisation (Curthoys, 1986:337). An illustration of women's disadvantaged position may be found in the case of domestic servants. In 1901 half of all female workers were domestic servants who received pitiful wages for 16-20 hour days, for work weeks of 6-7 days. They did not receive protection under the Industrial Arbitration Act established in NSW in 1901 (Kingston, 1977:50). Understandably women were increasingly abandoning domestic service to enter the burgeoning manufacturing sector (O'Donnell and Hall, 1988:4). In these conditions the replacement of expensive skilled male workers with cheap, non-unionised, female labour became a shrewd option for employers.

Bennett points out that decisions made by the Arbitration Court primarily reflected and justified the status quo which amounted to low wages for jobs sex-typed as 'women's work' and higher wages for jobs sex-typed as 'men's work' (1984b). The Arbitration Court only diverged from its essentially conservative function when the sexual division of labour was undergoing change, for example due to technological innovation or during wartime, and in relation to protective provisions (Bennett, 1984b:30). Work was classified as male if it involved strenuous physical activity or was considered 'skilled'. In this way the Court often relied upon cultural definitions of men's and women's work when setting wages not already pre-determined by existing economic conditions (Bennett, 1984b:31). In the main however, the overriding concern of arbitrators during the period 1912 to 1967 became the potential for cheap female labour to displace male jobs (Short, 1986:316). Short demonstrates this concern by reference to the logic underpinning the majority of the Arbitration Court's decisions until the advent of equal pay claims. Women were granted equivalent basic and marginal pay rates⁴ whenever it was foreseen that 'men's work' might be replaced by the 'gentle invaders'. When the work was dominated by women, and deemed 'peculiarly suited' to women, they received 54-75% of the male basic rate and, if it existed, the male marginal rate. In 1919 Judge Higgins reasoned in the Court that the marginal rate was measured according to work value and not basic family needs, concluding that women should receive the same reward for skill as men (CAR, 1919:702). This rationale was not demonstrated in the Court's decisions with any consistency however. (Women's Bureau, 1987:6).

⁴ Basic pay presumably referred to the rate required to support the needs of the family while marginal pay was granted on the basis of skill.

Restrictions upon women's entry into particular occupations were formalised in many industrial awards and fortified in state and federal government legislation during the time that the male minimum wage was in place (O'Donnell and Hall, 1988:4-5). The exclusionary tactics of the male dominated unions exacerbated the situation for women. Ryan and Conlon note that in the early twentieth century women were denied access into a wide range of apprenticeships including those for bakers, coopers, farriers, colliers, milliners, pastry cooks, plumbers, bootmakers, broomworkers, butchers, coachmakers, woodmakers, gold, silver and tin miners and so on (1975:63). At the same time unions fought to keep women from entering the work force in general in order to contain the supply of labour and hence giving themselves greater bargaining power (O'Donnell and Hall, 1989:4). In effect women were denied access to the benefits won by the strong trade unions who continued to annexe areas of 'skilled' work to strengthen their bargaining position. Employers were more likely to pay for training for male employees whose working lives would continue uninterrupted (O'Donnell, 1984:35). Male workers were protected from competition by female and other categories of workers who were forced to compete with each other for jobs in a narrow range of industries (O'Donnell, 1984:36). When women did receive training for their work, they were more likely to bear the costs than employers (O'Donnell, 1984:35).

The establishment of federal and state Arbitration Courts, or wages boards, made women's organisation in unions even more difficult than it had previously been. (Ryan and Prendergast, 1982:268). In order to obtain formal status unions had to register and apply for an award from the Court. Women's intermittent and structurally weak participation in paid labour made it particularly difficult for them to achieve the organisation, membership support and other requirements demanded by the rules of the Court. Those unions which were able to register successfully often took years to do so. Despite the fact that the Tailoresses' unions were among the first in Australia they, like other female unions, were adversely affected by arbitration because they were unable to meet the requirements for registration (Ryan and Prendergast, 1982:268). Moreover, as was the case in NSW in 1901, Arbitration Commissions would sometimes only recognise one union per trade, so that when women formed unions already registered by men, their representations went unheard (McMurphy et al, 1983:40).

Male dominated trade unions failed to represent the interests of women workers in their industries. This was again due to the low wage value accorded women's work. For

instance at the turn of the century unionised women, and other marginalised categories of workers, like juniors, only paid about four-fifths of male union dues. This directly affected the status accorded them by union officials (White, 1984:111). Many union representatives exercised a paternalistic attitude toward their female membership which discouraged women workers from getting involved. For example women were assumed to be married and therefore too busy for involvement in the unions affairs, or if they were single, too 'decent' to play an active role (White, 1984:112).

As a result of trade union demands and responses to the decisions of arbitration, the basic wage became synonymous with the 'family wage' as not only the right and proper form of working-class support but also, the most practical one. Obviously, where possible, the family would seek to collect the more valuable male wage, keeping the woman at home to provide the goods and services which were expensive or impossible to buy in the market place, such as child care and other domestic services. In this way women's exclusion from the skilled trades was founded on the twin aims of protecting the male wage and supporting the traditional family as a form of working class support (O'Donnell and Hall, 1988:4). The economic dependence of women within the family also served the interests of capital because it provided a category of part-time and temporary labour which was cheap and expendable (Ryan and Rowse, 1975). For many working-class women facing a lifetime of female wages and abysmal working conditions, marriage would have been the only economically viable option open to them (McMurchy et al, 1983:41). The minimum wage played a major role in reproducing the family form that lay at the bed rock of women's disadvantaged position in relationship to paid labour.

The reproduction of women's low wage value in early twentieth century Australia was determined by the resistance of male workers to attempts by employers to replace and devalue their labour by introducing cheaper sources. Primarily unions sought to exclude women from entering their trades and behaved competitively with alternative female unions so that women were disadvantaged in the race to get better wages, conditions and recognitions for skill. The pay rates which resulted from the struggle between workers and employers and male and female workers, were reflected and reproduced at arbitration. The formal implementation of the 'family wage' concept simply served to rigidify the already disadvantaged position of women in the paid workforce. Women witnessed a formal validation and institutionalisation of the low wage value awarded their labour and they continued to be estranged from the growing trade union movement. Meanwhile male

workers were able to define entry requirements for areas of work and training, and the skill associated with them, in ways most appropriate for their industrial interests.

EQUAL PAY AND COMPARABLE WORTH

The period after WW II until the mid 1970's saw the most intense rate of progress in the struggle for industrial justice for women, the most salient victory being the granting of equal pay in 1972. The advent of equal pay can be attributed primarily to the increasing success of the Women's Movement in having its demands met. Women became increasingly active at all levels of the trade union movement and had some success in getting feminist issues on the agenda (Booth and Rubenstein, 1990:121). As Kate White has argued however the trade union movement did not always welcome this intrusion (1984). Moreover when feminist demands to recognise women's work value, finally found expression in the Arbitration Courts they were hindered by three major factors (Bennett, 1988). Firstly, the Arbitration Commission's practice did not include a consideration of the findings of work value investigations in any comprehensive or consistent way and , second,women's skills were undervalued in comparison to men's when the Commission did apply work-value criteria. Finally, the more widespread practice of fixing wages at the industry level, worked against woman due to their weaker industrial organisation.

The participation of women, especially in jobs done previously by men, during the labour shortages of the war and its aftermath saw a general strengthening of women's industrial position. During the war women entering 'male' jobs gained from 68% to 100% of the basic wage paid to men (Ryan and Conlon, 1975:126-141). Again this was probably more a reflection of the desire to protect male jobs from the 'gentle invaders' than a commitment to equal pay. The union's rationale was that men would replace these women when they returned home from the war as long as employers were not tempted to retain cheaper female labour (Hargreaves, 1982:17). Trade union interest at the time did not extend to equal pay for women working in undervalued industries with few male workers, even where their skills were comparable with those in male dominated industries (Booth and Rubenstein, 1990:122). In 1949-50 the National Basic Wage Inquiry noted that females in all jobs were being paid more than they had been in previous times. They decided accordingly that the female basic wage would be increased from 54% to 75% of the male basic rate (Ryan and Conlon, 1975:140-141). Marginal wages followed suit.

Between 1970 and 1986 the number of female unionists in Australia increased by 88% while the increase in male unionists was only 21% (Griffin and Benson, 1989:85). The most obvious reason for this development was the increasing participation of women in the workforce, due in part, to a shift in industrial emphasis which encouraged growth in female dominated areas of work like the clerical and service sector (Booth and Rubenstein, 1990:123). Rapid unionisation of the public sector occurred especially after the 1960's. Unions in general were becoming increasingly active and unified in their goals. Women have always been a major group of public service employees. Consequently female teachers, nurses and office workers were brought into the structure of the ACTU. These included many feminist activists whose efforts were helped by the resurgence of the Women's Movement (Booth and Rubenstein, 1990:123).

The positive outcomes of women's increased trade union strength culminated in the 1970's with the election of a Labour Government. Women saw the advent of 'equal pay for work of equal value' which was to be organised either in arbitration or in the agreements made between employers and employees at the industry level. This represented an improvement on the narrower 1969 deliberation which was limited to 'equal pay for equal work'. This decision does not represent any radical departure from the Commission's prior conservatism however. The liberalist rhetoric about equal pay has, to some extent, provided the Commission with a shield with which to deflect criticism about its wage fixing practices. By claiming that existing procedures are capable of providing wage parity between the sexes the Commission has effectively justified the position that no further legal action need be taken (Bennett, 1988:544). The Commission decided to redress wage discrimination against women by applying work-value criteria but this never occurred in any consistent or comprehensive way. Only in very rare cases were work-value inquiries conducted at Commonwealth arbitration and rarer still were evaluations of jobs which were dissimilar in nature (Short, 1986:325). Furthermore trade unions did not assume responsibility for taking dissimilar work-value cases to arbitration (Short, 1986:325). No written guidelines which define 'equal pay for work of equal value' have been provided by either the Arbitration Commission or the state industrial bodies (Burton, 1991:126). What tended to happen in equal pay cases at federal arbitration was a comparison of work *content*, not work *value*. Female occupations were generally examined for aspects in common with male occupations, in terms of task content, and slotted into the male award hierarchy (Short, 1986:325). The emphasis upon characteristics of work usually performed by men in a gender segmented labour force where women's work is often quite different, is clearly not an effective strategy for recognising the skills women perform at work.

Where differences between men's and women's work existed, say in terms of training or task width, and work-value criteria were actually applied, conventional skill definitions held sway. Qualifications, training, width of tasks, responsibility and versatility and adaptability are all factors the Courts have considered in their work-value judgements (Bennett, 1988:139-140). However, as has been discussed in chapter 1, these categories are themselves made meaningful in the process of historical and political struggle and cannot identify 'objective' differences in the work value of jobs. At this point it is useful to reiterate some key points. The low wage value allocated to women's work and their low levels of unionisation throughout history have made specialisation in female industries relatively easy for employers motivated by the desire to cut costs associated with labour (Bennett, 1984a). Men have been far more successful than women in trading their craft status for supervisory positions (Frances, 1986:108). Work requiring the performance of the same task in the same place repetitively but with great speed and dexterity, has characterised most of women's work in the industrial sphere. Speed and dexterity however do not feature in work-value criteria. Jobs are gendered so that women become 'naturally' suited to the work they perform while men are seen to possess acquired skills (Jenson, 1989:149). Male dominated unions have restricted women's entry into apprenticeships whose lengths may not reflect the difficulty of the work or the time required to learn the tasks performed, but rather the union's desire to exhibit work-value criteria associated with skill and protect their jobs from being replaced by cheap 'unskilled' labour (Bennett, 1984a). Despite these facts the tendency to rely on the subjective work-value criteria of arbiters, rather than gender neutral job evaluation tests, continues to characterise the Commission's behaviour. Burton discusses the three cases relating to female dominated occupational groups which were brought before the federal Arbitration Commission between 1985 and 1988. She concludes that emphasis was on a comparison of the likeness of the work or educational qualifications it required unless the decision simply mimicked those already made by previous tribunals (1991:138-139).

Bennett argues that the lack of definitive guidelines for work-value gave the Commission the flexibility and therefore the power to make its preferred judgement in each case (1988:534-536). In this way the Commission would not have to err from its essentially conservative role but remain sensitive to external economic, political and industrial conditions. This can also be put in terms of the Commission's role in stabilising the current system of labour management and labour relations especially the maintenance of relativities between categories of workers like the skilled and the unskilled and male workers and

female workers (Lee, 1987:372). Bennett argues that women's lobby groups have failed at arbitration because they have not fully recognised nor challenged the political interests of the Commission's role and the gender discrimination inherent in its wage-fixing practices (1988:545). In 1985 the women's lobby group entitled the Council of Action for Equal Pay tried to use the federal nurses award to implement the principles of comparable worth at the Arbitration Commission. This challenged the Commission's preferred position of doctrinal flexibility in two ways which also explains why the Council's recommendations were rejected by the Court. First the Council advocated the application of job evaluation schemes to re-evaluate the comparable worth of women's jobs on a case by case basis and second they demanded that such cases should not be subject to the wage-fixing guidelines which contain wage increases in other awards. In a time when the federal government's economic policy was geared toward wage restraint, the Council's strategy obviously lacked a fundamental persuasiveness for the Commission (1988:536).

Theile comments that , at least in Western Australia, 'the machinery of conciliation itself is premised on assumptions favouring the employer'. The requirement 'enshrined in arbitration practice' that individuals must approach employers individually with claims for improved wages and conditions is a particular problem for women whose risk of unemployment is far higher than men's (Theile, 1982:366). Additionally, women do not always have the same industrial protection as men owing to their weak industrial history. Trade union strategy has recognised the essential conservatism of the Arbitration Commission for some time. As Hutson notes,

the aim is to shift as much of the battle as is possible from the Commission, where the employer has the advantage, to the workshop floor, where the trade unions have the advantage. Under such circumstances the Commission can be brought to accept arguments which are not perfect.

(This approach) is also based upon two other valid assumptions. The first is that there is no more convincing argument than the established fact. The second is that the Commission rarely grants either that which has not already been won or about which great determination to have it has not been shown (1971:230).

Equal pay was introduced in a time of decentralised wage-fixing. Unions therefore directed their efforts at negotiating increased wages with employers on the shop floor which took their attention away from the centralised wage fixing body. Bennett speculates that the procedural device used to implement equal pay, that is workplace agreements, was encouraged by the Commission. It was less taxing on the institutions resources and outcomes would be predictably minor. In other words women's wages would not rise too dramatically (1988:540-541). Employers and male trade unionists both stood to benefit

from this outcome. Bosses prefer wages to be as low as possible and male workers may perceive increased female wages as a threat to their overtime, over-award payments and other benefits (1988:541). Overall women workers fighting for industrial justice are faced with a difficult contradiction. Their lack of industrial strength on the shop floor and political power in general, means they are forced to apply to arbitration, a system known for its gender biases (Theile, 1982:362). A central feminist strategy must therefore be to increase women's trade union strength in order to exert some muscle be it at arbitration level or within the industry. They must also challenge the liberal discourses used to legitimate historical constructions of skill and other work value criteria which continue to frustrate women's efforts to achieve recognition for the value of their work.

AWARD RESTRUCTURING

The contemporary industrial scene is dominated by award restructuring, a central part of which is an evaluation of present workforce skills including those not formally accredited. There is therefore the potential of having the skills performed by women in female dominated industries valued in the work-value assessments presently being undergone in many workplaces across Australia. There are however serious problems with the award restructuring principles, at least in terms of how they might operate in practice. Not least of these is the current preference, by right wing and powerful employer groups, for decentralised wage fixing in the form of enterprise bargaining. The fact also remains that women's skills must be fought for by their unions and this usually requires strong female representation in the negotiating process (Winters, 1988:5). As has been noted there remain several barriers to women's participation in unions. There have however been some positive and innovative approaches taken by female dominated unions, such as the Clothing and Allied Trade Union.

The principles of award restructuring are contained in the Structural Efficiency Principle (SEP) - a set of guidelines which constitute the Industrial Relations Commission's interpretation of the governments proposals regarding industry restructuring. They were agreed to in the National Wage Case of 1988. Award restructuring outlines two central processes, the restructuring of formal written awards and the restructuring of workplaces across Australia. The SEP requires that new awards make provision for skill-related career paths and multiskilling. All discriminatory aspects of awards are to be removed (National Wage Case, 1988). In many industries this would mean increasing the number of classifications which relate to women's work in recognition of the fact that the variety of

skills demanded by their work is not reflected in the narrow band of classifications covered in the award (Windsor, 1991:4). For many male dominated industries on the other hand, industry restructuring may mean breaking down demarcations between tasks and significantly reducing the number of classifications in the award. The goal is to allow workers to move more freely between types of work, expressing a broader array of skills in smaller groups thereby improving flexibility to market demand and the industries productivity.

A salient feature of industry restructuring is the requirement that gender-bias free, skill evaluations are undertaken which are to involve direct participation and representation by employees themselves. This represents a significant departure from past wage fixing processes which occurred in an ad hoc manner reflecting workers struggles and social values about gender and work-value (Windsor, 1991:3). For women these 'skills' audits', if they are to overcome discriminatory biases, should recognise existing skills acquired by experience (Thompson, 1989:21). Some of these skills will have been learned informally or 'on the job', in the course of performing traditional roles within the home or the community or will arise from female socialisation in general. There is concern among feminist commentators that the potential positive effects of industry restructuring, such as skill recognition, career structures and improved worker satisfaction, will not be realised by women. Indeed the likelihood is that women's position in the labour market will be worsened and present inequalities crystallised if a number of factors are not given more serious attention by all involved in the restructuring process.

Industrial restructuring has been encouraged by the Australian Government, unions and some employers in response to the balance of payments crisis and is argued in terms of the need for economic growth (Junor, 1989:6). According to the rationale of award restructuring, 'Skilling' the workforce will enable Australian industry to be more flexible thereby increasing the nation's international competitiveness in a deregulated marketplace (Corbett, 1988:16). The principles and process of award restructuring link productivity and wage increases via skill levels. Award restructuring can be seen as the most recent outcome of the federal government's desire to increase productivity in the overall context of wage restraint. Unions are to accept training/skills upgrading within productivity agreements The level of skill provides the justification for unions to seek pay rises. As the Pay Equity Coalition pointed out in their submission to the 1988 National Wage Case

Decisions made about how people acquire skills, how they use them and what are the future skilling needs of a workforce, all hinge on one important factor - what is defined as 'skill' in the first place. ...

How skill is defined ... will determine which groups of workers benefit from any award restructuring, and which groups of workers don't (1988).

The government, in an attempt to cut spending, wants training to be provided by private industry. Viewed from this angle award restructuring can be seen as part of the overall trend in government policy making toward the privatisation of education and cut backs in the 'unproductive' public sector where women predominate (Junor, 1988). One of the problems for women is that skills formation resources are given national priority in educational areas regarded as 'productive' and therefore in industries dominated by men - such as engineering, technology, computing and business management (Junor, 1989:9). This is despite the findings of a Commonwealth skill migration report, which found a shortage of skills in the areas of secondary teaching, secretarial and stenographic work, nursing and other health fields (in Junor, 1989:9).

Enterprise bargaining means that the weakest, least strategic, most geographically diffuse and lowest value-added manufacturing areas, namely those covered by female dominated unions, will be put at a considerable disadvantage (Burgmann, 1990:16). The federal government and Arbitration Commission have not shown specific action aimed at addressing women's issues during the award restructuring process. Nor can it be predicted that employers will take up the slack. The ability of unions to perform this function will depend on the level of female representation in the restructuring process and the capacity of those women to make their contributions felt as well as the collective strength of the general female membership (Winters, 1988:4-5).

Susan Gray, federal organiser of the Clothing and Allied Trades Union does not deny that dangers exist in the enterprise bargaining system but argues that it could also be made to work in women's favour (1990:17). Enterprise bargaining could provide the opportunity for union members to take an active part in fighting to have their needs met. In this scenario women might bargain for child care, more flexible working hours, better conditions for part time workers among other claims. However Gray admits that positive outcomes for women will be dependent upon the establishment of a nationally agreed standard below which level, bargains will not be struck. Workers will also require training to help them to participate in union activity. The Clothing and Allied Trade Union already provides such training. The workers' right to discuss work related issues, she considers, must also be given practical consideration so that, for example, proposals to be considered by consultative committees can be understood by people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Unions must sell themselves by educating members of the gains won by the

union and troubling to make their philosophy and tactics known. In other words there needs to be a shift in union strategy towards encouraging higher union participation and representativeness (Booth, 1990:26-27). In addition, if women are to benefit, or at least retain their hard fought gains, the exclusivity of masculine conceptions of skill must continue to be challenged and versions which include women's experience constructed.

CONCLUSION

The Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission has historically protected its ability to remain flexible to the political, economic and cultural context in which it operates. It has exhibited a fundamental conservatism throughout history, its decisions reflecting powerful groups in society, government policy and the desire to maintain stability among existing social relations. A significant dimension of this stability has involved the sex segregation of work into skilled and unskilled categories. Reekie comment that women were

marginalised by an industrial relations structure which bonded male capital and male labour in a validation of men's experiences. The individual, autocratic and patriarchal rule of the proprietor was replaced by an institutionalised and liberal, but still masculine, state arbiter (Reekie, 1989:286).

Arbitration provided legal back-up for the exclusion of women from the skilled trades and from the trade union movement in general, drawing upon cultural stereotypes about men and women whenever the sexual division of labour underwent significant change. In this way the explanation for women's unskilled status, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, was largely due to their absence in skill debates between male dominated unions, arbitrators and employer groups.

'Equal pay for work of equal value' was given formal legitimation at arbitration in the 70's due to the pressure exerted by women increasingly involved in trade unions and the Women's Movement. However women did not see a significant alteration in the unskilled status accorded their work. Work-value criteria referred to at arbitration continued to reflect male experience at work and to ignore the political content of 'skill' and the way notions of skill have historically discriminated against women. In addition many equal pay decisions were made at the industry or enterprise level where women have traditionally lacked power. One of the central features of female dominated industries and occupations is still weak trade union representation so that the award restructuring process, and its emphasis upon enterprise agreements, is likely to simply reinforce and exacerbate existing differences in male and female rates of pay, training levels and skill recognitions. This is not surprising considering that industry restructuring has been motivated by government cost cutting

imperatives and not a perceived need for changes designed to implement industrial democracy. The emphasis on enterprise agreements emerges as a central issue for women attempting to receive recognition for their work and wage equity in the hotel industry.

INTRODUCTION

The work of barmaids has attracted very little serious research attention although barmaids as characters in Australian folklore have received frequent and colourful mention in the nations literature. By contrast there are almost no allusions to the existence of men working behind hotel bars (Grimes, 1983). This is not because men have not been present in the hotel industry but rather because the activity of serving drinks, especially in public bars, has been culturally defined as 'feminine work' (Grimes). The ideology of the 'serving wench' has survived despite the fact that for almost 70 years of this century, in SA at least, it was illegal for inexperienced women to serve liquor in public places. During these years men dominated the hotel industry. Furthermore public bars have been, and continue to be, male domains, where women, excluding barmaids, are seen not to belong. In this environment the sexuality of barmaids is automatically open for question. A predominant cultural attitude, certainly among male drinking customers, is that women work behind bars, not because they need the income, but because they enjoy the sexual attention of men. Barmaids, as Anne Summers has observed, provide an archetype in Australian History for the version of Australian womanhood stereotyped in the 'whore' which stands in direct opposition to the 'God's police' image of virtuous womanhood (Summers, 1975:313). Throughout history the question of barmaids status as skilled workers has largely been obscured beneath cultural stereotypes about their 'wantonness' or 'corrupting' influence upon male drinking customers.

A major barrier to the task of recognising barmaids' skills in the current context of award restructuring is the relationship of women barworkers, to the structure of the Liquor Trade

Union (LTU)⁵ as well as their predominantly casual status and employment in small privately owned hotels. As with the majority of Australian trade unions, the history of women's participation and representation is notable primarily for its absence. Although a historical commentator's reading of the managerial minutes of the union admits, 'women were employed in the trade in various capacities', only two categories of women workers are given substantial mention in the union's written history, namely women seeking to enter the wineries and barmaids.(Rowe, 1984). This is despite the fact that there were large numbers of women working in female dominated areas of the industry also covered by the union, like food waitresses, maids, cleaners etc. Those women who became noteworthy did so by seeking to enter areas of employment which contained significant numbers of men. In the present this history of exclusion translates into a need for more informed representation of female members who now dominate the union membership although this is not reflected in the number of women in the decision making hierarchy of the LTU⁶ nor in the sophistication of its strategies for representing this membership.

There is substantial evidence to suggest that many of the skills barmaids possess have not been formally accredited within the new training arrangements. This failure poses a distinct threat to women workers in small hotels who are likely to become increasingly marginalised in the weakest areas of the industry. Those qualities which can be culturally cordoned off as 'feminine' are largely invisible and taken for granted by employers, the award, training bodies and even women themselves. This is so even in the face of current attempts by the state to formally accredit the skills involved in the work by instituting career paths and training hierarchies as part of the award restructuring process. Many of the skills women perform in hotel bars as a central requirement of their employment are still totally obscured by sexual stereotypes of women as 'naturally' suited to the work.

The focus throughout this chapter is limited wherever possible, to an examination of South Australian events and the South Australian branch of the LTU although at times it has been necessary to bring in examples from other states. The argument also draws upon the views of women currently working in the hotel industry - 'Rachel', 'Sue' and 'Lorraine' (see Appendix 1). An industrial officer from the LTU in South Australia and the executive

⁵ The Liquor Trade Union in South Australia has members in hotels, motels, clubs, canteens, the Adelaide casino, breweries, wineries, soft drink companies and other areas (Liquor Trade Union, 1991:back cover).

⁶ The LTU employs only two women in positions higher than receptionist/secretary. One is an 'industrial officer' and the other is an 'organiser' (interview 4).

director of Tourism-Hospitality and Training were also interviewed (see Appendix 2). Quotations from interviews conducted will be interlaced throughout the text. Additional forms of documentation include historical writing, both popular and academic in nature, and recent government publications. Information about the history of the LTU has been gleaned primarily from an unpublished manuscript by Max Rowe (1984) held among the internal documents of the SA Branch of the LTU or from the various references made to it in Victorian histories of the LTU and general histories about Australian industry.

BARMAIDS IN AUSTRALIAN HISTORY

Rowe's summary of the union minutes in the period before 1967 mentions only one major issue relating to its female membership beyond the situation of women in the wineries, namely the position of barmaids in the hotel trade. Ironically, in this case, the feminists of the day contributed to what became the legal (at least in South Australia), and morally sanctioned, exclusion of women from securing either employment, or recreation, in the nations' public houses. The roles of the liquor union and the government, were however more powerful in attempting to keep women from finding work in hotels. The drive to expel women from hotel work corresponded with a peak in its already substantial wage value, especially in terms of female pay rates (Kirkby, 1991:96). This may also have motivated efforts to legally ban women from performing the work. Despite social opposition to their work the cultural stereotyping of the occupation as 'female work' has survived and women today dominate the industry.

Cultural images of barmaids

The temperance movement strongly influenced cultural stereotypes about barmaids and the work they performed although temperance workers were more directly concerned about the welfare of women within the family. Alcohol was routinely named as the cause for many of the social abuses women experienced at the hands of men within the family. In addition alcohol was seen to be an immoral and barbarising agent which threatened the moral and physical purity of the race. Opposition to women working behind bars stemmed from the belief that innocent young women would be 'corrupted' in hotels which were likened to 'dens of iniquity' (Summers, 1975:83). Barmaids then became 'sex sirens' luring 'weak willed men' to their ruin in alcoholism. King O'Malley, an active temperance campaigner and colourful character in South Australian history, referred to alcohol as 'stagger juice' and barmaids as the 'polished fangs of the stagger juice rattle snake' (in Theile, 1920::42). Francis Bertie Boyce, a commentator sympathetic with these views wrote in 1893

We should have no barmaids in Australia. A public-house bar is not a fit place for any young woman. The sights and language often heard must have an injurious effect upon the character. Publicans know this, for they often say, 'I never allow any member of my family in the bar'. Why should a publican put another man's daughter in a position he would not place his own?

A barmaid spends her time in serving out intoxicants, 'which weaken people's moral restraints, rendering their wills feeble, making them less human with every draught which such women sell, and even ply them. They excite their evil dispositions, brutalise them by an indulgence which too often has as its end lunacy, misery, and disorder'. Can this possibly be a fit business for any pure minded girl?

Again, a pretty girl is frequently engaged to attract soft young men, and keep them hanging about the bar, and when nature's bloom has left her cheek, paint is often used. A large number of barmaids are merely decoys. There is also the temptation to them of becoming intemperate. One of the worst abuses connected with the liquor traffic is through the employment of women to sell and deliver drinks. Much social impurity follows (1893:129-130).

Inherent to these comments is the feeling that hotels are places where women do not rightfully belong so that when they do appear they become a threat to the fabric of civilised morality. Conceptions of women's alien status as workers are also encouraged in this setting.

In Adelaide in 1884 the *Advertiser* noted

The fearful injury wrought young men, especially clerks, by the seductive influence of young and exquisitely dressed barmaids in the saloons and back bars of several Adelaide hotels. The girls whose attractions are heightened by artificial means dispensed liquors and toyed with the (youths) (in Pearl, 1969:94-95).

Boyce summarises what became the natural conclusion of these sentiments

If the law prohibited the employment of all women in both public and private bars, the evils where they now touch the question of social impurity would almost wholly disappear, and a dangerous incentive to drinking also end...May the day soon arrive when no fair Australian girl should be allowed, or even be willing, to help to gild the wine cup or beer glass with her attractive, and, alas, her most dangerous presence' (1893:138-139).

The 'moral' grounds for women's exclusion from barwork may not have been the only motivation relevant at the time. Kirkby's historical research of barmaids argues that women have been associated with brewing beer, if not barmaiding, for centuries (1989:94). In Australia, particularly in the late nineteenth century, the difference between men's and women's wages was least in the hotel trade. Barwork also represented the highest paid work women could do (1989:96). Male workers may have been attracted to the work for this reason but also because the work involved a wide array of tasks which were not

technologically replaceable. In addition the work was protected, at least in NSW in the early twentieth century, by an industrial award and received some union protection. There was also the added bonus of customer tipping. For these reasons barwork would have represented a far more attractive option for 'unskilled' women than factory work or domestic service (1989:96). Unfortunately it may also have inspired interest from male workers.

King O'Malley introduced the Licensed Victuallers Amending Bill to the South Australian Parliament in 1896. The bill called for the abolition of the occupation 'barmaid' in South Australia which in O'Malley's words 'bespattered with mud the golden mantle of the loving-moon eyed goddess of democracy - South Australia' (in Newnham, 1971:42). Indeed the final straw for King O'Malley was thought to be an advertisement which appeared in *The Advertiser* announcing vacancies for the position barmaid at the Eagle Hotel on the corner of Hindley and Bank Streets. The add read

Applicants must be fairly tallish, with well-defined hips and extra developed bust, small waist, long fetching neck, permanent bewitching smile and be an all round artist at bewitching men' (in Newnham, 1971:42).

The 1896 bill failed but in 1909 O'Malley was successful.

There were opponents to the Bill however. Hon. member Ebenezer Ward MLC spoke against it on the grounds that

the clause (for the abolition of barmaids) cast a slur upon honourable, honest women in a cowardly Parliamentary manner (and further) were the good and charming women who were occupied in the tiring occupation to be deprived by the Bill, introduced by a Yankee humbug (O'Malley), of the opportunity of earning an honest livelihood? (in Rowe, 1984:31).

Ward's staunch opposition won him suspension from speaking for the remainder of the sitting and, when he refused to depart the chamber, he made South Australian history by necessitating forceful removal by the Sergeant at Arms (Rowe, 1984:31). A temperance report in 1908 found the success of the Bill 'so wonderful...that we regard it as special intervention of divine justice' (in Rowe, 1984:32). But as might have been predicted the Bill did not reduce Australia's alcohol problem nearly as effectively as it reinforced the anomaly of women working in an otherwise all male environment. In other words cultural myths about the uncontrollable nature of male sexuality, the inherent evil of alcohol and the corrupting power of women, were deployed to reinforce the naturalness and rightness of sexual segregation in the workforce. Women's status as workers and their right to a livelihood were completely eclipsed ostensibly by the simple fact of their sex and the

mythology drawn up around it. In the 90's, barmaid's work is still saturated with cultural stereotypes of, for instance 'the buxom wench that goes upstairs and screws the customers for money' like 'in all the old western movies' (Rachel, interview 1). In historical terms the work has not been understood in terms of learned skill deserving of industrial recognition and reward. In the present those aspects of the work associated with 'femininity' are still not recognised and women in barwork experience continual sexual harassment from male customers.

During the 1900's, very few women in South Australia were legally employed as barmaids until 1967. South Australia was the exception rather than the rule in this regard. The legal prohibition against barmaids in other states usually only extended to set age levels. For example in Victoria in 1890 women under 21 were banned from working in pubs (Best, 1990:36). In 1908, the South Australian Licensing Act ruled that the supply or sales of liquor in hotels by women was illegal unless the woman was herself a licensee, or the wife or daughter of a licensee. The only other allowable exception to the law were those women whose signatures featured in a register of female hotel workers. The whole notion of a register for barmaids however, represents the hope that they would eventually cease to exist, since only women who had already been employed as barmaids for the duration of at least three months were eligible for entry (Young, 1984:578). Beyond this, a barmaids registration rights had to be verified by an inspector under the Act or a policeman. In 1901, 337 barmaids were registered in South Australia, 191 of which, worked in the Adelaide area (Rowe, 1984:30). It is difficult to discover the breakdown of bar attendants by sex but Victorian figures suggest that females dominated the industry prior to the law.⁷ The Hotel, Club, and Restaurant Employees' Union in South Australia and the Hotel and Caterer's Association in Victoria, represented the industrial interests of barworkers before they were annexed by the LTU.

The role of the LTU

There are however enough references in the minutes of the LTU's South Australian branch and elsewhere, regarding women working illegally in bars, to suggest that the law was not always a successful deterrent. For example one anthropological study of hotel barmaids gave the example of the experience of an Adelaide woman who had worked in bars for over thirty years. She claimed that she and her friends worked behind the bar pulling beers and

⁷ For example Best notes that in 1910 the total number of women employed within the hotel trade was 4131 compared to 1927 men (1990:84).

mixing drinks during the years that it was illegal to do so but escaped legal reprobation by working behind a screen. She also thought it was possible that people mistook her for the licensee's wife or relative (Grimes, 1981:169).

The LTU's position on women working illegally showed little sympathy. Again, as in the case of the female winery workers, the union's stance reflected its primary concern with protecting the status and jobs of its male members. For example when the Licensed Victuallers Association pressed the union for comment on the employment of barmaids in the labour shortages of 1942 the federated union led their position, giving support on the condition that 'their employment ceased six months after the war'. The South Australian branch held that barmaids should have jobs only 'for the duration of the war, provided they are paid the same rates and enjoy the same conditions as barmen' (Rowe, 1984:121). The minutes also show a disturbing hounding of unregistered barmaids in the Adelaide area. For example on the 17th of January 1934 a union member, 'comrade Bourke', reported an unregistered woman working at the Exeter Hotel on Rundle Street upon which it was decided 'that the secretary communicate with the Commissioner of Police on the matter'. Two months later 'the complaint had been attended to ' and although the minutes give no further information, we can assume that the result for the woman was loss of income support at the very least.

Women in the Wineries

Women who attempted to secure employment in the wineries were effectively blocked by strike action. In June 1911 the LTU passed a resolution to 'cut out the idea of girl labour' in the wine and spirit trade (Rowe, 1984:118). Pressure from employers to put women in country wineries was strong throughout the century although it was particularly fierce during the labour shortages of World War Two. The union minutes in 1941 stated opposition to the move unless there was a 'guarantee that other firms would not want to employ females' reflecting their fear that a female invasion of the wineries would occur, spreading beyond the countryside into metropolitan workplaces (Rowe,1984:10). In 1949 the State Industrial Court under the pressure of employer groups allowed for the employment of women in wineries at lower than male rates of pay. The union minutes recorded a motion carried by an overwhelming majority in response

We consider this action on the part of the Court to be a travesty of justice from which there is no appeal. We therefore determine that all members will cease work immediately at any wine cellar, store or distillery in the metropolitan area where female labour is introduced (1984:126).

In 1951, 37 male employees at Thomas Hardy and Son in Mile End went on strike against the introduction of female labour into their workplace. Union members in general showed their support by contributing an extra three pounds in wages to the union for the purpose of remunerating the striking workers. Employers continued to refuse equal pay rights for women but were forced to respond to the unions demands by restricting the number of female workers in the industry (Rowe,1984:126). Interestingly, at this time in Australian history workers enjoyed high rates of employment. This suggests that opposition to the introduction of female labour was unlikely to have been solely motivated by fear of job loss. It was, more likely, fuelled by the fear of degraded craft status. It is also notable that the pressure by employers to bring in women workers on lower wages had contradictory effects for women. The unions opposition strengthened their claim for equal pay, at least in theory, but also effectively obstructed their participation in the industry. For male workers, the opposition to the introduction of female labourers may have protected the status of their work but it also meant providing employers with a weapon workers could be constantly threatened with.

LTU's annexation of the Hotel and Caterer's Employees Association

Although male dominated unions have failed to represent women adequately in the industries they cover, there have been attempts by women in the union movement to represent the interests of female members. When they attempted to represent the interests of female workers they routinely met with opposition from the male trade union movement (Summers, 1975:310). This opposition took two forms. Trade unions representative of women were marginalised and trivialised by mainstream unionism. In the late nineteenth centuries male unionists widely believed that working women had divergent industrial issues to themselves and therefore needed to organise in separate female unions (Best, 1990:56). This rationale was no doubt also behind the creation of 'Female Branches' within existing unions, an innovation which prevented women members overrunning male dominated unions (Best, 1990:56). However when female dominated unions became too powerful, through militancy or increasing memberships, they were swallowed up by the mainstream movement.

In Victoria the experience of the Hotel and Caterer's Female Employees' Association, a subsidiary branch of the Hotel and Caterer's Association, provides an important example of female union experience. Around the year 1912 the Hotel and Caterers' Female Employees Association appears to have become very active and vociferous under the leadership of Secretary Sarah Lewis who was well renowned at Trades Hall for her upholding of

women's rights and women's unions (Best, 1990:93). It is perhaps not coincidental that barmen lobbied to become part of the LTU at the same time that their own union was preparing to merge with the waitresses union bringing other 'back of the house' (predominantly women workers) into the membership. It was also about this time that a federated Hotel, Club, Restaurant and Caterer's Employees Association was formed under the leadership of Sarah Lewis and dominated by the Victorian Female Branch. This federal body comprised the Victorian and South Australian branches. The LTU was attractive to barmen because the low numbers of work sites containing high numbers of workers meant it was well organised. Barmen also saw that the LTU had a better image and industrial record and also believed their interests would not be given supremacy among those represented by the Hotel and Caterer's Association (Best,1990). It is not unreasonable to suppose that the secret of the LTU's appeal lay in its all male membership. This gave it not only a more powerful and united image but translated into real advantages over unions comprising a large female membership when applying for award improvements at the industrial commission. Male members of the Hotel and Caterers Association were only happy to remain in such a union as long as the female branch activity remained ancillary and marginal to the male branch. The LTU took up the barmen's offer despite the protests of Sarah Lewis. Best claims that female barworkers followed their male counterparts because male LTU representatives were able to enter the bars they worked in and sign them up which the female representatives had been unable to do (1990:93).

Best notes that although the Trades Hall Council supported the principle of female unions it was

in practice considered to be a fringe activity of what the predominantly male Council members thought real unionism to be, namely the protection of the male breadwinner's job and wages...

(and the women were)... something of a nuisance setting up rival female unions (Best, 1990:93).

An example of this attitude was seen in 1913 when the male branch of the Hotel and Caterer's Association joined the federation set up by the female branch, creating a new set of rules and usurping the women who had previously dominated the power hierarchy. A similar example occurred in NSW in 1892 when the Trades and Labour Council announced its intention to bring charges against the Female Employees Union (FEU) which comprised barmaids, laundresses and waitresses. The union folded soon after (Summers, 1975:310). The FEU had brought this action upon itself by carrying out successful strike action. In addition they had increased their membership and received a great deal of public support (Summers, 1975:310). In other words the union had become a powerful rival in the eyes of the mainstream movement who moved to usurp this 'nuisance'. History shows that

relations between trade union gender interests has been characterised as much by a struggle for power and control over membership and awards than by co-operation and compliance.

THE POSITION OF BARMAIDS TODAY

Sex segregation and barwork in South Australia

Although hotel barwork has not always been clearly sex segregated it has become increasingly dominated by women since the 1970's. It is difficult to get statistical information which shows the breakdown of job categories within the hotel industry by gender over time. However there is evidence to suggest that the hotel industry has undergone a shift in its gender composition since the 1970's. A survey taken by the LTU in 1976 showed that of a total number of 3283 bar employees, about 1000 were female and 2000 were male, a ratio of 2:1, males to females. (in Grimes, 1980:120). By contrast in 1990 a survey conducted by Tourism - Hospitality and Training (1990) found that 64% of all bar attendants including those in supervisory roles, were women. Women comprise the majority of hotel bar staff. At the same time they are also more likely to be employed casually or part-time and are less likely to be in supervisory or managerial roles. For example 76% of all head bar attendants in the survey were male. Of those who were female approximately 33% were in part-time employment and 50% in casual employment. Casual employees do not receive the same conditions as full-time or regular part-time employees. For instance there is no annual or sickness leave and no security of tenure. However casuals under the South Australian award get a 50% loading on top of their regular hourly rate. Despite this a survey by the Victorian branch of the LTU found that women in casual employment earned lower wages, worked fewer hours, were concentrated in a narrow range of low status occupations and had less access to training than their male counterparts (FLAIEU, 1989:128). The survey also found that women in full-time employment were just as likely to be in occupations without career paths as women in casual employment (1989:128). The hospitality industry is marked overall by low wages, low skill recognition, high attrition rates, poor working conditions, unsocial working hours, broken shifts and stress due to constant contact with the public. Pay rates in the hospitality industry are in fact among the lowest in the current labour market (1989:147). In these ways the hospitality industry has the features of a 'typical 'female industry" (1989:137). The job status ascribed to much of the work is, in Rachel's words, 'stuff all' people think 'oh she's only a barmaid and that's it' (interview 1).

The shift from male to female domination of the hotel industry can be attributed to two major factors. Most obvious of these is perhaps the removal of the legal barrier to the employment of unregistered women in hotels in 1967. Employers, especially those in small businesses, prefer to employ women for a number of reasons. Most notable is the widespread belief that women, especially young attractive women will bring custom to the hotel. As a LTU representative comments

Employers are looking for someone with what they see as the right attributes - a pair of big boobs (and) long blonde hair. Someone to attract males to the industry and ... they hire on that basis.

Women may also be a preferred option from the point of view of employers because they are less likely to 'rock the boat' industrially and can be made to accept casual hours and poor working conditions more easily. This is not however because women choose to work fewer hours since most casual workers want more hours and more pay (FLAIEU, 1989:138). Lorraine, a supervising bar attendant earning the same casual rates as other staff in the hotel points out that,

If they've (employers) got someone who's willing to do extra work and not ask for extra money they're not going to come forward and say to you 'oh well here's some extra money because you're doing extra work'. It doesn't happen like that. I've just done it because it suits me. I don't like to rock the boat and I don't mind. Most of the time I don't mind, but I'm not saying that's how I'll always feel.

A LTU spokeswoman commented that

males tend to be more militant than females, women tend to go to work to earn money and don't put themselves on the line for strike action, women have always believed their work is temporary, very few women ever thought they'd make a career plus when they're married and a lot of them are, their husbands put them under pressure not to go on strike and lose money.

In any case casual workers can lose their jobs on the spot and it can be very difficult to prove that the sacking was related to discrimination or victimisation. Looked at from this vantage point women, who are predominantly casual, have every reason to fear the negative effects of industrial action.

Industry restructuring

In July 1990 a new Federal Hotels, Resorts and Hospitality Industry Award was negotiated between the Australian Hotels Association⁸ (AHA) and the Federated Liquor and Allied Industries Employees Union of Australia. A central feature of these negotiations was the support given to the principle that employees in the industry should have the opportunity to

⁸ The AHA represents the interests of hotel licensees. It has city and branch offices with paid staff and covers issues such as hotel licensing, the Licensing Court, prices and wages (Grimes, 1980:42).

improve skills and look forward to career advancement (Tourism, Training Australia, 1991a:1.12). The South Australian Hotels, Clubs, etc., Award involves the rationalisation of existing classifications into four 'streams' comprising of up to seven 'levels' each. The four streams are 'Food and Beverage', 'Kitchen', 'Guest Services' and 'General'. (Liquor Trade Union, 1991). Most of the old awards did not recognise skill or training (FLAIEU, 1989:148). For bar attendants there was only one classification which applied regardless of the length of time they had been in the job or the difficulty of the tasks involved in the various areas of the industry. For instance workers mixing cocktails in five star hotels were paid the same rate as workers pouring beers in suburban hotels (1989:148). In this regard the new award represents an improvement over the old award conditions. However the new classification structures will not represent a change in the actual conditions women workers experience or the pay they receive unless the incidence of casual work is reduced, access to the new career ladders are ensured and the skills involved in the work are actually reflected in the new classifications (FLAIEU, 1989:150).

In order to move up the classification structure employees must acquire 'the appropriate level of training' or 'have passed a competency test proving they have the skills and knowledge at the standards required' (Liquor Trade Union, 1991:6). Training bodies must be registered with the Australian Hospitality Review Panel⁹ (AHRP) for their courses to be recognised under the award. In the hospitality industry the most common training providers are TAFE and private training authorities like Tourism-Hospitality and Training¹⁰. Tourism, Training Australia¹¹ is its national equivalent responsible for 'identifying the

⁹ The AHRP operates under the auspices of Tourism Training Australia and is responsible for setting standards and granting recognition to training bodies. Employer groups, TAFE and State Training Authorities have input into AHRP at regular two monthly conferences. Courses registered by AHRP include those offered by TAFE, Universities, private program providers, industry associations or industry 'in-house' programs (AHRP, 1991:1).

¹⁰ Tourism-Hospitality Australia is the South Australian branch of Tourism Training Australia. It is a privately funded organisation. The executive director says that approximately '20% of overall costs last year were DEET funds'. The remaining funds came from 'ACCESS, accreditation of groups training, needs analysis (and) conferences for industry' (interview 5).

¹¹ Tourism Training Australia receives substantial funding from 'DEET, industry interest groups like the AHA as well as generating its own funds via projects like ACCESS' (interview 5). It was established by industry groups and the federal government and has representation from industry, unions and government.

travel and hospitality sectors' training needs, and to take action to ensure those needs are met' (Dept of the Arts, 1990:2). It has been guided by a working party consisting representatives from TAFE, the LTU and employer groups to come up with a program designed to assess the skills utilised by workers in the hospitality industry. The program entitled ACCESS provides a mechanism whereby those already employed in the tourism and hospitality industry can have their skills formally assessed and recognised (Tourism, Training Australia, 1991c:2). In order to apply for an ACCESS review employees must pay a registration fee of \$35 to Tourism Hospitality and Training for which they will receive information about the 'module' they wish to be assessed for and the 'competency' level it requires (Tourism Hospitality and Training, 1991d). Undergoing the skills assessment will involve being tested in the workplace by an in-house assessor or by applying to a TAFE college or other training establishment (Tourism Training Australia, 1991d:4). According to the executive director of Tourism-Hospitality Training the testing price is 'negotiable' but 'if you're in Adelaide \$40 is the going rate' (interview 5).

The new award allows for a transitional period, between 16 April and November of 1991, in which employees currently employed in the industry are 'deemed', by the employer, to have acquired the appropriate skills via experience on the job over a period of time. Employers are then to provide employees with a Certificate of Appointment which can be used to prove the workers training level should they move into a new job (LTU, AHA, SAEF, 1991)¹². After this time employees must undertake training courses or skills assessments in order to move up the career hierarchy. There are several problems associated with these new training provisions particularly for employees working in small establishments. Most salient of these is the emphasis placed upon the employee/employer relationship as the avenue for 'deeming' the skill level and therefore the wage rate of workers during the transitional period. It is not unreasonable to speculate that employers, motivated to keep their wages bill down, will fail to inform employees of their rights under the 'deeming' provision. Although employers are legally bound to comply with the new requirements, there is no penalty beyond the obligation to back pay wages forfeited by employees not accredited during the transitional period (LTU, AHA, SAEF, 1991). In this situation, the ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the wages paid in the workplace actually reflect the skill levels of employees, falls upon workers themselves.

Its functions include research into industry needs, provision of advice, development of career paths, national training standards and job descriptions for the hospitality industry (Dept. of Arts et al, 1990:2).

¹² SAEF refers to the South Australian Employers Federation.

Once the transition period has passed workers will only achieve movement through the 'new career structures' by completing the training modules set in the award (LTU, AHA, SAEF, 1991). The major training bodies cited by the Liquor Trade Union in South Australia are TAFE and Tourism-Hospitality Training SA who administer the ACCESS program in this state. The question emerges 'who will pay for workers' training?'. A LTU representative comments that employers, although they were the primary lobbyists for the new training arrangements, are now claiming that their employees do not need it.

Employers pushed and pushed for (career structures based on training) and we (the LTU) thought about it and decided that, yes it was probably the best way to go but I've spoken with employer groups ... and they are not interested in a trained workforce. If they have to pay for it they are not interested in it. ...I'm convinced the push for training in a lot of industries , was to try and stymie and stop any increases in wages and that was just the thrust they used. ...I think that ... more and more people are becoming aware that they do need some form of training and so ... (they) will probably go back and do some schooling ... and employers will be required to pay for that level of training.

In other words in many cases the cost of training will fall upon workers themselves. But many women simply cannot afford the time or money involved in retraining themselves. As Lorraine says

I'm a one parent family. I need to work lots of hours because I have a mortgage. I also have a house that needs to be renovated. I also have other commitments that need money and if I go back into education that's just another drain on my resources. Its another drain that I don't have the time to be putting the effort into ... I can't afford to drop a days pay to go to school for something that may not eventuate.

Women from country areas are likely to suffer a disadvantage in this way also. As the executive director of Tourism-Hospitality Australia says regarding the ACCESS program 'if you're in Ceduna and you want me to fly over there and test you its going to cost you a fortune'.

Other important questions that must be asked include - how will the ordinary bar attendant know that ACCESS exists or that they may receive a wage increase upon completing a training course? Furthermore, how can employees be assured that their employer will pay them the correct rate once they have completed training or that their employers will offer women workers training above their male counterparts? The LTU are hindered in their attempts to inform and protect the rights of members by a lack of connective structures between the various hotels and clubs and the union hierarchy at the top. As a LTU industrial officer noted.

Areas where we have a fair percentage of females would be hotels and ... our organisers have a massive problem accessing them to get information out to them. ...(and also)... Trying to speak to anybody in their workplace puts them under threat especially at the moment with the recession. Our people here have problems just going to them and asking them have they got any problems because they just don't want to know.

In June 1990 72% of hotels in SA employed 20 or fewer people (Tourism - Hospitality and Training, 1990:3). A representative of the LTU comments regarding this

In the past the brewery workers and the Coke and Schweppes areas have been our main focus because they are areas where there are substantial numbers of members in one place. That has changed mildly in favour of perhaps the Casino because we have an active shop stewards network, or job rep network in there. ... They all get fairly good representation, well on a par with say the brewery. The brewery is still one of our main areas.

Except for the Casino all of the work sites mentioned are exclusively male dominated. Interestingly workplaces which have substantial numbers of members and who are therefore easier to organise, like the Casino and large hotels, also have near equal representation of male and female employees whereas women workers comprise the majority in hotels.¹³ Not surprisingly the majority of small scale employers in the industry are, in the words of a LTU spokeswoman, 'not good, we have massive problems of non compliance with awards' and 'some are loath to hand out material' (interview 4). Although the union sends its publication and other material out to hotels, many members fail to receive this information because employers are relied upon for distribution to members. The women interviewed had no information about the LTU beyond the level of dues subtracted from their pay. This situation also seemed to be the cause of marked anti-union sentiment. Sue's comment was typical.

I think they (the LTU) should be giving you the choice as to whether or not you're even in the union. I've never even seen a card. I haven't had any contact with them. I just got my salary one day and thought 'shit how come this money's been taken out?'... Because I'd worked only a few hours and I think I got only \$7. I thought this must be a mistake. I said to (the boss) 'do you have to be in the union to work here?' He said, 'you have to be in the union to work in any pub in South Australia'.

The LTU and the AHA have long been partners in a closed shop agreement. Lorraine says of this

¹³ For example only 49.5% of employees at the Adelaide Casino are female and 54.8% of employees at international and national hotels are female, while 59.4% of all people employed in hotels are women (Tourism Hospitality and Training SA, 1990:3).

I don't know that you'll get much out of the union because its compulsory unionism. They're not interested. They don't have to rock any boats ... because they'll still get their money ... whether they do it or they don't do it.

Considering that casual workers pay the same union dues as other categories of workers but get less representation, these sentiments are not totally unwarranted.

The principles of industry restructuring encourage the participation of workers in changes to decision making processes within the workplace itself. It is planned that this will be organised via the establishment of ongoing consultative committees. Consultative committees are to represent the interests of all involves in the work group and to 'develop recommendations/decisions in the best interests of the common goal and taking account of the differences' (SA Dept. of Labour, 1990:1/1). The Hotel, Clubs etc., Award has a provision for the setting up of consultative committees (Clause 52). Employers are to sign an agreement with the union on establishment of a committee which may, among other things, determine an increase in the number of full-time and regular part-time positions (Drumm, 1991:1). There is the potential therefore for workers in casual positions to achieve greater security and more regular pay. Considering the voluntary nature of this procedure and the lack of information staff have regarding it, it is unlikely that many consultative committees will be set up. In fact only one establishment in South Australia has set up a consultative committee to date (Drumm, 1991:1). An LTU source summarised some of the difficulties involved

The problems that I see in the small area is that a chef is an employee ... now those people are regarded as managers in a lot of places. I don't see them as representing the workers. I see them as representing the management.... In a small place I can see problems because you only need a majority to vote. People on the management area can apply all sorts of pressure.... In this recession we're seeing all sorts of pressures applied to workers to sign away rights.

Again the emphasis upon voluntary 'negotiation' and 'agreement' between employers and employees disadvantages those workers who are not industrially strong on the shop floor.

It is difficult to determine whether employers will choose to employ the new 'skilled', that is trained and therefore more expensive worker, or the cheap 'unskilled', untrained workers. Until the restructuring provisions are implemented fully, wage rates are not tied to training so that employers can 'get...(workers)... skilled or unskilled and at the same rate' (LTU rep). This assumes that the skills involved in the work are also reflected in the training program. If this is so, employers will presumably be encouraged to look for the trained worker thereby improving customer satisfaction and productivity. A survey by

Tourism Training Australia regarding the trends in the hospitality and tourism industry generally, contradicted this assumption. Small businesses in particular had reduced the number of apprentices they employed in recent times (1991b:9). In those rare cases where employers do offer training, women may suffer a disadvantage due to employer's expectations of them. The belief that women work for 'pin money' only, that they prefer part-time work because they have children or intend to have children or that they are not ambitious and do not desire promotion, still exist in the minds of many employers in the hospitality industry (FLAIEU, 1989:142). Employers are also unlikely to be aware of their discriminatory practices and to select workers for promotion or training on the basis of their attractiveness or how 'friendly' they are 'with the bosses' (1989:142). If these findings reflect broader trends it may be that untrained women will continue to be employed in small industries where conditions, wages and union representation are poor. In the larger workplaces, where the number of female employees is lower, workers will be in a better position to demand payment for their skills. In other words the existing tendency for women to be highly represented in small enterprises - where employment is marked by insecurity of tenure, low wages, lack of training and low recognition for skill - may be exacerbated by the restructuring process. If industry training does not actually improve workers' skills there will be no reason for employers to employ more expensive trained staff unless pressured to do so by workers themselves or their union representatives. In this way the applicability of training programs to the skills actually required becomes important.

The barwomen I spoke to emphasised interpersonal skills as being central to both employers and customers expectations of them as well as their ability to retain their jobs. For instance Rachel says

I don't think you'd last very long basically if you were just sour faced all the time.... I think stopping and chatting, you know 'how was your day?', 'have you been busy?'. or 'have you had a hard day?'.... make a difference to people.

Sue agrees with this statement.

I think a good barmaid is somebody who, if you're a regular drinker, knows what you want without asking. This is what I like when I go to a pub. I like the barmaid to know my name and call me by it, to be happy and chatty.

Lorraine points out that

If you don't relate well to your customers you may find that the hotel doesn't have much clientele after a while so you're going to lose either hours or lose your job because there just isn't any work for you. If you're not relating well to your customer, talking to them, and he (sic) can go elsewhere where the

barperson recognises him and she (sic) knows what he wants and she talks to him, he's going to go down there. You might have nine or ten clientele that do that then you're not going to have any customers to serve so you're not going to have a job.

When questioned all three barmaids interviewed commented on the difficulties and 'skills' involved in 'relating to customers. Sue referred to being able to 'read' customers and the importance of 'knowing when to talk to them and when not to'. She spoke of treating work 'like I'm having a party at home', of being 'a good listener' and 'a counsellor behind the bar'. Rachel talked about the need for barworkers to be confident.

To be a barmaid is hard work because you've got to be up front. You've got to have confidence to get up there and stand in front of people. I've done a little bit of singing. I haven't done it for a long time ...since then I've lost a fair bit of confidence ... but ... I've been working here for a while and this guy said to me 'look if you can do this you can get up on stage easily'. I thought 'well shit yeah, I suppose I could'

All the women interviewed spoke of the need for assertiveness and tact in dealing with drunk, and often disorderly customers, in a number of contexts, for example

If they (customers) don't want to give you the money, (if) they don't want to pay for their drinks ... you can't just let them walk off without paying for their drinks. You have to get the money out of them.

Lorraine, the most experienced worker, says of the counselling role

You have to be there for the customer. If someone's got a problem and they want to talk about it you've got to try and be constructive I suppose and be helpful. It's a very fine line. You have to know what to say and what not to say. Really like a social worker. Be supportive but don't throw yourself in the deep end. It's fine enough to listen and it's fine enough to give them some advice but you've got to be careful that you're not doing their thinking for them. ...(and)...You've got to be careful that sometimes when somebody says something to you that you don't say something to somebody else because they might take offence.

On prevention of conflict she says

I don't think it's a skill that men have or if they do have then they usually notice it just before the fight starts, women have a better intuition you could call it or a gut feeling that something's going to happen if they don't refuse someone drinks. ... You tend to know. If you know your customers or just get the feel about people you know if they're going to erupt. ... It's a preventative thing. ... The men tend to get real manly. They jump the bar or they huff and puff and they get involved. In a lot of instances that's not real good because that just puts fuel to the fire.

Women also mentioned the importance of getting on well with fellow staff and management for maintaining the 'pleasant' ambience in the bar. Not all of these abilities are a necessary part of the job. The women interviewed noted that 'counselling' was often a voluntary

activity. It would probably not be appropriate to include it in bar attending skills audits. On the other hand, dealing with aggressive or troublesome customers, maintaining a friendly atmosphere, exercising tact and judgement in inter-personal relationships and working as part of a team are headings which describe a range of quite complex skill components performed by regular bar staff. The women interviewed saw these as central requirements of the work and had developed expertise in them to differing degrees depending on the kinds of experience they had behind them.

The 'introductory level' of the ACCESS training program which applies to the bar attendants interviewed, summarises the work into twelve task categories. One of these refers to non-manual tasks, namely 'interpersonal skills' involving the ability to 'greet and recognise guests'. By comparison the advanced level training includes a comparatively comprehensive range of interpersonal skills including the ability to

- Self evaluate and develop positive personality traits including assertiveness, leadership qualities, mood control and avoidance of bias.
- Use effective communication skills including awareness of body language, personal space, conversation tones and manner, clarity and pacing, negotiation in summarising and questioning.
- Maintain guest relations including establishment of initial contact and rapport and recognition and resolution of dissatisfaction.
- Build teams
- Work in teams
- Resolve staffing disputes
- Provide feedback to peers, subordinates and superiors (Tourism, Training Australia, 1991c:17).

With the exception of 'leadership' these are all qualities the women interviewed, from supervisor to ordinary bar attendant, experienced as central requirements of the job. The assumption that these kinds of skills are restricted to those at the upper levels of the award is often made, even though it is invalid because most jobs include substantial interpersonal elements (Cox and Leonard, 1991:39). This is particularly true of service work, like hotel bartending in small establishments, where the majority of customers are 'regulars' spending their leisure time. In this way the ACCESS program has underrecognised the skills bar attendants possess particularly those traditionally associated with 'femininity' that women are more likely to perform well. This is despite 'the major effort to make sure there's no sexism in any of the skill requirements, or promotion or training' reported by the executive director of Tourism-Hospitality Training SA. There was some scepticism among the women interviewed as to the relevance of the training they had actually received or

might entertain receiving. Rachel commented that the 'communication' aspects of the job in the hospitality course she completed were very limited.

Part of the course was communication skills. We were shown video's on a hotel where a customer would come and book a room and for some reason he'd get upset about the room. You were supposed to say 'oh well, yes sir, no sir, three bags full sir'. The customers always right and always be polite no matter what they say and that was it.

Sue asks the obvious question.

Why is it that someone who puts themselves through probably great expense and time and effort to go to a bar and waiting course and someone like me who's never had any experience, other than to sit on the other side of the bar, ... can work just as well?

The kind of 'Training' these employees are referring to, does not include some important aspects of the work, therefore it cannot define skill levels. What it does reveal is the worker's position in the industry and this is largely determined by gender.

The low status, low pay and lack of union representation female bar attendants experience fosters and reinforces the sexual harassment which is an entrenched aspect of their work. It also works to reinforce definitions of the work as 'feminine' thereby keeping male workers out of the industry. This in turn serves to limit the kinds of jobs women have offered to them (ACOA, 1982:34). There is an inverse relationship between a recognition of work based on skill and one based on 'natural' ability for women. One particularly destructive outcome of lack of skill recognition for barmaids is sexual harassment due to the long cultural tradition of barmaids as 'whores'. This is highlighted by the increasing popularity of topless barmaids in suburban hotels. Predictably this problem arose almost immediately after the legalisation of barmaiding in South Australia, aided and abetted by the 'sexual liberation' of women in the past decades. The most significant factor however has been employer's attempts to provide cheap entertainment for male clientele, hence maintaining a competitive edge in a recessionary period. For women working in hotel bars the introduction of topless 'entertainers' has added extra stress to their work and a renewed outburst of sexual harassment as well as the pervasive threat of sexual violence against them and other women¹⁴.

¹⁴ For example Lorraine says of the night she worked with the topless waitresses, 'it was quite stressful actually'. She also says,

'I don't think it degrades (barmaids) but I think you run a risk. Someone will come and see a topless waitressing show (and) ra ra ra. Who's to say that they haven't got a deranged mind and they have all these

The nomination of enterprise 'agreements' as the vehicle for industrial democracy hits women precisely where they are at their weakest. Women are vulnerable to exploitation primarily because of their casual status and lack of union protection. Women's access to information, time and financial resources is limited for the same reasons. This inhibits their ability to acquire the training necessary for career advancement and skill recognition. Furthermore much of the actual content of skills in the work are not reflected in the training programmes. Many of the skills women possess have therefore not been recognised in the restructuring process but are still considered to constitute 'natural' abilities or 'personality traits' whose value is not measurable in wage terms. 'Skill' in the industry restructuring process has not therefore shed its political meaning and continues to define the privilege and power of workers in a position to secure the label. Moreover the sex segregation of work has not been substantially challenged since it seems likely that the trend for women to become employed in the casual and low status jobs in the smaller, less industrially organised sector of the industry, will be enhanced in the present climate. This is reflected in Lorraine's cynical view regarding the future of her trade

I don't know about the future. The government steps in and makes all these grand changes but you usually find that not much comes out of it and if it does it's usually for the worst.

Unless these women are targeted by their union as in need of specific representation given their marginalised position in the industry it is unlikely that a breakdown in the sex segregated nature of the work will occur.

weird fantasies going around in their head. Whoever happens to be around at the time, their the ones that pay'.

Rachel's says of working with the topless barmaids,

'I found it really embarrassing, really embarrassing ... and then of course you get 'oh come on Rachel show us yours'. 'When are you going to get your gear off?' and that sort of thing. I felt like everybody was looking at me and trying to see through my clothes because these girls had their clothes off. ... Its Blatant sexual harassment. ... You get it all the time, well not all the time but a lot of the time from most of the people who drink here. ... They just think that they have the right to say things like that. They think that we're not going to get offended because we're barmaids and we're putting ourselves in that position so we should expect to get that sort of treatment. ... You can let people know that you don't like it but ... people know I don't like it and that's why they do it. ... They want to get up my nose. ... They come in and they give you a hard time. They know you don't like it and they just keep doing it. They keep at it and they keep at it.'

CONCLUSION

The predominance of women in the industrially weak sectors of the liquor trade is due, in part to their historical exclusion from areas of 'skilled men's work'. The work of barmaids has been defined as low skilled primarily because women were unable to muster the political and industrial strength required to win skill definitions in the industries they were concentrated in. The work of barmaids throughout history has been defined largely in their absence or by reference to cultural stereotypes about barmaids and female sexuality. This has not usually included a consideration of the status of barmaids as workers, least of all as skilled workers. The history of conflict between male and female workers in the hotel industry can be expressed today in an unequal distribution of representation between male and female workers in the occupational categories covered by the LTU. In the present this is still the main obstacle to a just recognition of women's work in the hotel trade as skilled. In addition the low status attributed to the work of barmaids and their vulnerable structural position means they have little grounds to combat the constant and overt sexual harassment which is seen as a 'natural' part of their work.

CONCLUSION

The experience of women in the small hotel trade supports the assertion that skill is historically defined in the process of industrial struggle. History shows the working lives of these women being tossed and turned by the actions of male hotel owners and the male dominated liquor union. Male parliamentarians and temperance campaigners also influenced the fates of women barworkers. Trade unions which represented the interests of women in the hospitality industry have historically suffered damaging competition from male dominated unions who have not adequately represented female members. Women were also excluded from entering the skilled trades within the industry. As a result of this women have been concentrated in the low status, low paid and 'low skilled' areas of the hospitality industry. Barmaids have been associated with stereotypes about male and female sexuality far more often than their status as workers has been acknowledged.

In the present strong links are being drawn between skill and training. However women's skills will not necessarily be recognised by increasing the training requirements of jobs. Skill must be recognised on the basis of the abilities women already possess. There is evidence to suggest that many of the skills women perform in hotel work are not included in the content of training programs but are obscured beneath assumptions about women's 'natural' abilities. This is because the length and content of training and access to it are shaped by social and political factors. 'Training' often can not be used to 'objectively' measure the skills possessed by workers any more than the 'difficulty of tasks'. For women employed in marginalised areas of the hospitality industry, the acquisition of training and advanced skills will not provide a guarantee of career advancement or wage increases. This will be largely dependent on their individual ability to bargain with employers on the shop floor, or failing this, to secure representation by an advocate. In the latter case barworkers need information about their union and confidence in its concern for their rights. The mechanism which failed to deliver women equal pay for work of equal value in

the 70's cannot be expected to deliver industrial democracy for women in the 90's. The emphasis upon enterprise agreements in the industry and award restructuring process represents in many ways, the governments abandonment of women's fight for wage justice and recognition for the valuable contributions made by their labour. It can be expected that employers, especially in marginalised industries where unions do not act as watch dogs, will continue to find cheap 'unskilled' workers a more profitable alternative to expensive 'skilled' workers. In any case the present recessionary climate works in the interests of employers who can demand more training from workers for the same wages.

In these ways the political, economic and industrial interest groups which have defined women's work as unskilled throughout history will continue to do so in the present without significant variation. Women's ability to capture skill labels will still be primarily determined by their level of industrial and political strength. For women in industries protected by strong representative unions industry restructuring presents possibilities for positive change. It is critical that the women's movement continues to emphasise the need for trade union organisation and challenges notions of skill on political grounds.

The indications discussed suggest that more detailed research is required if trends in marginalised sectors of the service industry like hotel barwork are to be understood. The hotel industry may also provide particularly fruitful research findings considering that it has been a contested area of employment by male and female workers which has undergone significant shifts in its gender composition. This has certainly been the case in South Australia.

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APPENDIX 1

THE INTERVIEWS

The location of the interviews was an inner-suburban hotel in the Adelaide area (Hotel X) where the three women I interviewed are currently employed. I worked in this hotel myself during 1990 as a casual bar attendant. Besides providing personal insight to the study, the experience enabled me to elicit relatively uninhibited responses from my former workmates in the interview context.

Hotel X employs 7 casual bar staff. Of these, two work in a supervisory capacity - one female, one male. The licensee is male and works behind the bar relatively infrequently. The manager, who lives on the premises, is also male. He works most days although he appears and reappears in the bar unpredictably. The hotel also employs two topless barmaids every Friday night between five and eight o'clock. They are sent from an agency and consequently different women appear each week.

Each interviewee agreed to my suggestion that the interviews be conducted in the public bar of Hotel X. Two of the women chose to participate in their free time (Sunday afternoon) and one before her shift commenced (weekday afternoon). The atmosphere was one in which both interviewer and interviewee felt comfortable. It was quite noisy with occasional interjections from regular customers and intermissions in which to refresh our glasses. The interviews were between 60 minutes to 120 minutes long, although talking around the topic often went on before the tape recorder was started and after the interview had formally ended. Often the 'chatting' outside of recording time elicited particularly interesting information in which case I simply restarted the tape recorder asking the interviewee to repeat their comments.

Interviews were kept as informal as possible. Questions were open ended in nature and designed to elicit uninterrupted monologues. For example, I often began with 'can you tell me about...' or 'so what did you think about that', etc. Sharing my own experiences in regard to particular issues also proved effective in kindling pertinent comments

Questions revolved around the following general areas

- first impressions of the work
- customer behaviour and attitudes
- the nature of sexual harassment and responses to it
- attitudes toward topless barmaids
- changes in work environment due to topless barmaids
- employers attitudes
- attitudes toward working conditions
- value attributed to barwork by barmaids and others
- attitudes and expectations of the union
- training issues
- work setting preference (front/lounge bar)
- differences in the work performed by male and female barworkers

Specific questions revolved around the skilled content of the work. Initially this involved drawing out the subject's opinion about her skills and the skills required in the work. If this did not provoke a detailed response I asked questions about skill which originated in my own experience. In the latter case I focused on areas of the work which have not usually been considered as part of its skill content. The following areas emerged

- counselling customers
- dealing with customer disclosure
- keeping confidentiality
- joking/chatting/smiling
- making customers feel welcome and relaxed
- assertiveness/handling difficult customers
- conflict resolution
- working in teams

INTERVIEW PROFILES

Rachel : Interview 1

Rachel is 25 years old. She has been in the hospitality industry for the past few years having previously worked in a range of jobs including farm labourer, gardening instructor, horse-riding instructor, deck hand and youth supervisor. She has been a waitress or bar attendant in four hotels. In addition to her job as a bar attendant she works part time in a program entitled 'Intensive Personal Supervision' which involves befriending a young person judged to be 'at risk' for the Department of Family and Community Services. No formal training is required for this job.

Rachel has completed year twelve at secondary school and a foundation course for university entry. She plans to go on to study Agriculture and Natural Resource Sciences at tertiary level. She was brought up on a farm and is a staunch environmentalist. She would like to work in the Department of Agriculture as a consultant educating people about land management programmes which minimise environmental damage. She completed a hospitality course through the Commonwealth Employment Scheme because

I wanted to go to England because I've got family over there. I wanted to have some sort of skill that I could use over there or anywhere. The hospitality industry is a trade that you can use pretty well anywhere if you can speak the language especially. You can do it anywhere in the world.

She has already travelled to England a couple of times but intends to do more travelling in the future.

Rachel is an attractive young woman with short blonde hair, cut and permed in a bob style. She has pronounced breasts which cause her some embarrassment behind the bar. She blushes easily but is assertive and popular with customers generally. She has recently fallen in love and moved in with a young man who drinks regularly at the hotel.

Rachel works as a barmaid because she needs a job and looks forward to leaving the industry.

When I first got the job here it was fairly easy to get work doing the sort of work I'm doing. I'm not going to be a barmaid forever. I only do it because its an income.

Sue : Interview 2

Sue is 34 years old. She has been at her present job for about two years and has not worked in the hospitality industry before. In the past she worked as a child-care worker, a bus driver, a disabled children's supervisor and a shop attendant in a video shop. She has completed an in-house diploma geared toward working with the mentally disabled and part of a training programme for child-care workers. She has not matriculated but did finish secondary school.

Sue is happily married with an eleven year old son from a previous marriage. Her husband is a successful business man and she does not work because she needs the money, although 'the extra bit helps'. She is shortish and good looking with vibrant red hair. She is usually in a bright, cheery frame of mind at work and enjoys chatting and joking. She is popular with customers and handles trouble makers with ease.

I didn't like comments directed at me but once I learned to give back ... like a guy would say to me 'when are you going to take your top off' (like the topless barmaids do) and I'd say 'when you take you're pants off'. That was it. They thought well she's not going to play. They just back right off.

Sue enjoys her work and plans to continue with the job at least in the short term. She says of barmaiding

I don't think I'm the right person to do this (the interview) because I don't look at it as a job. I enjoy it. I never did it before. It's fun. I like the party atmosphere. I haven't studied and ... I hated school. I'm more a life person. I like to get out and have a good time and that's me.

Lorraine : Interview 3

Lorraine is 45 years old and has been working at Hotel X for approximately five years as an 'unofficial' supervisor. She works for casual wages like the other workers but in addition to regular bar duties she

keep(s) tabs on staff, make(s) sure that everything's running alright, make(s) sure that everything's ready for the other staff when they start, make(s) sure that people don't work more hours than they should do (and) ... if there's no work that people get sent home, make(s) sure there's no customer complaints, lock(s) up, put(s) the money away (and) make(s) sure the alarm's put on.

Although she accepts her situation she also says that

I get upset sometimes because you are doing extra work and you do have extra responsibility. If somebody else doesn't do their job properly, who doesn't have any extra responsibility, (but) still gets

paid the same rate, ... you don't get any more recognition for that than they do. You tend to find that you are usually the one, if anything goes wrong, that gets into trouble. It's never the person that doesn't do their job properly because they (management) know it would be a waste of time talking to them (barstaff).

At present Lorraine also works as a nurse assistant in an old age home. She worked as a sewing machinist in a factory for ten years, a food waitress in a hotel for three years and had her own business at the Central Markets for five years. She was employed in a supermarket at a range of jobs including merchandising and sales work. She was assistant manager at the supermarket for a time. She has not received other than 'on the job' training for these positions.

Lorraine's early education reached first year high school but she has gone back to study in recent years. She has attended a Women's Studies course at TAFE although she did not complete the assessment. She is presently doing English as well as a foundation course at TAFE in preparation for further education. She would like to work in community welfare and plans to do a course at TAFE in Community Services. She would also like to go on to university studies eventually.

Lorraine is divorced and has been a single parent for a number of years. She has three adult children, aged 26, 21 and 19. She is 5 foot 6 inches with long, dark brown hair and blue eyes. She lives on her own but has a regular, long term boy freind.

Lorraine brings a lot of experience to work with her and has an insight into the various characters that drink at the bar and how best to handle them. She performs a wide array of tasks at the hotel besides barwork including managing the restaurant and working in the kitchen during special functions. Despite this, she foresees leaving the pub. She is not tired of the work but believes she is 'too old for it'. After all, she says, 'who wants an old barmaid'. Lorraine expects that one day soon she'll be replaced by a younger woman more 'suitable' for the work in the eyes of management.

APPENDIX 2

LTU industrial officer : Interview 4

There is only one female industrial officer in the union hierarchy of the South Australian branch of the LTU. I interviewed her on a weekday morning at the branch headquarters. The interview lasted approximately 90 minutes and comprised the following questions.

Interview questions

1. Do you agree that the Liquor Trade Union has historically been dominated by the interests of the brewery and aerated waters workers? Do you think this has changed? In what ways?
2. What are the most common complaints from members, individually or by workplace?
3. Which industries covered by the union have shown the most active role in the award restructuring process? Which ones have been least active? What factors do you think are important in determining participation rates?
4. What are your perceptions generally regarding the union in relation to
 - representation of women workers, especially hotel workers / barmaids
 - position of women in the union hierarchy
 - awareness of women's issues
 - actions on behalf of women workers
5. Do you think there is much awareness among union representatives that women and men have different issues at work and may perform different kinds of work behind hotel bars?
6. Is there an increasing trend toward casualisation in the hotel industry? What are the causes in your opinion?
7. Do you think the number of women working in the hotel industry is increasing?

8. Do you think employers prefer women workers as shown for example in methods of choosing staff in advertising, interview and other selection processes?
9. Is there an increasing trend towards more topless barmaids in the hotel industry?
10. What actions has the union taken to oppose the employment of topless barmaids? What problems has it faced in this area?
11. Do you think that barmaid's skills are accurately reflected in the award particularly their social/emotional skills, for example dealing with obnoxious drunks, listening, smiling, joking, preventing conflict, dealing with troublesome customers etc? If they aren't, do you think they should be? What problems might there be?

Executive Director/Tourism-Hospitality Training : Interview 5

Tourism-Hospitality Australia is responsible for the ACCESS training program and others in South Australia. I interviewed the Executive Director on a weekday morning at the office. The interview lasted approximately 25 minutes.

1. Who are Tourism, Training Australia and Tourism-Hospitality and Training and how are they funded?. Who is represented on their decision making bodies?
2. How were women employees represented in the process of classifying skill levels which led to the skill summaries in the new training programs?.
3. Could you explain the differences in the number of classifications and training requirements for the old award as compared to the new award?.
4. How will this change directly effect ordinary bar attendants?
5. How much will the new training cost?
6. Who will pay for it?
7. Who will provide it?
8. How will employees know ACCESS exists?