POLITICISING THE PRODUCTIVE: SUBJECTIVITY, FEMINIST LABOUR THOUGHT AND FOUCAULT

Wendy Bastalich

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the implications of Foucault's genealogical analyses and related commentary in political philosophy for the English speaking, academic, feminist literature about women and work. Although the field positively subverts the universal masculine subject of economic theory and policy, the thesis demonstrates that much feminist thought problematically retains a vision of the subject as defined by re/productive contribution. Foucault and those who share a Foucauldian approach have argued that conceptions of the subject as defined by productive contribution and reproductive drives have been, and continue to be, involved in the reproduction of the existing order of production. The thesis raises the concern that, in some of its central assertions and practices, feminist labour thought reproduces this kind of subject as universally and ahistorically 'true', and in doing so unknowingly participates in the production and circulation of the knowledges that support the social hierarchies, divisions and normative assumptions it attempts to challenge.

This argument is demonstrated in four parts which follow upon a summary of Foucault's middle period genealogies and a re-conceptualisation of feminist labour questions in light of them. The first part argues that the association of (emotional, domestic and familial) labours with the 'invisible' economic contributions of women within much feminist labour thought repeats normative meanings that are the product, and the means by which, women's work has been derided. Second, the subject frequently reproduced within feminist work and welfare thought does not undermine the market as the principle for social distribution, as feminist labour thinkers have sometimes asserted, but demands 'rights' and 'needs' that give the market a central role in the determination of value and security. Third, the subject of much feminist labour thought is sometimes imagined to be predisposed to the development of labour capacity or, alternatively, to find power, autonomy and freedom in material wealth and economic choice. This conception normalises lifetimes committed to the market and echoes a more widespread and immanent social drive towards the increased participation of the population in market-based production. Finally, the thesis argues that feminist critiques of comparable worth misunderstand the role that job evaluation plays in producing the normative conditions upon which occupational hierarchy depends. The debate about comparable worth does not prevent the reproduction of statements and practices that participate in the discipline of women at work.

In closing the thesis answers traditional labour feminist critiques of Foucault's work. Here I argue that an increased awareness of the conditions and possible effects of universalist assumptions about the subject offers feminist labour thinkers and practitioners more strategic and subversive responses to economic problems than current theoretical paradigms allow. It also encourages greater sensitivity to a diverse range of cultural positionings.

DECLARATION

The following thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis being made available for photocopying and loan if accepted for the award of the degree.

Signed: Date: 25/6/01

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1
INTRODUCTION

An understanding of discursive origins has not been the object of the English-speaking feminist literature about work whose questions and solutions are frequently assumed to reflect a self-evident condition of women. Histories of women's work locate causes, such as 'capitalism' and 'patriarchy', in political 'interests' and 'structures' that are already verified within theoretical paradigms. While accounts of exploitation and discrimination against women arising from the actions of political interest groups are often convincing, they neglect to consider a more immanent operation of power and its role in producing normative social relations. There has been a persistent neglect of approaches that consider the relationship between discourses within the human sciences and the evolving shape of social and economic domains. In particular, feminist thinking about the problem of work has not given close attention to the implications of Foucauldian thought, although both areas of literature explore the relationships between economic goals, the operation of power and the constitution of the subject within advanced industrial nations.

This neglect occurs despite claims by some writers (for example Ramazanoglu, 1993) that feminism can ill afford to ignore Foucauldian thought. Ramazanoglu has pointed out that Foucauldians offer alternative paradigms for thinking about power relations and re-situate feminism from the position of outside antagonist to active participant in constituting those relations. Watson (1995) and Bacchi (1999) have argued that feminist strategies and interventions in the social should adopt the poststructural awareness of the political, contested, and discursive nature of 'need' as it is formulated in social policy, including a consideration of the effects of these articulations. Feminist thinkers, particularly those influenced by poststructural and postmodern thought, have discarded the notion that feminism represents an essential condition or 'experience' of 'women'. For many, feminism is obliged to use the same knowledge of women given to it by the political techniques to

which it objects. As Judith Butler (1990:2) writes, the 'feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation'. Donna Haraway (1987:79) comments, with reference to 'socialist feminism', that a 'substantial guilt' lies not in the production of essentialist theory that suppresses women's particularity and contradictory interests, but in an 'unreflective participation in the logics, languages, and practices of white humanism'. Scholars offering critical comment on feminism's relation to 'third world' and Aboriginal women have also argued for the need to examine the Eurocentrism and 'whiteness' within some feminist analyses (Mohanty, 1991). There has been comment on the normative power of some feminist approaches to assimilate Aboriginal women as part of a new form of colonial supremacy (Lucashenko, 1994; Alcoff, 2000).

This thesis explores these concerns and begins a detailed dialogue between feminist labour theory and Foucauldian thought. It develops an alternative and additional conceptualisation of the problem of labour, informed by the epistemological precepts and historical studies contributed by postmodern and poststructuralist thought. Particular attention is given to the relevance and application of Foucauldian genealogical studies on discipline, government, and *The History of Sexuality* (1976). My aim is to problematise ideas that feminist labour thinkers have not typically identified as implicated in the reproduction of the troubled condition of modern advanced industrial nations. My purpose is not to settle the debates conducted within labour feminism, though I do support those labour feminists who explicitly problematise the hierarchical organisation of work and the resource inequities it perpetuates. My goal is rather to direct labour feminist attention to elements of its own discourse that participate in enabling the current organisation of re/production to appear sensible, self-evident, or inevitable. I aim to bring into relief those assumptions which are so familiar they operate transparently and are rarely questioned or explicitly stated within much feminist discourse about work.

I define my field of analysis as contemporary English-speaking feminist thought that adopts or develops theoretical paradigms which problematise, explain, and address differences between men's and women's economic condition, without reflection upon the discursive history of its own categories and assumptions. For the most part, the thesis refers to a field that adopts liberal or Marxist tenets of thought and which falls within the broad domain of modern social theory. Occasionally critical references are made to texts that concede particular points to poststructural or postmodern thought in their explorations of sexual divisions of labour. Many of the central precepts of the field were formulated in the 1980s, and texts from this period are given precedence in the literature review provided in chapter

two. More recent accounts are referred to elsewhere however in order to demonstrate the continuing persuasiveness of the central approach developed by the more classical texts. My definition of the field of labour feminism excludes texts that are influenced by psychoanalytic thought, or which are strongly radical feminist in flavour. However I do make occasional critical references to texts of this kind in order to show that they are also implicated at times in the problems the thesis seeks to highlight.

The texts that have been critically analysed all have at their heart a subject whose identity is taken as natural, universal, and unified, and whose discursive origins are not examined outside theoretical presuppositions about the economic or patriarchal determination of identity. All the texts examined are concerned with the exclusion of an experience — whether socially constructed, given by 'socialisation', or derived from an essential nature — from economic consideration. They are not concerned, as this account is, with the exclusionary or other effects of 'women's experience', except when it is seen as invested in the aims of 'capital' or 'male interests'. The term 'labour feminism' is used to refer to such texts as they form both the majority and the foundation for Western feminist thought about women's labour. For the most part the discussion refers to theorisations of sex segregation within the labour market, although feminist discussions of women's domestic labour are sometimes raised to exemplify particular points. The choice of texts shows a bias toward the Australian literature, and examples of policy positions are often taken from local South Australian documents.

Feminist labour thought has conceptualised the problem of labour in terms of the exclusion, marginalisation, and invisibility of women within conceptions of what is 'productive' or 'economic' within mainstream public policy and economic theory. It has been argued that the powerful forces that shape social reality either ignore the different and unequal positions attributed by gender, 'race', and class, or assume that what women do, whether in paid work or in the unpaid domestic and informal sectors, is non-economic or non-productive, thereby exacerbating the unequal economic situation of women and other disadvantaged groups. The occupational segregation of men and women and the sexual division of labour between paid and domestic work is often problematised and explained in terms of the powerful activities of groups of well-organised men in trade unions, arbitration, the judiciary, parliament, and business sectors. These institutions discriminate against women, or they impose systematic structural barriers that prevent women from attaining a more equitable share of social resources, thereby reinforcing existing hierarchies. Much feminist labour thought aims to illuminate the different and unacknowledged nature of women's economic condition compared to men, and its contribution to the economy. Criticism of

existing economic models and policies often revolves around their failure to understand the specific nature of 'women's productive contribution', 'experience', and 'needs'.

This way of thinking the problem of labour is shared by equal opportunity advocates, who emphasise better access of women to paid work, and those feminists who argue for the need to transform organisational cultures so that women's labours, both paid and unpaid, are valued and women may progress within work. It informs demands for 'equal opportunity' or 'equal access' to occupational hierarchies, and for the equal remuneration of men and women within them. Feminist interventions in citizenship debates are often based upon the claim that women's domestic labour makes a significant contribution to the market economy. For instance, within feminist comment upon welfare and taxation policy, the dependence of public work upon domestic labours often underwrites the rights demanded on behalf of domestic workers. In effect, what is occurring is a tendency for 'radical' movements like feminism to demand more involvement of women in the existing order of production[1] and more, not less, reference to productive contributions within debates about citizenship rights.

This tendency is not questioned because feminist theorisations of the problem of labour exclude the subject of their own discourse from political criticism. To a great extent, feminist labour thought imagines itself as providing a missing piece of the economic puzzle; the historical and political origins of its own problematising mode are not given explicit attention. Links between subjectivity and the existing order of production are highlighted in feminist thought only to the extent that the subject demonstrates a 'masculine' economic style. That is, the subject of economic theory and policy has been criticised because it assumes dependency on unpaid housework, is constituted as unconstrained by social and domestic ties, and is motivated by a competitive and dominating style that is seen as foreign to the caring ethic of women. Feminist labour thought — including positions that seek to go beyond access, calling for a radical transformation of the organisation of production — continue to assume, as a kind of implicit 'natural' imperative, that the re/productive[2] contributions of persons must be developed, recognised, and respected as a function of power and humanity. But as Flax (1990:47) asks in reference to attempts to widen the concept of production to include most forms of human activity: 'Why widen the concept of

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[1] The phrase 'existing order of production' is used to refer to a discursive system which values, prioritises, and universalises activities deemed 'productive'. Within this order, productive activity is typically seen to involve skilfulness, learning, or the development of raw talent, particularly when it attracts a monetary return within the traditional wage relation. References to production and the order of production also intend to include discourses which emphasise the value of education, training, or other systems for preparing and developing labour.

[2] The term re/production is used to designate the inclusion of family-based activities in the term production, where 'the family' usually refers to a biological kinship unit typically centred around the heterosexual couple.

production instead of dislodging it or any other singularly central concept from such authoritative power?' It is the unquestioned centrality of production to the subject within feminist labour thought that this thesis seeks to politicise and unsettle. Borrowing from a range of Foucauldian thinkers I argue that the repetition of a view of humanity as defined by its possession of a re/productive potential, and a unique contribution that must be recognised, is deeply implicated in the reproduction of the existing social order that feminisms in general seek to undermine.

Michel Foucault sought to understand the 'historically sedimented underpinnings of particular "problematizations" that have a salience for our contemporary experience' (Barry et al., 1996:5). Feminist labour discourse derives, at least in part, from the cultural and discursive conditions it was Foucault's object to describe. His genealogies give contingency and specificity to some of the naturalised categories and assumptions of feminist labour thought. The thesis reads Foucauldian genealogies for the insights they provide into why and how feminist labour discourse has come to think about women's issues in the way that it does. Although many labour feminists have questioned economic hierarchies and traditional economic paradigms, very few have analysed why the problem should be thought of in terms of the need to discover, recognise, or value the specific economic contributions of women, or to rewrite traditional economic paradigms in the light of women's specific labour contributions. My reading of Foucauldian thought suggests that ways of thinking humanity and society gave to feminism the possibility of observing a specific kind of problem, one revolving around the need for previously obscure and incomparable areas of human activity to be brought into the light of economic 'recognition'. Foucauldian genealogical works show the mechanisms that gave to feminism a central concern with defining the economic contributions, values, and rewards attributed to sexed workers. They give insight into why feminism so readily accepts lifetimes organised around skill development, careers, and child raising, and why the necessity and effects of these patterns and activities is less frequently questioned than the means by which they are to be improved, recognised, and secured.

The thesis draws attention to the Foucauldian insight that in the contemporary era human beings are produced as essentially fitted to, invested in, and defined by, the contribution made by participation in production and reproduction (Foucault, 1977, 1976). For Foucault these 'truths' attribute an inevitability and 'naturalness' to the existing order and are the means by which capitalist production and traditional heterosexual procreative relations have become dominant cultural and economic forms. Foucault explains how productions of the

human subject were born of practices whose economic[3] goals and considerations gave birth to a humanity complete with an apparent affinity for efficiency, industriousness, productivity, and heterosexual reproductive relations. For instance, in *Discipline and Punish* (1977), the controls imposed upon workers, including apprenticeship and educational practices, enable the observation and documentation of an individualised human soul that is 'naturally' predisposed to cumulative and linear style training and receptive to manipulation by authority. Today this same subject frequently demands the right to discover fulfilment and freedom within equal access to hierarchically organised work and education. In *The History of Sexuality* (1976) Foucault shows how the practice of confession has spread beyond the church to technical and political spheres retaining its interest in sex and gradually giving rise to the 'discovery' of a 'biological sexual drive' and 'life' process at the heart of humanity, upon which the health and longevity of the population depends. It is this 'discovery' of the life force at the centre of humanity that gives rise to a range of reformist programmes designed to minimise any wastage of productive energies by establishing conjugal relations and the regulated fabrication of children (Foucault, 1976:114).

This analysis undermines a view of a necessary human predisposition to develop and express re/productive 'capacity' or 'potential', and suggests that an acceptance of the universality or naturalness of this kind of subject participates in the diffuse and unified goal of positivist knowledges to harness lifetimes in more re/productive directions. From a Foucauldian perspective power does not simply repress the forces of the body, but aims to increase and order them. Capitalism was made possible not only by the controlled insertion of bodies into the machinery of production, and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes; it also depended upon their growth, reinforcement, availability, and docility, upon the optimisation of forces and aptitudes and of life in general (Foucault, 1976:141). This optimisation was made possible not by repressing or ignoring productive and reproductive drives, but by their invention and regulation, by the truths produced about natural human propensities, and the links made between these and the assumed benefits for the population as a whole.

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[3] Use of the word economy in this context refers not to a 'system' of capital accumulation, but to the values of cheapness and prosperity, as well as to a domain of market exchanges. The importance of economy within Foucault's analysis of power does not emerge from a view of power as defined by narrow corporate interests which can only exploit, repress, or exclude labour capacity, whether 'learned' or reproductive. Rather, economy plays a role in a discussion of power because of its central place in contemporary descriptions of the human subject and the nature of the domains it inhabits. Following a Foucauldian analytical practice the thesis is more interested in the effects of ideas of economy and its role in constituting the subject, than in understanding how the economy operates, accepting that principles of exchange and behaviour cannot be observed or discovered outside the discursive limits within which they are conceived.

In his later work on liberal government Foucault (1991 and 1981) shows how knowledge of the individual subject is linked to collective national goals, that is, how productive activity becomes not only the defining core of individual subjects, but also the precondition for national well-being. Government, understood in the broadest sense to include any agent authorised to nominate the appropriate conduct of individuals, does not act by representing or repressing social 'needs', but actively produces them in order to stimulate desired conducts within the population. The thesis is informed by the Foucauldian insight that power, or government, produces the subject as endowed with a sexually differentiated productive drive or natural inclination in order to increase, intensify, and regulate the field of production in the name of the national good. It is an aim that emanates from a diverse array of sites beyond the immediate interests of profit maximisation and the control of women by men, although it may be influenced by, or support these kinds of interests and relations.

The world labour feminism objects to can be seen to arise, not in any simple or direct manner from conservative political interests and institutions, but from diversely situated sets of expert knowledges which claim to know the 'truth' about the subject and the community. Rather than seeing powerful meaning systems as originating in individual consciousness, the fixed boundaries of 'State', unified political interests, or economic processes, Foucault redirects critical study of the effects of order in advanced industrial societies toward diffusely situated sets of scientific or 'objective' techniques and the knowledges they produce about the individual and the community or society. These knowledges constitute how reality will be or can be thought, having specific effects and containing the body within a limited field of action and reaction. In this view power acts not via a prohibition, but by prompting or enabling particular forms of reflection upon the self and the community. It is a mode which guides persons not by falsifying, denying, or repressing, but by producing anxieties, desires, motivations, and freedoms. The operation of power produces what it is possible or proper for individuals to desire, and defines the boundaries of conduct necessary to fulfil pre-designated destinies. At the same time, the 'truths' produced within liberalism are encoded within law so that, in addition to its creative and self-regulatory dimensions, contemporary modes of power continue to adopt a repressive mode legitimating and extending rights to some and denying them to others.

The current organisation of work is viewed not as arising from a neglect of original rights, needs, or capacities, but from demands that they be fulfilled. In this conceptualisation, the problem of labour is not simply the exclusion and devaluation of 'women's work' within economic practice and theory, or the lack of an alternative framework that can account for the specificity of 'women's labour'. In addition to discrimination against women and the

exploitation of women's labour, there is the problem of the economic determination of human value, meaning, and time, and the centrality of the subject to conceptions of liberty. There is the problem that progressive thinkers and strategists in the crucial area of work and economy fail to sufficiently interrogate the 'truths' that underpin the existing order of production and reproduction.

Additionally, there is the problem that progressive discourses, like labour feminism, risk understanding 'disadvantage' purely in terms of a 'lack' of productive recognition and development, ignoring the way that perspectives outside the norm might rephrase and subvert feminist problematisations. Unless alternative knowledges are really listened to, feminist political strategy risks being limited to bringing targeted groups into the existing productive order, 'enabling' these groups to more fully 'realise' productive aspirations. In this scenario, 'cultural diversity' is reduced to listing 'different' kinds of productive contributions, while different ways of imagining the meaning and purpose of life and of human value remain silent.

I argue that feminist labour thought can become more subversive in its challenge to the existing organisation of labour by acknowledging the historically and culturally contingent nature of the subject of work and the role it plays in reproducing the existing order. In particular, there needs to be more critical attention to the attribution of a universal productive and reproductive potentiality to thinking human nature and the citizen subject. That is, the subject for whom the development of market-valued labours and heterosexual reproduction is a self-evident and universal expression of an innermost essence, must be thoroughly politicised.

Specific authors are quoted in the discussion in order to exemplify particular expressions of feminist ideas. I do not wish to start a debate with these particular authors, or suggest that these extracts can summarise the author's position across time. Nor do I mean to imply that complicity with the dominant order is the prevailing feature of these texts. Indeed, as Scott (1988:48) has commented, the historical arguments of feminists attempt:

> to question the validity of normative constructions of gender in the light of the existence of behaviours and qualities that contradict the rules, to point up rather than resolve conditions of contradiction, to articulate a political identity for women without conforming to existing stereotypes about them.

It is also important to consider that individual feminist authors, particularly when speaking in the industrial arena, do not always accept the statements they reproduce as 'true', but accept their persuasive political power and deploy them toward specific ends. For example, many feminists argue for the inclusion of 'women's work' into skill hierarchies, not because they

accept the inevitability of hierarchy, but simply because this is likely to lead to increases in wages for women. However, while texts in the field problematise hierarchies of value and the exclusions and inequalities perpetuated by economic categories, theories, and policies, this does not preclude participation in the circulation of the meanings involved in their reproduction at other moments.

The opening chapter of the thesis provides a review of some of the key arguments, debates, and themes covered within labour feminism which are explored in more depth in later chapters. The literature review focuses on explanations of sex segregation within the paid labour market. It aims to demonstrate the epistemological and theoretical means by which feminist labour thought side-steps a confrontation with the cultural and historical contingency of the subject of its own discourse. In particular the chapter shows how an alignment of power with the political interests associated with men, bosses, and the State, that are seen to repress, restrain, and exploit women's labour, acts to cordon off a domain of feminist truth.

Chapter three then provides an explanation and summary of Foucault's discourse analyses on discipline, the history of sexuality, and rationalities of government, elucidating the political processes which gave birth to some of the key defining features of contemporary Western subjectivity. Chapter three aims to problematise particular assumptions about contemporary individuals that have not been given explicit attention within feminist debate. Based on Foucault's work, the chapter argues that a view of human nature, freedom, and individual desire as defined and driven by the development of labour capacities and heterosexual reproduction, is not only historically contingent, but also deeply involved in the reproduction of the current economic order. Within this discussion there is no assumption that Foucauldian thought can explain everything there is to know about contemporary Western working subjects. Rather, I seek to make use of existing discourse analyses, and in doing so, to demonstrate the relevance of this work for labour feminist thought.

Upon this foundation, chapters four to seven develop the argument that the re/productive aspects of subjectivity are not explicitly politicised within labour feminism. This section of the thesis emphasises the possibility that these statements are tied up with coercive practices and norms that oblige individuals to prioritise the development of skilled market performance and traditional heterosexual procreative labour within the lifetime.

Chapters four and five are concerned with the reproductive dimension of the subject. Here I focus upon the tendency for feminist labour thought to attribute to the 'woman worker' a

reproductive and familial orientation in its attempts to incorporate 'hidden', 'unrecognised', and devalued areas of production. This happens alongside, and despite, the condemnation of the traditional family form, and a rejection of the view that this is the result of the biological predispositions of women.

Chapter four focuses upon the discursive mechanisms by which labour feminism establishes the 'specificity' of 'women's labour' and canvasses the wider feminist critiques that are applicable to this kind of position. It illustrates that, within many feminist texts, the peculiar thing that distinguishes 'women' from men is defined in relation to heterosexual, procreative, and domestic roles. This productive speciality is then taken as a generalised norm that can define and unify the category women and account for the content of 'traditional women's work'. Although there is the insistence that gender asymmetry is not biologically produced, the chapter considers whether the attribution of sexual, emotional, and familial labours to women as a universal category, risks reinscribing traditional derided meanings about women and the work they perform. It also examines the extent to which this way of thinking the problem pays adequate attention to the exclusionary and standardising effects of universalisms, and participates in bringing about conformity with economic ideals. Clearly, an emphasis upon domestic and familial labours enables re-conceptualisations of what constitutes economic activity and value, and begins to redress the cultural violence that flows from an unequal weighting of the field of labour feminism toward studies that focus purely upon paid market labours. However, my concern is that representing 'women' in familial terms brings the danger of subsuming and pathologising experiences which do not fit that model, including for example the rejection or denial of motherhood roles, perhaps as a result of 'race', ethnicity, or sexuality.

A more direct example of the centrality of the re/productive subject to feminist labour thought is developed in chapter five which examines social policy, and in particular, citizenship debates with reference to women's unpaid work. Feminists in this area have challenged traditional theory because it positions women as the dependents of men, withdraws an independent right to citizenship, and exacerbates their secondary labour market position. There have been arguments about the rights of household labourers to social security support in recognition of their contribution to productivity, and the need for positive support to enable women to participate in the labour market. There has also been the claim that the single parent pension represents a form of decommodification of labour because it enables choices that are not dependent upon the market for a livelihood. Feminist public policy analyses often understand themselves as mounting a substantial challenge to the economic subject and the privilege given to the market domain. The discourse invokes a subject whose

experience is given in social ties and the lessons of repression they teach, a nature crystallised around a feeling of compassion and social responsibility, posed in opposition to 'economic man'.

Following the Foucauldian argument developed in chapter three, chapter five explores the extent to which the social subject, and ideas about 'social need' within feminist texts, can be seen to participate in the project of harnessing individual conducts toward economically useful ends. Here it is argued that some frequently repeated statements about the subject within feminist public provisioning texts are not as challenging to the market economy as is often assumed. In particular, the chapter problematises the need to value labours and validate new citizenship rights with reference to their support of the market economy. It also questions why, from among all the possible activities that feminism might include in its redefinitions of the citizen subject, preference is given almost purely to kinship support activities, particularly those performed within the traditional nuclear family. The themes repeated within much feminist welfare discourse give the impression that the subject will either find independence in market participation, or be relieved from this burden only for the purposes of maintaining its social supports.

While labour feminist statements about women's differences compared to men are foregrounded in chapters four and five, much feminist labour thought insists upon men and women's shared capacity and 'right' to develop 'potential' in paid work. Chapters six and seven consider the way women are constituted in relation to the paid market domain. Chapter six analyses feminist labour comment on industry policy, education reform, and the historical development of sex segregation. The chapter examines the extent to which feminist labour thought, including that which rejects the implicit acceptance of hierarchical divisions found in reformist positions, nevertheless continues to retain versions of the subject that support hierarchy. It considers the extent to which the emphasis upon market functioning is disrupted by feminist labour conceptions of the subject. Reference is made to a variety of statements within the feminist labour literature, including the view that humanity can be defined by its ability to learn and accumulate productive skill, and that individual and collective well-being depends upon this. It also highlights the assumption that 'learning' and 'value' are necessarily developed by women when they have access to quality formal education and work experience, and that racism is to be challenged by documenting the productive history of targeted groups and providing access to existing work structures. The central theme under consideration is the association within much labour feminism of control, independence, and power, with wealth, skill, technological advancement, and highly paid positions in paid work. This is often expressed in the claim that, although paid work

represents an inhibition to freedom, it is the site by which economic 'independence' may be gained, and by which men possess 'power' and effect domination. Meanwhile 'disadvantage' is seen to arise by virtue of exclusion from better placement within public economic life. In short, chapter six questions the link between freedom from disadvantage and other negative conditions at work, with increased economic choice and the development of a vigorous market economy.

Thus far the thesis focuses upon the operation of a normative mode of power that produces a form of subjectivity which individuals in general are thought to share. In chapter seven I turn to a consideration of the way that power acts to distinguish between individuals, enabling an understanding of our 'difference' compared to others within the hierarchies of paid work. Following Foucauldian analyses I develop an alternative analysis to those held by feminist labour thinkers of the role of practices such as job evaluation in the operation of power at work. Many feminists have rejected comparable worth on the grounds that it produces unequal evaluations of human worth and supports inegalitarian structures at work. There has been concern that the strategy is controlled by political interests who co-opt comparable worth, and neutralise its radical potential to effect the wage gap between men and women. However, comparable worth is given support if it is controlled by the women's movement, and addresses the devaluation of women's traditional work by providing fair evaluations of 'women's skills', thereby reducing the wage and status gap between men and women.

Chapter seven explores the way that comparative judgements of the worth of workers according to skill, status, and level of material wealth, acts to oblige and sway individuals to pursue improved positions within the hierarchy. These practices enable 'rationalisations' of work which direct and contain workers. They also produce objectifications of the self's progress at work which can become a reward or purpose in and of itself inviting competitive comparisons among workers, and a struggle for success and achievement that leaves little room for a consideration of others, or of the outcomes of work within a troubled and unsustainable global economy. Without addressing the links between individual worth and productive performance, it is difficult to see evaluations of 'women's skills' leading to a more caring work environment, or indeed to see how the removal of hierarchy could ever become urgent to the majority of workers.

I argue in chapter seven that attempts to document and establish new standards of 'economic' value, as well as struggles over the right to develop and recognise economic 'potentialities', are part of the means by which power has always operated to increase the utility of bodies and harness the conducts of populations toward more economic ends.

Whether these evaluations link skill and pay, or adopt monetarist evaluations in which pay is linked to product output, the increasing drive to evaluate the contributions of workers, represents, not a loosening, but an increase in control. It is a form of control that produces, and is supported by, comparative judgements of the worth of workers according to skill, status, and level of material wealth.

From this point of view, discourses about what constitutes 'women's skills' and 'traditional women's work' become involved in the observation, interrogation, and documentation of 'women workers' as units of production within the disciplinary regimes of paid work. In this way the new evaluations of 'women's work' may actually function as a mechanism of surveillance to ensure that new ways of being 'productive' are performed in areas of work that were previously 'unrecognised'.

Chapter eight canvasses feminist labour critiques of Foucault which might be summarised in the claims that it denies the operation of systemic economic forms of exploitation, as well as the possibility of meaningful political action. There is also often the claim that the subject should be retained within feminist theorising in order for marginalised voices to be allowed to speak a new vision of the future. The chapter demonstrates that Foucauldian approaches do not negate existing models of exploitation, but reframe them within new epistemological terms. Rather than taking something away from understandings of the means by which the existing order is produced, they add a more complex, productive, and normative dimension to understandings of power. The chapter explores some of the dimensions of a Foucauldian re-conceptualisation of the problem of labour in relation to current understandings within labour feminism. I argue that Foucauldian thought does not negate feminist practice, but raises a challenge for feminism to contribute to a technology of government that does not posit a form of productive citizenship as the only legitimate grounds for rights.

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DEFINING THE POLITICAL: TRUTH AND POWER IN FEMINIST LABOUR THOUGHT

The literature which forms the focus of the discussion is concerned with the problem that, despite women's increased labour market participation rates since the Second World War, they remain concentrated in a narrow range of female-dominated industries in clerical, retail, and 'service' sectors. Industries dominated by women are paid less than those dominated by men, are deemed low-skilled or unskilled, are poorly unionised, have high levels of part-time and casual employment, and a consequent loss of the employment benefits that accrue to full-time permanent workers. For feminist labour thinkers these conditions render women vulnerable to dependency upon male breadwinners, and constitute the basis for the significant disadvantage of women compared to men within contemporary Western industrial economies.

This chapter contextualises some of the central approaches that define, explain, and address this problem. The discussion aims to demonstrate the theoretical and epistemological means by which this body of literature assumes a separation between political and non-political domains. In particular I highlight a conception of power as emanating from the sexual, economic, and institutionalised interests of men and bosses in order to demonstrate the means by which the subject of the discourse is screened from critical attention. The chapter also begins to bring that subject out of obscurity by showing that feminist labour thought, in common with mainstream economic theory and policy, imagines the worker as a kind of productive vessel filled with skills or the potential for skill; a being for whom productive contributions are intimately connected to self-identity, well-being, and freedom. Much of the literature seeks to establish the peculiar productive value of women's work; a value that is expressed in terms of domestic, relational, and emotive propensities.

The discussion is organised around the feminist refutation of the human capital view that women's lower wages reflect their lower productive contributions compared to men[4]. Human capital theory is a useful starting point, not only because it functions as one of the main protagonists of much feminist labour thought, but also because, as the chapter will show, the productivity of the subject is central to both feminist and human capital economic models. Feminist labour thinkers have argued that mainstream economic theory is gender blind, exacerbates gender and race effects, and is unable to explain these forms of labour oppression. A summary of alternative feminist explanations for women's economic disadvantage follows upon a presentation of human capital theory and a consideration of its impact upon contemporary policy. This summary refers first to the role attributed to the forces of capitalism and patriarchy, and then considers the role of the State within economic and welfare policy. Feminist discussion in the latter area revolves around the family-State-market interface and has particular implications for reconceiving the citizen in light of feminist commentary about women's different social placement. Chapter five is based on material from this section.

The last part of the chapter relates to chapter seven, outlining feminist strategies to address the problems engendered by occupational segregation with specific reference to increasing women's wages. It considers the central debate between feminists who accept legislative change, and particularly the comparison of work according to criteria of work value, and those who reject this in favour of increases in the basic, minimum, or guaranteed wage.

1. Human capital theory and the contemporary industrial context

Within neoclassical economics, work is understood as the use of the individual's natural supply of skill, aptitude, and competence which workers develop within the environment in order to obtain earnings. Work or 'human capital' is the outcome of the individual's wilful interaction with the environment. The neoclassical subject is motivated to develop skill as part of a natural drive to fulfil desires.

According to Hayek (1978), the value of work and commodities, or the level of wages and prices, should be determined by the market since there is nothing intrinsically valuable about any activity or commodity. Hayek argues it is impossible to decide what 'society' wants or values, only the wants of individuals can be ascertained. These 'tastes' arise from an original and authentic individuality, born free and equal in the state of nature, capable of rational

[4] For a summary of positions to which feminist labour thought addresses itself see Mumford, K. (1989), *Women Working: Economics and Reality,* Allen and Unwin, Sydney.

thought, and motivated by self-interest. An individual's labour is valuable only if other individuals demand that labour. It cannot be determined by society because society does not exist; rather, the human world is made up of unconnected points, each containing its own irreducible economic logic that, if allowed to exert its will, mysteriously enacts 'justice' (Hayek, 1978:57-68). The only way to ensure the collective benefit, to determine efficient distribution of resources, full employment, and the production of goods and services demanded by consumers, is to enable free exchange among individuals within the market place.

However the 'justice' of the free market does not mean that everyone will benefit equally within a human capital view because individuals are possessed of unequal distributions of innate talent and capacity for the development of their human capital. Unequal wages are the result of these different levels of individual talent and investments in education and work experience. Human capital theory argues that women's lower wages and unequal labour market position reflects their choice not to invest in education and workplace experience. According to Mincer and Polachek (1980), women avoid more demanding skilled jobs and the training required for them because it is costly and they expect to drop out of the labour market when they marry and have children. Becker (1980) argues that the family makes decisions as a unit and recognises that the woman's specialisation in the home is in its best financial interests given the superior value of the male wage. This view rejects the notion of 'discrimination' as grounds for unequal wages because it sees that the market will correct for discrimination. Discrimination is an individual 'taste' or attitude which disadvantages not only the would-be worker from the disadvantaged group, but also the employer who faces a less competitive, and therefore degraded, labour market (Becker, 1957). The market is seen to prevent discrimination because employers who make decisions solely on the basis of merit will have the advantage over employers who make employment decisions on grounds of sex, race, marital status, and so on, which have nothing to do with the capacity of the individual to perform the job.

In the human capital view, the natural tendency of the economy to produce both the individual and the collective good is disrupted by the actions of centralised forms of power, including the State and organised trade unionism. Neoclassical economics objects to State interventions upon the free play of individual economic 'tastes', whether they are those of employers, workers, or consumers. The role of the State is minimal, limited to the provision of basic services such as roads and the upkeep of the military for the defence of the nation. In this view the subject of economics is constituted as possessed of a natural freedom known

in its relation to the State. That is, the State functions discursively to designate the boundary of free action.

Human capital theory has been a powerful shaper of economic policy, particularly in the last ten years. Bakker (1996:4) observes that the recent preoccupation with restructuring, seen to be necessary as a result of the increasing internationalisation of trade and the division and decentralisation of different aspects of corporate operations across the globe, is increasingly accompanied by a neo-liberal consensus. In this view nation States are called upon to become more competitive, particularly in export trade, and to provide less government regulation of the economy in order to allow the market to restructure national economies and establish transnational or regional trading blocs. Bakker (1996:4) also notes that part of the shift has involved a change in ways of thinking about citizenship rights. There is a move away from the Keynesian style in which the State is seen to place proper restrictions upon the market and is responsible for the provision of public services, to a situation in which the citizen is required to be self-reliant and competitive within the market. This is accompanied by the increasing privatisation of many, previously public, caring and maintenance services, and the transformation of public sector activities to private sector rules and criteria.

Following this trend the Australian employer lobby has argued that increased international competition, consumer demand for more differentiated products, and constant innovations in technology demand labour 'flexibility'; the need to respond to market demand quickly without the intervention of 'outside parties' (in Hamberger, 1995:4-6). The employer lobby often refers to human resources management (HRM) philosophy that emphasises tapping the creativity and commitment of the workforce to produce outcomes that meet with customer expectations. Workers and employers must work together with a sense of common purpose. For employers this will be best achieved when adversarial 'external forces', such as unions and government, are closed out of negotiations, and workers know they will be judged and rewarded according to personal performance. HRM philosophy emphasises greater opportunities for 'employee voice' and participation, reward systems based on pay, profit sharing, or share ownership, broadly defined jobs, wide spans of control, flat organisational hierarchies, team work, enterprise-based grievance procedures, and improved managerial leadership. These practices are seen to enable a more efficient organisation of labour and use of plant and equipment, and more skilled workers and managers. By aligning workers' goals with those of the company, much HRM philosophy argues, profits are improved, costs are lowered, workers feel more satisfied, leading to a benefit for the economic position of the nation as a whole. Within this discourse, establishing trust between workers and employees is emphasised, and equity is presented as central to ensuring productive relations

between workers and employers (Winley, 1994). The closed loop which connects individual fulfilment and worth, business success, and ethical and democratic ideals is reinscribed in the insistence that enabling the development of skill and ensuring its 'fair' remuneration will lead to greater job satisfaction, and an industrial system which can better respond to the demands of international competition.

Right-wing policy advisers advocate 'decentralisation' and 'deregulation', particularly the shift from a centralised Industrial Relations Commission and award-based industrial system, to an enterprise level and enterprise agreement based system. The system of centralised wage fixing, compulsory unionism, and collective bargaining is to be complemented, under a Labor government, or gradually replaced, under the Liberal/National Coalition Government, with a system of individual employment contracts negotiated at the enterprise level between workers and employers. Critics of the old system of arbitration and collective bargaining currently hold sway in Australian Government and argue that the old industrial relations system is responsible for a disassociation of wage rates from the worker's productivity, and therefore a lack of performance 'incentive'. Centralised wage fixing, awards, and trade union involvement are seen to inhibit national growth by creating 'inflexible generalisations' — the setting of wages and conditions on the basis of conflict and power, rather than the individual performance of the worker. In this view, employees will give of their best when the link between performance and pay is re-established, bringing about the united commitment of workers and employers to improving the quality of product and service. Productivity and skill are to be enhanced by removing 'disincentives' and establishing 'proper motivations' for workers by reinstating a connection between pay and performance.

Critics of the deregulation school of thought introduce the problem that pay rates bear only an 'arbitrary' relation to productivity, skill, and the educational level of workers, increasingly reflecting employer concerns with reductions in employment costs and company profitability. Labor and ACTU policy, expressed in the restructuring discourse which dominated the industrial arena from the late 1980s until the advent of enterprise bargaining, is opposed to a radical 'deregulatory' approach on the grounds that the meaning of productivity, skill, and flexibility will no longer reflect fairness and justice, but will become highly variable between enterprises reflecting the 'arbitrary' interests of employers (Hamberger, 1995). Instead there is an emphasis upon the link between product output and wages, with employers setting 'economic incentives' in the event of an increase in company profitability. Labor Government and ACTU industrial relations discourse has often cast itself in the role of protector and developer of the integrity of work values in the face of a deregulated market place in which employer interests determine the value of work. This was

typified in The Structural Efficiency Principle which documented the relation between wages and skill levels, and set formalised paths for the acquisition and reward of work value within training and career paths.

Within this Australian Labor policy logic, discrimination is not removed by the market, but must be inhibited by the State. Discrimination is however still viewed within the human capital model; it is seen to be a problem of wasted human capital. In the early 1980s a range of anti-discrimination legislation was passed, including the Sex Discrimination Act 1984, in an attempt to address this problem. The Act aimed, among other things, to abolish employment discrimination, increase women's ability to enter male-dominated areas of employment, improve promotional success, and ensure equal access to other conditions of employment such as training. In 1986, the Affirmative Action Act was introduced based on the rationale of addressing systemic discrimination through pro-active, rather than reactive analyses of company procedures. It required that employers actively consult relevant bodies and establish programmes designed to measure the extent and nature of any discriminatory practices in the institution by setting objectives, forward estimates, and monitoring and evaluating the success of the programme. The Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act (1999) has replaced the Affirmative Action Act (Bacchi, 2000). It was designed by the Liberal/National Coalition Government to reduce the administration and restrictions to competition associated with the old Act. Reporting requirements have been replaced with a simpler pro forma, the necessity for consultation with unions has been eliminated, and a new advisory board has been established with heavy business representation (Bacchi, 2000:65).

At the centre of these policies is the concept of 'merit' or 'skill' as the proper basis for recruitment, selection, promotion, staff development, and training (Bacchi, 2000:76), and the concern that the productivity of women should not be lost to the nation. Success at work is to be based on skilful contributions to productivity, and not the personal characteristics of workers thereby securing the national interest.

Both Labor and Liberal/National Coalition agendas accept as non-contentious apolitical fact that the productivity, skill, output, motivation, training level, and attitude of the worker are the object which must be developed, stimulated, measured, and documented in the name of national growth and democracy. Since the late 1980s there has been an increased emphasis in education and industry policy upon 'life-long learning', 'skill enhancement', 'retraining', and the flexibility of workers to changing labour market needs (Butler, 1997). The question is not whether more and better training is required, or whether it is the productivity of

individual workers that should be targeted and enhanced in order to address international economic crises, but who should pay for training, (individuals, employers, or the State), whether it is equally accessible to all workers, and the role the State should play in the stimulation of improved individual economic performance. Wages set beyond minimum rates are unquestionably tied to worker productivity. The difference between Left and Right is that the latter makes a more direct link between product output and wages, with employers setting economic 'incentives' based on an increase in company profitability, while the former emphasises the link between training, skill, and productivity, and the need for wages to reflect the workers' possession of these. A deregulatory strategy insists that the State establish the conditions within which a connection can be established between the performance of the worker and wages, while an interventionist strategy seeks to legalise the relation between work value and wages.

At one level there are more similarities than differences in these approaches. Left and Right tend to imagine the subject of work as possessed of a productive potential upon which individual and collective happiness depends. The freedom to express labour potential is either secured or threatened by the actions of the State. This ensures that the discourse confines political debate to the role of 'political' actors and institutions and does not question the constitution of the subject's freedom, whether individual or national, as dependent upon the development of labour capacity.

2. The power of exclusion

Feminists have provided empirical evidence that refutes the human capital view (see for example Treiman and Hartmann, 1981 and England 1982, 1984), and argued that it misunderstands the operation of the labour market. Labour feminism has argued that women are not less productive than men are, and that human capital theory has failed to consider the array of powerful forces that act to position women and other disadvantaged workers in secondary labour market positions. While feminist explanations of sex segregation have usefully discredited human capital theory, they also have their limitations. One of these is a negative view of power. For many contemporary feminist labour theorists, the woman worker is confronted by the organised activities of the State, men, and capital that act to exclude, segregate, and devalue her labour. Instead of seeing greater and more improved labour market participation for women as important in order to improve their wages and conditions of work, there is an implicit confusion of access to paid work with power and freedom. One of the effects of this conceptualisation of power is a failure to consider the political nature of the subject within feminist theory. As chapter three explains, power may

also act by improving and enhancing the labours contributed by individuals precisely via the production of a subject who seeks to develop skill as an expression of freedom.

Feminists have highlighted the historical and political causes of women's position in the traditional family, refuting the human capital view that it is a natural phenomena (Barrett, 1980). Many feminists in the field today would agree that, while capitalism is impersonal in its demand for labour, it is patriarchy that ensures that women remain in segregated and disadvantaged positions in the labour market compared to men. For Cockburn (1985:230), 'the action and interests of men are what lie behind the sexual division of labour'. Hartmann (1976:138) stresses 'the role of men — ordinary men, men as men, men as workers — in maintaining women's inferiority in the labor market'. She defines patriarchy as 'a set of social relations which has a material base and in which there are hierarchical relations between men, and solidarity among them, which enable them to control women'. For Hartmann, 'men controlled the labour of women and children in the family, and ... in so doing men learned the techniques of hierarchical organization and control'. For Burton (1991), men try to protect their masculine identities and their privileged positions within home and work. Men are already in positions of power within organisations. They hold onto this power by 'blocking opportunities for others, and use their power, based on past exchanges and interdependencies, to accumulate more power at the expense of other players' (Burton, 1991:9). Power is necessarily a negative force. In this conception power is imagined within a dependence-dominance relation; it is a repressive force which men use to restrain, restrict, and suppress the condition of women's labour.

Women's subordination then is seen to be in 'men's interests' because 'men benefit from women devoting time and energy to maintaining the home and rearing their children'. They also:

> gain as workers both from women staying out of the labour market altogether and from a structuring of the labour market in such a way that those women who enter it do not compete with men for all the available jobs. In addition, men's superior self-identity as a sex is sustained by separatism, because it enables them to avoid direct comparison with women. (Cockburn, 1985:230)

Feminist analyses of sexual relations in pre-history have also explained contemporary relations in terms of men's desire to control women's labour including their capacity to produce new life (Al Hibri, 1984; Mies, 1987). In these analyses, men's drive to control women is 'learned'; it supposedly arises from a native self-interest which precedes and shapes meanings attached to masculinity. The apparent solidarity of men within patriarchy also suggests an underlying assumption, within much feminist labour theory, that the traditional family form and men's experience of it is universal, overlooking differences

arising from discourses of 'race', class, sexuality, or other considerations. These factors are thereby positioned as marginal to the main historical causes of contemporary social divisions.

Many feminists have argued (see for example, Barrett and McIntosh, 1980; Milkman, 1980; Williams, 1981; Ryan and Conlon, 1989) that sex segregation is the result of struggles between powerful groups of male workers and capitalist interests expressed collectively by the State. In this view the family wage was created, (in which men were granted higher wages on the grounds that they had families to support), and women were excluded from training, unions, and well paid areas of work, forcing them to marry and bear the burden of domestic work. An exception to this argument was made by Humphries (1977) who argued that women's absence from the labour market was the result of successful struggle on the part of the working-class as a whole to keep women in the family in order to control the supply of labour, keep wages high, ensure care of children, the sick, and the elderly, and promote solidarity in the working-class. However, Curthoys (1986:329) notes that 'this kind of argument was subject to the feminist criticism that it saw the family as a decision-making unit rather than an arena wherein men control women'.

Comment on women's subordinate position within paid work has emphasised the warring interests of men and capital over the introduction of technology. What can count as evidence in this literature is conditioned by Marxist narratives. In particular much feminist thought about the labour process takes place in dialogue with Harry Braverman's (1974) text *Labour and Monopoly Capital.* Braverman argued that work is gradually being deskilled as a result of employer attempts to reduce the power of workers and the costs of production by sub-dividing work and introducing new technology. This argument accepts that the skill labels and training associated with a particular job reflect the complexity of the work performed. Feminists were concerned that this conception, like human capital theory, fails to challenge the view that women's work is objectively less skilled than men's work.

Feminists have argued that 'skill' is not associated in any consistent manner to training requirements or task difficulty, but reflects patriarchal ideology (Rubery, 1980; Beechey, 1982; O'Donnell, 1984; Phillips and Taylor, 1986; Gaskell, 1986; Frances, 1986; Jenson, 1989; Williams and Lucas, 1989; Wajcman, 1991; Cockburn, 1993, 1985; McDermott, 1990). For these authors male workers were able to secure the best wages and highest status positions within work by using skill labels to argue that their jobs require abilities and training which were not generally available in order to retain work value definitions and make workers less easily replaced. In this way male workers were often able to resist

employer attempts to degrade the quality, security, and rewards of their employment, and to undermine their control of the labour process albeit with the negative effect of labour market segmentation and the breakdown of worker solidarity. Women failed to deploy the ideological category 'skill' due to their poor trade union organisation which meant that they lost in their struggles with male arbitrators, unionists, and employers. This led to the segregation of women in low wage work positions.

A view of training as politically neutral job preparation has been refuted by Gaskell (1986) who argues that the function of training has more to do with limiting access to jobs and mystifying the 'skills' involved, than any necessary need to prepare workers for the job. In Australia, Pocock (1988:18) has argued that unions, employers, and government authorities that advise in the planning and allocation of resources within technical education prioritise the male-dominated apprenticeship structure. This has contributed to the problem of under-recognition of skill, lack of training and access to training, and a lack of support for training in areas of work dominated by women.

There has also been questions about the political neutrality of definitions of 'productivity'. Enterprise bargaining has been criticised by feminists because negotiations are dominated by industrially powerful industries which employ mainly full-time male workers resulting in definitions of productivity and efficiency which reflect male work, or notions of what male work involves (Tully, 1992). 'Productivity' is often assumed to mean the number of objects or goods produced within a given time frame as a result of technological innovation or organisational restructuring thereby reflecting male work experience in the manufacturing sector. 'Service skills' are naturalised and associated with gender and 'maturity' rather than learned ability, and the contribution made to productivity by service sector labour, where women are concentrated, is under-acknowledged (Junor et al., 1993). Feminists have warned that women workers will lose out in an enterprise bargaining culture because they are located in industries where quantifications of product output and profit are not easily available, such as health, clerical, and community services (Tully, 1992, Junor et al., 1993).

This kind of work has thoroughly undermined the view that the skill labels attached to men's work, and work value criteria in general, can be taken as politically neutral representations of the value of work. On the other hand research is conditioned by the tendency to accept as 'historical evidence' only those circumstances that illustrate the repressive effect that economic interests have upon labour power. The impact of broader social processes upon the transformation of work and working identity is not given the same attention within feminist analyses. In particular, the literature does not directly challenge the view of

humanity given in Braverman's text — namely a working subject for whom skill is central to the human self. The point of view adopted by feminist archivalists also loses self-reflexivity; there is no comment upon the conditions of possibility of the narrative, or the subjectivity of the authors.

Many feminist analyses of labour begin with descriptions of the unequal relations between men and women in the family, and move toward a consideration of their effects within the wider social domain. Women's position has been explained in terms of their marginality to the labour market due to their domestic roles (Beechey, 1977, 1978). Walby (1990:182) notes that many writers have seen the split of home and work as a major cause of changes in gender relations. Discussions of the origins and causes of oppression also share a tendency to understand the family in repressive terms; it is the site of male control over women and an obstacle that explains women's secondary labour market position. For example, Barrett (1980:152) refers to the family as 'the central locus of women's oppression'. Collins (2000:161) argues that second wave white feminists in general have seen the family as a site of patriarchal power and subordination of women. The literature often gives the impression that the subject of the discourse will find its freedom in escape from the constraining domain of the family.

This position has been criticised by many since the early 1980s, perhaps most notably for its exclusion of Aboriginal and migrant women for whom the family has been an important support base which many have struggled to maintain in the face of Anglo domination and racist policy and practices (Bacchi, 1990:98; Martin, 1986:245). What has been less commented upon is the way the family operates discursively within feminist labour accounts to designate all that is political and oppressive. The effect is a tendency for critical feminist debate to neglect a more pointed focus upon the positive operation of power, that is, upon the production of effects that are commonly assumed to be outside the political domain, and in particular, the increasing participation of all sections of the population in paid work. In a discussion of the unequal pay rates of men and women Barrett (1980:153) refers to 'women's subordination as wage labourers' and says that the 'the division of labour between men and women is not only oppressive for women but divisive for the working-class as a whole' (Barrett, 1980:162). Power's production of the division of labour is examined in this analysis, not its production of the subject as naturally predisposed to labour. There is reference to 'the increasing insecurity engendered by wage dependence' with industrialisation for the working-class with the consequence that 'self-support in agriculture was no longer possible' (Curthoys, 1980:329). However, a loss of power for women is less frequently associated with participation in work than it is with the exclusion

of women from particular areas of employment, from work in general, and from equal wages compared to men.

This concern with the rate of exchange of one's labour, without reference to the constitution of the subject as productive, is an inheritance of the Marxist definition of exploitation as the extraction of surplus value from labour. What is politicised is the difference between the return for labour and the value generated by that labour, which is creamed off by the capitalist for profit. The deskilling of labour as a result of the introduction of machinery by employers in order to increase surplus value, is also referred to as 'the stripping from the labourer of control over the production process' (Barrett, 1980:164). It is the centrality of labour and its development and protection to the integrity of the subject which leads the view above to imply that drawing a higher return for labour and retaining skill is the same as reducing oppression and increasing freedom, rather than simply a move which will lead to an increase in wages.

While women have been cast as slaves and prisoners within the family, men are seen to be free to enjoy the fruits of women's labour and to enter into exploitative relations in the public realm. For instance, Cockburn (1985:250) says: 'men, being free to work long hours, to strive for training and qualification, build careers and sell their soul to the company, are able to market themselves as more valuable labour power'. In this kind of analysis, the subject who is 'free' to develop 'labour power' is oppressed, not because of an obligation to understand themselves in terms of their contribution to production, but for the unequal returns they receive for their labour. Hence this feminist 'transformation' of work limits its aim quite unselfconsciously to the greater inclusion of women into the capitalist system, albeit on more equal terms with men, without considering the political nature or effects of its own constitution of the subject of work. As Probert (1997:306) affirms:

> the women's movement of the 1970s and 1980s placed great emphasis on the strategic importance of women's employment both in campaigns for equality with men and in more revolutionary conceptions of women's liberation.

The supposition that choice, power, and freedom will improve when sex segregation is dismantled, as opposed to the more modest claim that women's wages, working conditions, and general material well-being will improve with the dismantling of sex segregation, depends upon the universal supposition that human beings attain power and freedom in the exercise of labour and the receipt of its rewards. Freedom is seen as something that happens outside political restraint and in opposition to power; in particular freedom is seen as something that happens outside the family in a reformed labour market. In this sense then, feminist texts sometimes do not move beyond the possibilities that human capital theory

allows. Feminist labour thought often seems to shuttle between an economic subject of choice and the subject of constraint produced by the social realm. Freedom is imagined in terms of an atomistic individuality realised in power and control offered by high placement within occupational hierarchies. Domestic work is associated with dependence, exploitation, powerlessness, and victimisation. Women, not men, are seen as produced and constrained by the familial domain and are seen to realise power and freedom in their participation in the market.

Elements of feminist narrative about work are also protected from political scrutiny by references to ideological forms of domination. Feminist labour thought, influenced by Marxist theories of ideology and psychoanalytic thought about the unconscious (eg Chodorow, 1978; Mitchell, 1975), emphasise the role of patriarchal ideology and the social construction of gender in explanations of sexual divisions of labour. For example, Pateman (1988:140) cites as evidence of patriarchal ideology the notion that paid work is unfeminine, and that a woman's most important role is her domestic role, which she says maintains the incentive for women to become wives. For Pateman (1988:140), women do part-time work because it is all they can get, but also because they can continue their domestic work and thereby reduce conflict with their husbands. She quotes research on women factory workers whose identity as wives is central despite their significant involvement and investment in paid work (Pateman, 1988:141).

Gender ideologies are also seen to explain women's concentration in particular kinds of jobs. For instance, in recent years a number of writers have argued that women are employed in the service sector specifically in order to provide sexual and emotional services as a result of cultural beliefs about women (Hochschild, 1983; Filby, 1992; Adkins, 1995). In this view it is not that women fill roles in the economy that they choose by virtue of the special skills they attain in the home, as human capital theory would argue, but that familial and sexual relations themselves structure workplace roles and dynamics. While the disclosure of repressive ideologies provides a useful criticism of meanings that lead to women's subordination at work, it also gives the impression that feminist critiques are 'true' with the implication that they do not need to be investigated for political content.

Related to the view that ideology can explain sexual divisions is a conception of the subject as possessed of an individual consciousness that rationally organises reality, and brings to it a coherence of thought and action. Linked to this is the idea that 'women's work' comprises a common field of tasks and abilities. For instance, it is argued that the expectation that women perform sexual and emotional servicing in the work context gives rise to a body of

sexual and emotional work. While this theoretical framework allows an analysis of the cultural factors that position women at work, it downplays the ways in which women's labour contradicts the patriarchal ideology of feminine care. Feminist knowledge about women's work is also assumed on the basis of the author's transcendent reason, and its ability to grasp political and economic realities. This epistemological framework makes it difficult to question feminist suppositions about women's labour and identity in general, and downplays contradictions in the narratives produced.

Feminists have also pointed to the masculine nature of work culture, which is ignored by human capital theory, in their explanations of women's position at work (Kanter, 1977; MacKinnon, 1979; Hadjifotou, 1983; Burton, 1991; Cockburn, 1991;). In these positions those at the top of organisational hierarchies, mostly men, stand in the way of women's progress within the institution in an effort to protect their masculine identities, and their positions within home and work. These authors reject the view that the problem is limited to one of women's lack of access to paid work and promotional opportunities, and emphasise instead the need for institutional practices and cultures to change in order to be more woman-friendly. As examples of the masculine bias of institutions, Burton (1991) cites the assumption of domestic support for high level or demanding jobs which women cannot access, the association of women with subordinate or inferior activities of domesticity and child rearing, a lack of encouragement and grooming of women, the tendency for men's performance to be rated more highly than women's performance, and for women's successes to be attributed to effort, while men's are attributed to ability.

Labour feminists have also pointed to masculine biases within economic theory. For example, Ferber and Nelson (1993) have disrupted the seamless reproduction of the economic subject, arguing that its perspectives are coloured by the experiences and gender of the men who created the discipline of economics, and that it neglects familial and social influences in experience and identity. Gender blindness is evidenced in an approach that emphasises abstract mathematical methods, individual choice, and market-traded goods and services that are posed in opposition to the needs and experiences of embodied persons (Nelson 1993). Similarly, a masculine bias is said to explain the understanding of persons as separate within neoclassical economics, that is, as autonomous, impervious to social relations, and lacking empathic feeling for others. England (1993) argues that economic assumptions hide the disadvantages of women; for example, the view that men share resources in the family overlooks the material deprivation of some married women. Others have emphasised that the economic value of household work, performed mostly by women, is neglected within economic theory and accounting systems (Waring, 1988).

While these accounts usefully highlight some of the diversity of labours that contribute to the economy and disclose the dangers of the masculine bias within human capital theory, they also constitute the subject within feminist texts as more 'real' than the neo-liberal version. This subject is grounded in the family and posits a new kind of economic problem — the lack of recognition of domestic labours. Once again the authenticity of the subject who seeks recognition for labour value is left unquestioned, and analyses of divisions of labour continue to focus upon the need to include, not simply new kinds of labour, but a new kind of productive subject, namely the 'woman worker'.

Hekman (1992) provides useful pointers to questionable epistemological assumptions in this version of the problem. She points out that the production of subjects who are socially constrained and passive in opposition to the autonomous masculine subject, who continues to monopolise the capacity for agency within liberal thought, has the effect of producing the masculine as ideological in opposition to the material or bodily reality of the connected feminine subject. We are told that in 'fact' the subject is connected; the 'real' life of both men and women is one in which the subject is constituted by social context, unlike the autonomous masculine subject who is ideological. This idea wants to show the 'mythical' nature of economic man in favour of the deeper reality of social constraints upon individual will. Grosz (1990:83) comments that, by insisting on the necessity of ideological productions of self, the subject is made eternal and permanent. The philosophical distinction between the ideological and the 'real' prevents a consideration of the political production of the free subject, and its role in the regulation and control of the social order. Representations of women's experience are seen to reflect objective material conditions that are produced independently of the language used to describe them. So while this form of feminist labour discourse has effectively undermined the conservative view that women receive their economic deserts, the particular theoretical postulates adopted have been at the philosophical cost of naturalising a feminine, social, or domestic subject whose power and freedom is associated with greater participation in the market.

Some authors have taken critical positions with regard to the main body of feminist and Marxist thought about work arguing that traditional ways of imagining the relation of the economy, power, and the self are limited by continuing adherence to masculine economic models. Instead of simply pointing out that women have been misunderstood, ignored, and thereby further marginalised within existing economic models, some theorists have demonstrated the inadequacy of traditional ways of thinking economy and labour for conceptualising the situation of women. For Pateman (1988) feminists have not sufficiently

challenged the notion of 'labour power' which assumes that individuals freely enter into contracts in which they trade upon the labour in their persons in exchange for a wage or protection, and retain some other self which is in some sense free or outside that relation. Pateman provides a fundamental challenge to the system of wage labour and unpaid housework of women deflecting attention from the more conservative feminist struggle to secure choice within the marriage relationship and adequate returns within the wage relationship. In this analysis the problem is not simply that the extraction of labour power is unequally rewarded, but the slavery of women who must sell their bodies to capitalist and husband masters.

This critique deepens the critical stance regarding economic man; it becomes less and less possible for an informed economist to think about human behaviour as universally described in the model of the economic actor of human capital and the craftsman of Marxist theory. Pateman (1988) usefully problematises current economic constructions of the individual which excludes the circumstances many workers find themselves in, and fails to notice the inability of individuals to separate from the conditions under which they labour.

At the same time, Pateman's discussion of the relationship between the subject and power refers only to repression; power negates the freedom of persons. Pateman does not consider that power operates by the production of freedom. Since the domination of labour is the problem that represses freedom, and freedom and domination are imagined in opposition, the analysis continues to imagine that the expression of labour outside the contract would bring an 'authentic' experience of freedom.

Other analyses have sought to go beyond the problem that economic categories, concepts, and methods exclude and marginalise women to re-conceptualise an alternative feminist economic perspective. For Beasley (1994) the masculinism of Marxism is reflected in the theoretical framework and concepts themselves. Feminists cannot simply attempt to add women to existing socialist frameworks, particularly when explaining women's private labour or emotional labour. For example, Marxist models adopt versions of 'production', 'labour', and 'economics' that refer to a narrow range of activities within human society, namely those activities which produce material objects or commodified objects. For Beasley (1994:16), women are both labourers and the object product of their labours; women also labour upon their exploiters who become the object of their labour: 'his very self denotes the enactment of women's relentless labour of activation/construction of subjects'. Women's experience of private labour cannot be characterised by separation and alienation of producer

from object, but can more meaningfully be understood in terms of interdependency and relationships (Beasley, 1994:16).

Unlike Pateman (1988), Beasley does not assume that women's work involves a form of repression in opposition to freedoms found outside the marital relationship. Beasley (1994:14) argues that it is not possible to separate coercion from 'choice' because women feel both unsatisfied with their private labour, but also enjoy it as an extension of self-identity. So discrete boundaries between 'outside exploiter' and 'inside resistance' are blurred. This more sensitive conception usefully inhibits over-simplified solutions that aim to 'free' women from the marriage relation, enabling more respect for women in traditional marriage relationships. Beasley's inclusion of emotional labours, conceptualised as constituting a two directional power flow between exploiters and workers in the public world, also enables the analysis to overcome the dilemma raised by Pateman's conception of wage slavery. That is, for Pateman the wage relation and traditional marriage can never mean anything but subjection, overlooking the manner in which self-identity determines the experience of freedom.

In common with the general assumptions in the field however, Beasley and Pateman above also divide labour into two kinds, men's labour and women's labour, and see the solution in terms of bringing the invisible, unrecognised, and untheorised qualities of the latter into the sight of economic theory. A view of the subject, particularly the woman worker, as intimately or inextricably connected to labour power, informs a critique of liberal and Marxist economic frameworks. For instance Pateman (1988) questions whether it is possible to separate human abilities and skills, or what we do with our bodies, from some other part of ourselves which remains free from capitalist exploitation. She highlights that notions of the self as somehow separate from what we do, of a subject who is the rational owner of property in 'his' person, are not only misleading, but intimately connected to constructions of a dominant form of masculinity which emerged with the birth of conceptions about divided public and private spheres. In a similar way Beasley emphasises the inextricable link between women's emotional labour and their self-identity. In sum, texts that challenge labour feminist paradigms can continue to give the impression that labour remains central to the subject; in fact it sometimes appears that women's identity is even more intimately wrapped up with their labour than men's identity is.

3. The State and public policy

For feminist labour thinkers, one of the main reasons for women's secondary labour market position is the role of economic policy itself, especially as expressed by the State. In particular, the changes brought about by policies and programmes which imagine the individual in masculine terms have been seen to ignore and intensify the unequal positions attributed by gender, race, class, and ethnicity. At the same time, the field of labour feminism has often conceptualised the State as a centre of power outside of which stand a range of 'authentic' community voices whose 'needs' are typically left unpoliticised.

In Australia the early literature about women and public policy problematised public policy and the State as informed and invested with capitalist assumptions and interests that act to reproduce and legitimise unequal class and gender relations and which subsume and co-opt the demands of the Women's Movement (for example Pringle and Game, 1976; McIntosh, 1978; Franzway, Court and Connell, 1987). Other accounts emphasised the male interests that invest the State apparatus (Mackinnon, 1989), in addition to its own political agenda which strives to secure its legitimacy as well as maintain the status quo (Findlay, 1987). The outcome is legislative 'reforms' that legitimise dominant interests and maintain the State's credibility within a given political climate. There was a view of the State as an autonomous, or relatively autonomous, arena of struggle where competing groups vie for power and where feminism can successfully compete to achieve its demands and improve conditions for women (for example Cox, 1982 and Bryson, 1984). Sharp and Broomhill (1988) provide a good example of the view that economic theory, and the policies that arise from it, act to legitimise and justify the capitalist order and thereby women's position within it. These analyses then share, in common with the more mainstream approaches discussed under human capitalism, a tendency to privilege the State within discussions of political economy and to imagine it as a discrete and bounded entity.

Feminists have challenged the assumption that neo-liberal economic policy simply reflects economic realities, and replaced it with the view that neo-liberalism contributes to the production of social inequalities. For instance, Cameron (1996) argues that, when the Canadian government ceased to imagine women as primarily homemakers, access to training improved although assumptions about the kind of work women do continued to channel them into low-paid, sex-typed jobs such as clerical and service work. For Cameron (1996) federally-funded training programmes in Canada contributed to the existing gender division of labour by imagining equity for targeted groups like women as the provision of training for entry into low-skilled, low-paid work.

With regard to economic restructuring, feminists have argued that a rolling back of the State in the face of globalisation and flexibility drives is neither neutral nor inevitable, but ignores and exacerbates class, race, and gender divisions at work, and cannot adequately predict or control outcomes (see for example Jensen, 1989). For Jensen (1996), the increase in part-time work in recent decades does not reflect women's choices, but the decisions of employers informed by neo-liberalism in Canada and elsewhere. A number of feminists (for example Probert, 1995) have emphasised the negative effects of restructuring upon work, namely the degradation of secure, full-time, unionised, and well-paid work; the increase in hours and shift work; unemployment and underemployment; an increase in the service sector; and a decline in manufacturing; and reduced opportunity for promotion and skill development. In particular a polarisation of work has been noted in which women are more likely to be found in jobs with degraded conditions such as part-time status.

In Australia many feminists (Burgmann, 1994; Hammond, 1994) are concerned that women's weaker trade union representation will have damaging effects in the new climate of enterprise bargaining where union strength is highly correlated with favourable outcomes for workers. Mitchell (1995) notes that, despite a steady increase in women's wages until the time of publication, this trend seems unlikely to continue into the late 1990s as a result of the impact of restructuring upon women's employment. This kind of policy analysis usefully discredits the view of neutrality in policy making, and provides important warnings about the effects of gender and other discourses. At the same time, these analyses continue to limit their discussion of political economy to stories about an all powerful State that acts to repress the productive lives of individuals.

Feminists have been critical of the effects of restructuring upon women as a result of cuts in public services. For example, Connelly and MacDonald (1996) argue that the negative effects of restructuring and government cuts in Canadian health and social services are borne primarily by women, both as workers and home carers. The effects of cost cutting, casualisation, and sub-contracting include lower wages, stress, loss of benefits, isolation, less autonomy, the devaluation of the work performed, and unemployment. Women as the majority of public sector employees in health and education have been disproportionately affected by the cuts. The benefits that some women have gained since the second World War within higher level public service positions are now threatened by the new climate of deregulation. In addition, public services are off loaded on to the private sector and the household, putting an additional stress on home carers (who are mostly women), delaying

the entry of women into the labour market and leading to a greater incidence of unregulated homeworking.

In this view positive change such as the increase in the proportion of women in the labour market and a decrease in the gendered wages gap has been counterbalanced with more sober reflection upon the unequal gendered effects of the new employment conditions (Walby, 1997). Armstrong (1996) comments, in the Canadian context, that an increase in women's employment and signs that men and women's work is becoming more similar, does not necessarily reflect progress for women. Armstrong attributes these similarities to a decline in men's position as well-paid, full-time, and unionised work decreases across the board. She also notes the effects of decreases in employment in traditional male areas of manufacturing, construction, and distributive and wholesale trade, and the increasing numbers of men gaining work in traditional female areas. Walby (1990) sees that women's increasing participation in public paid work is merely a shift in control by individual men to the State; women are allowed entry into paid work as long as they remain segregated in low-paying industries and jobs. For Walby, the continued segregation in low-paying industries and part-time work signals a shift from a private form of patriarchal exploitation, to the public subordination and exploitation of women's labour. Here it is the State that stands in the way of women attaining the fulfilment of their labour capacities. One of the major mechanisms that leads much feminist labour thought to overlook the political status of the subject, and the diversity of knowledge sites that produce it, is the tendency to imagine the State as a kind of repressive monster that confronts, fails to recognise, and represses the individual at the level of their working lives.

Feminist literature about women, work, and public welfare policy represents a related field of commentary that explains the contribution made by public policy to women's economic position. It has been argued that the major traditions of social policy fail to consider the way in which social policy reproduces women's economic dependency upon men within the family (Pascall, 1997). As in discussion of restructuring, recent feminist thought about welfare policy has been particularly concerned with emerging neo-liberal forms of State action within a changing world economy. Once again feminists challenge the neoclassical assumption that economic theory has a neutral impact upon economic relations by pointing to its effect on women's position in the family, and its consequent effect on their labour market position.

Early accounts (Shaver, 1983; Cass, 1983) argued that the Australian social security and taxation systems operate to subordinate women by maintaining them primarily as wives and

mothers and as wage workers secondarily. Feminist commentaries on the tax transfer system (Edwards, 1985 and 1995) have insisted that the individual should be substituted for the family unit as the basis for assessments to remove the disincentive for women to seek paid employment. While, as Cass (1995:44-45) notes, interpretations of welfare benefits as increasing women's dependency have been replaced by increasing support for these systems among feminists as a result of public policies that threaten their removal, feminist writing about the tax transfer system continues to take a critical stance *vis à vis* the State. For instance, Shaver (1995) argues that while social security provision has changed from a basis in gender difference to one increasingly approaching gender equality or same treatment, class differences and differences based on immigration status have increased as the basis for provision. Edwards (1995) argues that, while gender difference has ceased to be the rationality for social security, the persistence of the notions of the family/household unit as the basis for social security and income pooling within it, lead to gender-differentiated outcomes since women face a disincentive to seek paid employment. O'Connor, Orloff, and Shaver (1999) argue that social policies are good for women to the extent that they are based, not on a view of the traditional family, but on the dual earning family. They argue that all policy eras have seen a division between the public world of the State and civil society, and the private domain of the male-headed family with dependent family members (1999:46). This is problematised because it reaffirms women's dependency in the family and constrains their participation in the market.

By challenging women's status as household dependents these arguments open the possibility for a more varied definition of the citizen. At the same time, the need to redefine the subject of public welfare policy as always and necessarily, first and foremost, an independent working citizen, is not explained. It often appears that, since the State is theorised as the site of politics, and is seen to act upon a more authentic domain of productive subjects, the desire to find independence within the market is an inevitable feature of the human community. In other words, the State functions discursively to help to establish the inevitability of the subject's attachment to the market.

Recent comment on Australian social policy focuses not only on welfare, but also on wider economic issues. Pixley (1996) argues that the Australian welfare system, both past and present, should be understood in the broadest sense to include not just a safety-net for the casualties of the economic system, but the regulation of labour, investment, and finance. For Pixley, understanding Australian welfare purely in terms of the former, fails to consider the extent to which economic analysis and social policy, in its broadest sense, interconnect with social security provision to determine outcomes for women. While this signifies an

important move for feminist social policy analysis, there remains a tendency to speak about social policy as purely the result of government ideology. Pixley warns against policies of deregulated economic growth and international competitiveness that has re-emerged in the 1990s, and marks the radical end of an era. Pixley recommends economic democracy, which she associates with Keynesian policy, including 'international monetary and investment regulations, the commitment to full employment and the insistence that economic policy should serve social ends and is therefore deeply political' (Pixley, 1996:58). However Pixley warns that high growth and higher output, which is the basis of social democratic Keynesianism and Right-wing politics, must be rejected in favour of an 'inward looking strategy'. This would emphasise restoring social and environmental integrity via a planned expansion of community and domestic services, and a restructuring of international trade and financial rules combined with 'social tariffs' so that countries can adopt advanced environmental and work standards and share work hours fairly. The limitation of these important recommendations is the extent to which they can be accomplished simply by adopting new State policy, or the extent to which new policy can be adopted without changes in the way that work is thought. My point is once again that contemporary feminist accounts of social policy often problematically assume that the power that shapes the direction and form of the economy is invested in the State and a neo-liberal conception of the subject.

Given the direction of feminist theories of the State the question often becomes, how much of the truth that feminism represents can be salvaged in its compromising liaisons with the institutions of power? This kind of feminism accepts that power is contained in institutions, structures, programmes, or attitudes and laws that exert a limitation and constraint over a 'community' whose integrity and identity is known and secured by its location outside the State. Social policy is investigated for its departures from the truth about the community and its effects upon social life. This obscures the powerful role played by authoritative discourses in constituting what is accepted as 'normal' about social life. Setting up the State as the active producer of social reality, obscures the possibility that social policy passively reflects and reifies social norms that are produced in a diversity of sites that criss-cross the formalised boundaries of State. It also obscures the possibility that the political nature of the knowledges of social authorities remains unscrutinised precisely because they are seen to possess 'accurate' representations of 'community needs'. From this point of view, a failure to investigate the cultural contingency of its visions of community, renders feminism insensitive to its own participation in the processes that shape social policy.

Feminist comment (Watson, 1990:11) on State theory has increasingly problematised the view that a unified and autonomous set of feminist demands exists outside the bureaucracy prior to feminist interventions in the arenas of the State. Allen (1990) has argued that feminism does not need a theory of the State, but should adopt a more disaggregated, diffuse, and specific analysis. For Yeatman (1994), ideas about what kind of community the State serves, determines the flavour and content of public policy. Yeatman argues that the problem is that ideas of community have not been informed by rational and participatory processes, so that public policy has been and continues to be informed by a patriarchal or fraternal vision of society in which a non-interventionist State leaves women and children under private patriarchal discretion. In this approach, reformism is no longer refused because of its 'co-opted' nature; there is increasing appreciation of the benefits and opportunities that participation in public policy offers.

There has also been increasing recognition that feminism cannot reinsert a counter citizen to economic man capable of representing all women. Yeatman (1990:156) notes the necessary partiality of constructions of justice made by feminists within the politics of policy formation. For Yeatman (1990:156): 'once political actors begin to comprehend how their positionality constructs their political ideas and visions, they are ready not only to accept a place within a multiplicity of contesting ideas and visions, but also to understand that their own positionality is not fixed or even coherent'. This insight allows her to argue that there remains a need to challenge the State's acceptance of private property, as if it were natural or based on shared custom, and to include tribal or collective property right. Yeatman (1990:169-171) accepts the increasing globalisation and localisation of State functions, and the difficulty of separating a State from the community. She notices (1990:158) that 'social policies constitute the problems to which they seem to be responses', and points to the 'discursive processes which have conventionalised phenomena and thereby made them subject to policy' (1990:169). In this view it is possible to understand that State policy does not respond to social problems 'out there', bringing with it a freedom that is outside the reach of power, (for instance women's freedom to participate in the market without the constraints imposed by the patriarchal family), but to see it as reflecting the normative assumptions of the wider social field.

However, although the sophisticated philosophical foundations of analyses like Yeatman's allow for the politicisation of the feminist subject, the focus is upon the State as the site of discourses that exclude and silence women. For example, Yeatman questions whether all the voices of women have been included in policy formation processes, and points to their subversive potential: ' ... the emergence of black, feminist, environmentalist, gay, and non-

metropolitan voices ... disrupts the monocentric discursive world that prevailed up to this point' (Yeatman, 1990:165). While commendable at one level, this perspective underplays the need to subject excluded voices to discursive interrogation in order to ensure that they do not retain traces of the 'monocentric' view, or otherwise adversely determine the experiences of women. The danger once again, even with sophisticated analyses like Yeatman's, is that feminism does not seek to interrogate the composition or effects of feminist subjective positionings, but understands subversion in terms of bringing silenced feminist voices into the domain of the State. Given the massive effects that State policy has had upon women's lives, this is understandable. At the same time, there is room for more critical attention to the feminist knowledges that are not only excluded by, but which also shape State policy and the individual behaviour of women.

4. Approaches to change: Wage equity

One of the central arenas of feminist struggle in paid work has been efforts to improve the worth attributed to traditional women's jobs within an overall centralised industrial policy. This view places emphasis upon legal and policy changes which can make work value criteria more reflective of women's values and experiences. This literature shows that women's low wages do not reflect motivation, education, or skill, as human capital theory argues, but historical wage discrimination, the exemption and undervaluation of their skills, and lack of access to education. On the other hand, the epistemological assumptions adopted preclude an analysis of the historical and contingent nature of the subject.

Feminist positions have centred on a criticism of the so-called 'family wage' instituted in 1907 by Higgins in the Harvester judgment (Ryan, 1989:89). The Arbitration Commission set Australian wage rates in male-dominated professions at a level seen to be necessary to support a man, his wife, and children. Female-dominated jobs received 54% of this rate, the amount deemed necessary to support a single woman. When women competed with men for men's jobs, they were paid the same rate to prevent them from replacing men (Ryan, 1989:99-100). The central assumption of this policy was that women would not need to support others and would properly be devoted to the care of family within marriage (Ryan, 1989:91-96). Feminists have sought to correct the historical inequality of women's wages ever since. In recent decades this has increasingly been through the mechanism of job evaluation and skills assessment and evaluation.

The concept of equal pay for equal work replaced the minimum male wage mostly as a result of the fear that employers would replace comparatively expensive male workers with cheap

female labour. In this policy, women working in 'men's' jobs were to be paid the same as men. While seeing the rejection of sexism and the family wage concept as positive, feminists have criticised the equal pay for equal work process because male and female classifications were merely integrated, with few assessments of the similarity of work according to work value criteria being taken to the Arbitration Commission by unions (Short, 1986). As a result the problem remained that dissimilar areas of male work and female work were difficult to compare, so that female-dominated jobs, where most women clustered, retained the low wages attached to them historically.

In 1972 the Commission was persuaded, by changes in social attitudes and support from the International Labour Organisation, to legislate for equal pay for work of equal value (O'Donnell and Hall, 1988:54). Equal pay for work of equal value referred to the need for an objective appraisal of jobs based on work actually performed, not the sex of the worker. However, changes were limited since, instead of laying down general principles which would have general application, the Commission left the implementation of equal pay for work of equal value to individual cases (O'Donnell and Hall, 1988:54). Unions pursued immediate wage claims at the time, rather than run equal pay for work of equal value cases, so that the wage gap between men and women did not significantly alter as a result of the 1972 decision (O'Donnell and Hall, 1988:55).

In 1985 the ACTU and the Council of Action for Equal Pay, supported by women's groups, put up a case for equal pay for work of equal value to be treated like comparable worth in which female-dominated occupations which are not equal to male occupations might be valued according to comparable criteria. The case was rejected by the Commission on the grounds that it was inappropriate for Australia and would 'strike at the heart of long-accepted methods of wage-fixation' (quoted in Bennett, 1988:534). Bennett (1988) argues that the Council failed because it did not consider the specific nature of the Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission which has always preferred looseness and vagueness in the application of work value criteria in order to allow it flexibility to respond to a variety of economic, industrial, and political considerations. These included, at the time of the equal value case, the need to restrain wage rises and to minimise the time-consuming and expensive demands upon its own resources entailed by the Council's case. Keeping work value cases out of the Commission also enabled a coincidence of employer and union interests, still dominated by men, to respectively keep women's wages low and prevent erosion of male overtime, over-award payments, and other benefits. Bennett argues that a more successful approach would involve an emphasis upon trade union organisation of

women, demonstrating discrimination against women as a result of existing male biases in traditional work value criteria used by the Commission.

Feminists have continued to demand the setting of criteria by which dissimilar work might be compared within wage fixing strategies ranging from indexation based on prices, award restructuring, which involved the creation of new relativities and realignments of rates across awards, and enterprise bargaining. The comparison of jobs dominated by men with those dominated by women is advocated in order to, interrupt the reproduction of proportional wage inequity between men and women within wage indexation, ensure pay reflects productivity rather than the profitability of the firm or industry within awards, and to prevent a widening of the wages gap as a result of deregulation and the introduction of 'arbitrary' bases for wage setting within enterprise bargaining. As a result of the Industrial Relations Commission's refusal to undertake a general review of skill, leaving the restructuring process to negotiation between parties in each case, feminist efforts to improve the wage gap in the time of award restructuring was successful only in a few areas (Hunter, 2000:13). In recent years the advent of enterprise bargaining has seen labour feminists emphasising the need for minimum wage protection and a centralised bargaining system (for example Pocock, 1996).

However the prominence of equal pay for work of equal value has not diminished. In 1993 the Industrial Relations Reform Act included a specific legislative mechanism that enables employees, unions, or the Sex Discrimination Commissioner to bring cases to the Commission in which workers performing equal work are not receiving equal remuneration (Hunter, 2000:14-15). In addition, following the Pay Equity Inquiry in 1998, the NSW Industrial Relations Commission in June 2000 handed down its decision in the Equal Remuneration and Other Conditions of Employment Test Case. This decision allows for fresh consideration of the value of work within awards, allows comparisons for dissimilar work, and explicitly states that proof that wage differences between men and women are the result of discrimination, is not required. Since coverage by enterprise agreements is still quite low, this decision has been heralded as a significant one for women (Hall, 2000).

Feminists who support equal value campaigns have emphasised the need for unbiased job evaluation, and the participation of gender experts and women themselves in their conduct. When job evaluation does occur, gender stereotypes are seen to explain the systematic undervaluation of 'women's traditional jobs', and the overvaluation of 'men's traditional jobs' (Burton, 1991; Burton, Hag and Thompson, 1987; Short, 1987). Much of the literature points to the difficulty that job evaluation outcomes tend to reflect the biases of

those who control it. For instance, Burton (1991:95) accepts that work value criteria can never be 'objective', but should reflect the values of the organisational culture. She also observes that low ranking female employees 'may not be in a position to put their views on the relative value of different kinds of work as strongly as other organisational participants'.

The validity of feminist projects for evaluating work are established on the grounds that they start 'from the other end, the individual's viewpoint, and in particular the view of women' (Cox and Leonard, 1991:4). Feminist skill identification systems insist that 'participants should be allowed to retain as much "authority" as possible ... workers are the authorities about jobs' (Women's Adviser's Unit, 1992:12). This insistence upon worker driven skills audits assumes that the new criteria will be better, not because they are more objective than existing criteria, but because they are based on women's experience. Here 'experience' tends to be presented as incontestable data, obscuring the need to consider its historical origins and effects. The woman worker also authors a unified subjectivity that silences alternative statements about women's work.

For instance there is the view that 'women's skills' should be included and valued within the job evaluation process (for example, Burton, 1991; Short, 1992). Part of this would involve rejecting abstract and simplistic formulas for the measurement of individual productivity which fail to capture the 'dynamic, relational and generative nature of productivity in the service sector' (Junor et al., 1993:2). 'A genuinely scientific approach' to identifying the processes that contribute to productivity is needed, including consideration of the contribution of 'service skills' to productivity (Junor et al., 1993:1). There has been emphasis, particularly in the early 1990s when awards were being restructured across the country, to prevent gender bias by valuing skills gained in unpaid community work and housework (Cox and Leonard, 1991). Many labour feminists pointed to the problem that women are socialised to avoid boasting about their capacities and fail to recognise themselves as 'skilled'. For Cox and Leonard (1991:20) this risks failing to value the skills which 'in fact' underpin the effective functioning of Australian workplaces.

References to the invisible skills of women are often confined to tasks and abilities possessed by female housewives and community workers with children who are then seen to carry these skills into the 'service sector' (for an example see Cox and Leonard 1991). Although it is not explicitly stated, the lack of reference to any other area of skill acquisition often gives the impression that everyone outside the category 'housewife' will find their skills accounted for, or that only 'family responsibilities' provide the experiences which support the effectiveness of Australian workplaces. This conjures a picture in which skill is

made up of two interlocking parts that together comprise all the valuable activities in the world, namely existing skills, and those performed by mothers in the home.

There are significant risks associated with the emphasis upon 'women's skills' which will be explored in more depth in chapter three and seven. Of most concern is the possibility that these discourses participate in the reproduction of derided meanings about women and the work they do. For instance, the traditional logic that feminism rejects might argue that, since women possess specific skills that are different from men, they are peculiarly suited and best placed in occupations such as nursing, clerical support, and dexterous manual labour, or indeed, for the roles of wife and mother. The attachment of narrow and culturally derided meanings to the bodies of women workers is then difficult to challenge because it has apparently been established 'scientifically', or grows out of 'women's experience'.

Assumptions about job evaluation and 'women's skills' also tend to assume that work precedes and informs language. Many texts give the impression that, although existing skill labels reflect the political power of men, the nature of women's contributions can be ascertained by an observation, whether qualitative or quantitative, of 'women's work'. The truth about 'women's work' is buried within the material world, beneath the misleading representations of power. It can be 'discovered' by the technical-rational 'scientific' method of job evaluation, and by the standpoint of women themselves. Here work is merely transcribed into language, overlooking the way that skill or conduct is constituted within language.

There remains the problem that the neutrality of the productive subject is supported. Within the equal value campaign, many feminists have advocated establishing or improving training routes, career paths, and pay rates for women, or workers in female-dominated industries (Pocock, 1988), as well as increasing women's participation in training for highly skilled and traditional male work (Cameron, 1996:76-77). It is argued that there must be nationalised regulation of training in order to include marginalised workers, such as part-time, casual, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, mature-aged workers, and the unemployed (Junor, 1993). The State is to ensure not only that the value of labour is acknowledged, but that women and other disadvantaged groups have equal opportunities to the means for its development. The implicit acceptance of hierarchy within these positions suggests that workers would be responsible for their wage levels if discrimination could be removed. Wage differences within a non-discriminatory world are apparently explained in terms of different levels of individual motivation and effort, with the implication that individuals are then paid what they 'deserve'. There is no attempt to discredit the human

capital view that wage differences are inevitable and 'fair' as long as they are based upon the skill, training, and productive contributions of workers. Women are no longer possessed of unlearned 'natural talents', but of a natural and proper inclination to become more skilled in their own and the national interest. The failure to discredit the view that the economy is fostered by skill acquisition, serves to bolster the mainstream economic policy view that responsibility for economic problems is based on the skill and training levels of workers, rather than say the movements of international capital and monopolisation. This places policy attention for change upon workers, (and justifies competition among workers for 'skill'), as opposed to the workplace or the economic environment. The equal pay for work of equal value strategy constitutes a subject, the woman worker, that is both different from men — women are seen to perform and value different qualities than men at work — and the same as men — their freedom and integrity depends upon their ability to develop their labour potential in the same way that men's is seen to. The link between productivity and subjectivity is not disrupted, rather feminist equal pay for work of equal value discourse constitutes a special kind of productive subject in the feminine worker.

5. Wage solidarity

Wage solidarity perspectives (Brenner, 1987; Hallock, 1988; Lewis, 1988; Warskett, 1990; Quaid, 1993) offer an important alternative to feminist arguments that emphasise wage increases based on evaluations of work value. Feminist writers from this perspective usefully problematise the hierarchical logic underpinning equal pay for work of equal value strategies by questioning whether work value criteria can ever be 'objective'. Emphasis is placed upon the processes of power and struggle that underpin the application of 'rational' job evaluation processes. The central objection to comparable worth, as it is referred to in North America, is that it attributes unequal values to persons in the name of scientific fact, ignoring and reproducing class and other differences among women. Here the debate is about the extent to which job evaluation can operate in a neutral manner, that is, the extent to which it can act in interests other than those of capitalism. Power is still conceptualised as operating in a repressive manner; it acts by failing to acknowledge the skill of women. The view that women possess peculiar traits and experiences, that are distinctive from men, is not questioned.

Commentators argue that the State advocates comparable worth because it limits the extent of progressive change (Lewis, 1988, Hallock, 1988, Warskett, 1990). Management dilute or block pay equity demands by manipulating classification systems and deploying complex technical processes. Lewis (1988) argues that, in practice, comparable worth has been

inseparable from job evaluation which was originally a tool used by employers to justify and rationalise existing wage rates that reflect, not the value of work, but the perceived needs of the worker, the scarcity of workers to do the job, and the level of trade union organisation. Comparable worth is seen as a management tool designed to de-politicise and maintain hierarchical social arrangements via the application of apparently neutral and 'scientific' techniques that render wage hierarchies 'fair'. This leads to divisions between workers and the break down of worker solidarity. Lewis (1988) argues that large sectors of the women's movement in Canada were opposed to comparable worth, which was pushed by the State as the one mechanism for achieving women's economic independence, and often saw a loss of emphasis upon minimum wage increases and collective bargaining. Furthermore wage solidarity feminists assert that job evaluation has benefited only a few workers in large public sector organisations, and has had little impact upon women most in need — that is part-time low wage earners, in small private and non-unionised firms, in female-dominated areas like the service sector. For Warskett (1990) the displacement effects of comparable worth impact upon less privileged sectors of the work force. Capital restructuring has led to the creation of new jobs in low unionised service sectors which are low-paid and part-time, or casual and performed by women and youth. Large multi-national corporations move capital and jobs to low wage countries, where women's wages are lowest, and women are even more greatly exploited. Furthermore women of colour have a far greater likelihood than other workers of being forced into marginal work that is low-paid, part-time, and offers little or no security.

Wage solidarity approaches object to the imposition of wage and status differences between workers, and emphasise not legislative and procedural change, but the need to organise women into strong trade unions. They advocate an increase in the wages of workers at the lowest level of the hierarchy in the absence of justifications for wage increases on the basis of evaluations of job content and value. Industrial change is to be spear-headed by an 'independent women's movement' and the trade union movement to direct pressure on employers to increase wages at the lower end of the wage scale. However despite the criticisms directed at job evaluation, many commentators have argued that comparable worth has the capacity to improve the wages of at least some women and minority workers thereby undermining gender and minority income differences, and can challenge cultural definitions of women's work as worthless (Acker, 1989; Steinberg, 1987; Warskett, 1990). For Acker (1989), it does this by challenging the idea that men are worth more than women and deserve more money because they have families to support. Acker also sees comparable worth as challenging because it can lead to increases in wages at the lowest pay ranges in working-class, clerical, and service jobs, upsetting hierarchies of power, status, and income

between classes of workers. She argues that it can also lead to the organisation of women, bring women's issues onto trade union agendas, and lead to a questioning of what is valued in work and who has the power to set those values. For Acker, comparable does not necessarily create class divisions between women. This depends upon how the strategy is implemented, and the relative power of those managing the implementation.

Quaid (1993:76) argues that commentators like Acker still place too much faith in the ability of job evaluation to produce rational results. She questions Acker's view that job evaluation is still more fair, as long as gender bias has been removed, than evaluations based on the market, or upon social prejudice. For Quaid, 'job evaluation is nothing more than an expression of culturally sanctioned pay claims', so that the question of whether it can be used to effect improvements in pay is a moot point. Improvements in women's wages will, and have only occurred because cultural values have shifted to a greater appreciation of the value of women's work.

While authors argue about the extent to which job evaluation can be used to change work value criteria to reflect the experiences and values of women, they do not challenge the view that these values are themselves political. They often hold the view that women possess different abilities to men, rather than examining the way that gender discourses predetermine how the jobs of men and women can be performed and experienced. The issue is whose values are to be politically successful; whose values are to be represented in work value criteria — men's values or women's values? This way of conceptualising the problem has led some texts to reproduce the notion of 'women's skills'. For instance Warskett (1990:68-69) refers to 'interpersonal and human relations skills', associates them with 'caring for the sick, the elderly and children' and 'skilled work traditionally performed by women', which she refers to as, not biologically given, but 'learned either through training or experience'. Here women, like men, are conceptualised as the possessors of skill; the subject of the discourse is imagined to be a kind of productive vessel carrying peculiar skills from job to job.

Job evaluation in the wage solidarity view is often seen to operate by a repression of women's capacity to gain recognition for their work and an equitable share of economic resources. For instance, Quaid (1993) questions the faith in the rational nature of job evaluation, presenting it as an impotent tool that merely reflects movements in the wider cultural field. While those who advocate improvements in the minimum wage and the rejection of wage differentials based on work value provide a more subversive direction for feminist change strategy, there is little consideration of the active role of job evaluation in the

production of subjectivity and workplace meaning. The implications of this omission will be discussed in chapter seven.

Conclusion

In summary, feminist labour thought has effectively undermined the view that women's lower wages and status reflects the contributions and effort of women workers, developing alternative explanations for women's position which point to discrimination against women, and the effects of industrial struggles upon their working lives. In particular, feminists have pointed to the male bias within definitions of skill, training, and job evaluation systems, the failure to implement equal pay for work of equal value, and the role of gendered ideologies in shaping working patterns and public policies in ways that exacerbate women's disadvantage.

At the same time, the epistemological terms of feminist labour theory effectively naturalise the subject, and refuse speculation about the historical practices and knowledges which condition its existence. Language and ideas are understood to have a transparent and passive relation to economic realities or 'experience'. The delineation of political and neutral elements of thought within the literature is often accomplished by aligning the former with a repressive power and the latter with liberatory movements. Particular domains and interests, such as the State, patriarchal ideology, (including economic theory and policy), and employer drives for control and exploitation of labour, are nominated 'political' and 'powerful', and are posed in opposition to the claims of 'the community', 'the women's movement' and 'worker's experience'. These are the epistemological and theoretical means by which feminist labour thought obscures the political and historical dimensions of the working subject.

For Foucauldian thinkers power and truth are not opposed, rather contemporary power operates precisely by the colonisation and deployment of truth. One of the central means via which power operates in the contemporary polity is by allying itself with notions of 'natural' or self-evident fact in opposition to interests and realms that are deemed 'political'. However, in a Foucauldian conception, these truths do not emanate solely from bourgeois ideologues, business think tanks, men, and so on, but are reproduced from a diverse range of sites within the population. They also operate in the name of the best interests of the population.

Foucauldian thought holds that truth promotes the existing order of production and reproduction, not by repressing or denying human freedom, but by producing it in particular ways. For Foucault and many others, meaning precedes and produces the knowing subject, and defines the conditions that constitute its freedom. Social order emerges from widely shared meaning systems that constitute our freedoms. In this view, an unjust world does not neglect to fulfil, facilitate, or recognise a natural human need for productive freedom and recognition, rather, particular practices, and the knowledges they produce, oblige the subject to experience skill as a 'natural right', and to work towards its development. Chapter three explores this kind of argument and approach, and considers its implications for feminist conceptualisations of the problem of women's labour.

3
FOUCAULDIAN PHILOSOPHICAL RE-CONCEPTUALISATIONS: DISCOURSE, POWER AND THE SUBJECT

Foucault's parallel studies on discipline, bio-politics, and government consider, with reference to the practices of prisons, of confession, of demography, and of centralised nation States, the transformation, since the sixteenth century, of a power which rules, not by an external and repressive sovereignty, but a normative law that is immanent to the population, and constituted in the practices and knowledges of the human 'sciences'. Foucault observes that the irony of contemporary power is its utilisation of individualising discourses about personal freedom, at the same time that it imposes collective conformity and order. In this regard Foucault comments: 'Never, I think, in the history of human societies — even in the old Chinese society — has there been such a tricky combination in the same political structures of individualization techniques and of totalization procedures' (Foucault, 1982:782).

This chapter explicates Foucault's analysis of a normalising mode of power, with specific attention to its role in the development and reproduction of the contemporary productive order. It also considers the relation between feminist labour thought, as summarised and defined in chapter two, and the operation of this mode of power.

The first section outlines Foucault's conception of power, the relation of the subject to discourse, and the implications of this for feminist labour analysis and politics. The summaries on discipline, sexuality, and government that follow argue that the production of the subject as endowed with a sexually differentiated productive propensity, whose development is central to freedom and the national good, is not an ahistorical 'truth', or one which does not require explicit questioning, as economics and much feminist labour thought

to assume. Rather, it is born at a critical turn in the evolution of advanced industrial economies, and can be seen as the product, and part of the means by which, contemporary power operates to support the existing productive order.

1. Discourse and power

In chapter two I argued that English-speaking feminist labour theory understands that the representations made on behalf of women within the discipline of economics are false based on the political biases of privileged masculine authors. On the other hand their own problematisations are taken as 'true', based upon a 'scientific observation of reality', or alternatively the 'experiences of women'. In either case feminist stories are informed by the individual consciousness of the author, either the feminist academic and sets of 'scientific techniques', or the 'woman worker' and the meaning she recognises in her situation. This is then simply reflected or represented within a progressive feminist discourse that interrupts the damaging falsehoods spread about women in traditional political and economic theory.

A poststructural position introduces an inversion of the speaker's relation to the text such that theoretical discourse does not reflect truths arising within individual consciousness. Rather, the text positions and authorises the theorist to speak 'truth' and defines the limits of what can be known and the terms within which it must be expressed. Foucault's project sought to go between the hermeneutic presupposition that systems of language are reflections of interpretations of the minds of subjects and the structuralist view that they reflect an inherent meaning within the nature of things (McHoul and Grace, 1993:2). In Foucault's work emphasis is placed upon the independence of speech and writing from meaning and 'truth'. It is not that foundational subjects transcribe or recognise 'truth' and experience within language; rather, discourse originates in a complex set of social, historical and disciplinary conditions (Foucault, 1972). The contemporary discursive field includes languages of identity, and produces modes of consciousness: 'Discourse is not a place into which the subjectivity irrupts; it is a space of differentiated subject-positions and subject-functions' (Foucault, 1991:58). The desires held as personal are produced in discourses which dictate not only the form and content of the subject, but also which individuals can lay claim to a particular subject position, and the limits of where and what they will utter.

In this conception the task of political philosophy is no longer to 'discover' the truth, but to consider the limits that truth imposes upon the known world. In relation to feminism, the question becomes not simply: how are women oppressed and how can they be emancipated,

but how are women thought, within what discursive limits, and what are the effects of these ways of knowing?

The Foucauldian discourse analyses discussed in the main body of this chapter show how particular ways of speaking and writing emerged and developed. Discourse analysis provides the precise details of how discursive and non-discursive practices interacted and led to transformations in ways of reading, writing and speaking. Discourse analysis aims to describe the local and shifting nature of events and spoken language systems, not to provide general principles for understanding 'history' or 'progress'. As a method, discourse analysis involves a description of the material conditions, and the correlations and interrelations between existing knowledges that lead to the formation and transformation of specific systems of meaning or discourse. Discourse is then a system of meaning that includes not just what is said, but the procedures through which statements are produced. For Foucault (1991:54), discourse is defined, not by its objects, concepts, operations, or theoretical options, which are diverse and often contradictory, but by its criteria of formation, of transformation, threshold, and correlation. Foucault argued that meaning is born of definite rules, limitations, and thresholds of birth and disappearance that relate to the internal operations of discourses, and the rules between and among discursive transformations. The first set of rules condition the changes within a given discursive formation, affecting its objects, concepts, operations, and theoretical options. They refer to the complex series of rules and procedures the discourse demands in order for a given statement to qualify as valid. The second set of rules describe changes which affect the discursive transformations themselves, including: 'the displacement of boundaries which define the field of possible objects'; 'the new position and role occupied by the speaking subject in discourse'; 'a new mode of functioning of language with respect to objects'; and 'a new form of localisation and circulation of discourse within society' (Foucault, 1991:56). Finally, Foucault was interested in rules that simultaneously affect several discursive formations at once and which 'typify changes peculiar to the *episteme* itself, its *redistributions'* (Foucault, 1991:56, emphasis in the original). Foucault (1991:60) says of his method:

> I do not question discourses about their silently intended meanings, but about the fact and the conditions of their manifest appearance; not about the contents which they may conceal, but about the transformations which they have effected; not about the sense preserved within them like a perpetual origin, but about the field where they coexist, reside and disappear. It is a question of an analysis of the discourses in the dimension of their exteriority.

Foucault (1991:69) argues that a refusal to analyse the rules of formation of discourse gives politics two options: to give science a validity which operates universally without

considering that its own practices are regulated and conditioned or, to intervene in the discursive field at an abstract level judging what is said by who says it, and evaluating ideas at the symbolic level distinguishing between 'reactionary' and 'progressive' concepts. Within traditional labour theory knowledges that are associated with repressive powers like capital, patriarchy, or 'the State' are interrogated, while feminist knowledge apparently reflects a self-evident condition of women. There is little consideration of the discursive history and limits within which it verifies 'women's interests', 'women's work', and 'women's rights'. The seamless transition of meaning into discourse within many feminist texts closes off the possibility that the object of feminist knowledge, the 'woman worker', is herself a partial product of the same social norms that establish the inevitability of the existing order. Scott (1988:47) remarks that:

> if we write the history of women's work by gathering data that describes the activities, needs, interests, and culture of 'women workers', we leave in place the naturalized contrast and reify a fixed categorical difference between women and men. We start the story, in other words, too late, by uncritically accepting a gendered category (the 'woman worker') that itself needs investigation because its meaning is relative to its history.

What Scott is referring to is the need for feminism to conduct discursive histories of women's work; to reflect critically on the categories it deploys, and the techniques it uses in the production of feminist knowledge about women's work. Discourse analysis would do more than merely trace the transmutation of knowledges about women's work; it would also describe the processes of power that have produced the existing 'truths' and 'experiences' of women. Such an approach would involve a re-conceptualisation of power.

Modern social theory, including much feminist labour thought, accepts that the law possesses the power to protect freedom, for instance within the social contract in which individuals are seen to exchange a portion of their liberty for State protection and benefits. Alternatively, the law is seen to deny freedom by imposing political restrictions upon individual choice. This happens, for instance, when public policy, based on the model of the traditional family, interferes with women's ability to find a fair return for their labour, and thereby supports the secondary labour market position of women. While some modern social theory accepts that power gives birth to culture and modes of subjectivity, this is often only in order to repress individual freedom. For instance, power has been seen to suppress the worth of the work that women do, and is understood as emanating from unified groups of political interests whose agendas are legitimated by the State. Analyses of this kind conceptualise a uni-directional flow of power that originates in individual or group authors and drives which are expressed or reflected in language, and which constitute the denial of freedom or authenticity.

In the *History of Sexuality* (1976) Foucault explicitly challenges the dominant conception of power within Western philosophy and political thought as operating via the statement of an ideological or juridical rule. By this he means a power 'centred on nothing more than the statement of the law and the operation of taboos' (1976:85), a power which in being stated imposes a repression upon human drives, which in constituting identity simultaneously represses: 'renounce yourself or suffer the penalty of being suppressed' (Foucault, 1976:84). Foucault comments that this leaves two possibilities — either you subject your freedom and desire to the law, (by entering into forms of legal protection), or the only freedom and desire you will have is that given by subjection to an ideological law.

The central thesis running through Foucault's work is that there has been a shift in the operation of power within advanced industrial Western economies beyond this purely sovereign form, defined by its transcendent, external, and singular quality in relation to the populace, to include a more diffuse, anonymous, and immanent form of power. While sovereign power exercises forms of coercion and violence upon those who challenge its will, modern power increasingly expresses itself in forms of control that are invisible and ubiquitous. At the centre of this shift is the transformation from the paradigm in which truth emerges from the sovereign right to exert a terrible justice, to one emerging, not from sovereign power, but from the changing substance of things themselves. It is a will to knowledge which delineates what can be known and how 'truth' can be verified, and which underpins and elaborates the exercise of power (Foucault, 1972:218). For Foucault, the operation of power in our times is intimately connected to the production, circulation, and authorisation of truth.

> There can be no possible exercise of power without a certain economy of discourses of truth which operates through and on the basis of this association. We are subjected to the production of truth through power and we cannot exercise power except through the production of truth. (Foucault, 1980:93)

Further to this Foucault (1980:93) says that: 'we are forced to produce the truth of power that our society demands, of which it has need, in order to function'. We are 'judged, condemned, classified, determined in our undertakings, (and) destined to a certain mode of living or dying, as a function of the true discourses which are the bearers of the specific effects of power' (Foucault, 1980:94).

Power leaves no permanent residue within the individual. For instance, power is not like socialisation, in which women are imagined to behave more compassionately than men because they are continually exposed to feminine ideologies that emphasise caring over competition. Rather, power acts by the objectification of the subject; it acts upon bodies, or

more precisely, upon actions: 'an action upon an action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future (Foucault, 1982:789). 'The exercise of power consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome' (Foucault, 1982:789). Foucault (1982:789-790) uses the term government as it was used historically to explicate his understanding of power. Power is not 'a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other', but a question of government. Government refers to 'modes of action, more or less considered or calculated, which were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people'.

Government relies upon norms and standards for truly human behaviour, at the same time effectively imposing moral standards via the production of these norms. These truths aim to provide for fulfilment and development of individual capacities and social needs, but they do not derive from them. As Rose (1990:7-10) puts it, rendering subjectivity calculable

> makes persons amenable to having things done to them — and doing things to themselves — in the name of their subjective capacities. ... It achieves its effects not through the threat of violence or constraint, but by way of the persuasion inherent in its truths, the anxieties stimulated by its norms, and the attraction exercised by the images of life and self it offers to us. ... Such a citizen subject is not to be dominated in the interests of power, but to be educated and solicited into a kind of alliance between personal objectives and ambitions and institutionally or socially prized goals or activities.

Or, in Burchell's (1996:30) words:

> Government increasingly impinges upon individuals in their very individuality, in their practical relationships to themselves in the conduct of their lives; it *concerns them at the very heart of themselves by making its rationality the condition of their active freedom.* (emphasis in the original)

In this perspective, power does not operate by nurturing a false self which betrays a form of human authenticity that exists in some other 'real' or imagined space. For instance, it is not that we are tricked into a false alliance with the productive forces of our time, or that free non-capitalist selves are responsible for objections to 'wage slavery'. Rather, power produces the possibility of heartfelt alliances, as well as objections to the productive order. It produces the whole complex field of meanings and practices, including the terms and conditions within which resistances to the normative order are posed. This is not to say that feminism cannot hope to challenge the normative order (see chapter eight for an extended discussion of this concern). It is to recognise that what is important in politics is not finding a 'true' or inclusive space from which to speak, but a consideration of the effects of these pronunciations upon the field of possible conducts. The point is to interrogate who we imagine ourselves to be in order to understand and intervene in the effects this produces. Foucault (1982:782) argues that, in the modern day, struggles against forms of subjection

are becoming more important: 'the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are' (Foucault, 1982:785).

This conception deflects analytic attention from the traditional course of critical theory. Instead of tracing the uni-directional flow of a foreign power that bears down upon the subject of labour, Foucauldians consider the practices which produce, enable, and legitimise the apparently incontestable 'truths' the subject holds most dear. Such knowledges are not determined purely by economic interests, but arise in complex relations between political and social events, and the rules within and between existing discourses. In this view, the organisation of work and economy cannot be understood purely in terms of the economic or patriarchal motives within ideological productions or social processes. Nor can these discourses be seen to obscure something more 'real' that is silenced by what is said — for instance, the authentic voice of women workers. The intimate relation between knowledge and power suggests that, to the extent that feminist labour thought is informed by the sciences of humanity, and reproduces the practices and knowledges of humanity, it becomes part of the powers by which contemporary societies are ordered. It cannot always be seen as an outside, independent, and antagonistic voice *vis à vis* processes for the production of social order.

The remaining part of the chapter summarises Foucault's genealogical work which shows how practices, techniques, and processes, and the knowledges they produce about the processes of population, its fertility, and prosperity, and the inner substance, 'soul' or 'nature' of human beings, are the means via which patterns of social order and conformity are achieved. One's internal life and the life of the species, including specificities for the new biological groupings of sex and 'race', are produced as objects within ordered and documented domains of impersonal and neutral 'fact'. In particular, the emerging processes for knowledge production that Foucault writes about, begin to 'discover' a re/productive orientation of the subject — an orientation that is assumed within many feminist labour texts.

2. The carceral society

Foucault's work (1977) on the rise of the prison from the middle ages politicises key elements of contemporary thought about the subject. It provides an expansive analysis of the transformation of the operation of power from a sovereign model to one that takes the soul and humanity as its object and means, thereby enabling the spread of industrial capitalism. In this analysis sovereignty is not challenged by a progressive development and concern for 'humanity'. Rather, sovereignty becomes inadequate to emerging social conditions,

including the task of capital accumulation, and the new system of labour and commodities. A new way of regulating the social order is required in which many different interests come together. These are not the sweeping movements of political interests, but more small scale practices which are often adopted in response to social innovations, epidemics, or other conditions by persons of varying interests and positions. The contemporary subject of labour, imagined as possessed of a productive propensity that must be expressed, is in this analysis, not the condition of freedom, but the product of the practices utilised by the new systems of accumulation.

Discipline and Punish (1977) opens with a description of the social and political conditions of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which gave rise to a new set of institutional techniques that made it possible to 'see' the individual. These conditions included: the increase in rebellions against sovereign power around the spectacles of torture and execution; greater accumulation of private property by wider sections of the population; the successful disbanding of bandit gangs by police; the professionalisation and spread of crimes against property; an increasing perception of the inconsistencies and irregularities of the organisation of the legal machinery, and the powers of the monarch within these; a greater investment of wealth in commodities and machines; and a popular tolerance of illegality. These conditions gave rise to demands to replace an ad hoc attention to the body with a tighter control of the minutiae of everyday life: 'a closer penal mapping of the social body' (Foucault, 1977:78) and a 'new "economy" of the power to punish'. This was to assure:

> its better distribution, so that it should be neither too concentrated at certain privileged points, not too divided between opposing authorities; so that it should be distributed in homogenous circuits capable of operating everywhere, in a continuous way, down to the finest grain of the social body ... render(ing) it more regular, more effective, more constant and more detailed in its effects; in short, which increase its effects while diminishing its economic cost. (Foucault, 1977:80-81)

From these concerns there gradually arose a new attention to detail by Napoleon, and within the classical age in general, involving the increased institutionalisation or enclosure of persons within defined spaces. It was a time in which the minutest movements, gestures, and attitudes of the body were observed, monitored, controlled, and documented, at first to neutralise dangers, and later to increase the possible utility and obedience of bodies. From these methods of observation and judgement, bodies of documented data emerged that could be organised and classified to form areas of knowledge so that whole fields of previously obscure behaviour could be monitored and controlled.

Within the prisons, the military, factories, hospitals, and schools a set of spatial and temporal micro-institutional practices allocated individuals to specified spaces and tasks, and organised them in relation to other individuals. Time was segmented and filled with precisely defined exercises to be performed at regular intervals and speeds. This architectural and functional separation of individuals was designed to maximise efficiency and productivity, but also to enable constant comparison and supervision. In *Discipline and Punish* (1977), Foucault argues that the ceremony of the examination gradually enabled the objectification of institutionalised persons within a broader network of registrations which could then be organised to form comparative fields, and thence the classification and determination of categories, averages, and norms. In this way, the productive outputs extracted from individual lives within the new institutional arrangements came to inform knowledge of the human 'soul'.

For instance, it was the operation of disciplinary practices within the prison that made it possible to invent 'delinquency': a 'biographical unity, a kernel of danger, representing a type of anomaly' (1977:254). In addition, the mechanical body comes to exist in conjunction with an organic body, possessed of a 'naturalness' that will accommodate or reject the exercises imposed upon it.

> Behaviour and its organized requirements gradually replaced the simple physics of movement. The body, required to be docile in its minutest operations, opposes and shows the conditions of functioning proper to an organism. Disciplinary power has as its correlative an individuality that is not only analytical and 'cellular', but also natural and 'organic'. (Foucault, 1977:156) ... This new object is the natural body, the bearer of forces and the seat of duration; it is the body susceptible to specified operation, which have their order, their stages, their internal conditions, their constituent elements. ... It is the body of exercise, rather than of speculative physics; a body manipulated by authority, rather than imbued with animal spirits; a body of useful training and not of rational mechanics, but one in which, by virtue of that very fact, a number of natural requirements and functional constraints are beginning to emerge. (Foucault, 1977:155)

Disciplinary techniques enabled the observance of an evolutive genesis against which something 'abnormal' could be prohibited in the name of 'truth'. They also enabled the organisation of persons in staggered, isolated, and comparative relation to normative standards, producing forms of individuality more nuanced and detailed than the form of juridical individuality found within the theory of the contract.

Foucault's analysis of the disciplinary techniques suggests that the hierarchical organisation of learning and employment, from simple to more complex levels of skill and knowledge, does not reflect anything intrinsic to human beings. It is not a structure that emerges from a 'natural' human tendency to seek increased levels of expertise. The productive capacity of

the worker, from the perspective of the formation of the disciplines, is not an authentic essence whose development and protection is constantly under attack from capitalist and patriarchal interests. There is no unique self with talents and propensities awaiting stimulation or fulfilment; nor is there any necessary association of virtue or naturalness with the development of one's labour.

Rather, practices born of the classical age, still well entrenched today, aimed for the control of time and the economic utility of bodies, and built up banks of data from which it was possible to observe a new kind of object — an evolutive, progressive, and organic humanity. This 'nature' is a product of political technologies like the segmentation of work, not an original justification for them. The subject that feminism seeks to free, by winning the right to training and a recognition of labour worth, is itself the product of the systems of control that have produced the problems some feminisms are concerned to change. This modality of power made the accumulation of capital possible:

> the two processes — the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital — cannot be separated; it would not have been possible to solve the problem of the accumulation of men without the growth of an apparatus of production capable of both sustaining them and using them; conversely, the techniques that made the cumulative multiplicity of men useful accelerated the accumulation of capital. (Foucault, 1977:221)

This illustrates Foucault's general point that power does not ignore, cover over, or wrest away freedom, in this case in the form of 'labour power', but produces it. The skilled body is one effect of the disciplinary regimes of exercise, arising not in pre-given individual 'talents', but from a muteness, humbleness, and obedience of the body; reflecting not authenticity and struggle, so much as the passive subjection of the body to repeated practice.

This analysis also raises insights and problems about the organisation of paid work that feminist labour thought tends to neglect due to the focus on the exclusion, devaluation, and underpayment of women workers. Foucault's discussion of hierarchical and segmentary practices discusses the unequal distributions of rewards, not in terms of their repression or lack of 'recognition' of the worker, patient, or student. For Foucault, hierarchies are important because of their ability to increase the efficiency and usefulness of bodies, and of the lifetime, beyond the institutions of work, via small scale everyday practices that reached into the very fabric of existence. These 'small acts of cunning' (Foucault, 1977:139) operate not by the exchange of rights of naturally free agents within the social contract, or the suppression of identity. Rather, they operate by the careful placement, training, and manoeuvre of bodies, and the knowledges these practices produce about them.

Unlike traditional Left analyses, Foucault's conception of the disciplines understands that the new techniques act to effect control, not just of the time of work, but also the time of life. These techniques aim to 'capitalize the time of individuals, accumulate it in each of them, in their bodies, in their forces or in their abilities, in a way that is susceptible of use and control' (Foucault, 1977:157). The disciplines impose repetitive, differentiated, and graduated exercise, and the tactical combination of individual forces to produce both efficient individuals and an overall efficient functioning. Disciplinary practices and knowledges have enabled the development of a form of social control which far surpassed the regulatory powers of sovereignty (Foucault, 1977:219). The disciplinary practices could reduce the inefficiency of mass phenomena; master the forces that are formed in the organisation of this multiplicity; increase the utility and submission of both the collective, and of each element of this multiplicity, rapidly and with least cost; and bring these power relations not above, but inside the populace, discretely and with least expense. 'The permanent competition of individuals being classified in relation to one another' that Foucault (1977:162) speaks of, took control, not just of the time contracted within the labour agreement, but of the time of the individual's life, exacting an anonymous and diffuse form of control independent of specific political or corporate interests. Foucault is clear about the distinction between this form of submission, and exploitation. The latter separates the force and the product of labour; the former brings about 'the constricting link between an increased aptitude and an increased domination' (1977:138). Power does not operate by repressing labour 'capacity', but by enhancing, controlling, harnessing, ordering, and regulating it.

For Foucault, power regulates the population by establishing norms about a 'natural' form of humanity and policing any deviation from this norm. A wide range of public and private social organisations regulate the population by establishing links between forms of 'deviance' and formal legal rules and procedures. Following these insights, the thesis explores the normalisation of a particular form of productive humanity within feminist labour texts, and the possible ways these norms participate in policing the populace towards 'responsible' production.

Foucault notes that in the twentieth century an undisciplined and resistant discourse reformulated offences as the affirmation of a living force: 'the lack of a home with vagabondage, the lack of a master as independence, the lack of work as freedom, the lack of a time-table as the fullness of days and nights' (1977:290). For instance, Foucault quotes a thirteen year old vagabond reported upon in the newspapers at the turn of the twentieth century. He says:

> I don't work for anybody. I've worked for myself for a long time now. I have my day station and my night station. In the day, for instance, I hand out leaflets free of charge to all the passers-by; I run after the stage-coaches when they arrive and carry luggage for the passengers; I turn cart-wheels on the avenue De Neuilly; at night there are the shows; I open coach doors, I sell pass-out tickets; I've plenty to do. ... Oh, a good house, an apprenticeship, it's too much trouble. And anyway the bourgeois ... always grumbling, no freedom. (in Foucault, 1977:291)

This association of freedom with unemployment, homelessness, and casual labours, and the rejection of a life ordered by paid work and grounded in the stability of permanent residence, so very different from contemporary understandings of justice, throws into question the inevitability and neutrality of human 'rights' and 'needs', and the humanity that is their apparent source. The lifestyles that underpin contemporary capitalism, and which people struggle to achieve today, were once the terms against which, at least some part of the populace, defined its freedom.

Foucault's work on the disciplines places the subject who yearns to accumulate skill as a condition of personal freedom into an historical context, and draws links between the production of this subject and the development of capitalist labour relations and social conditions. His work on the history of sexuality is relevant to labour feminism because it suggests that the association of women with the economic value of reproduction and affective ties within the heterosexual family is not an inevitable idea that is outside power, but another of the productions of power.

3. Bio-politics

In *The History of Sexuality* (1976) Foucault describes a different kind of technique for observing the 'truth' about the human soul. It acts, not via the observation and documentation of bodies within disciplinary institutions and temporal spaces, but the Christian practice of confession in which persons are incited to speak their thoughts and actions, particularly those related to sex. In *The History of Sexuality* Foucault explicates the role of normalising discourses about the naturalness of a heterosexual procreative instinct which operate above and beyond processes of economic exploitation and discrimination to regulate the social order in the name of public health and safety. Foucault's work in *The History of Sexuality* provides an account of the possible historical origins of the emphasis upon reproductive labours in some feminist discourse, as well as the assumption that valuing 'women's work' is necessarily a liberatory strategy that will benefit the national economy.

Foucault observes that Western individuals have gradually learned to think of themselves as instinctive beings, and to demand the 'right' to freely express this 'life force'. Foucault

(1976:58) argues that, in the twentieth century, individuality, previously given by reference to family, allegiance, and protection, now flows from the truth one pronounces about the self. Since the confession focused on sex, and what is confessed is taken to be the sign of a secret buried within the self, a knowledge of the subject gradually emerges in which truth and sex are increasingly intertwined. The confessional technique 'discovers' a new element in humanity, not its mechanical, progressive nature, but a 'biological' drive inherent to the species body. This new knowledge, and the practices which produce it, gradually become the means by which power regulates the population. It is a power that acts by enticing and encouraging the subject to speak, and which orders the field of utterances according to the existing rules of formation of the disciplines, in conjunction with the social and political concerns of the time. This analysis challenges the reading of the history of sexuality as involving the gradual lifting of sexual repressions. For Foucault it had more to do with the 'discovery' or 'implantation' in the population of a sex which must, from this moment on, constantly assert its 'right' to liberation. Within this conception, the view that liberation is constituted in the act of bringing the re/productive specificity of women's labour into the purview of a documentary gaze, is not self-evident or unquestionable. It is a way of thinking that seems to reflect the actions of the combined practices of discipline and confession. These practices do not ensure a way of being that is unfettered by social or other constraints. Rather, they act to bring the disorderly domain of utterances and conduct into conformity with social norms and regulations.

Foucault's analysis argues that a view of women as carriers of national reproductive value has been central to mechanisms of social control, particularly from the eighteenth century, although discourse about women's national economic value emanated from a broad range of sites within the population. Toward the beginning of the eighteenth century there arose a 'public interest' in sex which entered discourses of reason, as opposed to merely morality, and aimed to manage sex to serve the public welfare (Foucault, 1976:22-25). Governments attempted to manage 'population' with its phenomena and variables such as birth and death rates, life expectancy, fertility, state of health, frequency of illnesses, patterns of diet and habitation (Foucault, 1976:25). At the heart of this was the notion of a sexual life force and the view that this must be captured and channelled by governments in order to secure the national good. There was an increasing analysis of the economic implications of factors central to women's lives: 'the birth rate, age of marriage, legitimate and illegitimate births, precocity and frequency of sexual relations, ways of making them fertile or sterile, the effects of unmarried life or of the prohibitions, the impact of contraceptive practices' (Foucault, 1976:25-26). The medicalisation of women's bodies also emerged at this time; it was done 'in the name of their responsibility to the health of their children, the solidity of the

family institution, and the safeguarding of society' (Foucault, 1976:147). These technologies were central to the development and stability of capitalism; they enabled the regulation of the population via the monitoring of the birth rate and ensuring longevity, public health, housing and migration (Foucault, 1976:140-141). The technologies of sex

> acted as factors of segregation and social hierarchization, exerting their influence on the respective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony. The adjustment of the accumulation of men to that of capital, the joining of the growth of human groups to the expansion of productive forces and the differential allocation of profit, were made possible in part by the exercise of bio-power in its many forms and modes of application. The investment of the body, its valorization, and the distributive management of its forces were at the time indispensable. (Foucault, 1976:141)

It was the scientific or bio-medical naturalisation of sex, and its association with the procedures for ensuring 'racial' health and purity, that reduced women's national contribution to a reproductive and affective specificity. Within scientific discourses of population, the female body is no longer an object, one of the household's possessions to be wisely managed by its head, but takes on a visibility and peculiarity of its own. 'Women' are known in terms of their role in the reproduction of healthy offspring. Foucault (1976:153) argues that:

> In the process of the hysterization of women, 'sex' was defined in three ways: as that which belongs in common to men and women; as that which belongs, *par excellence,* to men, and hence is lacking in women; but at the same time, as that which by itself constitutes woman's body, ordering it wholly in terms of the functions of reproduction and keeping it in constant agitation through the effects of that very function.

In other words women come into the public eye as beings without sexual desire, (or for whom sexual desire can only be expressed pathologically), but possessed of a reproductive drive that renders them incoherent. Women are the mothers of the nation, and hence naturally unsuited to the rational demands of citizenship. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the feminine body was found to be, not only intrinsically reproductive and pathological; it was also paradoxically invested with both a 'biological' and social responsibility, and firmly positioned within the family. The feminine body was

> placed in organic communication with the social body (whose regulated fecundity it was supposed to ensure), the family space (of which it had to be a substantial and functional element), and the life of children (which it produced and had to guarantee, by virtue of a biologico-moral responsibility lasting through the entire period of the children's education) ... . (Foucault, 1976:104)

In the new regimes of truth, marriage and kinship continue to be the principle of the formation and intelligibility of sexuality (Foucault, 1976:113). 'Since the eighteenth century the family has become an obligatory locus of affects, feelings, love; that sexuality has its

privileged point of development in the family' (Foucault, 1976:108). Foucault also comments that one of the first figures to be invested with sexuality was the 'idle woman'. 'She inhabited the outer edge of the "world", in which she always had to appear as a value, and of the family, where she was assigned a new destiny charged with conjugal and parental obligations' (Foucault, 1976:121). This way of naturalising women's place in the heterosexual family gave rise to programmes and 'choices' for women which carried the obligation that they take responsibility for the bearing and rearing of the future population. Women's place in the family is no longer supported in the name of a 'supernatural' or religious reason, but a 'scientific' knowledge of 'humanity' and its best interests. In this view the notion that women are possessed of a reproductive speciality that is central to the national good can be seen as the product of bio-power. It is implicated in the normalisation of the heterosexual family.

Foucault's work in *The History of Sexuality* also brings the insight that the current emphasis upon human rights was born of a form of class and race supremacy, and a mode of social control that depended on the medicalisation and marginalisation of homosexuality and other forms of 'deviance'. Foucault argues that 'a whole politics of settlement ... family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, and property, accompanied by a long series of permanent interventions at the level of the body, conduct, health, and everyday life' were justified in terms of the need to protect 'racial' purity (Foucault, 1976:149). Medical knowledge of sex was not based upon the location within the body of an observable, detectable reproductive drive or chromosomal impetus. It was based upon the production of the 'perversions' via a classification of pleasures, and upon the moral and political objectives of the time. To the 'perversions' were linked the threat of a corrupted individual, generation, and even the species itself (Foucault, 1976:54). Furthermore, the production of a form of natural deviance, that replaced the legal prohibitions of specified acts within sovereignty, not only enabled the regulation of pleasures, it also served to obscure, and actually exacerbate, practices within the 'normal' domain, such as child sexual abuse and marital rape. Foucault's analysis opens the possibility of a less reverent attitude to human rights and, by demonstrating their lack of inevitability, encourages a more critical consideration of their effects.

This analysis suggests that the demand for the recognition of 'women's skills', and for the values that arise from unique experiences in social and familial domains, are not necessarily outside and hostile to a subjugating form of power. Rather, one of the achievements of this modality of power is that women's bodies have come to signify affective familial values and social responsibility as a result of the knowledge-making activities of a range of social

authorities constituted in the name of widely accepted understandings of the public benefit. The confinement of women to the home is not the outcome only of narrow male, economic, or middle-class interests, but originates in a more diverse array of public knowledges. The view that women are imbued with affective and familial 'skills' can be seen as an accomplishment that defines the limits and terms of subjective experience which depends upon the continuing circulation of discourses about sexual difference. This analysis renders questionable the political utility of extrapolations of a commonality among the sexes in traditional gendered terms. A view of women as signifiers of meaning, as opposed to carriers of a shared meaning that is merely reflected in social theory, places critical focus upon the effects of circulating discourses about sexual difference. Instead of asking how dominant interests suppress women's 'rights', it becomes necessary to consider the extent to which discourses about women's rights may operate as normalising and regulating practices that contribute to the stability of hegemonic cultural forms.

Foucauldian analyses of contemporary political rationalities of liberal government[5] have also focused on the ways in which knowledges of the individual are linked to national political goals. In this work, Foucault and other scholars have raised an alternative way of understanding the relationship of liberalism to power. This has important implications for feminist conceptualisations of its role in representing 'women' and 'the community'.

4. Liberal techniques of government

In chapter two I argued that there is a tendency within much labour feminist policy analysis to understand changes in the condition of labour by tracing the effects of government policy doctrine upon workers whose 'needs' and 'interests' are often assumed, and not explicitly associated with the operation of an immanent form of social control. In Foucault's analysis of liberalism, the view that a form of freedom exists outside the boundary of State, and which must inform the interventions of State enables liberal government to regulate the population in the name of its best interests (for a full discussion of the operation of government, particularly at the level of the State see Foucault, 1991, and Gordon, 1991). Rather than privileging debates around the form of the State, that is analyses which consider the relative benefits of welfare versus neo-liberal doctrines, a Foucauldian conception of

[5] Governmental rationalities refer to discourses that inform the practice of government defined as the 'conduct of conduct', a 'methodical and rationally reflected "way of doing things" or "art" for acting upon the actions of individuals, taken either singly or collectively, so as to shape, guide, correct, and modify the ways in which they conduct themselves' (Foucault in Burchell, 1996:19). In this view, a liberal rationality of government refers to a specific logic for directing the conduct of others which is immanent within an array of expert knowledges within contemporary societies.

liberal government suggests that a more radical, and strategically useful, approach will also consider the formulation of 'social need'. In particular it is important to avoid reproducing a view of society as bound by, and invested in, the norms of productive efficiency and stability since such norms are central to the development of capitalist economic relations.

Of central importance to the operation of a liberal technology of government is the birth of the category 'society', and the 'discovery' that it is in a complex relationship of exteriority and interiority to the State. The disciplinary practices of liberalisms predecessor, the Police State, gradually collect a body of data which suggests to government that it not only has to deal with a territory and its subjects, but that 'it also has to deal with a complex and independent reality that has its own laws and mechanisms of reaction, its regulations as well as its possibilities of disturbance' (Foucault, 1984:242). This gives rise to the question of too much government, or at least the idea that 'government adds itself as a supplement which always requires questioning of its necessity and utility' (Foucault, 1981:355). As Rose (1996:43) comments: 'government now confronts itself with realities — market, civil society, citizens — that have their own internal logics and densities, their own intrinsic mechanisms of self-regulation'. Within liberalism, unlike the Police State, politics should neither interfere with these rights and interests, but nor can it govern by the exercise of sovereign will because it lacks the requisite knowledge and capacities (Rose, 1996:44).

For Foucault, the system of interventions associated with the disciplines of Police, such as the increasing differentiation of wage, status and skill hierarchies, were able to spread within a climate that was constantly suspicious of State intervention by posing the collectivity of civil society and the economy as the measure of a particular technique's acceptability. It is only possible to have a system of interventions if these do not interfere with the 'natural' processes of society and economy and the free will of the subjects who make it up. Within liberalism, there arises the need to know what the limits of human freedom are, and the deployment of technologies to 'discover' or produce the limits humanity will bear. Feminist labour thought can participate in the spread of disciplinary techniques within liberal government by confusing 'fair' evaluations of labour, and access to competitive hierarchies with something universally just, and by implication, essential to 'humanity'. The view that individuals become human or social via learning and the acquisition of skill, also supports moves which aim to increase the involvement of the population in preparation for useful production. In this sense, the discourses about humanity which are produced by and support the spread of disciplinary practices can be proliferated by a feminist discourse, even when it simultaneously and explicitly challenges the legitimacy of women's inequality compared to men, and the hierarchical organisation of work.

Discovering the limits of intervention is a constantly shifting problematic of liberalism still retained in advanced liberal democracies. It enables the continuation of intervention, but also a critique of, and transformations in the form of intervention. In this sense, liberalism is not defined as a political doctrine or legal system born of Locke's social contract, the political economy of Adam Smith, or the reality of the market, but as a 'technology', a method for reflection upon, and criticism of, reality (Foucault, 1981).

> One cannot then say that liberalism was a never achieved utopia — unless one takes as the core of liberalism those projections which it was led to formulate by its analyses and critiques. Liberalism is not a dream which clashes with reality and fails to insert itself there. It constitutes — and this is the reason for both its polymorphic character and for its recurrences — an instrument for the criticism of reality. (Foucault, 1981:356)

Within a Foucauldian framework, liberalism does not operate, or fail to operate because the State has retracted its regulative obligations, or because, as a doctrine, it legitimises hierarchy and business ideals, or fails to acknowledge the structural constraints placed upon individuals. Liberalism is a technical form of governmental action which produces and *problematises* the condition of the 'real'. It is a form of knowledge always approaching truth, perpetually open to new configurations of the best interests of the population based on new discoveries about it. For Rose and Miller (1992:179-180), liberalism confers upon itself the twin goals of securing liberty by restraining the actions of authorities deemed political in realms constituted as outside the legitimate sphere of politics, while also promoting the self-organising capacities of these quasi-natural realms.

Government is achieved via an alliance between the aims and activities of a diverse range of actors, including for example, parents, social workers, philanthropists, doctors, managers, lawyers and planners, with the decisions of free citizens within the family, businesses, and economic and social life in general (Rose and Miller, 1992:180). Unions and women's lobby groups might be included in this list. These experts produce knowledge about problems of disease, crime and punishment, poverty, madness and family life, demanding some kind of collective response so that 'the domain of politics is thus simultaneously distinguished from other spheres of rule, and inextricably bound into them' (Rose and Miller, 1992:181). Experts increasingly express their strategies, not only through laws, bureaucracies, funding regimes, and State agencies, but also via forms of authority other than those of 'the State', such as autonomous agencies, licensure, professionalisation, and bureaucratisation (Rose, 1996:46).

According to a Foucauldian approach, liberal forms of regulation do not flow solely from the formal institutions of State and public policy, but from diversely situated ways of thinking the State, its relation to society and economy, and the ideal and natural properties of individuals. Normative knowledges about individual and collective 'natures' are at the centre of expert attempts, emanating from a broad range of sites, to shape the conduct of persons both individually and within organised associations. 'Society' and its inhabitants are not 'out there' waiting to be 'represented', but are the contingent historical products and means of contemporary power. To the extent that feminist research and policy activity makes claims which shelter an authentic productive subject, established either implicitly or explicitly by its exteriority to the State or political domain, it participates in the project of liberal government. It is not outside or acting in opposition to politics from a position of 'truth', but deploys truth claims in the name of expert knowledge of natural domains. This is true for both liberal and Marxist formulations for whom 'society' is the origin of all meaning, and must take upon itself the burden of its liberation.

Foucault's conception of liberal government does not imply that labour feminist conceptions of the State must give way to a new theory; rather, there is a need to de-massify 'the State' and resist an understanding of it as *the* major site of political power. Traditional notions of 'the State', often imagined as a self-determining agent and originator of social policies and programmes, comprising a set of fixed, frequently coercive and dangerously expanding institutions, populated by 'public servants' and differentiated from the body of 'civil society', are radically decentred within a Foucauldian analysis. 'Government' does not refer to a fixed body or container of power, 'the State', whose object is domination or profit, but to the wide range of social and economic programmes and knowledges of individual difference, a generic humanity, and the problems of the population that aim to bring about prosperity, efficiency, and order. Contemporary polities are no longer regulated by a prohibitive law which acts in the name of right; rather, scientific rationality has increasingly become the foundational authority for acts of justice. This authority operates via an ever-expanding claim to know the nature and best interests of individuals and populations. 'The State' is one discursive effect of political rationalities of government, not its agent or cause: a 'mythical abstraction' possessing no fixed existence or character, no necessary function, benefit, or authority (Foucault, 1979:20).

Modern government provides security in a plurality of forms which make the notion of a clear and immovable boundary between civil society and the State nonsensical. Colin Gordon (1991:36) comments on the need for analyses to conceptualise the State in terms of 'modes of pluralisation of modern government'. Among the players and relationships

involved in exploring and defining new governmental tasks Gordon (1991:36) includes: private individuals and organizations (social hygiene, medicine, social work, the collection of statistics, and so forth); 'the cross-fertilizing interplay between different agencies and expertises, public and private alike (criminal anthropology and accident insurance; industrial sociology and psychotherapy)'; 'multiple spaces of partly autonomous authority' within the public institutions of government; delegatory forms of representation such as the 'quango', local government, and the voluntary sector; and the representative organizations of capital and labour engaged in tripartite dialogue with the state. This conceptualisation positions feminist industrial sociology as a space within the complex matrices of modern government. The subject and categories of analysis of feminist labour thought comprise elements of knowledge involved in governmental regulation.

It is not simply a matter of interrogating the law in order to discover the extent to which it exacerbates women's position at work. For Foucault, law operates primarily as a codifying device: as a technique for enshrining the moral conducts produced by the human sciences within the law. The law is important because it structures the field of possible actions by setting boundaries; it is one tactic of government, not its primary mode. In both *The History of Sexuality* and *Discipline and Punish* Foucault shows how the law has gradually become psychologised or pathologised; it outlaws not illegality, but the abnormalities discovered by the new technologies of power. In this sense, the sovereign form was never usurped completely. Contemporary power takes the form of a juridico-scientific alliance; we continue to be ruled by a transcendent form of juridical power, but this comes more and more to reflect the 'truths' thrown up by liberalism's constant problematising of social and economic domains. There is therefore a need to interrogate feminist knowledges, and to recognise that they may enable, or at least fail to question, the codification of feminine subjectivities within the law. This may occur in ways that were not intended, or which produce negative effects from feminist points of view.

Furthermore, to confine political debate to a consideration of the State, as it is traditionally conceptualised, has the effect of distracting attention from its delegatory tendencies, and from the intermediary bodies or authorities who are given responsibility for the governmental function within liberalism. To understand what happens in society by theorising the interests which dominate or vie for power within the State is to sidestep a deeper questioning of the relations between the practices and knowledges which constitute reality and social 'interests' themselves. For Foucault, power can be studied by an analysis of institutions which embody power relations, or in which power relations are reflected, but power relations are not born in or explained by institutions (Foucault, 1982:791).

Furthermore, socialists, amongst others, who see a questioning of the State as fundamentally challenging and potentially revolutionary, overlook the fact that the rise of liberalism was accompanied, not threatened by, a heated debate over the role of the State (Gordon, 1991:29). This suggests that a critical consideration of the whole gamut of knowledges that inform policy and regulate the social arena is as important as considering the negative effects of the rise of a neo-liberal doctrine within the formal institutions of State.

What is important is not the 'power of State', but the way it functions discursively to designate the limits of political spheres and characteristics of rule from 'non-political' activities (Rose and Miller, 1992:177). Positions that claim to be based on the objectivity of science in the context of questions of rulership find their authority by establishing a separation and independence from the State which emerges as distinctively political. The conception of government means that opposition to 'the State' *per se* can be dropped in favour of an active engagement with the precise programmes of government. If power carries its effects via diffuse relations of truth and practice, rather than accumulating in concentrated centres of political interest, it makes sense for feminist research and strategy to consider the nature of the truths being constituted about women and workers in general, as well as the practices which support, and flow from these conceptions. Feminisms might also be careful to avoid an uncritical acceptance of the subject positions constituted in governmental discourses as they are understood in the broader sense. In particular, my reading of a Foucauldian approach suggests the need for a more self-reflexive approach to politics that explicitly questions the universality of production, learning, or skill to 'humanity'.

While the State is not the centre of political power, different ways of thinking the project of government — the role attributed to the categories State, market, and society, the nature of the citizen, and conceptions of their best interests — shape the kinds of programmes and practices adopted, and guide the conducts of subjects in particular ways. To use Rose and Miller's (1992) expression, welfarism and neo-liberalism do not designate different forms of State power, but different modes of governing the economic, social, and personal lives of citizens constituted in conceptions of the nature of the subjects over which government is exercised, the proper purpose or goal of government, and the tactics used to achieve these ends. It is to these considerations, and their relation to labour feminism, that I now turn. Contrary to much feminist labour thought, the difference between neo-liberalism and welfarism is not the form of the State, its ideology, or the degree of intervention, but the modes of conduct these rationalities produce and the strategies they adopt in order to do so. It is a difference of technique, not ideological principle, although there is overlap in the

techniques deployed. That is, neo-liberalism is enabled by the establishment within welfare of forms of expertise authorised by social objectives and the facilitation of citizens willing to pursue their development and well-being (Rose, 1996:40).

One of the insights that emerges for labour feminism from Foucauldian analyses of the rise of welfare government, is that the social instincts so frequently attributed to the feminine subject can be seen as sentiments that are called upon to justify the multitudinous interventions of daily life. As a liberal mode of government, welfare, like neo-liberalism, is informed by the limits of 'social freedom' which it must respect and protect. However welfare government is informed by a view of 'social responsibility' that is absent in a neo-liberal rationality of government. The notion of a social responsibility or 'bond' is born of the unrest, disaffection, and economic uncertainty in Europe arising from welfare's predecessor, 'economic government', in which the State delegates legal authority to private bodies on the condition that they ensure public order (Gordon, 1991). The solution to these conditions is deemed to be social government which is based on a new way of imagining the subject. What emerged was a rationality of government in which the individual's right to security derives from their membership of the social collective, rather than their relation to private employers and the State. Social government and notions of collective social citizenship enable a delegation of authority and accountability of the governmental function from employers, beyond the central institutions of State, to a range of intermediary social bodies.

Gordon (1991) notes that the imposition of global forms of order made on behalf of 'civil society' arise not from economic interests or territorial jurisprudence, but from an extra-economic *social* sensibility. Early French ways of thinking about public assistance referred to the 'feeling of compassion intrinsic to human nature and hence coeval with, if not anterior to, society and government' (Gordon, 1991:23). Gordon comments that these sentiments were local and finite in range, and gives the example of the redirection of domiciliary assistance to the family in the name of 'natural sympathies'. Foucault (in Gordon, 1991:24) argues that in order to establish which forms of assistance were possible, it was necessary

> ... to define for social man the nature and limits of the feelings of pity, compassion and solidarity which can unite him to his fellows. The theory of assistance must be founded on this semi-moral, semi-psychological analysis, rather than on a definition of contractual group obligations.

Foucault (in Gordon, 1991:22) sees the earliest expression of a non-economic, non-juridical collective interest exemplified in Adam Ferguson's *History of Civil Society*. Gordon describes Foucault's reading of Ferguson in the following terms:

> Society makes its own history out of its 'self-rending unity' *(unite dechirante):* that is to say, the intrinsic tension between the centrifugal forces of economic egoisms and a centripetal force of non-economic interests, that feeling of sympathy or 'disinterested interest' whereby individuals naturally espouse the well-being of their proximate family, clan or nations (and take comfort in the adversities of others). (Gordon, 1991:22)

The social subject that decries the competitive urges of economic man within many feminist texts is not a new or radical challenge. While it may generate a subversion of dominant forms at times, it is also the means by which modern industrial States have found their stability. Gordon (1991:35) argues that 'society', understood as a unified domain of interests, is not the State's antagonist or prey, but is the basis upon which its security depended. The sense of social responsibility within a welfare rationality of government did not arise from a natural condition of 'society' or shared feeling of identity. Rather, this category is itself the product and means of an economic and political agenda conceived in order to produce economic stability within the urban revolts of nineteenth-century Europe (Gordon, 1991).

Social solidarity establishes, in the name of truth, an interdependence among individuals and a collective interest upon whose behalf expert authorities can act. With the discovery of civil society, the private practices of the disciplinary institutions gradually come into public scrutiny. It becomes possible for trade unions and other social bodies to intervene in the employer-employee relation in the name of the 'social' interest. Rose (1990) argues that welfare was concerned with the condition of labour and the health and well-being of the worker outside work which, if not protected, could impede efficiency. The efficiency of production was tied to the 'welfare' of the worker (Rose, 1990:62). The State began increasingly to create social devices which would link State and citizens whose activities were brought increasingly into the view of public authorities. In the transition to social government the relation between employee and employer becomes encumbered by sets of statutory requirements (Rose, 1990:61). Over the course of the twentieth century these are gradually accompanied by an increasing concern with general welfare, security, harmony, and productivity. A number of programmes are instituted to cater for the health and well-being of workers, the need for support outside the wage relation, the minimisation of hostilities within the employment relation, and the maximisation of the worker's contribution to enterprise objectives (Rose, 1990:62). Clearly welfare government has had many positive effects. However, a failure to understand the political history of the social subject can divert critical attention from its role in rendering the condition of capitalist employee-employer relations the responsibility of society, as well as the natural product of apparently progressive social demands.

A failure to politicise social need may also lead to an unknowing reproduction and passive conformity to capitalist social norms. Defert (1991) sees institutions of welfare and social security as a form of social capitalisation. Insurance calculations effectively capitalize life by producing the individual life within a social field of risk against which insurance premiums must be paid for protection from risk. These payments may then be stored in capitalist institutions. Donzelot (1991a) argues that workers no longer face the capitalist but the social; the social is responsible for the provision of security not the employer as in economic government. This also guarantees the State because it is the only institution possessed of a solidity upon which responsibility for insurance can safely be placed. Rose and Miller (1992) argue that welfarism seeks forms of social insurance, based upon true knowledge of the best interests of society, in exchange for individual responsibility, with the effect of de-politicising techniques of government and encouraging a form of passive solidarity. Welfare extends the domain of the political, and renders it non-political at the same time with its insistence that questions of the general welfare are to be answered via technical rational means (Rose, 1996:50). Welfare policies become moral prescriptions of behaviour; they attempt to teach subjects to behave in particular ways or suffer the consequences of the withdrawal of social support.

To the extent that feminism emphasises social responsibility for producing economic stability and security, and emphasises the need for this to be achieved via a range of centralised systems for monitoring and regulating social life, it most closely resembles a welfare mode of government. However, this would not exclude the possibility that it also reproduces elements of a neo-liberal rationality of government. Both neo-liberal and welfare practices of government produce normative models of conduct which imagine that individuals will properly devote themselves to the support of national market objectives. The question is really whether they will do this in exchange for social rights, or whether they are charged with an individual responsibility to lighten the burden their potential market failure places upon society.

Neo-liberalism rejects problematisations of the social in moral terms, advocating the removal of these forms of 'moral corruption and dependence' in favour of managerially-controlled, monetarist forms of calculation, and State support of the market (Rose and Miller, 1992) However, while neo-liberalism relies on less centralised means, and constitutes a 'degovernmentalisation of the State', it does not represent a 'de-governmentalisation' *per se* (Barry et al., 1996:11). For instance, Rose and Miller (1992:200) suggest that wages based on product output, rather than skill, represents a monetarist style documentation system,

with the insistence that it is not a reduction in visibility, but a new mode of visibility, enabling a different kind of decision and relation. For Rose (1996), neo-liberalism uses forms of the audit, monetarisation, budgeting, and other financial, calculable measures which establish new ways of thinking, and new norms of behaviour. Commentary on the trend toward a neo-liberal future in Australia points out that we are not seeing the advent of deregulation in the sense of lack of intervention and regulation. Rather, there has been the birth of new kinds of regulations involving, not only or primarily economists and business, but also trade unions and workers (Dean, 1998; McEachern, 1995).

Neo-liberalism seeks to detach the practices of expertise from the institutions of State; to govern through the regulated choices of individual citizens who are endowed with freedom of choice and the desire for self-actualisation and self-fulfilment (Rose, 1996:41). Neo-liberalism places the burden for developing responsible citizenship and supporting the lifetime upon the individual. Deregulatory policy does not mean no intervention; it means establishing forms of legal, institutional and cultural conditions which create an arena of entrepreneurial conduct (Burchell, 1993:274). Within neo-liberalism, life is likened to an enterprise. Like a successful enterprise the individual must intervene within their own life to improve themselves; successful human beings develop their human capital or set of resources within the environment (Gordon, 1991:44). So neo-liberalism operates not by abandoning individuals to the ravages of a market economy, but by promoting forms of conduct that will support the market economy. Within a neo-liberal mode of government the social has become responsible for itself and individuals are charged with the obligation of lessening their burden upon the collective via permanent retraining and self-management in the name of their own freedom. Neo-liberalism simply adopts new means by which to stimulate the self-development of individuals.

The argument between welfare and neo-liberalism is about who will pay for the social fall-out of the capitalist market. It is not a debate which questions the privilege of the market, or the view that individuals are 'naturally' inclined to develop human capital. If feminism wishes to question the existing order, it must consider the diffuse knowledges and practices that enable the privileging of market relations within both welfare and neo-liberal technologies of government.

Burchell (1996:26 and 29) raises the central contradiction that arises from the centrality of the free subject to rationalities of government. Liberal government is always 'economic government' — 'a government which economises on its own costs: a greater effort of technique aimed at accomplishing more through a lesser exertion of force and authority'

(Gordon, 1991:24). However, as Burchell points out, poor economic performance at high economic cost can readily be evidenced in the contemporary context, yet this does not lead to a public rejection of this style of government. Burchell(1996:26) concludes:

> It would seem that the relationship between governmental activities and the self conduct of the governed takes hold within a space in which there can be considerable latitude *vis à vis* criteria for judging whether government has met the criteria advanced by itself for its capacity to govern.

This would seem to be because the 'proper' role of government, understood as the protection of apparently natural freedoms, distracts attention from, and makes secondary, debates about the extent to which particular actions can, or might be deemed 'efficient' or 'productive'. Liberalism does not ask — how does the pursuit of economic and social freedom affect poverty, but what social, economic, and psychological truths must be respected as a condition of natural freedoms? The important element of a liberal debate about political power is that 'natural' freedoms are seen to have been respected and secured. This rationality of government provides liberalism with its peculiar tenacity and endurance, despite its arguably continual failure to provide the conditions of social security, well-being, and economic efficiency.

Conclusion

The preceding chapter has highlighted the historical and political significance of the subject whose freedom to develop skilfulness, and to meet needs arising from placement in the traditional heterosexual family, must not be interfered with, but supported by the State in the interests of the public benefit. This is not an experience that precedes and informs language or sociality, but one which is given to the disciplines of modern social theory by normalising practices which have come to define the limits of experience and identity. This is not to suggest that this subject be rejected; nor does it assume that its outcomes are necessarily negative. This would accept that what is political must necessarily be condemned because it has repressive effects, or that the subject is an economically determined ideological effect which must be transcended. Foucauldian analyses suggests a politicisation of the subject, not in order to find a purer place outside politics from which to resist, but in order to participate in the project of government with more awareness and openness. The ensuing discussion takes up the task of interrogating the 'woman worker' as she is imagined within feminist labour texts. I consider the extent to which this subject reflects the norms and values that Foucauldian studies have politicised, and the dangers that may arise from this for labour feminism.

4
RE-ACTIVATING FEMININE DIFFERENCE: THE CONSTITUTION OF 'WOMEN'S WORK' WITHIN FEMINIST LABOUR THOUGHT

At the heart of labour feminist texts is the 'woman worker' and 'women's work'. This chapter analyses the qualities that describe the specificity of women and their labour within a range of feminist labour texts. Feminists have often referred to patriarchal stereotypes, ideology or culture in explaining the oppression of women; that is, meanings about what can be expected of women play a primary role in their subordinate position. Primary among these meanings has been a view of women as sexual beings with domestic ties. Cockburn (1991:76) puts this account as follows:

> This is what women *are* to most men (and to most women): people who have domestic ties. Even if the woman in question is celibate or childless she is seen and represented as one of the maternal sex.

At the same time there has been the widespread assertion that addressing women's economic disadvantage must involve the valuation of the 'qualities women bring to work' or 'traditional women's work'. The following discussion illustrates the reproduction, within particular instances of feminist labour discourse, of an association of traditional labours with a unified group — women — who differ systematically from another group — men. This is a move which goes beyond a critique of gendered meanings and the way they fix and limit what can be thought about women's work, or even of a valorisation of activities that are derided because they are associated with women, to one which reaffirms that these meanings describe something uniform about women and the work they do. In speaking about women's work, feminist labour thought sometimes gives the impression that it is inevitable that women and their work be defined in terms of the emotional and sexual labours associated with traditional roles in the family.

The first part of the chapter gives examples from feminist labour texts to illustrate this point. The second part of the chapter considers the possibility that a valorisation of women and women's work may unintentionally participate in reinscribing, naturalising and deriding the feminine. It also argues that generalisations about the nature of 'women's work' can lead to a neglect of the diversity of experience among those who identify as 'women'. The chapter closes by positing an alternative mode of conceptualising differences at work.

1. Polarising production

Though not typical of labour feminist analyses in general, some feminist writers have explained sexual divisions at work with direct references to the biological experiences of women. A clear example of this is given in Al Hibri (1984) who refers directly to the sexuality of women within particular kinds of kinship and marriage relations in explanations of sexual divisions of labour.

> The most obvious difference between the male and female is the genital difference and related phenomena. One such phenomenon is that females can bleed ... a woman's body can change shape and then produce a miniature human being, which is subsequently nourished by the female body and grows to start another full life. (Al-Hibri, 1984:83-84)

From this observation follow assertions about the motives, drives and behaviours of women regardless of age, sexuality, procreative status, and the style of organisation of child bearing and raising or other relevant social practices. Al Hibri (1984:88) says of women:

> her experience of the world was substantially different from that of the male. She was planted deeply into the cycle of life and the womb and bosom of nature. Thus she had no reason to feel cut off, frustrated, or shortchanged.

In Al-Hibri's text (1984:88-89) women were always productive but this differed from the male in that women's labour was 'oriented primarily toward improving the quality of life (agriculture, for example)'. In effect, the text gives the impression that the origins of women's shared circumstances and the specificity of their labour grows out of procreative drives and roles. Bradley's (1990:30) summary of anthropological and historical accounts of the sexual division of labour notes that, while most feminists and sociobiologists have rejected biologistic explanations which overlook cultural variability, paradoxically for many, 'women's reproductive role takes on a symbolic significance so great that in practice such accounts are hard to distinguish from those of biological determinists'.

For most labour feminists the association of women with caring and domesticity is not established on the basis of biology but 'socialisation'. In more contemporary Australian feminist industry policy critique 'typical women's skills' include 'communication skills,

developing sound interpersonal relationships, the ability to do many things at one time; and the work of emotional and physical caring' (Gender Equity Network:1995:4). 'Women's skills' are carried into female-dominated areas of employment by women who acquire them as a result of exposure to training for feminine roles. Kempnich et al. (1992:8-10) assert that,

> women's socialisation trains them to assume a caring role — everybody else's needs come first. This training, which is intended primarily to fulfil a need in the domestic sphere, is nevertheless carried over into the public arena when women participate in the workforce.

Similarly some sociological studies (for example, James, 1989 and Kaplan Daniels, 1987) have explicitly explained 'women's difference' as arising in experiences or 'roles' within the domestic realm. For these authors the emphasis is often upon valuing as labour the skills that women bring to work. For example Ungerson (1990:5) comments that 'women do have caring skills and successfully deliver very considerable quantities of welfare to numbers of dependent adults and children; the problem is that these skills remain unrecognized'. For Williams (1992:31-32),

> one of the problems for women workers is that, because the skills they develop in their socialisation as women and in managing the household derive from an unpaid arena of work which is not legitimated as 'work' and because those skills are rather regarded as the exercise of tacit, 'natural' qualities, such 'skills' are not officially recognised as critical competencies even when they are used in low paid work such as child-care.

This kind of position typically insists upon the need to include and value the contributions of 'women's work' within understandings of skill, production, citizenship and economy.

Alternative accounts focus upon the social and historical production of identity by patriarchal and capitalist interests. Such analyses place less emphasis upon the 'special' qualities of womanhood, seeking to explain instead the way that particular labours are performed by women as a result of oppressive ideology. These analyses nevertheless associate particular labours with women. For example, commentary on service sector jobs involves an analytic step between the observation that women are sexually objectified and expected to be caring in the workplace to the observation that women's work is sexual and emotional in content. For Adkins (1995) the constitution of women as sexual objects in the workplace is transformed into 'sexual servicing'.

> Women not only took orders, served food and drinks and cleared tables, they (and only they) also provided sexual servicing for men, both customers and co-workers. Women were thus not only 'economically productive' but also 'sexually productive' workers. (Adkins, 1995:147)

In this text it is presented as self-evident that the denigration of women as sexual objects is a form of 'production' because 'most women (regardless of their occupation) were required to fulfil conditions which related to the production of an 'attractive' female workforce; they were forced to 'expect and deal with forms of sexual objectification from men customers and men co-workers as an integral part of their work' and 'were defined, indeed were only usually allowed into the workplace, as sexual workers' (Adkins, 1995:145). Commentators on service work claim that emotional labour is 'structured', 'regulated', 'exhausting', 'commodified', 'rational', 'exploited' and 'appropriated', in the same way that the products of men's labour have been (for example, Hochschild, 1983; Filby, 1992; Tancred Sheriff, 1989). Although the interpersonal aspect of work is seen as physically invisible and deeply personal, it is conceptualised as an item of exchange within the labour process. For these authors women workers are exploited via the appropriation of emotions and sexuality by employers for profit, transforming their interpersonal responses into 'surplus product', and the customer, or customer satisfaction, into the 'object product' of exploited female service labour. For instance, Filby (1992) argues that women experience emotional labour as alienation within capitalist labour relations and will 'bolster the esteem of customers' because their managers create an environment in which they are forced to do so. Here references to specific kinds of heterosexual relations are transformed into 'work', that is, men's objectification of women's bodies comes to define the nature of contemporary 'women's productive contribution'. Within these analyses there is a slip between a discussion of women's oppression via their sexuality and emotionality, and definitions of women's service work as primarily sexual and emotional in content. In this way generalised discourses which constitute women as primarily emotional and sexual beings come to define feminist definitions of 'women's work'.

Beasley (1994) draws attention to the problem that feminist critiques of economics focus purely upon women's exclusion, neglecting to expound an alternative framework or way of thinking the economic that can account for 'the specificity of women's work and the ways in which it may depart from the logic of the market' (1994:ix). Beasley (1994:16) questions whether 'women's labour' can be thought of as an object, noting, with reference to women's work on male partners, that 'his very self denotes the enactment of women's relentless labour of activation/construction of subjects'. She points out the limitations of traditional frameworks, especially Marxism, to understand or explain women's work within modern Western heterosexual relations.

> For one thing Marx's notion of 'labour' is 'oddly disembodied, despite an overall emphasis on muscularity. It is not sexually specific or sexually differentiated for the most part, nor is it libidinal, even if occasionally procreative. Though for Marx labour is muscular and cognitive, he describes consciousness in rather limited terms and his

> analysis recognises unconscious processes only to a restricted degree. While for Marx the subject/body is politically passionate, it is peculiarly bereft of an emotional life. The psychic, personal and emotional features of labour are not fully incorporated. (Beasley, 1994:12) ... Marx's view of labour is probably singularly unhelpful when considering labours which are undoubtedly constructed in a domain enmeshed with bodily, psychic, libidinal, emotional and deeply personalised meanings'. (Beasley, 1994:13)

In order to overcome the market bias in economic thinking, Beasley (1994:x) 'intentionally focuses on the particularities of women's activities and especially on the "private" unpaid labour they undertake'. In defending this bias within the analysis Beasley refers to 'the directly sensuous, libidinal and bodily aspects of women's experience', admits sympathy with the 'position that women's labour should be described by reference to sex' and recognises that 'different kinds of bodies ... offer different capacities to the organisation of production' (1994:xiv). Women's work for Beasley involves the 'complex interweaving of the creation of services/goods with the expression of love/affection/care (in which) one sees the formulation of an *emotional economy*'. Marx cannot explain women's work because it does not refer to 'invisible, emotional and psychic aspects of labour' (Beasley, 1994:13). The labour performed by Western women within the sexual order 'is undertaken not on the basis of exchange but rather on the grounds of 'love' or 'altruism'. Furthermore Beasley (1994:16) asserts that in

> an emotional economy women labour upon their 'masters', thus unsettling the more clear-cut distinctions and distance between the subject/object that Marx describes in the exchange model of class relations of dominance/subordination. When the expropriator is himself the 'objectification' of labour, when his very self denotes the enactment of women's relentless labour of activation/construction of subjects amongst others, the inside/outside spatiality and (quantifiable) measurement of alienation and expropriation become uncertain indeed.

Beasley's summary of 'modern Western women's labours' include:

> 1. Sex differentiated *waged* work;
> 2. public unpaid labours which replicate features of (3) to (8);
> 3. 'service' support labours, including travel, educational and civic duties, etc;
> 4. 'housework', including shopping, cooking, washing, home maintenance, gardening, etc;
> 5. 'body work'/body management, including organisation of diet, exercise and sleep, maintenance of 'beauty', childbirth, activities related to menstruation and health, etc;
> 6. sex;
> 7. childcare;
> 8. emotional labour, including husband-care, care for friends, neighbours, relatives, etc. (Beasley, 1994:33)

While this typology usefully classifies activities that are ignored or stigmatised as 'leisure' or not-work, thereby extending the category of production, it unnecessarily ties these activities to one sex. Qualities ascribed to women within traditional gender dichotomies and relations

are used to describe something unique about 'women' and the work they do. They also come to inform 'alternative' economic paradigms.

In some instances labour feminist texts flip gender binaries by valorising feminine qualities and degrading men and masculinity. This typically involves an association of men with negative qualities of domination and the exploitation of women and nature, flowing from a negative conception of power as something that men possess and use over women. For Al-Hibri the male feels frustrated and alienated as well as inadequate, jealous and hostile toward the female (1984:85) and seeks to realise his defining desire for immortality by appropriating the control of offspring, minimising the female's contribution to reproduction, assuming responsibility for providing for the woman and child and developing technology and religion (1984:86-90). Al-Hibri argues that women's procreative labour is not determined by biology, but is the outcome of a male drive or universal political interest to exploit and control women's sexuality and their labour.

While most labour feminists reject the biologistic tendencies in Al Hibri's radical feminist stance, many of them do assume that gender ideologies can describe fixed differences in men's and women's work. Masculine subjects, and men, are typically described as uncaring and unemotional. The masculine subject of economics consciously maximises access to scarce material resources; he is 'rule driven, simplemindedly selfish, uninterested in building relations for their own sake' (McCloskey, 1993:79) while women are 'co-operative, anti-authoritarian and anarchopacifist' (McCloskey, 1993:85). Women are more likely to express these traits because they are positioned in the private realm where they take primary responsibility for family dependents. The feminine involves, in England's (1993:40) words, 'emotional connections and the skill and work entailed in honouring connections; ... activities traditionally assigned to women'. According to Strassman, motherhood is performed without self-interest or egoistic desires. The 'missing feminine experience' which needs to be included in economic paradigms revolves around a recognition of the 'gift-giving and coercion' women experience especially in domestic work (Nelson, 1993:33). According to Nelson, feminist theory rejects 'masculine' definitions of economics which focus on choices detached from social/physical contexts, stressing material well-being and ignoring nonmaterial sources of human satisfaction such as child care and health care (1993:32). 'Progressive' economists reject the androcentrism of neoclassical economics arguing for 'a better economics ... which would choose carefully from both "masculine" and "feminine" approaches' (Nelson, 1993:29). 'Alternative' visions for the future are necessarily imagined in relation to a 'community' model.

The solution to the 'problem' of men's urge to dominate and exploit is sometimes posited as men's need to learn to become more like women. The following quote assumes that men already do not possess caring qualities that women demonstrate in female dominated professions.

> Nursing, teaching, social work, and librarianship need caring and dedicated people, and it would be a positive social change if men were encouraged to develop these 'feminine' skills and orientations. ... If the aim is gender equality, then men should be encouraged to become more 'like women' by developing, or feeling free to express, interests and skills in traditionally feminine activities, and crossing over to predominantly female jobs. ... But short of promoting separatism, transforming men is the only logical solution to the problem of gender inequality. Women have been working for decades to become men's equals. It is now time for men to work at becoming women's equals. (Williams, 1995:178-179)

Here the qualities attributed to men within a strongly macho discourse are accumulated within men and associated with the 'nature' of actual men. The world is also conceptualised as divided by masculine and feminine qualities, in which one mutually excludes the other, and both together encompass the whole work of 'work', so that to be a caring man is to be 'abnormal' or 'special'. The negative qualities which tell men who they are, and which guide and define the conducts of persons called men, are reinscribed in these kinds of statements. There is then support, rather than subversion of domination as a sign of normal masculinity.

At the same time, the conception of the relation between gender ideology and skill in the positions above is underpinned by the learning subject; men need to 'become' more like women by 'developing' or 'feeling free to express interests and skills'. There is the assumption that people *possess* skill as a result of social learning. Instead of arguing for the need to resist the objectification and fixing of persons in traditionally gendered terms, and to problematise its negative effects, William's quote above also repeats the link between skill acquisition and liberation. There is the assumption that 'positive social change' will ensue when men become more deeply involved in the project of improving their skills.

Another form that gender dichotomies take within some feminist labour texts is the association of women with 'the service sector'. This frequently involves constituting men, and men's role in production as the manufacturing 'other' of women's work. The assumption that women's work is emotional, domestic, and caring often appears to rest upon the constitution of men's work as physical, public, and dominating. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (in Women's Bureau, 1990:12) includes ten major industries in its definition of the 'service sector'. These include hotels, licensed clubs, cafes and restaurants, accommodation, travel agencies, motor vehicle hire, hair-dressers, beauty salons, laundries and drycleaners, photography services, and motion picture theatres. Here industries which

employ a majority of women are grouped together under the heading 'services'. Feminist texts also often accept an association of women and service-oriented jobs. The publication of an important conference on women and award restructuring provides a typical example.

> The growth of the service sector and the massive increase in the labour force participation rates of women are two prominent and related features of social and economic development in advanced industrial economies. Australia is no exception. Between 1966 and 1988 the service sector's share of national employment grew by 12 per cent to 76.4 per cent, and the employment shares of the agricultural/mining and manufacturing sectors fell correspondingly. Over the same period women's labour force participation rates rose from 36 per cent to 50 per cent. (Women's Bureau, 1990:4)

This conception of a two pole economy, in which men and manufacturing and women and the service sector are opposed, is commonly accepted as describing a self-evident fact about the economy. However, ways of thinking about the economy and its sectors are deeply gendered. That is, thinking and speaking about economic shifts in the kinds of labours performed are read through and given life within gendered discourses. New jobs in tourism, hospitality, and retail and community work are gathered together and attributed a common content — 'service' — because women do them, and because existing ways of thinking what women do involve the notion of usefulness and subservience to the needs of others. Understandings of women's work as unified by the element of 'service' does not reflect, but constitutes the nature of particular jobs and has effects upon the way they are performed.

Although 'the services' are widely held to designate a 'sector' of the economy that is distinguishable from other sectors, usually male-dominated sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture, illustrative, fixed content which can substantiate its 'different' nature, and women's association with it, is scarce. Instead a range of definitions exist which are often contradictory. Theresa Perkins (1983:27) finds little evidence to support the strong correlation between the increase in women's economic activity and the rise of the 'service sector,' but notes it has 'achieved the status of a "common sense" assumption that does not require investigation'. Coombs and Green (1989:280), writing within the context of the labour process debate, define the 'service sector' as:

1. Service industries: including tertiary industries (transport, communications, utilities), personal services (hairdressers, dentists, catering), goods services (maintenance of cars, consumer goods and buildings), producer services (finance, banking, legal and research work), cultural industries (publishing, broadcasting, advertising) and public services (education, health and public administration);
2. Service products: which are also produced by manufacturing industries who produce services or who consume them internally;
3. Service workers: people who actually produce the service products are distributed across all industries both service and manufacturing; and
4. Service functions: necessary human requirements which can be satisfied in a number of historically specific and changing ways.

This description would seem to make redundant the usefulness of the term 'service' to unify or define an industry, job or industrial sector. Coombs and Green (1989:279) conclude that the service sector is diverse lamenting that 'a lot of ink has been spilt in attempting some embracing definition ... much of it wasted by trying to bring unity to what is better left as diversity'. Yet, the authors conclude that 'the main thing (the service sector) has in common is that their products, the resultant service, are not in the main physical goods but are in some way intangible, impermanent or immaterial' (1989:279). In other words the 'service sector' is unified by establishing its difference from occupations which produce physical objects.

Notions of 'women's skills' often function as a centre around which 'services' coalesce within some feminist texts. In Australia at the time of award restructuring, when skill accreditation systems were an emphasised component of the national industrial agenda, women's work was thought about as involving a variety of tasks, although the examples given of 'unrecognised' skills often included emotional or domestically derived abilities.

> The development of career paths requires job descriptions that list tasks in order of complexity and skill employment. The difficulty with this is that many of the skills used are unrecognised as acquired skills. One example is childcare, where nurturing is not recognised as a workplace skill because it has traditionally been done as part of unpaid domestic labour. Another example is the skill of communicating, especially where there is conflict. Numerous receptionist jobs, for example, rely on skills of 'diplomacy'. (Women's Employment Branch, 1989:12)

Service sector skills are variously referred to as 'generic', 'relational' or 'emotional', 'invisible', 'intangible', 'difficult to assess', or 'perceived as difficult to assess', and 'qualitative'. In contrast, it is argued that male work is linked, whether erroneously or not, with specific, task related, technical or manual skills, and with the production of physical objects which can be quantitatively measured (Junor, 1993).

2. Some problems arising from binary thinking

What is different about women's work sometimes sounds very much like traditional versions of the 'good mother'. Good mothers are often seen to provide family stability by using skills of diplomacy and communication. Good mothers are supposed to be nurturing which often involves the expectation that they put aside their own 'selfish' needs and prioritise the emotional and physical needs of the family. In this way the home takes on qualities of 'intimacy' and 'altruism'. Flax (1991:53) says that the assumption that relationships, needs and desires expressed within the private realm are necessarily more 'intimate' than those expressed in the realm of production establishes the public realm as a

rationally organised order in which libidinal and emotive reactions are absent. For Flax the association (whether essentialist or social constructionist) of women with mothering, relating, caring and preserving, simply resurrects women as a stand-in for the 'natural', the body and materiality in opposition to men's supposed affinity with abstraction, militarism and power over nature and other people's bodies (Flax, 1992:53). Unless gender binaries are also challenged, constituting private realm associations as 'caring' can disallow or make 'abnormal' the possibility of alienation, violence and self-interest in relations between women and their 'dependents', or alternatively, of communication and consensus in relations with and among men.

The assumption that work can be neatly divided into the altruistic emotional labours of women and the dominant object activities of men is an oversimplification that denies areas of overlap between men and women. For instance while Beasley's (1994) analysis convincingly demonstrates the inability of a Marxist conception of labour to account for activities constituted as feminine, a view of women's work as different from men's work because boundaries between self and others are uncertain tends to screen off the possibility that men also perform emotional labour. When men act and speak in ways that influence the way others think and feel about themselves, are they also labouring? If so, why is it necessary to speak about emotional labours as specific to women? There is an unnecessary obscuration of men's personalised and intimate subjective investments and an assumption that men's work is not to be thought of as caring.

An emphasis upon women's service work, can also overlook the multiple ways that subjects are constituted within a diverse work culture. For example, the argument that women service workers are employed specifically to perform sexual labours, depends upon the service worker being recognised and differentiated first and foremost as a 'man' or a 'woman' rather than say 'black', 'Asian', 'ethnic' or 'lesbian'. Assuming that sexualised meanings about women can constitute a specific and unified domain of activities deflects attention from the possibility that alternative forms of subjectification are anything other than additional and marginal to gender oppression. As Williams (1993:152) says with reference to feminist economists, 'they sometimes reuniversalize gender, rendering it cultureless and raceless, unintentionally reinventing the timeless human or uncomplicated feminine perspectives'.

An association of women with the positive qualities of maternity, pays little consideration to the variable way that sexual difference has been thought, but assumes it has always been recognisable in the same way across time and place. Butler (1993:5) makes the following point in this regard.

> The concept of 'sex' is itself troubled terrain, formed through a series of contestations over what ought to be decisive criterion for distinguishing between the two sexes; the concept of sex has a history that is covered over by the figure of the site or surface of inscription.

Not all women's work has been defined in terms of 'good' mothering. For instance, while government policy has emphasised the service that 'women' perform for the nation in their childbearing and rearing roles, black women, both in Australia and elsewhere, have often actively been discouraged from raising children, and have suffered the collapse of family and kin networks. As Scott (1988:47) notes:

> to maintain that femininity predisposes women to certain (nurturing) jobs or (collaborative) styles of work is to naturalize complex economic and social processes and, once again, to obscure the differences that have characterized women's occupational histories.

For example, the labour performed by Aboriginal women in white society since colonisation has not been represented purely in terms of 'traditional women's work', but includes outdoor pastoral, agricultural, and fishing labour (Goodall and Huggins, 1992:407). Williams (1993:151-152) notes that following the emancipation of African Americans in the United States, 'whites criticised black women who removed themselves from fieldwork, accusing them of aspiring to inappropriate norms of womanhood'. It is also the case that women from a variety of cultural positions are choosing not to have children due to economic necessity or because they seek different kinds of lives. Many women cannot conceive, others are outside childbearing years. The reproduction of the female sex as universally identified with nurturing children and community brings a lack of sensitivity to questions of difference; it risks silencing, alienating or doing violence to women who have fought to be recognised as mothers or who have actively rejected motherhood. Elam (1994:32) comments that 'a feminism that believes it knows what a woman is and what she can do both forecloses the limitless possibilities of women and misrepresents the various forms that social injustice can take'.

The paradox that becomes evident in the transformation of women's work to women's skills is that the grounds for women's inclusion in productive paradigms is the same as the basis of their oppression. That is, the qualities and roles attributed to women by the existing gender order are the same ones that a number of feminist texts would valorise, both culturally and legally. Gender ideologies, which are seen to explain women's oppression (the notion that women are naturally soft and nurturing as a result of their reproductive capacity), are also used to justify collective action by and for women (women possess 'skills' arising from shared, oppressive domestic/reproductive roles). Consider the following comment.

> Women are socialised according to certain values and perspectives which favour the dominating society. ... The social role of women is based on accomplishing the demands or expectations of others. (United Nations, Women 2000, in Kempnich, 1992:3)

On this issue Elam (1994:44) comments that 'women preserve their community only by insisting that it is man made'. Women cannot share in a femininity that is not repressive or positive, but come into existence in their subordinate relation to men.

Reaffirming gender binaries in thinking about work fails to sufficiently challenge the means by which the segregation and derision of women workers has been enabled. The insistence that work performed traditionally by women is necessarily marked by its emotional and sexual qualities in a way that traditional men's work is not, or that women are more likely than men to express 'emotional skill', also establishes an association of women with emotion, sexuality and other qualities associated with reproduction, thereby re-invoking the grounds upon which women's work is derided. Associations of women's work with 'service' and with labours that are 'intangible' or difficult to include within traditional productivity measures may have counter-productive effects. Feminist statements may occasionally unwittingly align themselves with more hostile discourses which naturalise caring and nurturing as possessed universally among women. The argument that 'women's work' or 'women's skills' involve nurturing and caring due to socialisation or cultural ideology, creates the irony that women presumably do not need to learn them. They might then be seen as the obvious candidates for 'service' jobs constituted in terms of subservience to customer's needs and demands. Ironically essentialist charges of this kind are precisely what feminists have wished to avoid in their emphasis on the social and political, rather than biological, origins of skill.

Fixing the meaning of woman and tying traditional feminine traits to the category 'woman' bolsters the norm which helps to define what is right and proper conduct for women. In some feminist texts moral virtues often attached to 'good', 'healthy' or 'normal' womanhood are being translated into expressions of 'efficient' and 'productive' womanhood. Women are objectified and become morally obliged in the name of productivity to perform qualities associated with femininity. Being perceived as 'uncaring' can be constituted as 'aberrant' since 'good/natural' women are caring. In effect thinking women's work within feminist labour discourse may contribute to the requirement and obligation of women to accept a difference from men based on domesticity, heterosexuality, procreativity and the provision of service. The association of women with these relations and traits is precisely what feminists have been opposed to, that is, the naturalisation of women with domestic, heterosexual reproductive and subservient labours.

Thinking about labour as self-evidently sexed obscures consideration of why it is necessary to think about women as uniformly recognisable in terms of a 'reproductive capacity'. It also obscures the origins of meanings of womanhood and their role in existing power relations in favour of discursive re-activations of some of its central premises. The reference to 'traditional men's work' and 'traditional women's work' is produced by a discursive process of delimitation, the drawing of a boundary which designates what will and what will not constitute the object.

In *The History of Sexuality* (1976) Foucault offers insights into some of these questions. He argued that the rise of industrial capitalism after the sixteenth century did not see the repression and control of sexually differentiated labour capacities, but the production of subjects possessed of sexually differentiated 'biological drives' or a life force whose health and purity could only be ensured by 'normal' heterosexual conduct. Power is not expressed in the form of men's control and exclusion of women's labours in their efforts to preserve their own humanity and creativity or labour power. Rather, the apparent naturalness of this subject is an effect of power. This subject is merely reinvoked in stories about sex segregation which assume an active male drive that exploits and sexually objectifies a passive reproductive femininity. For Foucault (1976) the legal sanction and normative dominance of the heterosexual nuclear family is both an effect and the means by which the existing order was formed and consolidated. The association of 'women' with a form of domestic, heterosexual labour is not only problematic because it reproduces derided and narrow meanings of women; it also reiterates norms involved in social regulation.

In raising these considerations I do not wish to imply that feminist discourse about 'women's skills' is purely complicit with dominant meaning systems. Clearly, asserting the productive quality of emotional and domestic tasks and attaching positive terms such as caring and nurturing to emotional labours has been a positive and important step with a range of beneficial outcomes. It has become possible to counter claims that particular activities are unskilled, natural or passive. The categories of skill and economy have been extended to include activities that were not previously deemed 'work' such as unpaid housekeeping and other activities. Labour feminists have introduced the possibility of talking about domestic work and emotionality as valuable within mainstream economic policy discourse despite legal classifications to the contrary, thereby undermining the legitimacy of official designations of skill and the wage rates tied to them. The invaluable contribution made by feminist comment about women's difference is to highlight the political nature of skill and to find value in activities denigrated because of their association with women.

What needs to be re-conceived in feminist discourse is not the valorisation of emotion or other qualities as productive and useful, but the assumptions that these qualities originate within women or can be found uniformly among women. The risks involved in existing theoretical conceptions of women's work can be avoided by re-situating work and the worker within a discursive context. This would involve a rejection of two of the central assumptions found within much of the labour feminist literature. The first is the idea that 'women's skills' are given by socialisation. The second is a view of feminine gender as given by a patriarchal ideology that bestows power on men while it oppresses women.

3. Reconfiguring the questions

The first faulty epistemological assumption that must be addressed is the view that 'women's work' precedes or exists outside language, and originates in an experience of womanhood. The assumption here is that individual women learn specific skills; individual consciousness is like a blank tablet upon which lessons of experience are written. As Scott (1992:25) remarks, 'the evidence of experience then becomes evidence for the fact of difference, rather than a way of exploring how difference is established'. It fails to consider that what is imagined as subjective personal experience precedes the subject and possesses a social and historical significance in its own right. It is this conception that enables an unambiguous enthusiasm for the project of valuing 'women's skills'.

Marks' (1997:81) study of caring professionals working in special education in the schools emphasises the need to consider the effects of caring talk rather than assuming that caring 'derives from an uncomplicated internal impulse to attend to the needs of others'. For Marks, caring talk can be also be seen as 'expressing and reproducing anxiety and mystifying conflicts within groups and organisations'. Feeling that one is or should be caring does not render one's actions caring. For instance, Menzies Lyth (in Marks, 1997:84) found that nurses defend against the anxiety generated by intimacy, illness and death by thoughtlessness, objectifying patients, avoiding attachment, and ritualisation. Marks (1997:84) reflects that this behaviour might be 'a product of the unrealistic expectations placed upon women to care, under situations where the opportunities for such care are structurally frustrated'. In her own example she notes a range of effects of gendered discourses including critical scrutiny of mothers of children at risk, distancing of fathers, the marginalisation of resistant voices and the opportunity for professionals to prevent and deny an active role in conflict (Marks, 1997:86-87). Marks (1997:89) concludes that gendered

care serves to mediate the regulation of children and to obtain consent from parents for that regulation. It 'may be used both to control and "empower" others' (1997:90).

The view that gender is given, at least in some part, by a patriarchal culture, does not so much assume that women possess special knowledge; rather the cultural expectations placed upon women by themselves and others lead to divisions in work and the subordination of women. More sophisticated analyses of this kind consider that experience has a social and political significance that precedes the subject. However the insistence that 'masculinity is the mode of the oppressor and femininity that of the oppressed' and that 'power is part of the masculine position' (Walby, 1990:93) can lead to a negative inflection on women's work. Whereas a discursive view of the subject would consider the effects of multiple and sometimes conflicting statements upon conduct, Marxist-style analyses are often coloured by a view of feminine consciousness as ensnared by social and political interests. For instance it has been argued that women's sexuality and emotion work is commodified and utilised by capital as an adjunct to the control function (Tancred-Sheriff, 1989). Emotion work is conceptualised as 'acting' (Hochschild, 1983) and 'may actively obscure, both from (women) themselves and others the degree of their exploitation' (Duncombe and Marsden, 1995:163). Filby (1992) constitutes female gaming staff as alternately 'scolding', 'esteem enhancing' and 'ridiculing of men' via a managerial deployment and expropriation of the 'sexual skills of womanhood'. For Filby (1992:38-39) female gaming staff are 'undoubtedly colluding in their own objectification' but they also 'resist management attempts to manage their sexuality'. A view of emotion work as acting and women as persons who do emotion work often constitutes women in derogatory sexist terms — as persons engaged in manipulation or the obscuration of an authenticity that could bring about more progressive change. 'Caring skills' become a parody of the ideology of submissive feminine sexuality whose effects are tied up with an oppressive political power. Positive readings of the effects of feminine caring discourse, including the way it constitutes women's experience and identity, is often suppressed in analyses of gender as ideology. This does not allow that the effects of a particular discourse might be positive or negative and cannot be predicted on the basis of theory, but must be evidenced in specific contexts from particular points of view.

An alternative discursive conception understands the identities of social subjects as given and negotiated in language conceptualised as independent from economic determinants. A view of 'woman' as textual or discursive object would reject a unified view of 'women's work' and examine instead the effects of women's positioning, by themselves and others, as persons possessed of caring, domestic and community abilities and values. Here femininity discourse does not express something eternal, authentic or universal about women, but

neither can it describe falseness and complicity with oppressive power. Rather femininity discourse acts to naturalise and normalise the association of 'traditional women's work' with women. However, as Cranny Francis (1992:8) notes, while women are positioned as people with particular qualities, this 'does not mean that she has those qualities or that she will compliantly accept that positioning; it simply describes the way that this particular discourse positions her'. While this positioning is different from men, and will impact upon women's conduct and their negotiation and experience of cultural space, these effects cannot be fixed or translated in the terms that women possess or perform specific tasks.

A discursive approach enables a consideration of multiple positionings. What constitutes a caring act becomes contested ground. The assumption that women universally possess or demonstrate specific kinds of skill obscures the complex and variable contexts and relationships within which skilfulness is enacted. An understanding of subjectivity as arising in discourse, as opposed to individual consciousness or ideology, emphasises the fragility, complexity, and changeability of identity. For instance, as Cranny Francis (1992:8) says, 'gender discourses are only one component of ... (a) matrix of positionings':

> The individual is also positioned by discourses of class, ethnicity and generation, by discourses which characterise her or his sexuality or sexual preference (for example, heterosexual, lesbian, homosexual) in particular ways, and also by complex institutional discourses of education, religion, militarism and so on. (Cranny Francis, 1992:8)

People are not always positioned simply as gendered subjects over which are laid class, race and other positionings. In many cases racist or other assumptions overrule femininity discourses. For instance a view of women as caring maternal beings has not protected many Aboriginal women, and some poor white women, from losing their children as a result of questions about their 'fitness' for motherhood.

Theories that lead to fixed postures in relation to feminine subjectivity must be discarded. Haraway (1987:76) has pointed out the positive achievement of Marxist/socialist strategies of including household work and motherhood as labour, but she finds difficulty with the essentialising move involved in 'the ontological structure of labor or of its analogue, women's activity'. What Haraway is rightfully concerned about is the association of specific labours with women. Within many feminist labour texts, women's domestic labour and their labour as mothers comes to define who women 'really' are in as much as reproduction provides the basis upon which the diverse group of people designated women can be unified and their work given descriptive content. It is not a subversion of the right of the market economy to define human life and identity, but an attempt to include women within

definitions of human beings as they have always been defined — in terms of their contributions to social re/production.

Feminist labour thought constitutes the woman worker within a sameness-difference dichotomy. Her relation to reproduction constitutes her difference from men; her essential productivity constitutes her sameness with men. Scott (1988:39) points out that both feminist arguments about women's difference and sameness bring dangers for feminism; the latter implies a false neutrality and the former underscores the stigma of deviance and can be used in ways that feminists never intended. Poovey (1988) warns that Western philosophical dichotomies allow only two possibilities — woman may be like a man, and fail often because women are inevitably positioned within femininity discourses, or she may be like a woman and be derided. Much labour feminism falls into this kind of danger. The view that women's labour is emotional and sexual in nature, and that it cannot be encountered by existing economic categories and paradigms, can act to underline justifications for women's current positioning. On the other hand, the insistence that 'women are productive too' fails to notice the means by which discourses supposed to guarantee our freedom are themselves involved in modes of control, domination, and subjectification. Scott recommends subverting the dichotomy upon which the equality difference debate rests. Instead of being positioned in either the sameness or difference category, Scott recommends claims for a diverse humanity that are made invisible by assumptions about the sameness or difference of men and women. An emphasis upon difference in this conception need not fling feminists back into the 'equality is sameness' camp. Rather Scott (1988:48) argues feminism needs to argue 'in the name of an equality that rests on differences — differences that confound, disrupt, and render ambiguous the meaning of any fixed binary opposition'. This is not in order to insist that 'we are all individuals', thereby reinstating a universalised model of humanity, but rather to notice the historically complex ways in which meaning is constituted. The acceptance of a diverse and non-oppositional field of difference might involve bringing into focus, not simply different ways of being productive, but different ways of attributing meaning and purpose to life.

If feminists want to effectively interrupt processes which allocate women to the roles of childcarers and housekeepers designating them only a secondary role in paid work, it will be necessary to disrupt, not reproduce, a necessary and universal association of women with reproduction. Feminist labour thought should be wary of any attempt to capture the 'truth' about 'men's work' and 'women's work' with a focus upon the negative effects of the imposition of fixed categorical differences upon persons. What is important is not the inclusion of women's difference or the extent to which women's difference renders them

complicit or resistant to patriarchal structures, but how discourses about men and women are imposed upon subjects, or voluntarily taken on by them, and come to constitute experience. The problem is that women are not permitted to 'mean' anything other than what womanhood will allow, for instance their behaviour, motives and actions are necessarily to be interpreted as a form of familial affectivity that can then be either romanticised or derided. Constructions of the economy that decentre traditional binaries and envisage a diverse and shifting range of economic contributions will be more subversive in the long term than those which simply reiterate gendered dichotomies.

Conclusion

Most feminists agree that the association of women and the work they do with domesticity and reproduction is one of the means by which women are segregated in low-paying, low status occupations. Yet descriptions of 'women's work' which give the impression that it is primarily composed of these kinds of tasks, can still be found within the feminist literature. Within much feminist discourse about work, women and the quality of their labours are constituted in traditional terms involving domesticity, sexuality, interpersonal, caring, and service qualities. Similarly, men and men's work are constituted as aggressive, dominating, and socially isolated in opposition to the caring roles performed by women. This reiteration of gender binaries does not challenge the privileging of production in the constitution of the modern subject. Instead women are sometimes constituted as possessed of a specific form of productive capacity that arises in traditional heterosexual procreative relations. This view of the subject is not new, but reflects dominant gendered norms that are involved in the regulation of existing divisions. A new kind of conceptual approach is needed in thinking 'women's work'; one that is critical of the effects of such meanings and flexible enough to consider a more diverse and shifting array of performances at work.

5
PRIVILEGING THE MARKET: THE CONSTITUTION OF THE SOCIAL SUBJECT WITHIN FEMINIST LABOUR AND PUBLIC PROVISIONING DISCOURSE

The association of women with domestic and reproductive labour, and the emphasis upon the community-mindedness of women that often occurs within feminist labour thought, not only reiterates dominant gendered norms, it can also be seen as part of the logic that supports the privileging of the market. As discussed in chapter three, from a Foucauldian perspective, the emphasis upon the sociality of the subject is not an ahistorical occurrence, nor is it one that is necessarily antagonistic to economic goals. These discourses are simply one mode of liberal government in which public authorities seek to harness the social in order to bring about the conditions for economic stability, order, and prosperity. For governmentality thinkers, the social subject advocated within a welfare regime of government is not the source of a radical challenge to the economic subject, nor does it emanate from positions outside the political. Contemporary ways of imagining the hostility of social and economic spheres is not an unresolvable tension which subverts the stability of the social order, but the precise means via which it attains its stability (Gordon, 1991). In welfarism it is in the name of the interconnectedness of individuals, of their extra economic sentiments and duties, that governmental programmes come to act, and which enable them to regulate the population (Gordon, 1991).

My purpose in this chapter is to consider the extent to which feminist comment upon State social provision in areas of the labour market and income maintenance, naturalises a citizen whose needs and freedoms are constituted in ways that privilege the market. The chapter illustrates moments in which texts assume a self-evident association of women with productive kinship activities, of the value of these kinship activities with their support of the market, and a linking of choice or freedom with access to market participation. The subject

of these texts does not necessarily, as labour feminisms sometimes imagine, provide a neutral reflection of apolitical 'needs', but can be seen as a product of the system to which it lends stability. In its constitution of the subject and recommendations regarding social provisioning, feminist welfare debate sometimes reiterates moral judgements that posit specific kinds of support for specific kinds of citizens — those whose procreative activities support the productivity and stability of the market, and whose choices and lifetimes are ultimately geared to participation in the market.

1. Politicising the social subject

Labour feminist thought posits a non-political social subject who stands outside the State and other institutions which disseminate capitalist and patriarchal ideologies and otherwise act to produce the social oppression of women (see chapter two). Power has been seen as the possession of male householders and the State, especially as informed by neo-liberal economic theory and other sources of patriarchal familial ideology. These forces are seen to constrain women in the family thereby inhibiting their freedom to participate in paid work on equitable grounds with men.

Debate often centres around the form of the State with the assumption that welfare represents a more neutral basis for social provisioning than neo-liberal style government. For instance, Brodie (1997) sees the neo-liberal State as reintroducing moral grounds for motherhood support, and the welfare State as providing welfare support universally, just by virtue of being a national citizen. For Brodie (1997:131), neo-liberalism replaces 'universal, publicly provided services and social citizenship' with 'market-based, self-reliant, and privatizing ideals', 'efficiency and competition', and a model citizen prepared to work harder and longer in order to be independent. Similarly, for Yeatman (1994:101), an interventionist rationale, unlike the neo-liberal one, 'tends to name all aspects of social life, to bring them out of customary morality and to subject them to some kind of rational and participatory calculus'. For Cass (1995:45) 'the basic premises and processes of public provision in the welfare state challenge the hegemony of the market and ... the unequal gender order' because it protects 'the social rights of those who cannot derive a market income'.

For governmentality thinkers the institutions of State and public policy, whether neo-liberal or other, are not purely determined by economic or patriarchal interests and cannot designate a clear boundary outside of which 'authentic', community-based resistance takes place (see chapter three). Rather, the domain of truth, emanating from the human sciences, constitutes how the State will be thought, the kinds of policies it can implement, and the 'nature' of the

subjects over which it attempts to govern. Truth production is imagined as a complex field in which economic and social goals coexist, and in which business and patriarchal interests are themselves influenced by ways of thinking the subject, the economic field, and their relation to the family. For Donzelot (1991a) debates about the proper role of the State have always been used to deflect attention from this more diffuse operation of power beyond and within public institutions.

Contrary to a view of economic theory as ignoring social needs within family relations, or abandoning them to unregulated 'private' domination by male householders, Procacci (1991) argues that political economy has been involved in the production and management of social needs in order to bring about optimal market conditions. These conditions included ownership of small private property, insurance, saving, legalisation and normalisation of the heterosexual nuclear family, the institutionalisation of children within education, and forms of social intervention in the workplace, such as unions and arbitration. For Procacci, putting political economy at the centre of analysis, to be resisted or supported, has the effect of putting the mode of production at the centre of analysis, overlooking the role that non-economic techniques have played in the production of social order.

According to Procacci political economy is important not for its ideological mystification, or its subordination of society, but for the techniques it enables that open up new social spaces to 'economic' government. Economics was concerned with the moral or behavioural conduct of subjects, giving rise to the problem of the technical means by which the conduct of the population could be managed in order to sponsor the conditions for optimal performance of the market. For instance, Procacci gives the example of the 'disorder' of paupers. He refers to their vagabondage, unlegislated couplings and forms of social support, their tendency to spend their money as they wish (on 'licentiousness and drunkeness'), their refusal of insurance against the future in the form of savings and investment in small property, and their ignorance and lack of education regarding the 'necessity of duty' (Procacci, 1991:161-162). For Procacci, the science of economy was intensely concerned with the moral conduct of the population whose prosperity was conceived, not as inborn, but in need of stimulation. The regulations that political economy helps to inspire are not simply carried out by the State and public policy, but involve the activities of a wide range of social actors, including sociologists and other knowledge makers in the human sciences, as well as administrators, economists, philanthropists, and doctors. Political economy enables a battery of tactics which have far outlived it, spreading beyond pauperdom to every level of the social fabric, aiming to 'implicate the population in the order into which they are to be integrated', 'an immense enterprise of permanent educability' (Procacci, 1991:166).

In a similar study of US strategies to empower the poor since the 1960s, Cruikshank (1994) argues that the poor are not a politically neutral or unified social category. Instead, the poor are actively produced by diverse discourses of empowerment that aim to engender their active participation in the amelioration of their own condition. Cruikshank notes that discourses of empowerment locate the impetus for change within the subjective feeling of the poor themselves, rather than say capital, although the discourse also readily acknowledges the political causes of poverty.

This kind of approach de-emphasises the State and a discrete political domain of knowledge, and highlights the role played by discourses of subjectivity produced by the human sciences in the regulation of social order. To the extent that feminism participates in the production of unified and naturalised knowledges of the subject, it is not outside the domain of power, providing the authentic ground of resistance to it, but acts in concert with the dominant mode of regulation. Analyses like that of Procacci and Cruikshank demonstrate the importance for feminism of disentangling inherited elements of Enlightenment thought, as well as the need to undertake a consideration of their effects. The work of Procacci and Cruikshank suggest that, although the social subject within much feminist labour thought is imagined in an outside and antagonistic relation to the market, many of the claims about its needs and rights have not had a radical or subversive effect, but were produced in order to bring about the stability and prosperity of the market.

For instance, demands for greater social security have not always challenged the market, but have actually enabled the conditions required for its stable functioning. Ewald (1991) argues that the working-class are encouraged not to revolt, but to insure themselves against the damaging effect of the inevitable social upheaval following from progress and enlightenment. Ewald explains how insurance provision produces the world as a risky enterprise, requiring the working-class to sink their savings into capitalist security institutions. The working-class come to demand not another kind of system, but the means for maintaining themselves, of minimising the dangers of the existing system. Donzelot (1991a) argues along similar lines. For Donzelot, 'solidarity' aimed not to stimulate class conflict, but to ameliorate it by creating a consensus society. The working-class are not possessed of 'natural' needs, but are born from norms of behaviour produced by bourgeois statistical techniques activated post mid-eighteenth century. Solidarity defines the basis upon which commonalities exist, and these commonalities are defined by empirical facts produced by the activities of social authorities. It is the commonality of citizens and the interdependence of individuals with one another that provides the grounds from which the

welfare state intervenes. In this sense, Foucauldian analyses of socialism repudiate its claim to provide an alternative to liberalism, and see it as an effect or necessary component of liberalism which helps to undermine the project that socialism sets out for itself. Donzelot (1991) argues that the aim of solidarity is not to change the social structure (it does not attempt to provide the right to work or challenge property rights); rather, it affects the form of the social bond. It is intervention which harnesses the social in order to let the economy function more productively.

In sum, the privileging of the market over other forms of economic exchange is reproduced not simply by policy, economic theory, and men's economic interests, but by naturalised productions of social need in terms which both enforce and stimulate forms of conduct that prioritise productive stability. Feminist labour thought is itself involved in the naturalisation of solidarity, that is, of the discursive production of collective needs, rights, and demands of women and of the community. To what extent do these productions participate in a form of subjectivity and 'sociality' that prioritises economic order and stability?

2. The re/productive citizen

One of the first things that becomes apparent in an examination of the relations drawn between the market and the subject of work in feminist welfare debate, is the attempt to include reproductive activity within ways of defining what is economic. This inclusion occurs on the grounds that it supports the generation of national economic wealth. In discussions about the need for policy reform, feminists emphasise that 'no economic model in major use today acknowledges the significant contribution that non-paid economic activity in the home makes to gross domestic product' (Edwards, 1985:55). Cass (1995:41) argues that 'non-capitalist spaces provide the very infrastructure of the social order', and make 'a very significant contribution to the economic welfare of this country' (Cass, 1995:54). In a related comment, Bittman (1997:114) spells out what makes homework productive: 'Inside the hard labour of the family, the next generation is born and raised and the current generation of workers are able to revive themselves for another day of work'. Feminist welfare literature is deeply interested in establishing the interdependence of private and public life. Pixley (1996:45) writes that 'the welfare edifice fundamentally depended on restricting women to unpaid production'. Further to this, 'the types of investment and the issue of reproduction as both the creation of future generations and the care of the population over the life cycle are just as fundamental to understanding a welfare state' as the exchange of the 'labour commodity form' (Pixley, 1996:45-46).

In these kinds of arguments, household labour is thought and valued in relation to the market domain. Gibson-Graham (1996:33-34) are concerned that understanding women's household activity as significant because it reproduces the capitalist labour force, denies the autonomy of the unique sphere accorded to women. Gibson-Graham (1996:34) argue, with regard to the relationship of household labour to capitalism, that: 'Despite its effectivity and ostensible independence, it "belonged" to capitalism as "capitalist" reproduction'. Besides denying the uniqueness of non-capitalist household spaces, the emphasis placed upon the dependence of the market on the domestic domain, often gives the impression that women's unpaid labour is to be valued and included within citizenship models because it supports the market. The valorisation of reproductive labours within the category 'production' and 'economy' is an understandable response given their constitution as 'non-work' or 'leisure' within economic and popular discourse, and the damaging effects of this for women. The danger of the statements above is that they give the impression that the only valid grounds for valuing human activity, and including them within the category 'economy', is in their supportive relation to the capitalist market.

Within many feminist discussions of welfare and social policy, women's exploited reproductive and family labours are the only additions the literature seeks to make to economic categories and analyses. This can give the impression that they comprise *the* forgotten economic factor; rather than one of a variety of human activities or ways of life that may also support or provide an alternative logic to the market. Feminist social policy discussion infers that reproduction or 'caring' is more central to understanding economy and society than other ways of life, and that these activities can account for all the economic contributions and experiences that have yet to be recognised. Bakker's (1997:10) comment below is typical:

> A fundamental weakness in neoclassical economics (as well as critical perspectives such as the Keynesian or the Marxian), according to feminist writers, is that need and production are not situated within an analysis of systemic reproduction that includes human reproduction and sustenance.

Pascall (1986:70) comments that traditional social policy analysis properly attributes 'a central significance for caring work, in society and social policy'. Pascall (1986:70) quotes Graham (1983:30) who says that caring 'marks the point at which the relations of capital and gender intersect', and Stacey (1981:189) reiterates that 'we shall never be able to understand social processes going on around us so long as we tacitly or overtly deny the part played by the givers and receivers of "care" and "service"'. A decade later Pascall (1997:3) notes that 'a unifying theme of academic feminist critiques of social policy has been an analysis of the welfare state in relation to the family'. Within this literature there is still little or no

problematisation of the tendency to confine discussions of the 'excluded' activities of citizens to domestic and family-based work.

Some feminist texts conflate 'women' with 'caring labour', and move from here to a relation of 'caring' labour with women's unfulfilled citizenship demands[6]. For Cass (1995:47 and 49) it should not be assumed that women are dependent upon a male breadwinner, but the category is associated with a 'relatively unrelieved obligation to carry out caring work in the family/household and in their kin networks', and women have close association 'with the ties of love, kinship and caring, ties which militate against the independent existence on which economic citizenship is predicated'. Ungerson (1990:187) complains that corporate child care is not a 'women's policy', but a 'working mother's policy' because it provides care only for those women in paid work. For Ungerson (1990:189) it is 'essential that policies which are woman-centred develop, rather than policies that are paid worker centred, but this hangs crucially on the ability of mothers and carers to insert their needs and rights into the political as well as the economic process'. Here 'woman-centred' is equated with caring and motherhood.

'Gender' has also been limited to motherhood. For instance O'Connor et al. (1999:1) comment that 'concerns of gender pervade ... social policy debates — about employment opportunities and day care, about how (or even whether) to publicly support caregiving work and single parent families, about the scope of women's choices as to whether and when to be mothers'. Following acknowledgment of the positive benefits of citizenship, O'Connor et al. (1999:2-3) comment that

> state programs and social policies have a less friendly side for women as well: systems of social provision which reward citizens engaging in paid labour more than those who engage in unpaid caregiving, workplace policies which ignore workers' caregiving responsibilities, or laws which refuse women the capacity to control their reproductive lives or which fail to protect them from systematic (but 'private') violence.

This statement conflates 'women' with 'caregiving' and 'persons at risk of family violence', presumably persons situated in the heterosexual family. The statement that women perform the majority of domestic care work blends with the view that the State will affect women to

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[6] For an exception see Taylor (1999) whose discussion includes the role of men in caring for elderly female spouses, and raises attention to the need for an understanding of the differences between men and women carers in the development of caring relief. McGurk (1994:18) also notes that, in Australia, men and women take the same amount of time off from work to care for elderly relatives or spouses. McGurk's work is not given to suggest that men and women perform the same amount of caring labour, since many women do not undertake waged work, and many more women than men care for the elderly. McGurk's and Taylor's texts are cited because they provide examples which show that the labours of male carers are not inconsiderable, and do have a relevant place in a discussion of care work.

the extent that it acts upon caring work. In the first statement, caring labour is a subset of the category 'women'; women might still do things besides caring labours, and men might also perform caring labours. In the second, 'caring labour' has subsumed the category women so that the only effect the State need be concerned about regarding women, is that upon their caring labour. In these texts the assumption sometimes seems to be that women's specific citizenship needs arise from placement in the family and the labours they perform there, and that the State must act to prevent the dangers that arise for women in families.

It is taken as self-evident in these statements that the only needs and rights that have been excluded from notions of citizenship, and the economic logic of social provisioning, are those of procreative heterosexual citizens and women who provide care for kin. As Pascall (1997:28) argues, in the context of a discussion that focuses purely on women's domestic, reproductive, and familial labours: 'universal citizenship must involve the recognition of unpaid labour in citizenship entitlement'. This is not an argument for decommodification per se, but one that supports the extension of citizenship rights to those who provide for the care of kin.

Generalisations about citizens as subjects for whom family, (defined as involving the support of kin, especially children), is a natural and inevitable progression, are also sometimes evident within claims about the changes needed in paid work. Rights and benefits often seem to be limited to those who choose to organise their lives around family and work because it can be seen to benefit the economy. The Office for the Status of Women (1998:1) makes the following statement:

> Family friendly work initiatives are the sensible answer if we are to provide families with a lifestyle of their choice, and the workforce with committed and professional people who manage to balance their work and family commitments. Australia should learn from these overseas experiences and encourage a workplace which values the contribution of all people and accepts their family commitments as part of the package.

Changing work in ways which will benefit 'all people' means accepting their family commitments. The inevitability and centrality of family and work within the lifetime is taken as given and once again there is the assumption that the only constraints people experience, and which may require an exemption to the rule of unbroken workforce participation, are those arising in family responsibilities. The Office for the Status of Women (1988:1) contends that the benefits of such an approach include:

- greater productivity;
- employees absent for shorter periods of time;
- higher workplace morale;
- reduced stress and anxiety in the workplace;
- greater level of loyalty;
- improved staff retention rates; and
- reduction in staff absenteeism/employees comfortable to be honest about needing time flexibility.

The benefits of workplace change which include the needs of reproductive citizens are ultimately to be measured at the workplace and in productivity rates. Mitchell (1998:36) recommends greater access to social security benefits for men out of the labour market, superannuation contributions to those out of the labour market undertaking care work, and moves to make employment conditions more responsive to care participation. In these kinds of statements the feminist insistence that alternatives to the heterosexual procreative family exist diversely, and need to be supported, are contradicted by the assumption that location within the family, which supports the market, is the only politically or economically significant situation of persons with regard to welfare. It seems, as Ian Lindenmayer (1994:3), the then Deputy Secretary of the Australian Department of Human Services and Health says , that the focus is upon 'the basic structural unit of our society, the family. It's not upon a particular minority group; if you like, it's upon the society as a whole'. For Lindenmayer (1994:6) 'families are integral to the lives of individuals and the broader community'. The terms of the existing feminist debate can give the impression that this is an unproblematic assertion.

Feminist welfare discussion often conjures the image of lives transcribed by relations between family and work, of women struggling with the constraints of family, and seeking to find a better relation to the economy. For Pascall (1997:10), the problem is that traditional social policy studies construct the family and paid work as separate contexts, and do not consider that 'an important key to women's lives' is 'an understanding of how they straddle these boundaries'. Ungerson (1990:4) reiterates this point.

> As is always the case when social policy is discussed in relation to women, the interdependency of the public world of policy with the private world of care becomes the central issue. ... the organization of public services plays a determining role in the way women experience some of the most important aspects of their lives — the bearing and rearing of children ... and the care of dependent elderly people.

Narayan (1997:51) says,

> women who enter waged work in contexts where men systematically fail to shoulder an equitable share of household and care-giving tasks, and where social and institutional policies are not designed to render these tasks compatible with full-time waged work, end up with the unsatisfying options of part-time work or of attempting in exhaustion to struggle with these varied and conflicting demands.

In these extracts women's choices and problems are represented purely in terms of the painful experience of travelling between family and work and the lack of adequate support for caring labour. The emphasis is given to the need for legislation, policy, and practices that recognise the 'dual roles' of women in work and family, which aim to enable women to form independent households, and allow parents to mediate paid and unpaid spheres harmoniously without unfairly advantaging men in the public sphere, or damaging men's access to parenthood experiences. Policy is interrogated with the following questions:

> Does it enable men and women to choose paid and unpaid work, balance parenting with employment? Does it sustain the old pattern of men in public and women in private, or help people to change it? (Pascall, 1997:26)

There is often little or no feminist consideration of the need for workplace change from the point of view of women (or men) who are not parents or whose needs are not confined to parental duties, such as aged workers, single and childless workers of all ages, workers with disabilities or health problems, or workers whose families live in other places. This has the effect of normalising lifetimes divided between caring work and market work, moments in which feminism participates in underlining two alternatives for women, reproduction or care of family dependents, and market-valued work. This approach constitutes reality and experience as a composite of two oppositional domains which comprise between them a whole world. 'Work', meaningful activity opposed to 'leisure', is imagined in relation to 'productive' employment or the reproductive, domestic and family life that supports it. 'Work' relates to family and career; the only alternative being to 'have it all', that is, 'both' family and career. The needs of citizens are thought in relation to the market-driven world of ambition and competition, and the values of family which necessarily organise private life.

While many people, and women in particular, are squeezed by the contradictory demands placed upon them by paid and unpaid work, it does not follow that the only solution, the only imaginable world, is one where movement between the two spheres is more flexible. Gibson-Graham (1996:vii-ix) problematise discourses that emphasise accommodation and adaptability to economic change, and the 'unwitting economism or productionism' this involves. They call for 'alternative social representations in which noncapitalist economic practices proliferated, gender identities were renegotiated, and political subjects actively resisted industrial restructuring, thereby influencing its course'. Of course feminist labour

texts do resist and seek to influence the course of industrial restructuring in a range of ways. They also usefully emphasise changes in employment to accommodate family life, rather than assuming that the family should adapt to the market. However the emphasis in many feminist social policy texts suggests there is also an unquestioned acceptance of a subject whose 'needs' are limited to a better adjustment of family and market. This pattern of thought does not highlight ways of life that do not fit into existing ways of thinking social and economic domains. Nor does it seek to subvert or transform those domains beyond the demand that mechanisms be implemented that can sooth the inherent tensions between them.

The centrality given to reproduction and family labour within much feminist welfare thought probably stems from Marxism's privileging of production and reproduction as 'material' and 'economic' in opposition to supposedly ideological or cultural factors which are given only a secondary significance in the reproduction of social life. Pascall (1997:18) says that, like productive relations, 'reproductive relations and reproductive consciousness have roots in material human necessity too' and 'reproduction is the bedrock of private life ... (and) ... public life'. While the history of productive and domestic relations has been thoroughly examined by feminist welfare thinkers, the fact that the subject is necessarily positioned as either economically independent, or socially embedded, is not taken to be politically or historically significant. Pascall (1997:26) quotes Phillips (1991:119) who argues that 'we do need a distinction between private and public, and ... rather than abandoning the distinction, the emphasis should be on uncoupling it from the division between women and men'. These 'spheres' are seen to adequately encompass all the possible labours being performed 'out there'.

Thus what is problematised is the level of equality within productive and familial labour domains, not the history or effects of their emergence. For Butler (1998:41-42) the argument that gender is central to political economy because it structures unpaid reproductive work, fails to consider how reproductive relations have become naturalised. The view that heterosexual reproduction is central to economic life, in a way that other activities are not, has historical and political antecedents. Foucault (1976:113) argues that in the new regimes of truth, marriage and kinship are the principle of the formation and intelligibility of sexuality. In other words, existing social forms were naturalised with the rise of the Western individual. The association of the heterosexual family with unrecognised economic contributions is not a necessary relation. The kinds of welfare accounts cited above simply reproduce this association.

There has been almost no further consideration of the limitations this way of thinking might bring. For instance, the link between reproductive sexuality and the economic good of the nation depends upon the suppression of non-heterosexual ways of life. As Butler (1998:42) puts it:

> the economic, tied to the reproductive, is necessarily linked to the reproduction of heterosexuality. It is not that non-heterosexual forms of sexuality are simply left out, but that their suppression is essential to the operation of that prior normativity. This is not simply a question of certain people suffering a lack of cultural recognition by others but, rather, a specific mode of sexual production and exchange that works to maintain the stability of gender, the heterosexuality of desire, and the naturalization of the family.

In addition, limiting the 'economic' to market work and kinship support within a cultural climate that values the 'productive' above other considerations, leads to a lack of welfare entitlement for persons whose activities do not fit into either market or household models. The lack of attention to further sub-sets in the category 'women' beyond motherhood, and an association of something 'caring' arising from 'women's traditional work in the family' with commonly held characteristics of 'women' and 'unrecognised citizens', can give the impression that citizens will *either* work and prepare for work, *or* have children, *or* do both. There is the sense that those who do not perform one of these roles are outside the range of the normal, or else their experiences are not considered to be 'productive' or 'economically' significant. They might then be seen as lacking specific welfare needs, or their problems are not 'gendered' and are therefore not of concern to a feminist welfare agenda.

Yet it is possible to imagine a range of activities that consume individual lives, but which are not typically considered economic. The values and terms of reference that underlie these ways of life could redefine, throw into question, or decentre ways of thinking the economic and the privilege attributed to 'the productive life'. Among these could be included 'alternative lifestylers', lives not organised around kinship support or the paid market, such as subsistence farmers, political activists, artists, musicians, writers, scholars, or ecological activists, such as tree planters. There are others who support a community or cultural tradition that extends beyond the nuclear, or even the extended family. Among these people it is not difficult to imagine Aborigines engaged in keeping alive and transmitting traditional culture and language, fighting for the preservation of sacred sites, or preoccupied with holding together and securing the future of a besieged community. Friendship itself and the support it provides is rarely regarded as a socially or economically significant support activity[7]; it becomes a kind of after-work entertainment or hobby. Other ways of life that are

[7] An important exception is Beasley's (1994:33) redefinition of the economic which includes the support of friends.

not recognised or which are actively discredited by Western citizenship models include, persons pursuing spiritual goals, vagabonds, beggars, students ineligible for government support, and newly arrived migrants or refugees engaged primarily in non-market resettlement. At present persons who do not qualify as paid workers or parents must be either 'sick', 'unemployed', 'retired', or 'students' (preparing for the market) in order to qualify for public support and recognition.

The constitution of the feminist citizen in terms of reproduction and kinship care that supports the market, is positive in the sense that it offers recognition and support to carers, and challenges a view of citizenship as inevitably self-sufficient, highlighting the experience of care and dependency in many people's lives. At the same time, the discourse does not unsettle the heterosexism and market privilege at the heart of the existing regulatory order.

3. Market dependence

I now want to turn to a consideration of the central role attributed to the market within particular feminist welfare texts in their constitution of human freedom. There is often the view that existing citizenship models are limited by their failure to see the constraints placed upon women by their familial situation. For instance Cass (1995:48) says that:

> the 'citizen' is an independent, autonomous actor who participates as an individual in the labour market, participates democratically as an individual citizen in political processes and receives social benefit entitlement as a right based on individual citizenship. These concepts, however, do not represent the ways in which women with caring responsibilities are excluded from full participation, are limited in their participation by their responsibilities to care for others, or participate in ways which are qualitatively very different because they are providers of informal welfare.

Here traditional conceptions of the citizen are problematised because they do not consider the limitations that women's caring work in the family imposes upon their participation in work and the processes of democracy. It is not so much a decentring of the independent labouring subject from conceptions of the citizen, as an argument which seeks recognition for the constraints that care work places upon the participation of citizens within the existing political and productive order. Feminist texts on work and welfare often problematise women's situation in the family in terms of poverty and the barriers it presents to 'independent' market activity. For instance, the problem with the use of the family unit within the tax transfer system is that it reinforces 'women's market related dependency'

(Cass, 1995:42). As Shaver (1998:280) states in regard to women:

> Their family responsibilities tend to undermine their wage-earning capacities, and their weak position in the paid workforce tends to entrench their economic dependence within marriage. This is reflected in disproportionate levels of poverty among some groups of women.

While both Shaver and Cass accept a relationship between poverty and capital, in the above statement the poverty of women seems to be caused not by the latter, but by the obstruction the family presents to wage earning. In 1983 Baldock and Cass (1983:xi) argued that the central question feminists must ask in analyses of social policies including employment, social security, childcare, health, education, housing, and urban planning is: 'To what extent do various state interventions reinforce, challenge or transform some elements of the enduring but changing pattern of women's unequal access to economic security and social autonomy?' Edwards and Magarey (1995:9) note that 'a decade later, this is still a critical question'. In these statements the woman subject is economic not only by virtue of her positioning in the heterosexual family; she is also possessed of a way of experiencing security and autonomy that must be realised by transcending social constraints and participating in the market.

The 'rights' of women workers are often phrased in terms of market access. For instance, a move to replace the individual with the family unit within the tax transfer system is advocated in order to remove 'the disincentive to seek paid employment' that these policies are seen to introduce for women (Edwards, 1995:158). In comment about the tax transfer system and the use of the family unit, the problem is constructed as the reinforcement of 'women's market related dependency'; that is, it reinforces women's secondary labour market position making them more likely to become dependent in the family (Cass, 1995:42). Commentators on the situation of Aboriginal women with dependants also discuss welfare payments in terms of their inhibition on market participation. For example, Daly (1995:172) draws attention to 'the disincentive effect such welfare payments (supporting parent's and widow's pension) might have on Aboriginal women searching for full-time employment'. In order to improve apparently inborn economic motivations and incentives, Daly (1995:173) advocates 'increased access to appropriate education and training, changes in the nature and location of employment opportunities and selected measures to overcome discrimination against indigenous people'. While such measures are to be welcomed, Daly's account does not question the view that problems in the Aboriginal community be understood in terms of 'dependency' on welfare and 'independence' within the market. While feminists in general support the rights of mothers to exemption from the market, and the provision of adequate welfare support, their own logic sometimes seems to share the conservative view that individuals who have suffered from discrimination have a 'natural

right' to rejoin the market. Many feminist social policy texts do not explicitly challenge the prevailing logic that exemptions can be made on special conditions within the general rule of market earning. Welfare is a negative right, something one is accorded when one is in some way market 'disabled', or worse, morally deviant or corrupt — that is, not possessed of an 'economic incentive', or possessed of developed human capital. Pringle and Watson (1996:72) note that incorporating women into public life as welfare recipients with needs, has negative connotations of special treatment, dependence on an 'other', and victimhood. However they also comment that 'discourses of need disable women from entering public life'. A view of welfare as dependency is not only problematic because it gives welfare a negative connotation, but also because it constitutes a subject inspired to participate in public life as an expression of a natural drive for 'independence'. The assumption that participation in the market is an expression of something with universal value for humanity can also provide support for welfare rules that oblige the unemployed or other 'disadvantaged' groups to comply with social security rules in order to retain their benefit.

The neo-liberal policy agenda of the Liberal/National Coalition and feminist work and welfare statements, coincide when emphasis is placed upon the constraints of women in the family, the contribution of family work to national productivity, the right of women with children to public provisions, and the need to free women to participate in paid work. For example a Liberal/National Coalition Government policy statement says:

> Women still carry primary responsibility for the care of children, the sick, disabled and elderly, making a vast contribution to the economy in their unpaid capacities. In this context, the inflexibility of workplace practices, child care options and superannuation measures have come into sharp focus, highlighting the particular disadvantages facing women today. The Coalition believes that it is not for government to dictate how people should live their lives. We are firmly committed to ensuring that women have a realistic choice as to whether they are in or out of the paid workforce and, whatever their choice, it must be respected. ... The Coalition believes government has a responsibility to provide flexible mechanisms to enable women to achieve their goals and aspirations, while ensuring a reliable safety net and support system for those in need (1996:5).

Like liberal discourse, the kinds of feminist arguments illustrated above, posit a role for government only when it acts to protect natural born 'goals and aspirations', that is, the freedom and desire to participate 'as an independent' citizen within the market. By constituting choice in this way, the current organisation of the world and human lifetimes into reproductive and productive labours makes perfect sense. In these discourses what is promoted to ensure the happiness and well-being of the population is programmes and interventions which ensure that people are able to participate as fully and flexibly as possible in paid and family based labours. At the heart of these discourses is not simply the view that

humanity is naturally productive, but that it is naturally driven to consume itself in ordered forms of economically beneficial re/production.

The assumption that this version of subjectivity is universal can distract attention from the moral judgements beneath existing models of citizenship. The masculine individual of economic discourse is not entitled to welfare support just by virtue of being a citizen within a democracy, but is defined and attributed rights according to a primary responsibility to contribute to the market. This can be demonstrated by reference to the situation of new immigrants in Australia. Fincher (1995:218) notes that government support for new arrivals is limited to unemployment benefits programmes so that new immigrants are defined as unemployed if they have not found paid work. Fincher notes that 'there is little acceptance of the need to support immigrants financially for a time after arrival, except through the provision of English language programmes for a limited period'. Unemployment benefit is not granted unconditionally, but depends upon the individual taking active measures to find paid work.

As discussed in chapter three, a welfare mode of government is not less moral or more neutral than a neo-liberal mode of government, but extends rights to citizens in exchange for the correct kinds of moral conduct. Feminist texts sometimes give the impression that the normal citizen will only 'choose' time out of the market in order to perform familial caring duties which indirectly support the market. This implies, within the context of a society in which full employment is increasingly impossible, and where both men and women of varying sexualities and cultural backgrounds are choosing not to have children, that the only right to recognition of one's non-market activities, and to support and possible exemption from the market, is in the capacity of kinship 'caring'.

4. Social security and the State

Although many feminist welfare texts are critical of capitalist labour relations, some continue to assume a capitalist subject in their questioning of the role of the State. The orientation of analyses sometimes implies that the problem is not so much the capitalist market, as the State's ability to ameliorate its negative effects via the provision of social security. For instance, overviews of wages and welfare policy (for example Shaver, 1995 and Sharp, 1995) are confined to an examination of their ability to provide a safety-net for all workers, or to act as a means for redistributing income between the genders. Shaver (1998:279) refers to the need to focus upon 'those dimensions of social policy which do or do not alleviate (poverty)'. Superannuation policy has been read (eg Sharp, 1995 and Rosenman, 1995) for

its ability to provide women workers with protection from poverty or inequitable income compared to men throughout the life cycle. This kind of approach usefully confines itself to a consideration of the material effects of particular policies, sidestepping moral arguments about provision. They are also unusual because they bring into focus the circumstances of women beyond childbearing age, helping to decentre the preoccupation of the field with 'working mothers'. On the other hand as Gibson-Graham (1996:14) comment, both mainstream and Left discussions of social and economic policy tell us that 'we may have democracy, or a pared-down welfare state, or prosperity, but only in the context of the (global capitalist) economy and what it will permit'. Confining welfare discussion to the protections it can provide within a capitalist economy, gives the impression that the citizen is at home within the existing order of production.

In some texts the subject is constituted as possessed of an inborn freedom that expresses itself in market participation. The State is then positioned as charged with the obligation of securing the dignity of this natural freedom by ensuring that citizens can engage in labour. For example, for Narayan (1997:54),

> human dignity is at risk when humans are left without protection for important vulnerabilities. Human dignity is at risk when humans are rendered vulnerable to intrusions on their capacities for self-government and autonomy, and to a lack of *adequate means* for the satisfaction of basic needs. (emphasis in the original)

While Narayan (1997) rejects the view that welfare should be grounded in either motherhood or market labours, her text nevertheless constitutes a subject whose self-governing activities are oriented toward participation in the productive life of the nation. Narayan's concern, like much feminist welfare thought, remains with the exclusions perpetuated by existing male-centred citizenship models. She advocates, as a solution to this, the democratic representation of all members of society. Narayan (1997:58) argues,

> that a variety of policies that work to reduce disparities, ensure equal access to the workplace, provide quality education and affordable childcare might be grounded not only in terms of their value to the particular lives of *individual citizens,* but also in terms of their *enabling a variety of forms of citizen participation in national political life.* Such provisions and policies need to be understood in part as *social preconditions for the possibility of politically active citizens* who are vital to the political health of liberal democratic societies. (emphasis in the original)

Here participation in 'places such as classrooms, campuses and workplaces' (Narayan, 1997:59) is equated with the universal needs of citizens and becomes the condition of democracy and empowerment. Lives lived outside the structures of work and education are constituted as not politically active, and as inhibiting 'national political health'.

In effect, feminist welfare policy texts participate in the production of policy approaches that oblige a primary commitment to the market by imagining a subject whose freedoms are necessarily defined by market participation. An alternative way of imagining the subject is provided by Gibson-Graham (1996) who decentres the capitalist subject by deconstructing the monstrous and essential qualities attributed to capitalism within much social theory. Gibson-Graham speak of a plural economic space, one that includes a variety of capitalist and non-capitalist forms and practices. The economy is imagined as a diverse realm in which capitalism is multiple, and coexistent with a variety of economic modes, such as self-employment, socialism, 'underdeveloped' economies, and the household. This destabilises the unitary view of the subject that is supposedly possessed of a freedom and integrity that is necessarily realised in the exchange of waged labour within the employment relation. It introduces the possibility of thinking about freedom as an experience that is contingent upon social placement, and exposes the moral nature of existing social policy rhetoric.

Gibson-Graham's conception also re-contextualises the State's position in relation to 'the economy'. The State can no longer be imagined as the mediator of the antagonistic and mutually interdependent spheres of society (seen as composed of family units) and economy, whose primary role is to protect the freedom of citizens by allowing them to participate in the market *and* uphold their reproductive obligations. Within a prolific economic space, the State's obligations and roles can be rethought to include, for instance, the protection and facilitation of the freedoms found within a variety of capitalist and non-capitalist domains. It is not that 'normal' or 'good' citizens express themselves within the order of education and employer-employee relations. Rather, citizens are persons who travel between, and presumably find value, dignity, and freedom within a variety of economic spaces. This kind of conceptualisation subverts the universality of the productive subject and raises a new task for feminist and other progressive social policy analysts. Current social security policy, and its conceptualisation of the State's role as economic manager and provider, must be rethought in light of the plural economic space that constitutes the nation.

Conclusion

Foucauldian scholars have suggested that contemporary power acts via the production of social demands that ensure the stability needed for efficient market functioning as well as the investment of individuals in the market. The feminist welfare texts critically examined above can be seen to participate in this project in particular ways. Feminist welfare commentary often claims economic value for women's household labour on the grounds that it supports the market sector. There is also an association of women's unfulfilled citizenship needs with

reproductive activity. The 'woman citizen' is seen to demand recognition for the support that family labour gives to the market as well as the means to move out of the constraining domain of family into the market place. State 'security' is imagined in terms of the protection of citizens from the negative effects of the market which continues to dominate 'economic' life. This is not a model of citizenship that decentres the heterosexual nuclear family as the organising principle of social and economic life, nor one which re-positions the subject and the State within a plural economic space. Rather much feminist welfare writing reiterates a model of citizenship that effectively obliges individuals to place their energies, and find their support, in the family and the paid market place.

6
THE PRODUCTIVE SOUL: CONSTITUTING THE SUBJECT WITHIN SEX SEGREGATION AND PAID EMPLOYMENT TEXTS

As in thinking about social policy, feminist thought about industry and education policy, and historical analyses of sex segregation overlook the role played by diffuse productions of the truth about the working subject in the regulation of the population. The first part of this chapter cites literature that historicises the working subject and examines its role in shaping the new regimes of work. The discussion then turns to an analysis of the extent to which feminist literature about women and work unquestioningly adopts universalist assumptions about the working subject that have been implicated in the regulation of population.

The chapter argues that specific ideas and styles of argumentation within feminist labour thought are involved in investing subjectivity in production. These ideas include the constitution of the woman worker as possessed of a productive capacity whose development is a necessary prerequisite of individual happiness and national economic growth. In addition, 'difference' is often constituted within feminist labour texts in terms of a lack of access to, or 'recognition' for, productive contributions, and links are made between participation in the productive order and collective social values and goals like progress, prosperity, and democracy. Finally, within feminist positions which explicitly reject a view of human freedom as arising in the hierarchical arrangements of the market, there is nevertheless a vision of power and control as arising in privileged placement in paid work. Once again the focus is upon freeing the self through a better relation to work. This contradicts feminist aims to undermine the centrality of the market in defining the life course.

1. The subject and the regulation of work

A conception of the subject as properly or naturally devoted to work and education has been linked to ideologies or discourses which support the existing capitalist order. For instance, Elaine Butler (1997:63) has argued that the globalising aspirations of post industrial capital lead to the production of a subject 'flexible, adaptable, ready and willing to engage in continual (self) improvement/learning, for the benefit of the nation'. Butler (1997) disrupts the emphasis upon more and better vocational education for women undermining the assumption that it is a natural good arising from women's demands. She also effectively politicises the desire for education by highlighting the role that discourses of the subject play in cajoling subjects to adopt particular economically useful behaviours. Jackson (1993) has also argued that the recent emphasis upon competency-based education is important, not because it improves learning or job readiness, but because educators can be made more accountable to market imperatives. According to Jackson, broad goals of educational achievement and social objectives are reinscribed within vocational education discourse, and educators are made accountable in a more direct way to the short-term skill needs of the market.

Discourses that constitute subjects as possessed of productive aspirations have also been linked to a range of negative social effects. For instance, Elaine Butler (1997) argues that these discourses are implicated in the effects of longer working hours for full-time workers, more unpaid overtime, fewer jobs, and decreasing job security, and they do not lead to change in gender, race, and ethnic segregation in the labour force. She highlights the problem that the benefits to workers 'remain illusory, framed in uncertain global visioning of emerging futures'. Along related lines, Dean (1998:98) explains how the unemployment policy of both Labor and the Liberal/National Coalition has aimed to produce a relation to self in which the individual is the proprietor and marketer of personal skills, qualifications, and physical and psychological attributes. The language of the active jobseeker can give rise, within Labor discourses, to an approach in which national government agencies are responsible for providing, in exchange for appropriate jobseeking conducts, job-search and labour-exchange services, training, case-management, and even direct job creation. On the other hand, within Liberal/National Coalition policy and practice, national government agencies are no longer responsible for the provision of support for the unemployed, but require the unemployed citizen to adopt responsible consumer choices about services which provide employment assistance (Dean, 1998:102). Those who fail to adopt active jobseeking approaches may also be targeted and forced to spend their days in government-defined activities for their unemployment benefits (Dean, 1998:102). Sharon Beder (2000) also links

discourses that constitute work as a responsibility to the nation with a range of negative social effects arising from their support of 'work for the dole' schemes. Among these Beder (2000:174 and 180-187) includes: increased welfare costs; reductions in wages, especially for the bottom third of the employment market; the replacement of regular workers with unemployed workers; the removal of entry level jobs; withholding employment benefits from unemployed workers; forcing people to accept demeaning jobs without reducing poverty; and a rise in slums, homelessness, crime, and drugs.

However, while these accounts usefully point out the effects of ways of thinking the subject, some of them retain conceptual limitations — specifically in relation to their understanding of the origins of discourses of the productive subject. For instance, Butler (1997:64) argues that the 'key actors' in these constructions are 'corporate interests supported by the state' involving politicians, bureaucrats, elites from industry and the labour movement, managers, and human resources researchers and practitioners. This overlooks the role played by experts, and non-economic practices and objectives beyond the field of corporations, bureaucracy, and human resources in the production of an economic or productive subject. For instance, as Bonham[8] has argued, in the domain of city planning discourse, the subject is also imagined as destined for engagement in the economic activities of work, freight, consumption, and education. However, the economic subject of transport discourse in Australia from the late nineteenth century onwards, did not emerge from a specific political or economic interest group, but from a raft of minute changes in urban street space. These changes were brought about by discourses on health, morality, a concern with speed, and the economic use of time, and were confirmed by the broader productive imperative of society. This suggests that discourses that conceptualise the subject and life as primarily a productive venture are immanent to the aspirations of the population, and not generated purely by business interests.

Within Elaine Butler's account there is an emphasis upon the 'taking up' of subjectivity by workers so that participation at work is necessarily a form of subjugation from which workers might be expected to seek escape to a truer form of freedom. This implies that workers are possessed of 'false-consciousness', or are the dupes of corporate strategy when they pursue life-long learning, overlooking the way that these kinds of discourses constitute actual experiences of freedom. The view that a 'natural' state of freedom exists beyond the identities formulated by political interests distracts attention from feminist envisionings of

[8] Jennifer Bonham is currently writing her PhD thesis at the University of Adelaide and is jointly enrolled in Politics and Geography. The ideas I have borrowed from her arose in the context of a personal conversation in April 2001 about her PhD research on the history of transport discourse in Australia.

freedom and the extent to which they have been colonised by dominant discourses. The desire to find a place beyond the tyranny of politics also side-steps an examination of the effects of individual strivings for freedom; individuals are not seen as responsible for the ways in which they are implicated in reproducing the condition of modern society, but can be seen as its 'victims'.

More useful ways of thinking about the origins and role of the productive subject in the political order have been developed. For instance, Rose (1990:59) challenges the view that managerial discourses about productivity, worker control, and autonomy at work serve a legitimating function for the profit drive of employers, acting as a veil over an inherent and irreconcilable conflict of interest between workers and employers. For Rose, these discourses aim not simply to legitimise profit, although they certainly do this, nor do they originate in narrow political and economic interests. Such discourses are part of a diffuse knowledge base which aims to maximise national efficiency and productivity through the efficient use of material and human resources and the application of expertise. Arguing along similar lines, Donzelot (1991b) highlights the role played by reformist movements in ways of thinking about work. He gives the example of contemporary France in which a new discourse of work emerged that was not 'a mere ideology, a representation concocted by a state apparatus to serve and celebrate the ends of productivity', but 'the outcome of a series of reforms and experiments conceived in response to a malaise caused by the pursuit of productivity, designed to induce a range of local improvements in the regime of work' (Donzelot, 1991b:251). At the centre of this new discourse is a new way of thinking about the subject of work, not in the interests of productivity, but in an effort to ameliorate its negative effects.

Here those who oppose the damaging effects of the productive order become involved in the production of forms of subjectivity that support it. Rose (1990) and Donzelot (1991b) discuss the role played by the techniques and knowledges of disciplines including economics, industrial medicine, occupational and industrial psychology, psychopathology, ergonomics, vocational guidance, and human engineering within the modern Western states of Britain, the US, and France respectively. They argue that workers in the twentieth century are regulated by productions of the subject as finding pleasure, meaning, and security in work, unlike nineteenth-century discourses which perceived work as the oppression of human freedom. Workers are no longer either oppressed in work, nor free when they oppose it. The pathology previously attached to those who failed to fit into work is now blamed on the enterprise. Worker dissatisfaction becomes an indicator of an unproductive and dysfunctional work site, the aim being not rehabilitation, but creating the working

conditions which will enable the worker to pursue self-development. This is expressed in discourses about permanent retraining and self-managing work groups which are to encourage greater participation and fulfilment in work. Rose and Donzelot comment that continued retraining has become a social right bringing the pursuit of freedom into line with economic requirements. The 'setting free' of the worker's productive capacity in permanent retraining breaks down the older posture of resistance to work and workplace change. Work is changed to enable the worker to express their 'social need' for fulfilment in work, enabling the new formulae to be put into application according to their economic pertinence, and their capacity to break down resistance to work in favour of greater participation in it. Reforms have been instituted which claim to make work simultaneously more pleasurable for the worker and more profitable for the employer. This serves to support a link between production and productivity and the social administration of society.

The argument that the aims and activities of progressives are implicated in the reproduction of the productive subject is also supported by writers in the contemporary Australian context. Meredyth (1998) argues that Labor's post-compulsory education programmes of the early 1990s cannot be reduced, as it is within educationist responses, to an expression of political ideals, interests, or economic doctrines. Nor can it be understood in terms of a strong State coercing the democratic community, or alternatively a weak State unable to contain the market. Rather, educational programmes aimed to address the social welfare problems of youth unemployment, welfare dependency, and the inappropriateness of vocational training to industry needs and international standards. While economic theory has clearly influenced policy, employers have themselves been required to adapt to new ethical routines (Meredyth, 1998:33), and the concerns of education providers and social welfare advocates have not been easily overlooked by bureaucrats (Meredyth, 1998:35). Neither can the doctrine of choice and flexibility, common to both Labor and National Coalition policies, be easily translated into programmes since both are built upon the considerable regulatory effort of education itself (Meredyth, 1998:36-38).

The activities of feminist scholarship are also involved in the regulation of work. Donzelot (1991:267-268) notes that feminism has been involved in the new techniques for governing work by providing indicators of the enterprise's productive performance. The social and economic health of the enterprise come under scrutiny not only in terms of the accident rate and level of absenteeism. Wage differences between men and women also become indicators of the enterprise's social and economic health and its productive capacity. To the extent that feminism participates in producing a self naturally motivated toward the development of market labours, it participates in the overall project of directing social resources and

individual conducts in directions which prioritise the development of economic capacities. There is a danger that those views which see education and training as political only when they can be seen to be controlled by capital, either directly or via the State, give too little consideration to the political contributions made by the human sciences and 'the community' in the production of expert knowledges which organise and reproduce the existing order.

2. Feminism and the productive subject

Feminism has pointed out that feminine identity is not constituted primarily in relation to paid work, or in competitive and individualistic terms, but is known according to a primary role in constraining relational domains, carrying affective, domestic, and reproductive meanings. As Campioni and Grosz (1983) make clear, within non-feminist discourse,

> the condition of being human — the condition of labour — is the prerogative of men. The domination over nature and the creation of consumable and exchangeable goods through labour, ie. production as meaningful activity on a world in order to transform it, has in fact been a description of the place accorded to men in patriarchal culture. What counts as labour and as production is narrowly defined in such a way that generally only the activities of men (and those of women insofar as they are the same as men) count.

Feminism has shown it is male identity and experience that is constituted in terms of 'work' — male bodies are seen as economically productive bodies. The feminine subject is seen as 'naturally' befitted to a more derided domestic set of aims; she gives priority to relational responsibilities and affections, and this explains the exclusion and subjugation of women within economic thinking, domains of exchange, and legal representations.

In response to the problems for women that arise from the failure to identify women's work as productive, feminists have demanded more recognition for the productive nature of women's activities, and sought greater involvement of women in the productive life of the nation. There is the underlying goal of establishing women as productive, rather than 'natural' domestic beings, and of preventing the economic waste of women's productive utility. There has not been a questioning of the centrality of productivity in thinking human needs, values, and drives. On the contrary, claims about women's productivity have often been made in the name of the assumed 'naturalness' of productivity to human life.

There sometimes arises the image of a feminine subject possessed of a productive capacity, particularly as expressed in the propensity for accumulating expertise in the process of learning. The Gender Equity Network (1995:4) has reported that 'contrary to common

belief, typical female skills can be taught'. Sue Willis is cited as providing the example that,

> flight attendants and nurses are taught how to relate to people, and how to listen and respond with empathy ... even if you weren't taught these skills, but gained them through life experience, you've still learnt them.

In this text a clear link is assumed between work value and the development of skill. Again, Thornton's (1986:97) rejection of equality arguments states that 'new forms of life which make more of women's potentialities have to be created'. She calls for 'full justice to women's potential', and 'optimising women's advancement'.

The development of potential is then linked to the attainment of fulfilment and happiness for women. For instance Cockburn (1985:243-244) sympathetically quotes a researcher for the promotion of unskilled women to technological operator jobs:

> It's upsetting that so many women are doing work that is way beneath what they are capable of. They have all this pent-up potential. The firms take women on as operators and they don't know anything about them or their real capabilities.

In a similar manner, Lawtham (1997:104) draws attention to the link between attitudes and job satisfaction with job performance, and supports the view that 'a happy worker is a productive worker'. Probert (1997:313) also states that for 'some groups of women ... in the struggle for women's liberation ... it was paid work — in the form of a satisfying career such as their husbands were pursuing — which could provide real satisfaction ... .' That the human subject strives to develop their 'potential' as part of a striving for freedom is taken as self-evident and outside debate.

While socialist positions, like wage solidarity, challenge hierarchy they also sometimes imply a model of humanity as productively inspired. For instance, Brenner (1987:461) argues against accepting the necessity and validity of divisive meritocratic hierarchy. She says that 'if we are looking at the work that people do, then we should ask whether that work is productive, safe, and interesting, and whether it allows people to use their talents and skills and to develop new ones'. Brenner (1987:462) also claims that a 'language of rights does not have to be limited to a narrowly defined meritocratic standard but can be expanded to include the rights to contribute one's best efforts, to do work that enriches, and to receive in return a decent standard of living'. Here individuals come to demand more involvement in work as a 'right' linked to basic 'needs'. They are also assumed to have 'talents' and 'skills' which only need developing.

To some extent, socialist feminist thought also does not question a view of the subject as 'naturally' predisposed to the accumulation and expression of skill. The denial of skill has

been seen as tantamount to a denial of humanity. For instance, Phillips and Taylor (1986:65) remark that 'capitalist work in general has become more routinized, more deadening, more a denial of the humanity of those who perform it'. This interest is based upon the power and freedom seen to reside in the human capacity to develop one's labour. It is this 'power' that is degraded by the imposition of technology.

The productive contributions of individuals are the taken for granted value, whose expression, development, and reward must always be ensured. The rights expressed here come to sound very much like human capital discourse with its emphasis upon the importance of developing the skills of workers and enabling greater flexibility at work.

There is also a failure to question hierarchy itself in favour of establishing productive equality between the sexes.

> It is my belief that not only must the hierarchical nature of the division of labour between the sexes be eliminated, but the very division of labor between the sexes itself must be eliminated if women are to attain equal social status with men and if women and men are to attain the full development of their human potentials. (Hartmann, 1976:137)

Here the development of labour within paid work is essential to the quest for liberation. It does not call into question the hierarchical division of labour, but seeks to establish the 'right' of both men and women to develop market labours. Some wage solidarity feminists argue that work cannot be, and should not be, evaluated and differentiated because of the need to respect the productive value of all human activity. Differentiations among human labours are denied in favour of a position which insists upon the equal recognition of everybody's labour. An interviewee in Lewis (1988) exemplifies this conundrum.

> 'If you really look at it, what's equal to what? What we're really saying is that a clerical worker is as good as a garbage man. Why isn't a garbage man as good as a doctor? In a society that is based on inequality, how can you win equality? ... anything anyone is paid for, anything society thinks is worth doing, you ought to be able to earn a decent living and be able to live on it'.

Here comparisons among occupations are made in terms of an equality in the productive contributions made to society. There is the sense that to claim, for instance, that doctors are better than garbage collectors, is unjust, not only because it results in comparative poverty for garbage collectors, but because it denies an underlying humanity grounded in the individual's productive contribution to society.

The productive equality which is at the centre of some feminist arguments about equal pay for work of equal value or comparable worth might be seen as one of the products of the disciplinary practices Foucault outlines in *Discipline and Punish* (1977). Instead of an unruly

field of social behaviours, the disciplines made it possible to observe and document individuals within institutions such as the workplace. These practices enabled the 'discovery' of an essential productive disposition or tendency toward the orderly acquisition of skill, and designated an individual's value in relation to a productive norm. One of the legacies of this history might readily be imagined to be the emphasis upon an equality that takes on meaning in relation to the norms of productivity and efficiency. Without this currency of meaning 'equality' could not be established. The assumption that valuing some work more than others is tantamount to a violation of humanity, already accepts that productivity is the standard against which work and workers can be judged.

The importance placed upon valuing the 'different' productive contributions of women might also be said to originate from a conception of a normative productive humanity. Within a disciplinary system difference is produced in ways that support the normative order. Difference is no longer understood within a multiple and shifting field in which comparisons of human beings, and especially of their value or worth, is incoherent. Rather, normative differences arise in which the points of 'difference' can be plotted against one another in relation to a central fixed standard in order to produce conformity to that standard. The insistence upon the productive equality and integrity of all work might be seen as one result of this view of difference. Women's difference is known in relation to the categories 'production' and 'men'. Within a liberal paradigm, inequality must therefore be understood as the failure to acknowledge the uniqueness of women's productivity or, in the socialist view, as the attribution of unequal values to the contributions made by individuals to society. Neither position disturbs the authority of activities nominated productive in the determination of value.

Many feminists equate skill and training schedules and the 'professionalisation' of 'dead end' occupations with democracy and the national good. For instance the Women's Employment Branch (1990) makes the following comment:

> occupational segregation cannot be justified in terms of either equity or efficiency. Furthermore, if the segregation of women continues in the face of the changing gender structure of the workforce, the costs to the economy due to loss of efficiency are likely to increase over the next decade. (Women's Employment Branch, 1990:Preface) ... If training continues to be directed primarily towards men, and half of the future workforce have restricted access to training, Australia will experience an erosion of its skills base, which will in turn constrain economic development. (Women's Employment Branch, 1990:18)

Here training is associated with the development of skill or productivity which is in turn

good for the national economy. In a similar vein Metcalf (1997:2) notes that,

> women's concentration in low-level jobs and in a restricted range of occupations suggests that women's skills are not being fully utilised. This is problematic not only for individuals but also for the economy. While the loss to the economy is not new, its importance has grown with the growth in female employment. This suggests a more urgent need to tackle gender segregation and women's lack of progress in the occupational hierarchy.

In this view, the development of one's personal human capital is a moral good defined in utilitarian terms; it contributes to the well-being of all.

The lack of problematisation of the links between learning and productivity, and productivity with the national good, within many feminist texts, fails to decentre the worker as the source for correction. The notion that the aggregate level of individual skill and training constitutes national productivity is the basis upon which industrial relations policy acts to correct gross economic problems; that is, individual productivity is targeted in an attempt to improve national competitiveness (see chapter two). This view spawns a range of programmatic interventions that aim to stimulate the productivity of individual workers. It is a position which imposes a particular ethic of life or mode of conduct as a condition of freedom or an expression of 'choice', namely a diligent commitment to transforming oneself into a more productive unit of the national good. It is a discourse which ties the individual to national security, placing a collective moral value and imperative upon the individual's economic performance.

Feminist emphasis upon the values generated by experience and self-development, whether this occurs in or out of paid work and formalised training, or within the unpaid sphere, suggests a shared behaviourist conception of human capital based on the notion of the development of human resources. The labourer is not free when they avoid a transcendent law or economic determination of their value and time, but when they develop or control their human capital. Instead of showing how subjects naturally driven to enhance the economic value of their labour are produced, and enable the reproduction of an economic imperative, much feminist discourse limits itself to attempts to win recognition for women as economic subjects. What is problematised is the constitution of the female body as unskilled, not receptive to training. A view of human beings as improved within a linear, progressive style of development, and the assumption that the individual's progression to higher occupational levels reflects mental and other capacities, could have the effect of stimulating judgments and forms of self-regulation which lead to the struggle for occupational 'success'. This is a conception of subjectivity born of the physical organisation of work into hierarchical structures which also act to make sense of them.

Partly as a result of these forms of agreement, 'industrial reform' has come to mean the creation and adjustment of careers that can reflect the worker's aspiration for 'self improvement'. The market demand for skilled workers is now expressed as a progressive 'right'. The acquisition of these rights are not limited to an increase in wages, but require the active involvement of citizens in the productive life of the nation. 'Equality' has come to mean the 'opportunity' to access training, education, and other forms of skill acquisition. One expression of this is the increasing levels of training, education, and specialisation required for jobs that once required much less preparation. All sides of the political spectrum demand more and better vocational training and education. Individuals are both encouraged and obliged to undertake training throughout their lifetimes since status and wage improvements depend upon the formal acquisition or acknowledgment of training. This is often justified, either explicitly or implicitly, in the name of the freedom, integrity, and pursuit of individual expression and fulfilment, all of which accord with a market-driven society. Increasing work loads, and the deferment of other goals in order to attain higher educational qualifications, are not simply products of corporate demands that defy the needs of workers, they are also, at least partially, the effects of progressive discourses.

This is not to imply that the effects of these discourses are always or necessarily negative. On the contrary, they often seem to have positive effects such as the re-evaluation of work, increased wages, and access to education and training (at least for particular groups or as seen from particular points of view). At the same time, the goal of securing more and better training and work opportunities for women might still be achieved without reaffirming a view of humanity and national security as based upon the development of human capital. This would avoid the risk of supporting the outcomes that feminism is opposed to. If overwork and a lack of time for non-waged activities are some of the effects of objectifications of the subject as 'naturally' productive, then feminist discourse may at times conspire in outcomes that contradict its own aim. A more successful politics would reject a view of humanity and the national good as grounded in productive work and increased levels of hierarchically organised training and education. It would also raise discourses that contradict a view of humanity as productively inspired.

3. The colonisation of alterity

The aim of a new kind of feminist labour politics would be to achieve feminist goals without accruing the risks associated with truth claims. One of these risks is the silencing or deriding of persons whose cultural values and present lives are not dominated by a productive goal.

In this, feminist labour texts have not always been successful. The problem of labour is often framed as the 'disadvantage' faced by persons who are not yet contributing to work. The solution depends, not upon changing the organisation or availability of paid work, challenging racism, or of raising awareness of, and tolerance for, existing alternatives to paid work and the problems these perspectives might raise. Rather, there is an emphasis upon 'non-productive' persons taking a more active role in improving their own circumstances. For instance, the feminist reform agenda has often emphasised access to education.

> Education contributes significantly to people's labour market opportunities. In the past, many groups have had limited access to quality education and, sometimes, limited choice of subjects to study because of their localities or personal circumstances. The Department (DEET) recognises this and, in the International Year of the Family, is working to support the development of open learning services which will improve the community's access to eduction and training in all sectors. ... All of which means greater access for parents at home looking after their kids, people at home with disabilities, family members with literacy or language difficulties, home-based workers and people, particularly Aboriginal people, living in isolated areas. (Women's Bureau, 1994:10)

There is no question in this literature that more participation in, and preparation for, the market is a good that will be universally welcomed. With regard to the changes required of the vocational education system in Australia, Junor (1993:15) makes the following statement.

> As Australia moves out of recession in the 1990s, the pressures for short-term cost-cutting should decrease, and there will be an increased need for a longer-term, more visionary approach to productivity enhancement. Such an approach must be economically, ecologically and socially sustainable. It must avoid the twin dangers of burning-out some workers whilst marginalising others through continued high unemployment or through the pursuit of *numerical* flexibility strategies which require the growth of a new contingent workforce. Training must contribute to flexibility in a way that conserves, develops and, above all, utilises, the national pool of human capabilities.

Here non-working members of the population are to be 'supported' by enabling a fuller and more stable participation in the existing order of production. All members of the population become obliged to enter into an active engagement with production in the name of the national good.

There is often the sense that those who do not understand their work as skilled, who do not wish to make use of 'training opportunities', view 'professionalisation' with scepticism, have no career ambition, or who do not identify strongly with occupational status, are 'lacking self-esteem', or a developed feminist consciousness. Given the emphasis upon the contribution of individual labours to the national good, one might also read into these positions a lack of social responsibility, and a hindrance to the progressive future of the

nation. Normative judgements sometimes apply to those women who fail to participate in paid work 'assertively'.

> Women of non-English speaking background (NESB) are hampered not just by language barriers, but by their lack of understanding of the subtle nuances which enable effective communication (for instance, the difficulty of translating concepts which are often culturally derived). (Kempnich et al., 1992:2) ... The key to greater participation by women in decision making was considered primarily to be one of learning to be assertive. Fundamental to being able to operate assertively is believing that one has needs and indeed rights which deserve respect and consideration. (Kempnich et al., 1992:10)

Here it is assumed that 'assertiveness', understood as the capacity to demand one's 'rights', is a condition or value universal to all cultures, and that those who refrain from participating in decision-making structures do so because they fail to understand the culture of the organisation, or lack self-confidence. It is not deemed possible that some, maybe many people, experience existing decision-making processes and environments as alienating and prefer to avoid participating in them. Instead, as Cruikshank (1993:330) observes in relation to post 1960s empowerment discourses in the US, 'those who have failed to link their personal fulfilment to social reform are lumped together as "social problems", are diagnosed as "lacking self-esteem" and are charged with "anti-social behaviour"' .

Sometimes there is an effort to valorise the activities of marginalised groups by labelling their activities as 'already productive'. For example, Curthoys and Moore (1995) have attempted to contradict the 'racist assumption' that 'Aborigines did not use the land productively', not by questioning productive contribution as the basis for evaluations of human worth, but by insisting that in fact Aborigines *are* productive. For Curthoys and Moore, the problem with labour history is that it has failed to inform the public of the labour performed by Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders. What is interesting about this debate is its questioning of whether Aborigines 'were culturally averse to work' or 'did in fact work', and the view that racism is automatically challenged by asserting a productive history of the Aborigines. The article notes and dismisses Ward's analysis in *Labour History* (1988) that Aborigines 'will not settle down to a steady job,... that they share what they have with friends and relations rather than save', and have 'assumptions about human life which are very different from White Australians'. This is rejected in the view of 'most writers in the field of Aboriginal history' which 'acknowledge' the 'historical existence of Aboriginal labour within the wider society' (Curthoys and More, 1995:3). Here there is a struggle to represent 'the truth' about Aboriginal life, one which is non-racist and which 'recognises' Aboriginal productivity. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders 'have been ignored and thus denied worker status' (Curthoys and More, 1995:4). The text provides the following

conclusion:

> If we begin by acknowledging that Aborigines and Torres Strait Islanders worked within their own modes of production and were incorporated as workers into introduced modes of production from the beginning of settlement, and that women and children as well as men worked, we may be on the road to acknowledging the importance of indigenous labour to post-1788 Australia. The 1992 Mabo judgement of the High Court was a beacon along this road, but reconciliation will never come until Australians come to terms with the fact that work is part of all societies. (Curthoys and Moore, 1995:20)

While a recognition of Aboriginal labours is a positive and necessary step, the above quote translates Aboriginal life prior to and after colonisation into a white cultural framework which values activities when they are called 'work'. Racism is apparently addressed when Aborigines are objectified as supporters of white labour markets and persons who demonstrate the values of hard work. The text does not consider that cultural positions outside the norm might themselves be diverse and might reframe the questions, assumptions, and paradigms that dominate the labour literature.

Any discourse, regardless of the radical nature of its claims and theoretical affiliations, can participate unknowingly in the colonisation or derision of alterity, and the regulation of a population driven by the values of work and productivity. For instance, Elaine Butler (1997:66) adopts a sophisticated approach which problematises conceptions of the subject as primed for permanent industrial innovation. At the same time, however, her discussion refers to 'the illusory nature of depictions of shared loyalty, mutuality and trust between managers and workers'. Here, what is political is illusory, giving rise to the possibility of a space outside the world of political deception that offers a 'truer' vision, or at least a narrowing of politics to those productions and effects traced to corporate interests. Unemployment, overwork, and segregation by sex, race, and ethnicity, are problematised because they are the effects of corporate productions of the subject. The delineation of some ideas as 'real' and others as illusory leaves particular domains of knowledge outside critical speculation. It also gives rise to the view that the end of politics has arrived when political effects have been secured, that is, when the exclusion of marginalised groups from well-rewarded jobs and 'secure' investments has been accomplished. One gets the sense that those designated other to the norm will be free when 'they' become more like 'us'. In this way an analysis that retains the split between truth and politics always risks becoming a part of the drive to colonise cultural beliefs that fall outside productive norms of subjectivity.

The danger of derision and silencing of alternative perspectives flowing from a truth/politics split can be evidenced in relation to feminist perspectives on household labour. In many feminist texts, as described in chapters two and five, the economic problem is seen as the

exploitation of women in the home, the denial of access to direct economic rewards arising from exclusion from lucrative spaces in public production, and women's seclusion within the family.

> In the private system of patriarchy the exploitation of women in the household is maintained by their non-admission to the public sphere. ... Within paid work there was a shift from an exclusionary strategy to a segregationist one, which was a movement from attempting to exclude women from paid work to accepting their presence but confining them to jobs which were segregated from and graded lower than those of men. (Walby, 1990:178-179)

For this analysis to work we must assume that 'women in the household' experience specialisation in household labours as exploitative and limiting. Household labours are necessarily a burden. Recognition of this leads Pateman (1988:141) to comment that when women enter paid work they do so as beings from another world; they are never workers in the same sense as men. Ironically, the insight that household workers know a way of being that is substantially different from the productive norms that dominate paid work, is often transformed within feminist texts into a negative state. For Pateman (1988:130) those who experience a sense of freedom within legal contracts are suffering from 'false consciousness'.

> Housewives see freedom from control as their great advantage; they stress that they can decide what to do and how and when to do it, and many housewives have strong, internalized standards of what constitutes a good job of work. Wives, like the strikingly high proportion of male workers who tell investigators that they are satisfied with what, to an outsider, appear to be extremely unsatisfactory jobs, make the best of their lot; life can be insupportable otherwise ... (but) ... the demands of his work largely determine how the housewife organizes her time.

In the above quote, accounts that women and other workers value freedom from control becomes 'making the best of their lot' while the author underwrites this experience with the deeper 'reality' of men's control over their work. Ironically, the altruism and interdependency associated with 'women's work', which feminism frequently seeks to valorise (see chapter four), and expressed here as 'organising time' to fit in with others, is overwritten and becomes a 'subjugation'. The need to find exploitation in exclusion from the paid sphere of production and a patriarchal domination of women's household labour, prevents an acknowledgment of the positive experience of a lack of external control and regulation of work reported by some household labourers. The 'different' nature of household labour is effectively read through a theoretical paradigm which pairs freedom with production. Household labour can only be spoken about in terms of what it lacks compared to the domain of paid work.

The relation between the 'woman worker' and the academic feminist is not far removed from Mohanty's (1988:56) 'average third world woman' constructed within Western feminism:

'This average third world woman leads an essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read sexually constrained) and her being "third world" (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family oriented, victimised, etc.)'. It is in setting up the authorial subject as the implicit referent, the norm which encodes and represents cultural others, that power is exercised in discourse (Mohanty, 1988: 55). Only the author of the text is in a position to give voice to the 'real' experience of the 'woman worker'. It is a production which implicitly favours a view of women as disempowered as a result of their exclusion from paid work. This too easily supports, despite the critiques of capitalism within many feminist texts, an unreflective demand for more and better work for women and a silencing and derision of alternative ways of life.

4. Economism and power

As discussed above, some feminist texts link training, skill development, and the 'professionalisation' of working-class occupations directly to notions of freedom, individual fulfilment and worth. In this kind of position, the problem is the inhibitions that discrimination or taste put in the way of perfect competition. Other feminists explicitly challenge the view that women find freedom in segregated work structures, and some suggest that work contracts can only provide a condition of domination (for example Pateman, 1988). To some extent the latter form of analysis provides an active challenge to the productive norm. At other moments however, the same discourses associate positive qualities like power, control and freedom of choice with economic status, and in this way act to support the productive ordering of life.

The theoretical positions adopted in feminist texts about patriarchy and capitalism and their determination of sexual divisions in work, have often not overcome the problem of 'economism' that Foucault (1980:88) sees in the theory of power of eighteenth-century liberalism and Marxism. He comments that a 'clear analogy runs through all these theories between power and commodities, power and wealth'. In liberal positions power is possessed like a commodity; it can be transferred and exchanged within legal contractual relations. Alternatively, Marxist analyses of power understand it in terms of the role it plays in the maintenance of the relations of production and of class domination. In this view power serves the economy. This conception is reflected within feminist debate. Liberal theory is, to varying degrees, more positive in its view of power. For feminist welfare liberals women can obtain more power via a rearrangement of contractual relations. For Marxist or socialist-style theorists, power is often a purely negative force which men, bosses, arbitrators, and powerful trade unionists possess. Power in these analyses is understood in an antagonistic

relation to freedom; power necessarily takes freedom away. For instance, men's power robs women of freedom. However, since power emanates from the economic interests, positions, and 'choices' of oppressive economic actors and ideologies, it often seems to follow, within labour feminist texts, that women will also be powerful when they can express economic choice, when they enter high level positions in paid work, and have more money, and therefore more 'independence', than is currently available to them.

In particular, in these analyses, freedom to choose is known and expressed economically — freedom is an individual economic experience. One wage solidarity writer equates 'real independence' with money: 'most of our life choices are limited by the knowledge that we will seldom make enough money to establish real independence' (Lewis, 1988:28). For Sharp and Broomhill (1988:xi) also, 'wealth provides security, status and power'. It can be expected that these authors will join with Phillips (1996:142) in rejecting a struggle 'to ensure that there are as many wealthy women as wealthy men', and instead share the 'hope for a society in which people's autonomy and security, and their role in political processes, rest far less on private-property ownership'. For Phillips (1996:142) however, as for others, it is accepted that

> a lack of access to or control over wealth contributes to women's economic disadvantage both qualitatively, in the ways it affects personal security and autonomy, and quantitatively, in terms of the empirical evidence on wealth distribution.

Here, personal security and autonomy are not tied to the collectivisation of wealth, but to access or control over wealth. The economic problems of women are to be remedied by improving their position in paid work. As Probert (1997:314) says, feminists have supported equal pay for 'perhaps revolutionary reasons'. 'They believed that access to jobs and financial independence, and a presence in the public sphere — the world outside the home — were preconditions for women's freedom, for women's liberation'. In these statements there is the assumption that women in general, and certainly white middle-class women, ground a feeling of security, freedom, and autonomy in personal wealth, gained via individual participation in paid work. Freedom is conceptualised in economic terms; earnings are constituted as the main solution to a form of 'oppression' synonymous with the suppression of economic choice and security.

The problem with the link between independence and personal wealth gained in productive employment is not that it emphasises that for many women more and better paid employment is crucial and fair, say because it will allow them to enter marriage on their own terms, or avoid marriage altogether. This is undoubtedly of great importance and has been usefully emphasised in feminist texts like those quoted above. The difficulty that arises from an

association of universal values like independence, freedom, or choice with individual economic means is that it implicates something intrinsic about human nature, and closes off alternative perspectives regarding the source of human freedom and autonomy. For instance, the link between individual wealth and a universal freedom obscures and downplays perspectives which associate human survival, well-being, and integrity with the collective efforts of the family or clan, with public duty, spirituality, or a code of moral conduct.

In addition, assuring material security by private effort often requires that earnings be accumulated and invested in the financial institutions that are the foundation of the existing economic order, such as the stock market, banks, insurance agencies, and private property ownership. The association of wealth with freedom promotes or reproduces a version of the subject for whom the pursuit of security and autonomy effectively obliges investment in the existing order. It is not a subject whose values and needs are estranged by that order, or one who imagines the world in another set of terms.

Feminist labour thought also frequently insists that workers attain power when they are deemed 'skilled'; power is something possessed in the economic value of one's labour. Since power is conceptualised as a repressive force which operates on the side of falsity to negate freedoms and forms of individual expression that are 'true', and since power represses skill, feminist labour logic asserts that freedom amounts to attaining a truer reflection of the economic value of work. This view often sits somewhat awkwardly alongside the feminist insight that value is always political, and has led to the hierarchical segregation of workers in ways that benefit capital. For instance, Jensen states that,

> restructuring the labour process so as to privilege skilled work and workers will further marginalize women unless political actors challenge long-standing processes which isolate women from machinery and which define women's skills as talents. Carefully constructed strategies in pursuit of equal pay for work of equal value — which by their very nature politically question popular notions of skill and value — may be part of such a process. Unions and other actors must also reject notions of 'difference' within the working class which can be the basis for legitimation of a two-tier labour force in which the 'real workers' all seem to be skilled men, and women and others who have been historically without power fill the marginal categories. Acceptance of such a politics of fragmentation can only be a step backward. (Jensen, 1989:155)

Here the contradiction between simultaneously supporting and problematising a strategy that differentiates work is obscured by the association of skill with power and the assumption that women will have more power when they have their skills identified. Linking skill with power, instead of simply the possibility of a wage increase, serves to underline a view of human beings as predisposed to the development of labour. Skilfulness lies within these

understandings as a pristine or pre-cultural quantity, a 'natural' good which must be protected as a fundamental part of the human struggle.

There is also a link made between power and knowledge of machinery, for instance, within the argument that knowledge of machinery enabled men to resist women's entry into skilled trades. For Wajcman (1991:21) the

> gender division of labour within the factory meant that the machinery was designed by men with men in mind, either by the capitalist inventor or by skilled craftsmen. Industrial technology from its origins thus reflects male power as well as capitalist domination.

This then enables an association of freedom from the repressive effects of male power with the acquisition of technical knowledge of machines. Wajman's (viii:1991) introductory sentence to her summary of feminist thought about women and technology makes this clear: 'Over the last two decades feminists have identified men's monopoly of technology as an important source of their power; women's lack of technological skills as an important element in our dependence on men'. Jensen also (1991:22) problematises 'women's profound alienation from technology'. Women are then invited to understand barriers to power and freedom in terms of a lack, or a perceived lack, of knowledge of, and contributions to, the machinery and inventiveness of production. Once again the solution entails a greater commitment on the part of women to attaining the skills valued in production.

In making these observations, the point I want to emphasise is not that wage equity, poverty, and skill evaluation and development are not important issues for feminism, but that there is a need for arguments about improving economic distributions to avoid an unqualified and unreflective equation of wealth, skill, education, and technological advancement with power and freedom. These associations are not inherent truths buried within the nature of things, but contingent meanings which give shape to the world. The effects of these ways of thinking may include the pursuit of work, wealth, and 'progress' as ends in themselves, distracting attention from their effects, and implicating subjective desires in productive goals. A strategy which highlights social constraint upon individual economic choice, or produces social problems in terms of the lack of the freedoms found in the market, originates from and supports interventions designed to bring individuals out of the constraining social domain into a fuller participation in the life of the market place. It is time that the widespread and immanent drive toward production were drawn more explicitly into the political debates of feminist labour theory.

Conclusion

Feminist labour thought about women's experience of and relation to paid work does not always subvert the truths that Foucauldian thinkers have argued are involved in stimulating the investment of the population in productive goals. This has been demonstrated with reference to statements that assume that individual fulfilment, national prosperity and justice arise from the development of productive capacities, or which pair power, freedom and security with involvement in market activities, institutions and rewards. The normalisation of this kind of subject has also led, in some instances, to the derision and silencing of alternative ways of living.

7
THE DISCIPLINE OF WOMEN: RE-CONCEPTUALISING FEMINIST EXPLANATIONS OF JOB HIERARCHY AND COMPARABLE WORTH

Thus far I have focused upon the extent to which feminist discourse participates in the reproduction of a normative form of re/productive humanity. In this chapter I would like to focus upon the practices that produce an individualised relation to production, and the limitations of feminism's conceptualisation of, and objection to, these practices. In particular I would like to consider feminist positions on equal pay for work of equal value, and its use of job analysis and evaluation.

Wage solidarity critiques reject comparable worth in favour of increasing wages for workers at the bottom of the wage hierarchy, and usefully problematise the links that comparable worth discourse makes between wages and work value (see chapter two). However the approach fails to offer a comprehensive analysis of the regulating effects of job evaluation practices. A wage solidarity approach often condemns the practical utility of comparable worth when it is seen to be controlled by corporate and patriarchal interests. At the same time, provisional support is given to the approach when it is seen to be controlled by the women's movement, and provides re-evaluations of 'women's work' that lead to increases in women's wages. There is a tendency to analyse comparable worth and job description processes purely in terms of their impact upon the difference between the wages and status of men and women workers.

Following Foucauldian analyses of the relations between power and the techniques of occupational psychology, this chapter develops an alternative critique of workplace processes like job evaluation. It also raises a different set of cautionary and strategic conclusions than those canvassed within current debates. In common with wage solidarity

positions, I take a critical view of job evaluation processes, although the emphasis falls more on their role in bringing about compliance with the production drive, than on a traditional rejection of the 'political' production of hierarchy by vested interest groups. Job analysis techniques are not conceived as tools of a hegemonic capitalism, (although they are clearly involved in the production of hierarchal divisions), but as methods for the production of normative and regulatory knowledges about the subject of labour. Job evaluation and description are also techniques which reflect the productive view of humanity; a view that invests many levels of industrial society.

The chapter explores the knowledges that feminist uses of equal pay for work of equal value strategies produce about women, and considers some of the possible effects of this knowledge in the workplace. I conclude that feminist activists must avoid reifying feminine stereotypes about women's work in their efforts to increase the value and status of the work performed by women. However, I conclude that, despite the risks involved, job analysis may have more positive uses than wage solidarity approaches currently imagine. Although, as I have argued throughout the thesis, such uses would need to be underpinned by an explicit rejection of the universal claims that enable the normalisation of competitive labour within the lifetime.

1. Feminist equal pay for work of equal value debates

Feminist thought can be broken into two distinctive positions regarding the nature of individuals and ways of thinking about equal pay for work of equal value. In the first, individuals are imagined to possess different capacities for contribution so that it makes sense to differentiate rewards in order to reflect the extent that an individual has realised their potential. Feminists holding this view have problematised women's inability to develop their potential, or the inability of existing hierarchies of value to 'recognise' the work that women do. Job analysis and evaluation is performed in order to overcome the latter problem by providing accurate documentations of women's skills. Another position reasons that, if individuals are different but equal and there is no inherent difference in the value of one individual's contribution compared to another, it makes no sense to differentiate work or reward some people more than others. In this view, improving existing evaluations of women's work can only be supported to the extent that it equalises the gap between men's and women's wages and status. In short, feminist debate about equal pay for work of equal value, and the use of job description and evaluation techniques that are to achieve it, tend to polarise around either an unqualified acceptance of the strategy, or a qualified acceptance or rejection, based on the extent to which it affects wages.

There are three elements of the wage solidarity position on equal value strategy that distinguish it from the problematisation I develop in this chapter. The first element of the discourse I want to highlight is an emphasis upon who controls the technology, with a corresponding de-emphasis upon the meanings that support, and are produced by, industrial techniques like job analysis. The obstacle to achieving a livable income for all who work is seen to be in the hands of managers, personnel departments, and the State who subvert or water down the more radical demands of the women's movement. In this context Steinberg (1987:473) says the problem is not discourse; rather there is a need to

> consider ways for feminist insiders to gain control of the terms of debate, greater access to information, and greater control over policy decisions. If we succeed in carving out new strategies, we will be more likely to achieve our agendas — not because policymakers see the intrinsic validity of the arguments we are making, but because the costs of opposing our agenda prove greater than the costs of doing it our way.

Here feminist arguments are always already aligned with workers, and both sets of interests are placed outside the field of political questioning. On the other hand 'the State', and its adoption of comparable worth, is seen as opposing everything progressive and is treated with a general sense of mistrust.

Despite these misgivings, comparable worth is often condoned if it is seen to act to address the devaluation of 'women's work'. For example, Warskett (1990) is critical of the hierarchical effects of comparable worth but argues that job evaluation contains the positive capacity to 'recognise' the skills and duties within women's jobs, providing better information, more consistency in job classification and compensation, enabling unions and workers to restructure career ladders, training programmes, and promotion and transfer policies. Here improving the status and wages of women's work within the existing hierarchy is seen as an acceptable short term project that should not be postponed while feminists fight for an egalitarian society. As discussed in chapters two and four, this approach is informed by the assumption that 'women's work' is a fixed set of activities, rather than a productive and contested field of meaning. Job analysis is perceived as a passive tool that either misrepresents or values the activities women perform. And, as argued in chapter six, a wage solidarity approach does not challenge the view that human beings are essentially productive and therefore require, as a condition of integrity, 'recognition' for the value of their labours.

Finally, many wage solidarity texts give the impression that job evaluation processes are not worth analysing outside a consideration of wages. Comparable worth commentators often

assume that the wage gap and the material circumstances of men and women is the only outcome of job analysis that is of significance. Magid (1997:127) says that comparable worth

> has been seen as an important reform because of its potential to have impact on the low wages earned by most women. Most working women in the United States continue to work in jobs which are predominantly (more than seventy percent) female. Across the board these jobs have been paid substantially less than men's jobs of comparable worth. If the wages for these jobs could be raised to the level of comparably evaluated men's jobs, comparable worth implementation could significantly improve the material circumstances of most working women.

An evaluation of comparable worth purely in terms of its impact upon the wage gap between men and women neglects consideration of other effects of job evaluation processes, such as their impact upon the meaning of particular jobs, influencing for instance, the tasks performed, and the amount of work performed. But more importantly, an analysis which assumes that the question of comparable worth is purely one of the unequal distribution of economic resources, the devaluation of women's work, the denial of a productive human equality, and the oppressive forces that produce exploitative outcomes, overlooks the active or productive role played by techniques like job evaluation. Current feminist perspectives on equal pay for work of equal value do not consider its role in a form of social control that enables more 'productive' rationalisations of work, and intimately invests individuals in a hierarchical work culture. The objections of wage solidarity writers also fail to recognise the extent to which their own claims may be aligned with the logic of State policy makers. Nor is there an acknowledgment that valuing 'women's work' is a fraught political process which may introduce difficult contradictions for feminists.

2. Job evaluation and social control

A Foucauldian analysis of job description and evaluation suggests a different set of conclusions from the feminist positions summarised above. Hollway (1984) and Rose (1990) see an important role for psychological techniques like job evaluation in the formation of contemporary subjectivity, and the regulation of economic relations. Hollway (1984) has argued that industrial psychology and occupational assessment techniques, (including job analysis and evaluation, selection testing and interviewing, performance appraisal, and the measurement of potential), produce knowledge of the worker that enables the regulation and administration of workers within changing industrial climates. For Hollway (1984) psychological discourse has an independent source in a diverse set of sites outside the corporation, but it is taken up by the corporation in politically motivated ways. For instance, for Holloway, these knowledges enable the surveillance and administration of workers within the large organisations that have grown up with the development of 'advanced'

economies. Rose (1990) explains that the knowledges produced by these psychological techniques establish a link between the subjectivity of workers and the national goals of orderly production within changing economic climates. For example, in the time of full employment in the inter-war period and immediately after, when workers could not easily be replaced, the productivity of the worker was constituted as dependent upon a feeling of contentment. A range of measures were recommended that would allow the worker to freely express the unique pattern of wishes and desires that comprise their personality and their social solidarity within the informal work group (Rose, 1990:64-72 and 84-93). Rose (1990:92) argues that it was not just that a new language was being formulated, but that 'the micro structures of the internal world of the enterprise (the details of technical organization, roles, responsibilities, machinery, shifts, and so forth) were opened to systematic analysis and intervention in the name of a psychological principle of health that was simultaneously a managerial principle of efficiency'. In the context of an increased industrial organisation of workers in the post 1960s economy and the threats it posed to productivity, a new version of the worker was born. Human beings were seen to work for monetary rewards and promotion opportunities, and required discipline and firm leadership (Rose, 1990:94-99). This enabled a new set of regulations in the field of work. Payment was to be based on performance, as captured by 'scientific' psychological techniques (such as job evaluation, performance appraisal and productivity bargaining), rather than overtime or special allowances which had come to represent a 'disincentive' to hard work. Job evaluation is not then simply a mechanism for legitimising divisions among workers. It has also acted as one of a barrage of techniques to produce knowledge about the worker, and enable different kinds of institutional regulation of workers in changing economic times.

In modern decades, Rose (1990:101-115) argues, occupational psychology and its practices produce the subjectivity of the worker with a new inflection adapted to contemporary economic requirements. The new qualities that are valued are adaptability, innovation, flexibility, excellence, and sensitivity to consumer pressures due to rapid technological change, increased international competition, and the modern emphasis upon consumption as an expression of individual identity. Work is once again an important expression of the individual's unique identity and personal life purpose. The worker who finds meaning in their work will identify with the product and take responsibility for the production process because it reflects their feeling of self-worth. There is a demand for equity which comes to mean the removal of unjustified wage and status hierarchies through rational evaluations and comparisons of contributions of workers. Conceptualisations of the worker within occupational psychology in the US, find the development of the worker in the interests of their happiness and satisfaction less important than freeing up the ability of the individual to

achieve personal goals, their commitment to the organisation, self responsibility, and productivity. In these discourses there is a need to recognise the worker as self-regulating, primarily oriented toward the achievement of personal goals, motivated by success not punishment, and driven by emotional and intuitive capacities as well as rationality.

In Rose's analysis occupational psychology not only legitimises hierarchy, as wage solidarity thinkers recognise; it is a 'technology of the social' or mode of social regulation. It is supported by and produces a knowledge of subjectivity that encourages and obliges individuals to invest their energies and time in production. This mode of control has effects beyond the immediate work environment and the contract of employment. It is a power which produces the 'nature' of individuals and in doing so encourages and obliges a commitment to production in the name of personal and collective freedom.

Rose and Holloway also challenges the view that job analysis is controlled and promoted purely by corporate interests. Processes for the differentiation of jobs are supported by knowledges that emanate from a broad cultural, historical, and economic context. The 'truths' produced may coincide with employer interests and masculine conceptions of freedom, but be produced and policed by 'progressive' speakers in the name of worker's rights.

Occupational practices and knowledges constitute a mode of control that operates within both 'deregulatory' and centralised industrial systems. Some authors, (for example Jackson, 1993), have seen the competency assessment drive that has swept North America, Great Britain, and Australia as part of the neo-liberal public policy agenda in which elements of capital and the State join together to bring broad educational goals more in line with the needs of industry. However as Meredyth (1998:39) has observed, early 90s Labor education policy of national certification sought to extend the combination of intensive individualisation with regular and systematic normalisation that was already well ingrained in the education system. In relation to the question of how best to value productivity, it remains the case that, whether pay is linked to skill and training (within a centralised discourse), or more directly to product output and economic incentives (in the 'deregulated' scenario), the well being of workers is tied to the economic performance of organisations and the nation. When productivity is valued over skill, work is documented as a cost balanced against its production of monetary profit within accounting systems of the enterprise. This enables the individualisation of workers along a different scale of value. Instead of valuing people according to their skill, their contribution to the profit of the organisations they work within is the standard of evaluation. In both scenarios individual workers are objectified as

productive units of the economy. They can then be targeted by a range of interventions which aim to rationalise work.

Another difference in the approach of Hollway and Rose compared to a wage solidarity position on job evaluation, is that it does not operate by suppressing or failing to recognise skill, status, and productivity. Instead, all workers, including the 'privileged', are objectified and controlled within increasingly disciplined institutions. This suggests that those who are 'successful' at work have not escaped the field of power any more than those who are 'unsuccessful'; nor can they be said to be objectively more, or less, 'free' — though they are probably better off and have more interesting jobs than workers at lower levels. Whether 'rewarded' for participation in paid work, by improved living standards and status, or punished, by subjection to self-supported training, unemployment, poverty, or 'unrecognised worth', all positions are subject to a form of power that observes, judges, and normalises against a productive standard. All members of the population are to become more skilled and better trained and they must produce more objects and better, faster services at the lowest cost and with the least expenditure of energy. Job analysis, and the training and award structures associated with it, are important, not so much for what they suppress, but for their creative power.

Job evaluation is much more than a means for correcting the low value and wages of women's work. Foucault is clear: the disciplines 'make' individuals, not only as ideological representations, but as 'a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power' (1977:194). The individuality he refers to is composed of four characteristics including 'cellular (by the play of spatial distribution), organic (by the coding of activities), genetic (by the accumulation of time), and combinatory (by the composition of forces)' (Foucault, 1977:167). Disciplinary techniques cluster activities within discrete functional, spatial, and hierarchical domains providing the detailed means for thinking about the distinctiveness of individuals. In contemporary society individuality is known by the meaning attached to one's physical placement and condition at work in comparison to others, the meaning attached to the activities performed at work, one's relative level of expertise, and the contribution made to the overall goal of the organisation or society. In other words, persons are defined according to what they do at work and where they are placed; whether they are casual, contract or permanent, senior or junior, or skilled, semi-skilled, or unskilled. Skill and other measures of competency, such as the quantity or quality of production output, constitute one of the central measures by which individuals are known. The time spent at work is broken down and classified in terms of the skills performed. Skills are clumped together to describe larger units defined as jobs or occupations. Since workers are

understood as possessors of skill, the knowledges, experiences, skills, and outputs listed as required by particular jobs offer a major source of identity. From a Foucauldian point of view, workplace processes like job evaluation and description can be seen to objectify workers in order to subject them to regulatory organisational processes; they also provide the possibility of a 'unique' attachment to work.

Work placement does not just produce individual differences; it also nominates the relative worth of these differences within an increasingly complex table of comparative evaluations. Productivity is measured within relative scales; individuals are known not only in terms of what they do, but also in terms of the relative productive value of their occupation in relation to others. Levels of expertise are constantly redefined and documented within struggles around awards, training, and vocational and educational curricula, so that the productive identities offered by occupational placement are always unstable giving rise to anxiety and comparative objectifications of individual value. This anxiety expresses itself in the demand for more 'accurate' representations of individual work value as evidenced in the rationale of award restructuring.

Award restructuring can be seen not simply as a means by which women might get their work re-evaluated, but as a contemporary variant of the history of workplace surveillance spawned by the mutually supporting activities of occupational knowledge and assessment techniques discussed by Hollway (1984) and Rose (1990). Within award restructuring, objectifications of individuals were to be documented and collected by consultative committees and job evaluation experts and centralised within awards, job descriptions, and performance agreements. Award restructuring represented the drive to document and thereby observe, control, administer, and regulate the realm of activity at work. Award restructuring was an ambitious national documentation process that aimed to register labours previously 'unrecognised', and to 'rationalise' existing documentations of labour and the relativities between workers. Alterations to be made to awards in order to create enterprise efficiency and productivity include:

- establishing skill related career paths which provide an incentive for workers to continue to participate in skill formation;
- eliminating impediments to multiskilling and broadening the range of tasks which a worker may be required to perform;
- creating appropriate relativities between different categories of workers within the award and at enterprise level;
- ensuring that working patterns and arrangements enhance flexibility and meet the competitive requirements of that industry;

- including properly fixed minimum rates for classifications in awards, related appropriately to one another, with any amounts in excess of these properly fixed minimum rates being expressed as supplementary payments;
- updating and/or rationalising the list of respondents to awards;
- addressing any cases where award provisions discriminate against sections of the workforce. (Australian Conciliation and Arbitration Commission, in Dabscheck, 1995:56-57)

Here mechanisms which enable workers' every movement to be documented, compared, and judged by themselves and others, are implemented in the name of incentive, efficiency, and anti-discrimination. Within award restructuring, work was to be written down in increasing detail, no part allowed to remain unobserved, unclassified. It is broken down into finer, more 'accurate' delineations of productive contribution, embodying a power which is automatic, anonymous, diffuse, and operationalised by a variety of authorities. These practices make work constantly visible from an anonymous, internal, and central point.

One of the clearest effects of award restructuring has been the proliferation of private training organisations and consultancies.[9] Jobs have been defined both more tightly and more broadly; a wider range of tasks are to be accomplished within the time frame allocated to a particular job. For many workers the cost of an apparently progressive disciplinary rationale is overwork and the obligation of obtaining increased training and education. One of power's most impressive achievements then might be seen to be the individual's preparedness to undergo extensive periods of education and training, and other processes designed to increase their 'efficiency' and 'productivity', in the name of personal fulfilment and ambition.

Skill accreditation is not a means to gain more power for workers. It constitutes a normalising gaze, a form of surveillance, and social control. The development of labour, prioritising education, training and other means of enhancing productive skill, can be re-conceptualised, not in terms of an apolitical 'choice' or means of empowerment, but of a deeper commitment to the disciplinary system. One is reminded of Foucault's (1977:192) comment upon the contrast between the submergence of 'ordinary everyday individuality' in sovereign times prior to the sixteenth century, to its celebration within the emergence of disciplinary institutions: 'This turning of real lives into writing is no longer a procedure of heroization; it functions as a procedure of objectification and subjection'. The successful operation of disciplinary techniques results in a permanent hold upon the time and utility of individuals, implicating the body beyond merely the duration of the employment contract,

[9] Interview with Anne Drohan of the South Australian Liquor Trade Union October 1998.

the time taken to produce a specified object or service, or even of the time of training for employment.

3. The discipline of women

While the production of particular jobs often coincides with the prejudices of employers and the existing culture of the workplace, jobs are not the sole possession or product of these interests. Defining the boundaries, content, and status of jobs might be seen to involve a broad range of players, discourses, and factors as they interact across time. These could include — expert knowledges about the work in question; popular perceptions including, but not confined to, the gender, race, class, or other qualities of the workers who traditionally perform the work; social, political, and institutional developments that influence the spaces, conditions, and terms within which the work is performed; the idiosyncratic approaches of workers; the tasks traditionally performed; professional or other ethical guidelines associated with the work, and struggles over demarcations between occupations and training routes.

In this perspective, feminists and 'Left progressives', including trade unionists, educators, bureaucrats, and community advisers, are deeply implicated in defining work. The practices they implement and endorse make it possible to observe and control what gets done, in what time frame, by whom, and for what reward. It is a process that escapes the grip of any particular 'interest', emanating from diverse points.

Within this array of factors corporate directives are not necessarily antagonistic to the claims made by trade unions or feminists. In addition, while gaps clearly exist between documentations of jobs and perceptions of what is actually performed within them, and although these differences often reflect employer perceptions more often than those of workers, trade unions, or professional associations, these latter groups do not provide the 'truth' about jobs or knowledge that necessarily subverts oppressive meanings. For instance, both employers and health professionals, including some feminists, might agree that nursing involves 'care' while doctoring involves 'technological skill'. The meanings produced do not obscure something 'real' about those jobs, but participate in constituting the way they are thought and performed.

Foucault's analysis of the hierarchical cells of the disciplinary institutions of work and education does not comment on their exclusion of women, but describes a classificatory grid designed precisely in order to facilitate the movement of individuals to the next rank. Rose's analysis also fails to point out that the productive subjects described by occupational

psychology often did not include women who were, and are deemed to have a primary attachment to home and family. Feminists have commented that women's bodies are not marked as 'skilled' so that their movement within the world of work is circumscribed within special routes, with narrow pathways, sudden ceilings, and lower reward rates compared to the paths of men. However, instead of subverting the objectification of bodies in terms of their relative level of skill or productivity, feminists from a variety of perspectives have sought to remove the male biases that 'obscure a true picture of women's skills' (Women's Adviser's Unit, 1992:11) via processes of job analysis and evaluation. That productive norms determine the value and organisation of labour, identity, and life is not problematised; rather, there is the concern that the concept of skill has been smeared with masculine meaning and obscures the values and qualities women bring to work.

Feminist emphases upon capturing 'women's skills' within comparable worth procedures might be re-conceptualised not as offering a liberation strategy that will free women from the field of power, but as a set of techniques that aim to mark women's bodies in 'different' ways so that they may be included in the social controls that regulate working life. As Miller and Rose (1990:7) suggest, information should not be seen as the outcome of a neutral recording function, but is itself 'a way of acting upon the real, a way of devising techniques for inscribing it ... in such a way as to make the domain in question susceptible to evaluation, calculation and intervention'. Equal pay for work of equal value discourse and the procedures utilised to put it into operation, might be seen as a 'will to power' that establishes and documents norms or competencies around which those designated 'women' are to be known and regulated.

The first step in this process has involved problematising the subjectivity of women and insisting upon the need for their empowerment via the intervention of experts. There is often an emphasis upon the need to overcome the lack of association between what women do and detailed skill descriptions. For instance a Women's Adviser's Unit (1992:17) publication states that,

> women themselves often minimise, or sell short, the skills and knowledge they use and the tasks and activities they undertake, particularly by using terms like 'I just' or 'I only'. Women workers will often neglect to claim the skills they have acquired through informal means; via on the job training, by working in community organisations as well as in voluntary and household capacities.

Here women workers and their speech is discredited because it does not relate daily activities to a productive norm; 'women' are constituted as lacking a capacity to recognise the value of what they do. The meanings and values that inform the actual speech of women is not explored or valorised; instead, EEO employees are authorised to transform this meagre

speech into the language of productivity and skill. For instance, although 'participants are to be allowed to retain as much "authority" as possible', it remains true that

> only facilitators who understand the social and political forces which determine the way in which the concept of skill is constructed will be able to assist women workers identify skills which are intrinsic to job performance but have previously been unrecognised. (Women's Adviser's Unit, 1992:11-12)

Job evaluations free of gender bias are ensured by the intervention of those trained in sex discrimination and equal opportunity (Burton et al., 1987). Their knowledge is validated by the acquisition of formal training. They are 'trained to recognise processes which might contribute to sex bias in the descriptions of women's and men's jobs' (Burton et al., 1987:124). The discourses produced by disciplinary power enable those who have gained the relevant qualifications to speak authoritatively about the 'work that women do', or to constitute a 'valuable' or 'unrecognised gendered trait'. Job holders are the objects of this process, not the subjects of knowledge outcomes. Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) officers are not themselves 'women workers' but 'gender experts', less likely to 'underestimate' the value of 'women's work' than women workers themselves.

Skill is discovered in new places and in new bodies. A previously incomparable field of experience is problematised and classified when 'invisible' qualities are brought into training and skill hierarchies. The Women's Adviser's Unit (1992:17 and 19) insists upon the need to 'avoid minimising' and to 'be specific'; the Unit recommends replacing statements like 'I just organise the whole thing' and 'being a good team member', which are 'often used to cover the diverse and sophisticated range of skills women use', with more detailed descriptions of the tasks and skills performed. For instance, 'I just ...' is to be replaced with

> I organise boardroom functions. This includes briefing the caterers and negotiating prices with them; selecting the menu; choosing and obtaining drinks (including wine), flowers, crockery, cutlery, table linen; arranging for, briefing and supervising waiting staff; arranging parking; composing and distributing invitations; greeting guests/clients and making them feel welcome and relaxed. (Women's Adviser's Unit, 1992:17)

Workers' descriptions of their work in terms of their personal qualities is to be transformed into the skills demonstrated in work, moving from a passive, and 'disempowered', possession of traits to an active performance of skill. The problem is framed in the terms that 'many of the skills that women workers use are described as personality traits, personal attributes, or talents ... they don't talk about what women do' (Women's Adviser's Unit, 1992:29). Cruikshank (1993) has argued that programmes which seek to enhance the self-esteem of women are also practical techniques for the subjection of individuals. They act by linking personal goals and desires to social order and stability. Feminist job analysis and evaluation approaches produce 'empowered' versions of women's subjectivity which

actively demonstrate recorded skill. The language of industrial relations reform is to take on personal significance for women arising, as it apparently does, in the experiences of women workers themselves. In effect 'self-esteem' or 'worth' is linked to the development of market-valued skills. It is not a discourse that overcomes male bias, but one that brings the incomparable language and field of activities of women into the purview of a masculine productive standard. The production of knowledge about the skills in women's jobs amounts to a trade-off, at least in some cases, of increased wages for women in exchange for conformity with productive goals.

Equal pay for work of equal value strategies not only insist that women are skilled in the same way that men are; they also seek to establish specific skills and language to describe the 'unrecognised' labour of women. Here it is insisted that existing ways of knowing women's work should be transcribed into the language of skill. For instance, Poynton and Lazenby (1993:77-78) comment on the need 'for more powerful ways' to describe the skills of women:

> For example, women working in the reception areas of 'high powered' multinational corporations report being required to be immaculately groomed, to behave with charm and poise and 'smile a lot'. But how can these job requirements be presented to the Industrial Commission, for example, in a serious and effective way?

The question is not whether these expectations should be inscribed into formal definitions of the job, but how to infuse them with authority. The Women's Adviser's Unit (1992:30-31) offers a similar viewpoint.

> Many women are expected to be polite, courteous or nice as an essential part of their jobs. This means that women have to use their 'technical' skills while at the same time performing their traditional role of making others feel good about themselves.

Discourses of femininity that are imposed upon women by themselves and others are to form the basis for the 'technical skills' used in women's jobs. Jobs are informed by the cultural qualities ascribed to the job holder (Hollway, 1984). In this sense the 'elimination of sex bias' might be read as another way of saying 'the insertion of traditional versions of women's "difference" into existing codes of value'. For instance, while feminists are critical of 'justifications' for the employment of women in low-paid factory jobs on the grounds that they possess fine motor control and dexterity, there is sometimes an association of 'women's skills' with precisely these qualities. Steinberg and Haignere (in Lewis, 1988:88-89) list 'unrecognised job content in women's jobs' that should be included in job descriptions. These include 'fine motor skills like rapid finger dexterity', 'sitting for long periods of time', 'time stress', 'communication stress (dealing with upset people — gathering information from upset or ill people, calming upset people)', 'stress from distractions', 'stress from concentration (eg. video display terminal)', 'stress from exposure

to the sick and disabled with no hope of recovery', 'stress from multiple demands (receiving work from lots of people)', 'stress from multiple role demands (being asked to do work quickly and to provide better service to several people)', 'working with constant noise' and 'answering complaints from the public'. In effect, job evaluation might be seen at times as a process in which cultural stereotypes about women come to describe 'what women really do'.

This is a simplistic move that does not attempt to intervene politically in the transcription of skills, but merely records all tasks in detail in order to 'argue more effectively for the recognition of these skills in established industrial forums' (Poynton and Lazenby, 1993:78). Feminist work value strategies aim to ensure that the saleable aspects of women's work are remunerated; they do not necessarily ask questions about what should be valued or whether employers or the market should determine the value of the job.

Further examples are given by the Women's Adviser's Unit (1992:29-32) which suggests a range of replacements for women's ways of speaking about their personalities with descriptions of jobs and technical skills. For example, instead of 'be friendly/good natured', the text suggests phrases like 'take an interest in, cooperate with, engage in conversation with, welcome, put customers/clients at their ease, or make them feel comfortable'. Instead of 'be patient/easy going', the text advocates language such as 'maintaining a calm manner, persist or persevere, tolerate (interruptions/provocation), work effectively under pressure, manage (stress/time) effectively'. Instead of 'be tactful/diplomatic', the text suggests language that uses words like 'build good working relations, mediation rather than confrontation when there are conflicting interests'. Instead of 'you have to have a good sense of humour', the text suggests the use of terms such as 'create a climate for and establish a commitment to resolving problems/maintaining productivity despite difficulties, inspire others to act in a positive way, devise ways to entertain/interest/amuse in order to resolve anxiety/minimise distress/promote well-being'. Once again the universal traits that are ascribed to women become 'what women do at work', and therefore 'women's skills'. In these statements, women's work is described in terms of its support of others and prioritising the feelings of others over one's own. While this may describe a value that is too often overlooked at work, there is the danger that translating statements about femininity into skill downplays aspects of the job that call for confrontation, conflict and saying no, qualities not typically ascribed to women. Similarly the work performed by men is less likely to be described as involving 'taking an interest in others', or 'tolerating interruptions and provocation'.

Moreover, authorising and documenting 'what women do' within job descriptions and evaluations may simply act to deepen the obligation of job holders to perform the skills 'discovered'. Hollway (1984:38) points out that job analysis is the standard against which workers are assessed, exerts constraints on performance, is used for selection, identification of training needs, appraisal of performance (for purposes of pay and promotion), job comparison, and also preserves the conditions of work. In this sense, fixing 'women's skills' does not describe 'real' features of jobs, but constitutes how those jobs will be regarded and performed.

Translating feminine qualities into skills and tasks performed at work, rather than questioning whether certain tasks should be performed or expected at all, may have the effect of authorising unequal power relations within the workplace. This might be exemplified in service sector jobs which involve a third party, the customer or client, who stands outside the worker/employer relationship and receives the service. Discourses about the rights, desires, and behaviours of customers might be expected to play an important part in the reproduction of particular subject positions within the service encounter, contributing to the shape of the product or service, and also the nature of the work. However, the power play between customers and workers is not of concern to feminist skills discourse. Indeed, failing to make customer service a priority in favour of money or machines has been equated with discrimination against women workers:

> Responsibility for the satisfaction or welfare of other people such as customers, clients and patients is a common feature of women's jobs. However, many standard job classification and evaluation systems value responsibility for money or machines more highly than responsibility for client welfare. Not only is this inconsistent with corporate goals of customer service excellence which hold that customers should be the organisation's first priority, it is a form of indirect discrimination against women workers. (Women's Adviser's Unit, 1992:35)

This statement gives no consideration to the different contexts within which 'service' is provided, the power relations that operate, or the implications of this for different kinds of workers.

In the current climate, service receivers are increasingly being transformed into 'clients' or 'customers' whose demands are to inform the goals of businesses and organisations. This may give them considerable power in their interactions with workers. In some workplaces this power will be offset by other terms of authority. For example, the power of clients in encounters with social security personnel, the tax office, banks, insurance companies, and educational institutions is arguably less than in their interactions with waitresses and waiters, bar assistants, and shop assistants. Customers or clients are increasingly called upon to play a role in the observation and assessment of the worker's capacity to achieve 'competency'

standards. For example, calls made to telephone, electricity, and other agencies are often taped for the purposes of 'training' or 'service monitoring'. In these instances workers never know when or where they are being observed. In other workplaces clients are invited increasingly to comment upon the quality of the worker's interaction with them. For example, educational establishments and other training providers invite assessment of the quality of the service. The establishment of a cultural climate in which workers are to be constantly judged and monitored, with the threat of action for failure to achieve nominated standards of conduct, can represent an unequal power relation between the service workers and the customer. However, in some work contexts it may be the customer who is under surveillance — for example 'non-productive' recipients of social services are monitored in order to determine 'need' and eligibility. The point is that the expectations that underpin these encounters, and which may be objectionable from a feminist point of view, are not given explicit consideration within job description and evaluation processes, but in some cases are merely translated into the language of skill.

In some occupations, 'good service' often means servility and involves the expectation that workers 'owe' the public a 'service' and will subordinate a sense of self to produce a feeling of well-being in 'the paying customer' (Hochschild, 1983) who is 'always right'. Women must utilise the range of skills that are to replace 'being friendly' within the hospitality context not just because employers and customers demand it, but now also because it represents being good at one's job and is a condition of employment, self-worth, and the wage. The interpersonal aspects of hospitality work are precisely those that have been nominated as 'unrecognised' in hospitality due to the higher value placed on technical components of jobs (Harper, 1993:149). Some expressions of a job evaluation rationale risk practitioners simply recording the skills that hotel barworkers perform without attention to the power relations that inform it. Failure to deploy the skills that make customers 'feel welcome' can then become authorised grounds to refuse an applicant a job or promotion, or to dismiss an employee. The emphasis upon 'service skills' may also act to deny grounds of resistance for some service workers. When customer respect is not forthcoming or when employment conditions are experienced as unfair, workers may no longer resist by ignoring customers, slowing the pace of work, or refusing custom, tactics that can ultimately drive customers elsewhere and undermine the profitability of the business. In the new professionalised hospitality climate, such tactics demonstrate 'poor job performance'. This places considerable pressure upon the service sector worker to provide 'good service'. Unless a deeper questioning of ways of understanding women's work occurs, 'recognition of women's skills' in some workplaces may result in a legal sanction for employers to pressure workers to perform tasks experienced as objectionable. The documentation of

interpersonal skill components within service and retail awards, for instance, may be experienced as an increase in surveillance, control, and the expectation that workers will demonstrate a variety of caring and nurturing behaviours, particularly in relation to customers. Employer and customer demands for 'interpersonal communication skills', ('give us a smile darling'), may be precisely what women workers experience as oppressive. Skill evaluations produce the requirement that workers perform the emotional labours associated with womanhood as a legalised condition of the wage.

4. Implications for strategy

In arguing that job description and evaluation is a mode of social control, I do not mean to suggest that the strategy should be dropped altogether. Given that many occupations, especially those performed either predominantly or historically by men, are well paid and respected as a result of their definition as skilled, attaching value to jobs performed mainly by persons designated 'women' may also result in improvements in wages as many feminists have pointed out. My main points is that it is important that feminism desist in circulating the meanings that support the productivisation of life. I have argued that the skill hierarchies supported by job analysis produce the possibility for the objectification and regulation of workers as units of the productive good. They also produce an intimate attachment to work that can prompt individuals to direct their lives toward 'productive' achievements. The first form of control depends upon the links made between the nature of workers and the productive good. The second depends upon the links made between self-worth or identity and the status accorded to a particular position within the hierarchy of jobs. It is therefore important that these links be problematised wherever they appear.

Instead of limiting criticism to the effects of job evaluation and description upon wages, there might be more consideration of the knowledges that support and flow from job analysis and evaluation. An emphasis upon the equality of productive contributions (see chapter five), with criticism limited to a lack of recognition for women's different contribution, too readily agrees with the more liberal and disciplinary emphasis upon the inclusion and extension of gendered productive contributions. This is not to deny the radical nature of strategies which demand wage increases regardless of evaluations of productivity — 'just give us the money' (Lewis, 1988). Demands for a guaranteed annual income decentre the role of productive contribution in the distribution of social resources. Feminist demands for an increase in the minimum wage might be more effective if they explicitly challenged the naturalness of productivity as a standard of value and the links made between individual identity and status at work. This would also support feminist criticism of the

social antipathy towards persons positioned outside waged labour, based as it often is upon the view that the long term 'unemployed' contribute nothing to the general good, have not demonstrated their unique productive worth or common productive humanity, and therefore do not deserve more than a barely minimal share of collective resources.

Detaching the meaning and worth of the self and universal notions of humanity from questions of political strategy could provide an interruption within which new sets of questions might be posed. That is, there is a need to continue to politicise the 'truth' that one's position in the productive order is important because it can capture and fix the meaning of the self. This might enable less self-identification with work and less acceptance of the regimes imposed by work. It might encourage more attention to the effects of jobs and more widespread and constructive criticism of work cultures. If productive equality were not deemed an essential requirement of human justice and dignity, work might still be evaluated and regulated, but this could occur according to different standards of value. For instance work could be evaluated and judged not in terms of what it reflects about the abilities of the self and its deserts, but for its impact upon the environment, people in other places (including consumers, traders, beneficiaries, and producers), the well-being of the job holder, and upon the social values the organisation is commissioned to represent. A focus upon the value of work as the problem and the source of solutions, deflects attention from these kinds of considerations.

A rejection of the identities offered by the disciplinary system does not necessarily mean that job analysis techniques cannot be utilised by a progressive feminism. It is not possible to take a unilateral position *vis-à-vis* comparable worth; but it is possible to consider the cultural biases that inform its practice and the range of effects it may have within specific sites. It is crucial that feminists challenge the view that existing evaluations of work are problematic simply because they fail to acknowledge the value of 'women's work'. Job analysis and evaluation impact on more than simply wages, and the outcomes these processes have on work will vary depending on context. Limiting inclusions in job descriptions to 'feminine skills' and insisting that these are attached to 'female experiences' introduces a set of unnecessary and potentially counterproductive limitations to feminist practice.

Instead of a process which apparently reflects the statements of job holders, feminist and other progressive interventions in job description and evaluation processes might understand themselves as actively engaged in the political and creative act of constituting jobs. The political nature of this struggle might be openly acknowledged without endowing any

perspective with the authority to nominate 'truth'. Organisational and market-based values might be challenged from another set of values about what the work should entail. The process could aim to take an active role in shaping the relationships between jobs, the amount of work performed, and the sharing of interesting or routine tasks. A crucial part of this process, and one in which feminists might still be expected to play a lead role, is in resistance to descriptions of work that entrench derided roles for women, or alternatively, excuse men from performing 'service' functions.

Conclusion

This chapter has drawn upon Foucauldian analyses of occupational psychological techniques in its development of an alternative perspective to existing feminist thought about job evaluation. In this analysis job description and evaluation do not protect or misrepresent the individual or the real content of jobs. Nor should problematisations of job evaluation be limited to a critique of the unequal resource distributions they enable. I have conceptualised job hierarchy and techniques like job evaluation that support it, as modes of social control that operate via the production and regulation of differentiated occupational identities, and their fostering of an intimate attachment to the hierarchical order of work and education. The definitions of work that are produced within complex political struggles are always necessarily political. Feminists need to ensure that they do not participate in the feminisation and surveillance of women's work. Instead a more open and strategic approach could be taken. At the same time there is the need to explicitly challenge the links between work and self-worth or identity.

8
REFUSING THE ECONOMIC ORDER: FEMINIST CRITIQUES OF FOUCAULT

In this concluding chapter I wish to turn to a consideration of the kind of reply or criticism labour feminism might make to the charges raised against it and the approach adopted in the preceding discussion. Criticisms of Foucault's work that flow from some of the theoretical assumptions and principles of labour feminism include the view that a Foucauldian conception of power is unable to account for systemic gendered asymmetries, negates the possibility of progressive political intervention, neglects matters of economic distribution and exploitation, and is of limited use to feminism. Instead of subverting the position of the subject within politics, some feminists have argued that marginalised subjectivities must come to inform new political visions. This chapter defends Foucauldian thought against these claims, and, in doing so, compares and contrasts the approach taken in the thesis with labour feminist approaches in the social sciences. The chapter explores the similarities of analysis, as well as the means by which differences might be resolved, especially in relation to the central questions raised in the thesis. At the same time, I extend my discussion of the dangers for feminist labour thought of not questioning its own universalisms.

The chapter considers the respective criticisms that Foucault is a colonising thinker, that his micro-physics of power disenables a macro-physical understanding of economic domination, and that his rejection of a pre-cultural agency poses a problem for feminist ambitions for change. A summary of debates about Foucault's work on liberty and ethics will be discussed in the final part of the chapter.

1. Insurrection and the Left

Nancy Hartsock's (1990) criticisms of Foucault are perhaps representative of the views of many feminist labour theorists today. One of Hartsock's (1990:165) objections is that, despite Foucault's sympathies with social struggle, he writes from the perspective of the dominator: 'Foucault reproduces in his work the situation of the colonizer who resists (and in so doing renders his work inadequate and even irrelevant to the needs of the colonized or the dominated)' (Hartsock, 1990:166). Evidence for this is given in his treatment of 'other knowledges' which Hartsock (1990:167) argues are viewed from the position of the ruler, refused the status of legitimate and official knowledges, and rendered 'insurrectionary', 'disordered', 'fragmentary', lacking 'autonomous life', 'counter-discursive', and 'anti-scientific'. Foucault's ruling perspective is also evidenced in his stress on resistance rather than transformation as exemplified in his view that, in Hartsock's (1990:167) words, 'the task for intellectuals is less to become part of movements for fundamental change and more to struggle against the forms of power that can transform these movements into instruments of domination'. Hartsock points to a 'profound pessimism' in Foucault's conception of power as ever expanding and invading, and finds something 'sinister' in his warning against socialist intellectual goals of social transformation. This is interpreted to imply that 'those of us who have been marginalised remain at the margins' (Hartsock, 1990:168).

For Hartsock (1990:167) Foucault is 'with' the ruling group because he labels subjugated knowledges 'insurrectionary', 'disordered', 'fragmentary', and 'lacking autonomous life', a position enabled by a binary logic which characteristically produces the colonised as the opposite other to everything that the coloniser is seen to epitomise. Foucault does indeed describe subjugated knowledges in marginalised terms. They refer to

> a whole set of knowledges that have been located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity. ... It is through the re-emergence of these low-ranking knowledges, these unqualified, even directly disqualified knowledges (such as that of the psychiatric patient, of the ill person, of the nurse, of the doctor — parallel and marginal as they are to the knowledge of medicine — that of the delinquent etc.), and which involve what I would call a popular knowledge (*le savior des gens*) though it is far from being a general commonsense knowledge, but is on the contrary a particular, local, regional knowledge, a differential knowledge incapable of unanimity and which owes its force only to the harshness with which it is opposed by everything surrounding it — that it is through the re-appearance of this knowledge, of the social popular knowledges, these disqualified knowledges, that criticism performs its work. (Foucault, 1980:82)

However, the use of the term 'subjugated knowledges' does not necessarily refer to those knowledges recognised by Foucault's critics as subjugated, but to knowledges that are not

legitimated by their status as 'truth'.

> Subjugated knowledges are thus those blocs of historical knowledge which were present but disguised within the body of functionalist and systematising theory and which criticism — which obviously draws upon scholarship — has been able to reveal. (Foucault, 1980:82)

In this sense his claim that these knowledges are fragmentary and disordered is merely to say that knowledges which have not been authorised as scientifically 'true' represent disorder from the perspective of those knowledges which have been authorised as 'true'. Foucault does not attempt to position his own knowledge as 'true', but actively promotes the subversion of official knowledges by researching alternative accounts. Hartsock's argument that Foucault speaks as a coloniser only holds because of the assumption that Foucault speaks from the position of transcendental rational subject who produces order in opposition to the disruptive and fragmentary knowledges of the colonised. Foucault is noted for his insistence upon the local and temporal value of his researches, and his deconstruction of the autonomy and rationality of the modern individual. His project was not to marginalise local knowledges, nor to bring them into the light of 'truth', but to subject them to an erudite analysis that respects their capacity to speak for a particular local experience.

It might also be observed that a criticism of Marxism can only be deemed 'ruling class' if Marxism is seen to encompass the entire realm of insurrectionary thought nominating everything outside it as its opposite other; all other knowledges becoming official and colonising (Campioni and Gross, 1983:115-121). It is precisely this kind of dualistic thinking that Hartsock sees as oppressive and 'ruling class'.

Foucault's defence to the kind of criticism levelled by Hartsock and others is encapsulated in the following statement:

> research activity, which one can thus call genealogical, has nothing at all to do with a disqualification of the speculative dimension which opposes to it, in the name of some kind of scientism, the rigour of well established knowledges. It is not therefore via an empiricism that the genealogical project unfolds, nor even via a positivism in the ordinary sense of that term. What it really does is to entertain the claims to attention of local, discontinuous, disqualified, illegitimate knowledges against the claims of a unitary body of theory which would filter, hierarchise and order them in the name of some true knowledge and some arbitrary idea of what constitutes a science and its objects. (Foucault, 1980:83)

For Foucault dominant discourses that suppress 'the speculative dimension' include structural theory. Foucault (1980:81-82) argues that the order imposed by functionalist and systematising theory actually buries subjugated knowledges. It is not that the ruling class attempts to defuse revolutionary movements by decrying their repressive possibilities, but that these movements were themselves born of moral systems which were extended to the

working-class in order to bring about economic order. Critics of Foucault have not defended themselves against this claim. Emancipation for Foucault (1980:85) referred to enabling popular discourses to exist without being disqualified or diminished by being labelled non-scientific. His quarrel with Marxism and other social theory was limited to its reproduction of a 'scientific' method and 'objective' knowledge claims, and the consequent lack of awareness of the normalising means by which power operates.

From this it follows that feminist social theory must relinquish claims to sacred theoretical ground and acknowledge its own will to power; it must consider the extent to which it may have already been colonised by dominant discourses. Within much feminist labour thought, full-time housewives who do not find their house-bound condition inherently problematic, but speak about freedom *from* the labour market, (offering an alternative to the implicit supposition that freedom and independence is conferred by market participation), are not easily heard. The contented housewife, discounted within much expert feminist labour knowledge, is more eligible as a form of subjugated knowledge than the feminist expert who speaks on her behalf by repeating discourses that link the subjectivity of women with productive potential, and justice with the right to develop this potential. From this perspective, questioning movements for social change like feminism becomes less 'sinister,' and more radical. The recognition that the re/productive subject is a contingent discursive category, rather than a self-evident condition beyond the gaze of political criticism, enables a fresh look at the goals of progressive political commentary. Listening to alternative discourses about the human subject might, for instance, destabilise a view of the subject as essentially a doer, that is, as defined in the capacity and activity of production, and preparation for production. Accounts that draw on alternative sources of knowledge beyond liberal and structural theory might bring into political focus positions which do not emphasise a productive life, or which value activities on grounds other than their support of the market — activities which provide alternatives to it, and which might also be argued to deserve public support. Perhaps most importantly, decentring the productive subject within economic thought, and thereby the pre-eminence of the claim that 'women's labour is productive too', calls for new reflection and discussion in framing feminist political demands.

At the same time, it is not the case that feminist and Marxist theory are necessarily antagonistic to Foucauldian thought, as Hartsock's critique implies. Foucault (1982:778) accepted the usefulness of models of exploitation within institutional and legal relations of production and sought to expand upon these to consider power relations which he saw manifesting in the objectification of the subject. Criticisms of Foucauldian thought like

Hartsock's tend to set up a divide between Marxist research activity and Foucauldian thought overlooking the shared use of resistance to universalist knowledge claims. Foucault (1980) points out that Marxist research has been able to produce insurrectionary knowledges at the expense of a strict adherence to the totalitarian principles of theory. The knowledge of struggles which emerged from critical research since the mid 1960s was 'not possible and could not even have been attempted except on one condition, namely that the tyranny of globalising discourses with their hierarchy and all their privileges of a theoretical ante-garde was eliminated' (Foucault, 1980:83).

Feminism's insurrectionist history is a consequence of its longstanding disregard for the totalising theory of malestream philosophy. The simple assertion that the subject of knowledge does not describe everything that exists, but privileges particular kinds of lifetimes, imposing derogatory meanings, and excluding the values of many, is the most subversive claim made by the variety of feminisms. By specifying the masculine assumptions underlying the subject of economic theory and policy, and highlighting the way this denigrates, excludes, and punishes those whose experience does not fit the masculine mould, feminist labour thought has mounted its claims for improvements in wages and conditions, reductions in working hours, the rights of mothers and of women in general to independent government support, an extension of union membership, the recognition of domestic and emotional activities as forms of labour, the removal of unwanted sexual attention in the workplace, and many other important changes. While many of these struggles were and are informed by unquestioned principles of economic theory, and of the human sciences more broadly, the view that rejections of universalist theory can never underpin social struggle denies the history of feminist labour struggle itself.

2. Rethinking economic oppression

A more common critique of Foucault is that his work fails to consider social structures and the forms of domination they exert including, most importantly for feminism, systemic forms of gender oppression. For instance, Walby (1990:15) argues that the dispersal of power in Foucault 'makes analysis of gender ... overly free-floating' and de-emphasises economic relations. Alternatively, cultural theory in general has been accused of neglecting issues of economic exploitation and distribution in favour of raising questions of justice around cultural difference (Fraser, 1995). The diffuseness of power is seen to make it difficult to locate domination such as that operating in gender relations, and to make 'room only for abstract individuals, not women, men, or workers' (Hartsock, 1990:169). Walby

accuses postmodern critics of 'going too far'

> in denying the possibility of explaining common forms of oppression among women. While gender relations could potentially take an infinite number of forms, in actuality there are some widely repeated features. In addition the signifiers of 'woman' and 'man' have sufficient historical and cross-cultural continuity, despite some variations to warrant using such terms. ... in practice it is possible; that there are sufficient common features and sufficient routinized interconnections that it does make sense to talk of patriarchy in the West in the last 150 years at least. (Walby, 1990:16)

Hartsock (1990:169) insists that: 'We must not give up the claim that material life (class position in Marxist theory) not only structures but sets limits on the understanding of social relations' (Hartsock, 1990:172).

Foucault's work does not deny or render impossible an analysis of systemic economic relations or forms of domination. He makes it clear that ethnic, social and religious domination, and 'forms of exploitation which separate individuals from what they produce' are crucial historical struggles (1982:781), and that 'economic theory and history (have) provided a good instrument for relations of production' (1982:778). That women's labour is exploited within production relations is not at issue — it has already been convincingly explicated within feminist labour thought and elsewhere. Foucault's task was to expand upon these analyses and to include a third kind of struggle — 'the struggle against forms of subjection — against the submission of subjectivity' (1982:782). For Foucault, these three kinds of struggles are sometimes mixed together and sometimes isolated from each other although 'one of them, most of the time, prevails' (1982:781). In the nineteenth century struggles against exploitation were important, in contemporary society struggles against subjection are becoming increasingly important although the other kinds of struggles remain (Foucault, 1982:782).

It does not follow that struggles against subjectification and their explanations are somehow purely cultural, removed from economic considerations. I have argued that far from being removed from economic pressures, the production of subjectivity as economic in its very 'nature' obliges individuals to commit themselves to economic production. The normalisation of re/productive labour gives rise to a world in which individuals and organisations are obliged to accept that preparation for the labour market is the precondition of social membership and rights; exemptions being granted solely for procreative purposes. My examination of the peculiar ways in which women are subjectified and implicated in the order of production, suggests that modes of domination can continue to be incorporated into poststructural analyses of subjectification at work. Women are objectified within disciplinary ranking systems in the same way that men are, but, in as much as their bodies signify femininity, they are also systematically assigned secondary positions within the labour

market. I have sought to contribute some insight into the relations between struggles of domination, exploitation, and subjectification in understanding the generation of the existing economic order, and the relations they constitute between men and women.

However the explication of struggles against subjectification are not merely additive to forms of domination and exploitation; they involve a significant critique of these theories as well as raising the task of reconfiguring their epistemological foundations. A Foucauldian approach demands that feminist labour thought relinquish its tendency to understand power as a negative force expressed as economic domination or exploitation. Foucault objects to domination, not as a form of power as feminist labour theorists understand it, but as an effect of power. Power and domination are not the same thing, but as Foucault (1979:94) says, dominations are the 'hegemonic effects that are sustained by the confrontations of power'. My reading of a Foucauldian analysis of power rejects the view of many feminist labour thinkers that power acts purely by suppressing the development of women's labour and their ability to choose. It is the production of 'true' knowledge that is powerful, not the actual containment of the body (domination), or the unfair value or exchange rate attributed to it within the labour relation (exploitation). One of the central achievements of power is the view that the development of a labour 'potential' constitutes human freedom. I have argued that this view enables, or is implicated in, forms of domination and exploitation. For instance, women's secondary labour market position is accomplished not simply by an act of exclusion or denial by 'economic interests', but by the objectification of women within a wide range of human science discourses as universally possessed of caring and support skills, as well as a sexual instinct which drives them to reproduce and form families.

A Foucauldian approach also differs from many traditional labour accounts in that it posits an independence of discourse in relation to economic consciousness and conditions. The former cannot be read off as an expression of the latter, but must be understood in its own right. The political practices of economic interest groups do not give rise to, or control the meaning and form of discourse, but act upon the conditions of its emergence (Foucault, 1991:67). For Foucault (1979:92), power is not 'a general system of domination exerted by one group over another, a system whose effects, through successive derivations, pervade the entire social body'. Mechanisms of subjection cannot be understood as the simple products of economic and social forces, forces of production, class struggle, or ideological structures. While they must be studied in relation to forces of domination and exploitation, this relation is not terminal but circular (Foucault, 1982:782). In order to understand the persistence of exploitative economic relations and forms of domination it is important to consider that knowledge production about the subject and the domain of society is not

limited to, or controlled by, the interests of men and capital. Indeed these interests are themselves constituted by the broad domain of knowledge production. The implication for feminist labour thought is the need to reconsider 'structural' accounts of knowledge production, and to give attention to the independent role of expert knowledge in the reproduction of the social order and the determination of the economic.

The field of economic practice is also important for what it makes it possible for scientific knowledge to observe, the way it shapes the field of its formation, organisation, and distribution in direct, physical, spatial, and technical ways. In this sense there is no dispute between socialism and Foucault on the point that systemic global relations cannot be understood without reference to their material conditions.

3. Micro-structures of power and cultural specificity

As the preceding discussion suggests, hegemonic effects such as 'patriarchy' are not denied within a Foucauldian conception, rather global economic theory is replaced with an ascending analysis of power in which practices at the micro level of society are seen to produce overarching forms of domination. Instead of seeing men or the ruling class as the unified authors of women's oppression, a Foucauldian approach considers a wide range of diffuse, anonymous, local, seemingly insignificant, and often contradictory micro practices which collectively come together to produce patriarchal effects. This demands a different kind of analysis, one that rejects general theories about the connection between power and economy in favour of specific historical analyses (Sawicki, 1991:24). Moya Lloyd (1993:444:445) argues that thinking about patriarchy in this way would involve

> a rejection of the idea of a single, universally applicable definition or narrative of patriarchy and its replacement by a series of (inter-locking) feminist genealogies, excavating the multiplicity of discourses and practices that have had, and continue to have, specific bearing on the lives of women.

For Lloyd (1993:445), a Foucauldian conception of patriarchy implies not only that, since power is everywhere, feminisms must be prepared to oppose a plurality of discourses, practices, and tactics, but also that the contradictions within and among these discourses rob patriarchy of its omnipotent status. It does not render feminism politically impotent, but offers a positive view of patriarchy as 'always already fractured, unstable, impaired, and thence open to subversion' (Lloyd, 1993:445).

Unlike a micro-structural analysis of power which is open to a diversity of meanings within patterns of normative order, macro-structural theories can impose culturally specific values and paradigms upon a more diverse field of experience. As Fraser and Nicholson (1990)

point out, feminist politics in the 1980s led to complaints by poor, working-class women, women of colour, and lesbians that feminist theories have failed to illuminate their problems. In particular:

> They have exposed the earlier quasi-metanarratives, with their assumptions of universal female dependence and confinement to the domestic sphere, as false extrapolations from the experience of white, middle-class, heterosexual women who dominated the beginnings of the second wave. (Fraser and Nicholson, 1990:33)

Jackie Huggins (1994:78) has argued that the white women's movement is irrelevant for Aboriginal women, and needs to take more consideration of their specific needs, of the primacy of racism for Aboriginal women, the effects of colonisation upon them, the relation of Aboriginal women to Aboriginal men, the significance of extended family and communal networks, its 'elitism and subordination of subjects and objects', and the 'use of alienating and culturally insensitive theoretical discourses'. For Huggins (1994:77) the failure of white cultural paradigms and the existing women's movement to consider the experience of Aboriginal women has meant that 'many Aboriginal women will not be prepared to talk publicly, to audiences of 'others', about the oppression they suffer through sexism'.

The relevance of Huggins' criticism can be demonstrated in conceptions of the patriarchal oppression of 'women' within feminist labour accounts. The primary problem for 'women' is often perceived to be their difference in relation to men who are seen to occupy 'privileged' positions. For instance, Hughes (1997:5) observes that feminists believe that men and women have different levels of personal, economic, and institutional power. Walby frames the problem for women in terms of the following questions.

> Why are women disadvantaged compared to men? Has this inequality been reduced in recent years? What difference, if any, does the increase in women's employment make to other areas of women's lives? Is the sexual double standard a thing of the past? Are contemporary forms of femininity as restricting as those of the past? Is it useful to talk of 'femininity' as if it had one form? Is the increase in the divorce rate a sign of women's independence or of men's flight from family responsibilities? (1990:1)

Here employment is assumed to be a major indicator of inequality between men and women. Sexuality is questioned in terms of women's ability to say yes to sex without moral reprobation. While there is recognition that femininity takes more than one form, freedom from restriction is seen as central to the feminine subject. The breakdown of the nuclear family unit is also a key focus, and is seen in terms of women's greater independence or men's irresponsibility and neglect.

That these values are central to all women is highly questionable. With regard to the productive dimension of the subject's concerns, it can be observed that economic comparisons with men are not necessarily meaningful across cultural spaces. For instance,

Behrendt (1993:31-32) argues that 'Aboriginal women are politically aligned with Aboriginal men', and highlights their oppression by white women. For Huggins (1994:74) white women are not 'powerless in the face of male power', but are 'collaborators in the use of white (male) power against black people'. Other authors have pointed out that Aboriginal women are not locked out of public life, but often hold leadership roles in the community, are better educated, less likely to be unemployed, hold jobs with higher status, and have earned higher wages compared to Aboriginal men (O'Shane, 1976: 32, Burgmann, 1980, Goodall and Huggins, 1992:402, Huggins, 1994:71). Discourse about Aborigines does not always constitute wage differences as the major source of Aboriginal poverty, nor one which is to offer a major corrective. Feminist labour thought often emphasises low income, the lack of employment benefits, and the productive value of women's labour. Studies of Aboriginal poverty suggest a stronger correlation between unemployment and poverty, especially in rural areas, than between poverty and low income (Ross and Whiteford, 1990). Choo (1990) claims that, for many Aboriginal people, 'economic disadvantage' is more likely to be associated with loss of land than with the experience of paid work. Furthermore, Moreton-Robinson (2000:16) points out that business or career success is not a measure of self-worth in Aboriginal women's life writings. She also comments that subjugated knowledges of Aboriginal women reject the impersonal contractual relations of the dominant society (Moreton-Robinson, 2000:30).

Assumptions about the universality of women's economic condition and the needs and rights of workers in general, can lead to the imposition of inappropriate interventions and a form of cultural colonisation. Williams (1992:vii) comments that:

> we are surrounded by countries with a much more tenuous tradition of employment rights. We need to value what was achieved in terms of employment rights in this country and reconceptualise and extend them to incorporate all dispossessed groups, including those in unpaid work.

While the goal here seems unproblematic at one level, there is the danger that 'we' do not have to analyse the assumptions of the discourse, but become the universal exemplar to be imported by the 'dispossessed' whose problems will be solved when they become more like 'us'. 'Re-conceptualisations' of work must also consider the negative effects and dependencies that Western style 'development' imposes upon poorer nations, their social and environmental impact, and the way this reconfigures political struggles around the globe. Reconceptualisation must also involve an awareness of one's own cultural frame enabling Western feminists to consider that formal 'recognition' of women's labour, and the attainment of 'economic independence' in relation to men through paid work is not the only

or proper means by which 'problems' should be understood[10]. Mohanty (1988) argues that Western feminism needs to situate itself and examine its role within a global economic and political framework. 'To do any less would be to ignore the complex interconnections between first and third world economies and the profound effect of this on the lives of women in all countries' (Mohanty, 1988:54). Since meaning is contextual, analyses which are not local risk setting up conclusions which impose a false sense of unity on the oppressions, interests, and struggles of women (Mohanty, 1988:68).

The subjectivities constituted within feminist labour thought represent one possible and culturally specific way of living freedom and justice. I have sought to give this apparently neutral position specific political characteristics, noting its vision of a subject known in opposition to a dominant form of masculinity, bounded and skilled in the domestic arena, who seeks greater public involvement, flexibility of movement between public and private spheres, and a sense of positive identity and social rights from the value of economic contributions. The mistake arises in assuming that feminist 'generalisations, of course, have to be layered by the complexities of class and race, which, along with gender and differing institutional arrangements and histories, contribute to economic stratification within and between societies' (Sharp, 1994:194). Sharp's view conjures a pyramidal structure where white men and women are on top, followed by the layered tiers of more and more disadvantaged groups. This is exemplified in the following statement which seeks to differentiate itself from accounts that 'treat women as if they were a unitary category in a way which seriously neglects divisions based on ethnicity and racism' (Walby, 1990:42). In recognising 'race and ethnic differences' Walby (1990:43) notices that,

> while minority men earn significantly less than white men, minority women earn more than white women. When Asian women are differentiated from West Indian women it appears that Asian women earn less than white women, while West Indians earn more. However, if only the age range 25-54 is considered, this gap is reversed to a very slightly higher rate for white women. Women in the older age-band earn less, and this group is larger among native white women than among West Indian women because of the timing of immigration into Britain. Thus the surprisingly higher rates of pay among this latter group are partly an age effect, reflecting the disadvantages of older women.

Here 'disadvantage' within a culturally diverse array of positionings is produced in relation to the norm of earnings or conditions of work. These 'differences' are then imposed upon the nominated group informing the basis for a new kind of unity which may not previously have existed. By constituting the problem in these terms 'justice' becomes more access to wealth and upward mobility at work. Besides overlooking ways of being 'different' that are

[10] See Bulbeck (1998:21-22) for a summary of some Southeast Asian understandings of the relations between gender, economics and power which differ from those frequently posited in Western feminist labour texts.

not measurable in relation to positions in paid work, this kind of approach risks extending a market imperative at the same time that 'difference' is seen to have been addressed. To cast doubt on this process is not to imply that relative levels of poverty cannot or should not be calculated. Clearly this can be a powerful political tool. The difficulty arises in the assumption that these comparisons constitute the essence of a 'different experience' and the basis of 'solidarity'. It must be remembered that these are particular ways of *making* 'otherness', not essential ways of being. The demands formulated do not necessarily exhaust political strategy, or constitute comparisons that, once made, can justify universal claims on behalf of 'women'. It is still necessary for feminisms to listen to dissenting voices, and to learn how alternative experiences might reframe existing questions and paradigms.

Defining the economic problem of women as a universal need for skill paths and upward mobility constitutes unclassified areas of work as backwardly mobile, and working-classness as a position which must be imagined in negative terms, and from which escape is necessary. Walkerdine (1995:325) argues that the working-class are a fiction of the middle-class imagination, known in a polarised manner as, on the one hand, a romantic body of heroic workers who 'sell out' when they enter bourgeois life, and on the other, a derided other who must escape the darkness of origins. It 'is a bourgeois fantasy which constitutes this inadequacy and places it as a grid for the girl to read her own history' (Walkerdine, 1995:321). Commenting on film culture, Walkerdine (1995:320) argues that:

> by the 1950s, the story of the girl is a story of rags to riches transformation through education. Here, the girl does not just intercede for others, she may actually be shown to move out of the horror that is herself towards a transformation both to adult womanhood and to wealth, glamour and romance. ... I would say that these films signal a particular trajectory which incorporates education, respectability, glamour, romance and upward mobility through marriage. ... The ... elements are poverty, class exploitation and oppression and how women get out of these at a moment at which becoming a 'princess' is shown as the glamorous, perhaps the only way.

This usefully highlights the way that the dream of freedom for many women has become one with dominant economic forms, such as education and the middle-class, heterosexual nuclear family, thereby also inspiring lifetimes devoted to the development and maintenance of re/productive labour. At the same time, Walkerdine's account continues to constitute the lack of a middle-class profession as 'soul-destroying', and the desire for upward economic mobility as inevitable. She argues that:

> working-class people are being presented with home ownership, consumer goods, holidays, education, the possibility that for the first time their sons and daughters may not have to face the same tiring, poor, soul-destroying jobs as them. The class becomes a place to leave. And why on earth would you not want to leave it for the life that is being offered? Why should anyone see a romanticism in back breaking work or

> poverty? Why, having faced so many defeats, would you want to try again? (Walkerdine, 1995:319)

Working-class occupations are seen as necessarily involving over-work, industrial hazards, and grinding poverty. It becomes impossible to talk about educated professional or other areas of highly-regulated, well-paid, or 'protected' work as involving grinding overwork, life threatening danger, boring and repetitive tasks, or other 'soul-destroying' facets. Perhaps it is the middle-class woman's perceived escape from the drudgery of an 'other' world that is projected onto a unified working-class, coloured, or 'third world' category of women. Subverting the dichotomy would mean speaking about different kinds of work without the assumption that everything middle-class is to be envied and everything working-class is to be rejected. A failure to do so simply underlines the grounds upon which existing paradigms of 'progress' are based.

Furthermore, the view that the subversion of these universal paradigms is a project removed from economic relations can act to establish a false division between cultural and material realms that is unnecessary and misleading (for a similar argument see Young, 1997). For Foucault, while one of the effects of the operation of power is the constitution of subjects, it acts at a material bodily level. For example, Judith Butler (1998:41) notices the very material effects upon homosexual persons of the normalisation of the heterosexual family and its institutionalisation within law:

> lesbians and gays are excluded from state-sanctioned notions of the family (which is, according to both tax and property law, an economic unit); stopped at the border, deemed inadmissible to citizenship; selectively denied the status of freedom of speech and freedom of assembly; are denied the right (as members of the military) to speak his or her desire; or are deauthorized by law to make emergency medical decisions about one's dying lover, to receive the property of one's dead lover, (or) to receive from the hospital the body of one's dead lover.

The economic implications of processes of normalisation and subjectification can also be clearly illustrated in their effects upon the distribution of resources. Resources are limited and their distribution is determined by political forces. According to Behrendt (1993:35-36),

> if the specific needs of Aboriginal women can be confined within the white feminist framework then resources need not be allocated to problems relevant only to Aboriginal women. However, when benefits are gained by the white women's movement, such gains do not always trickle down to black women.

If the economic problem is defined as a lack of education, training, child care, and skill recognition, public moneys are directed toward education, reconstructing the system of competency assessment, and changes to legislation which support working parents. Public funds are absorbed and utilised for a particular segment of the population in the name of productivity, efficiency, and the best interests of everyone.

Within a Foucauldian paradigm the solution to generalising directives is not simply to let the marginalised speak, but to resist the discourses of those who speak on their behalf. For Foucault (1980), the object of discourse analysis is an anti-scientific one in the sense that it attempts to bring subjugated knowledges into the domain of written and remembered dialogue. This is not the same as a project which attempts to 'give voice' to 'different' groups. Domination and violence in Foucault's work arise not simply from the prevention of speech, but from the imposition of positivist subjectivities upon those who are given to confess (Foucault, 1976:62). My concern is that attempts to include and value marginalised groups like 'women' or 'Aborigines' simply becomes part of the homogenising drive of disciplinary and governmental norms which act to enforce increasing conformity and commitment to the existing re/productive order. This can occur when universal conceptions of freedom, say as given purely by economic recognition and returns, ignore historical and cultural variety in thinking human needs, or when 'other experiences' are constituted in terms of their 'lack' in relation to prevailing norms.

4. Power, the subject and feminist change strategy

It is precisely this failure to reify what the subject has to say that has led some feminists to question the relevance of Foucault's work for women's politics. For instance, Benhabib (1994) claims that feminist politics and theorising becomes impossible if a view of subjectivity as constituted in discourse is accepted. Hartsock (1990:170-171) insists that, instead of dropping the subject, 'we need to engage in the historical, political, and theoretical process of constituting ourselves as subjects as well as objects of history'. She argues that there is a need for a reconstructed theory which can do more than resist universalisms. A new world must be produced 'from the margins' based on the grounded experiences of those who have hitherto been marginalised.

In this section I want to challenge the claim that Foucault's genealogical conception of power is incompatible with feminist change which should properly be informed by the subjective experience of women. The discussion will involve a more detailed explication of Foucault's view of the political nature of the 'marginalised' voice. I also want to argue for a re-examination of the nature and interrelation of community and State, in which the former is seen to offer an 'authentic' challenge to a set of hegemonic political institutions in some feminist theorisations of social change. This section argues that the logical consistency and strategic flexibility of feminist labour thought is not dependent upon, but undermined by a

conception of power that upholds truth imagined as flowing from a form of pre-political consciousness.

The confidence with which some feminist thinkers have sought to champion the voice of women stems from an underestimation of the cultural and historical contingency of feminist resistance. In the *History of Sexuality* (1976:95), Foucault comments that political struggle in the modern era has been waged in the terms of contemporary power; that is, it takes its own product, the individual life and the life of the population, as the basis for resistance. It is in the nature of power to respond with 'counter-conducts' — refutations of existing conducts made in the name of the truth and well-being of the same population and individuals power has birthed. For Foucault (1976:95), 'resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power but can only exist in the strategic field of power relations'. What constitutes resistance is given within the field of power as 'the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite' (Foucault, 1976:96). Feminist labour discourse counters the view that women are not productive in the way that men are by calling upon the productive contributions made by the labour of reproduction. This does not decentre or politicise the productive subject, but aims to include or 'recognise' the contributions made by the opposite other of men's productive labour — women's reproductive labour.

This is not to imply that attempts to include women within the category of production have only had negative effects, and are necessarily always complicit or failed. Foucault (1979:96) says with regard to forms of resistance that they are not,

> only a reaction or rebound, forming with respect to the basic domination an underside that is in the end always passive, doomed to perpetual defeat. Resistances do not derive from a few heterogeneous principles; but neither are they a lure or a promise that is of necessity betrayed. They are the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite.

The point here is not that resistant statements are entirely complicit with forms of domination, but that they find their meaning in relation to what already exists. The goal of a Foucauldian politics is not to step outside the cultural order and the field of power, but to observe the cultural specificity of resistance. This is the step I argue feminist labour discourse needs to make; an exposure not only of the exclusion of women from the category production, but of the centrality of production to the subject.

In considering alternative ways of thinking the subject a number of dangers arise for feminist politics. Attempts to subvert the productive subject from feminist politics could become simply an act of inverting the Western gaze, involving the projection of negated qualities of

the Western subject onto cultural 'others'. This kind of projection might conclude that 'others' are opposite to Western cultural ideals — that is, more 'traditional', 'natural' or 'spiritual'. It might also lead to the assumption that some marginalised groups are not in need of the same kind of productive 'development' that the Western subject seeks. The second problem that emerges from the view of politics as properly emerging from subjective experience is a failure to interrogate the claims of those who have previously been marginalised within feminist discourse. Including the values of women who have been marginalised is not necessarily a subversive move. Some of these groups also demand the 'right' to develop and trade upon skill. This suggests the need to remain mindful that 'others' do not only provide sources of 'difference', but also share grounds of similarity. On the other hand, as Ien Ang (1995) points out, differences can not always be contained within an atmosphere of peaceful cohabitation, rather diverse voices often vie with one another. How are different and sometimes hostile claims to be reconciled or resolved within an approach that seeks to speak on behalf of the marginalised experience of women? A Foucauldian approach suggests one way to overcome the problem of cultural relativism that a politics grounded in the inclusion of marginalised others raises. In the formulation of political goals and analyses, the effects of subjective desire arising within a diverse cultural field is given priority.

The point is not to retain the subject in order to allow politics, but to understand politics as a process which investigates the subjugations that flow from the discursive objectification of persons. For Foucault the study of power necessarily involves a study of the discursive subject and its capacity to produce the contemporary order:

> power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him (sic) by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. There are two meanings of the word 'subject': subject to someone else by control and dependence; and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to. (Foucault, 1982:781)

> What was formed was a political ordering of life, not through an enslavement of others, but through an affirmation of self. (Foucault, 1976:123)

A Foucauldian focus does not paralyse the feminist labour movement, but allows it to expand its traditional concern with the exclusion of women from the value of productivity. Feminism might ask not simply how can women access and meet the contradictory demands of home and paid work that flow from their re/productive natures, but also how might they refuse lifetimes constituted by the dual demands of these realms, and thereby multiply the possibilities of persons. The observation that persons are not necessarily or only productive,

or that being is as important as doing, is not one that emerges outside the field of power. It can also be seen as the opposite other to the norm of productivity. However, like the claim that 'women are productive too', it has its potential for benefit. It gives more weight to the increasing observation by feminists that the 'right' to have both a career and a family has not led to a lessening of constraint, but to a multiplication of the demands and expectations placed upon women and the exclusion of activities like friendship, self-reflection, activism, and creativity; activities that are less readily associated with 'natural' desires than re/production. A rejection of the universal attribution of women as 'working mothers' might also enhance feminisms' capacity to welcome women who have been and continue to be denied motherhood rights, who seek to strengthen and retain domestic roles, or who have struggled against the assumption that they should become mothers.

A failure to politicise the productive subject risks silent compliance with the negative effects for women and other groups that flow from the less positive programmes of contemporary governments. As Dean (1998) argues, a view of the subject as the entrepreneur of individual human capital supports 'work for the dole' schemes. It might also be seen to give rise to welfare reforms, like those recently mooted by the Australian Liberal Party, which insist that primary care-giving parents undertake training in order to receive government pensions. One of the effects of this might be an exacerbation of the deficit of private care that Hochschild (1995) observes in advanced Western nations. The view that single parents should prepare for the labour market in order to avoid the poverty trap, is too readily supported by universalist and prescriptive visions of the subject as motivated by economic incentives, or whose independence is realised in market participation. Instead of repeating elements of the programmatic logic that defeats the ability of parents to provide undivided attention to child-care for specified periods, feminist discourses might explicitly link discourses about the productive nature of the subject with the continuing failure of the existing system of distribution to cover and provide home-based care. In this example, a politics that politicises the subject could act to remove the burden of responsibility for 'empowerment' from the individual parent and emphasise responsibility for the collective provision of care.

The second implication of Foucauldian thought for feminist labour theory that I want to discuss in this section is its recasting of the relationship between community and the State in theorising political change. One of Foucault's criticisms of socialist intellectuals in his later work was that they limited themselves to the role of recanting the impossibility of change being carried out by the State and imagined freedom as a condition that can only be known outside the State. For instance, Gordon's (1991:7) summary of Foucault's point of view in this regard refers to intellectuals as a 'supporting ideological chorus line rather than

interlocutors in a discussion about how to govern'. Here the problem is not the power of the State and the political interests which control it; rather, the concern raised is that an obsession with the State as the hope and/or dread of progressive interests obscures attention from critical work which attempts to evaluate context-specific, actual existing interventions. Foucault's criticism was against positions that fail to engage in the governmental debate in a governmental era.

Governmentality thinkers have argued that traditional political thought about the power of State and its suppression of community freedom have actually participated in the collapse of social welfare policies. Rose (1996) argues that a neo-liberal agenda was not part of the concerns that early 1970s governments in Britain and the US brought with them fully formed; rather, challenges to the welfare state were part of the conditions that gave rise to something called 'advanced liberal government' and a neo-liberal agenda, challenges which came from both Left and Right. Rose (1996:52) adds that part of these challenges came from 'some forms of feminism', presumably those that emphasise the patriarchal nature of the State and its incompatibility with the integrity of a women's movement conceptualised as the only source of progressive change for women. Donzelot (1991a) has argued that the discursive separation of State and society enables a position in which the freedom of individuals is no longer compatible with the provision of social security. He also argues that both Leftist and neo-liberal attacks on the overweening nature of the state have led to a crisis in the rationality of the welfare state. Socialist critiques join in the neo-liberal chorus of criticism of the welfare State's overbearing nature upon the integrity of society. In the Right-wing discourse the State provides too much security and destroys the freedom of the social, while for the Left it provides too little security and destroys the freedom of the social (Donzelot, 1991:174-175). The debate continues to revolve around the relation the State should take to society. It depends on a view of social freedom known outside the boundary of the State, as well as the view that State intervention in the social field necessarily increases its repressive strength.

While feminist labour texts, like other sections of the Left, evince a welfare ideal, they occasionally continue to overlook the extent to which condemnations of the welfare state have contributed to its collapse, as well as the extent to which a valorisation of freedom of choice chimes in with the neo-liberal agenda that has filled the gap. Feminism is sometimes still unnecessarily hostile to State reforms. Within many feminist texts there is the sense that power emanates from capitalism and patriarchy, concentrates in the State, and acts to obviate the freedom of oppressed groups (see chapter two). A range of feminist arguments can be seen as part of the wider challenge of the welfare state, including the once widespread

concern with co-option of the women's movement by 'the State', and an insistence on the incapacity of public programmes to adequately reflect social diversity. At the same time feminists have long since given up advocating revolution, but have focused their efforts upon improving conditions for particular groups within the terms of the existing system. As Franzway et al. (1989:156) state in reference to feminism, 'to get a clearer sense of where we are now, we need to untangle this paradox, that a vigorous interventionist strategy meshes with a substantial doubt about, even suspicion of, the approach'.

Seeing the State as a monster whose tentacles are constantly usurping the freedoms demanded by society introduces an unnecessary suspicion toward the general practice of legislated programmatic reform. It can also lead to an unquestioned acceptance of discourses nominated as emanating from the 'community'. For Young (1994:311), the mutual understanding, identification, and reciprocity within feminist notions of community are similar to the desires which underlie racial and ethnic chauvinism. Young points out that these unifying desires are dangerous because they make it difficult for people to respect those with whom they do not identify.

The challenge facing feminism is a rethinking of the relation between social diversity and the welfare State which does not lead to a loss of the gains achieved for the social subject. Watson (1995:171) argues that 'feminist social policy analysts and practitioners must seriously rethink the strategies and discourses of the last two decades and devise new approaches appropriate to the individualised, privatised, regulated, and divided world we inhabit'. This might begin with an extension of the vision of politics and power to incorporate a more critical and analytic engagement with the whole gamut of government beyond the institutions of State including feminist labour theory.

Far from the cynicism about social change that he is accused of, Foucault's later work ended on a positive note. A governmentality perspective does not reject policy or other intervention on the grounds that this brings about forms of political regulation. This reading would suggest a negative view in which anything understood to be touched by power is seen as a repression of 'natural' freedom. Foucault's conclusions were not anarchistic, but libertarian (Gordon, 1991:6). Changes are possible, as are the means to bring them about.

A Foucauldian analysis of liberalism sees its usefulness as a critique of reality in which government participates in problematising existing conditions. Foucault argued that the governed should be allowed to work with government without notions of complicity or

compliance (Gordon, 1991:48). He argued that political struggle has not depended upon ideological explanations and visions of change but has increasingly been directed toward a

> criticism of things, institutions, practices, discourse. A certain fragility has been discovered in the very bedrock of existence — even, and perhaps above all, in those aspects of it that are most familiar, most solid and most intimately related to our bodies and to our everyday behaviour. (Foucault, 1980:80)

This relates to his view of political struggle as taking place, not at the ideological level, but at the level of the body. To their credit, feminisms have typically adopted a practical approach to politics and have been active participants in the problematising mode of liberal government. Both the Foucauldian literature, and the accumulated practice and lessons of feminisms' engagements with public policy conclude that the participation of the governed in the shape and form of the programmes and practices of government is essential.

Feminism can resist not by perfecting theorising of abstract enemies in the State, neo-liberal doctrine, men or bosses, but by continuing its traditional emphasis upon immediate effects and personal everyday life. For instance, Meredyth (1998) argues that educationists need to relinquish their partisan and abstracted theoretical distrust of bureaucracy in order to support a centralised education system, acknowledge its social accomplishments, undertake careful studies of the actual effects of doctrine upon policy, and practice and mount effective responses to political projects. The implication for intellectuals is a shift in the direction of scholarly pursuit. Instead of adopting preconceived postures towards the State as either the handmaiden of capitalist-patriarchy, or a security net that saves the disadvantaged from the economy, political analysts need to interrogate the supporting logic of social programmes, the universalism of their precepts, and their effectiveness in improving everyday life. In this approach, the question becomes not 'to what extent are community values being ignored or represented by the State', but 'what are the everyday costs and effects of the freedoms posed on behalf of women or the community, and what is denied or derided within these universalist representations'. While this approach involves a confrontation with the programmatic interventions of State, it opens a dialogue that is without inherent suspicion and which aims to negotiate the detail of specific interventions, rather than posit overarching 'rights' and 'needs'. A Foucauldian approach introduces the possibility of a more open approach to political strategy at work, one which is less presumptuous about the interests associated with particular programmes, and more interested in debate about the actual effects of the strategies adopted.

The solution is not simply more democratic forms of participation, but more debate which understands the cultural nature of subjectivity, and which therefore emphasises contingency as opposed to 'truth' in policy formulation and implementation both within the institutions of

State and beyond. Bacchi (1999) argues that instead of seeing the objects or targets of policy as existing independently of political or policy discourse, they should be understood as part of the discursive construction of what the problem is. Bacchi's approach quite usefully emphasises, not better, more accurate representations of social problems by diverse participants, but analysis of the presuppositions of policy and the possible effects of these. In this approach, the object of study is not an apparently self-evident problem, but problematisations of the social.

In sum, the object for Foucauldian informed feminist labour thinkers is to continue to participate in the problematising mode of liberalism with greater self-reflectiveness and strategic skill. Strategy needs to highlight the relations between discourse and effect, to throw light upon the implications of 'rights' for those who espouse them and those upon whom they are imposed. The understanding that events are shaped by authoritative claims about the nature of the subject broadens attention from a narrow concern with the State, male trade-unionists, and the apparent appropriation of women's issues by 'co-opted' femocrats. It multiplies the moments and sites wherein effective and positive intervention might occur.

5. The practice of liberty

Perhaps the severest criticism of Foucault's work by feminist social scientists has been the view that the ubiquity and circulating quality of power carries 'implications of equality and agency rather than the systemic domination of the many by the few' (Hartsock, 1990:169). The problem is perceived in the terms that those who are dominated are given equal responsibility for their positions, constituting simply another version of 'blame the victim'. A productive view of power, according to Hartsock, also negates the possibility of overcoming its hold. On the other hand, McNay (1992) argues that Foucault's theory of disciplinary power does not over-exaggerate agency, but reduces social agents to passive bodies serving to contradict the feminist aim of rediscovering and re-evaluating the experiences of women.

While McNay (1992:10) approves of the opportunities for conceptualising autonomy that the later work on self-fashioning actors allows, she points to a problematic 'conception of the individual as an isolated entity, rather than explaining how the self is constructed in the context of social interaction'. Here Foucault's work is represented as moving from a unidirectional conception of power as always acting upon passive bodies to one which allows the subject to act at the same time that it constitutes that subject as masculine. Diprose (1994:27-35) argues in a similar vein that feminism must use Foucault's later work with care

because the autonomy of the self depends upon a passive feminine other and risks undermining a feminist critique of ethics. Here it is argued that the self-transforming subject is simply a reiteration of the rational, objective, and disembodied masculine subject whose authority depends upon the denigration of the feminine.

Following from my focus upon Foucault's genealogical work and its re-conceptualisation of power, the thesis has focused upon the relationships between a view of the subject as naturally predisposed to the prioritisation of re/productive activity, the objectification of workers within institutional matrixes, and the normalisation of the conducts open to them — even when they engage in self-shaping activities. Does this acceptance of a disciplinary view of power mean there is no escape from the effects of the increasing productivisation of life? If I do wish to argue for agency and liberty in the face of disciplinary and normalising practices, how does the analysis escape reinvoking a pre-cultural form of subjectivity that models itself on the masculine? In clarifying my position in relation to these questions I turn to debates about Foucault's later work on ethics. My summary of this discussion will show that Foucault can be read to allow for a meaningful practice of liberty that does not simultaneously suggest a form of pre-given subjectivity, nor one that rests upon a denigration of the feminine.

While a distinction between power and ethics is clearly evident in the development of Foucault's interests, with implications for thinking the liberty of persons as I shall discuss below, his later work does not nullify the relation between power and the body in *Discipline and Punish* . His later work has been read as a continuation, rather than a reinvoking or alteration of his work in *Discipline and Punish* (Gordon, 1991). The possibility of active participation is not denied in this work; indeed the participation of the subject is always involved (Lloyd, 1993:442). Rose (1996:44) comments that self-regulating subjectivities do not run counter to disciplinary controls; rather, the self-mastery, self-regulation, and self-control they seek to produce are the conditions upon which a nation now made up of free and 'civilised' citizens can be governed. My own reading of the role of the productive subject in the discipline of bodies and the government of conduct has assumed the operation of both a passive objectification, as well as the wilful imposition of self-discipline upon bodies. The point I have tried to make is not that the disciplines render bodies passive and helpless in the face of power, but that workers of all kinds are engaged actively in supervising both their own and other bodies within the hierarchy of paid work.

That subjects play an active role in preparing and subjecting their bodies to re/productive life is not to say that the harshest effects of the system of production can be 'blamed' upon those

subjects as Hartsock's interpretation of Foucault would argue. As I have already argued, power does not always adopt a governmental mode, nor are its effects always negative. The negative effects of the system of production can best be explained by a mix of modes of control, including forms of domination and exploitation, in which the subject's capacity for action is severely limited.

At the same time, a Foucauldian analysis does imply that individuals are more potent in relation to the reproduction of existing relations than Hartsock's approach would like to admit. My analysis in chapter seven suggests that the existing hierarchies of work would not be possible without the active participation and agreement of ordinary people. The assumption that power necessarily denies agency can lead to the dehumanisation of the enemy as a structure or culture 'out there'. As Watts (1993/4:107) points out, institutions are made up of people: 'we' *are* the institution. While capital stands in for the devil of modern life, individuals and groups in a position to take responsibility for challenging modern power relations can avoid the discomforting upheaval alternative critiques would entail. There is a need for a wider range of subjects to take responsibility for the way the social world is organised, and to refrain from seeing oppression as flowing from 'them' 'out there', not 'us' 'in here'. In the work context the view that oppression is generated 'from above' enables ignorance of the endlessly repeated ways in which 'we' are accomplices who experience pleasures and fulfilment in the perpetuation of the way things are, at the same time as experiencing a sense of being 'victims of the system'.

In short, a Foucauldian conception of power need not be read as either over-doing or denying the responsibility and agency of the subject. However for some authors who are largely sympathetic to the Foucauldian project, there remains the problem that its emphasis upon the liberty of persons reinvokes a pre-discursive agency. For instance, Hindess (1996:152-158) argues that, despite Foucault's rejection of universalising discourses of emancipation, his condemnation of domination in general in the name of liberty in parts of his later work serves to promote a global conception of community. Hindess argues that Foucault's critique of the idea of sovereignty does not go far enough. Sovereignty is problematic, not only for its repressive way of thinking about power, but also for its conception of the community as composed of autonomous persons. Diprose (1994:27-35) also argues that Foucault's conception of the aesthetics of the self does not escape from a reactivation of a form of pre-cultural agency which exists outside disciplinary and normalising practices. She argues that the value and privilege attributed to the ethical subject in Foucault's later work is not given outside cultural relations, but is in fact grounded in and dependent upon the passive status attributed to the feminine subject. Since the denigration of

women is the condition for upholding the ethical subject beyond culture, Diprose argues that feminism must part company with Foucault at this point.

Foucault's account of the resistant strategies of self-formation need not be seen as emerging from a unified sense of community, or a disembodied consciousness beyond the cultural realm. In his later work on ancient modes of ethical self-formation, Foucault is careful to distinguish between four kinds of technologies for knowledge production, all of which inhibit the actions and attitudes of subjects (Foucault, 1988). These include forms of exploitation and communication that are the subject of traditional theorising, as well as modes of power and ethical action. It is useful to distinguish, as Foucault does in his article 'Technologies of the self', between his work on power and his work on ethics. Both are techniques for making up subjects, or 'truth games' which impose 'particular kinds of domination' in the sense that they imply 'certain modes of training and modification of individuals' (Foucault, 1988:18). The difference is that power objectifies the subject and submits individuals to certain ends. Technologies of the self:

> permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (Foucault, 1988:18)

However, practices of self-liberation are not the same as positing an essential freedom.

> Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an 'agonism' — of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation. (Foucault, 1982:790)

This implies a form of liberty that is not so much pre-cultural, as intractable in its questioning of meaning. Foucault's work can be said to explore a wide array of ways in which subjectivity is produced, all of which impose a limited array of attitudes and conducts, but not all of which are complicit with the goals of power.

In answer to Diprose's critique of Foucauldian ethics, Lloyd (1997:90) argues that the aesthetics of the self is not taken in Foucault as necessarily outside the institutions of disciplinary power. Rather, Foucault seeks to show that 'there are other possible relations between ethics and politics, economics and society (which may, of course, be less equally or more normalising) than the one under which we currently operate' (Lloyd, 1997:90). Butler argues that a view of the subject as possessed of a capacity for self-determination is not the same as reinstituting the pre-cultural subject. Judith Butler (1990:143) rejects the view that agency must resort to a pre-discursive 'I', and that 'to be *constituted* by discourse is to be *determined* by discourse, where determination forecloses the possibility of agency'. The

ability to produce an effect that brings about a change in existing signifying practices is to be found in the plurality and temporal fragility of discourse. Butler (1990:147) refers to an excess in signifying practices and their dependence upon repetition. That is, we are not constituted once and for all, but know ourselves as partial fragments of the totality of possible configurations of identity from moment to moment. It is the 'coexistence or convergence of such discursive injunctions (that) produces the possibility of a complex reconfiguration and redeployment; it is not a transcendental subject who enables action in the midst of such a convergence' (Butler, 1990:145). As Lloyd (1997:91) argues, an aesthetics of the self is not a transformation that takes place outside social structures, but one that 'occurs in the gaps within those structures; gaps exposed via a critical ontology'. A conception of a community of autonomous subjects does not imply that politics must be based upon a common experience, nature, or identity. Foucault's conception of liberty and ethics does not render us all alike; it enables an understanding of opposition to normalising identity categories based upon our very differences. Lloyd (1997:99) argues that it is in the process of subverting normalising identities that joint action occurs, a process which generates alternative subjectivities.

The view that Foucault's work forecloses the possibility for a meaningful freedom that is of use to feminism has also been challenged by Susan Hekman (1999). Hekman answers charges of unbridled relativism and moral anarchy, that are directed at analyses like those of Foucault and Butler, by pointing in a most practical manner to a middle ground between universal truth claims and total chaos. She notices that 'every society requires a ground for meaning that makes language intelligible, that this ground is ungrounded in the sense that it lacks universal validity, and that this ground provides a stable foundation for meaning that extends over time' (1999:121). What she refers to as the 'background' produces 'not nihilism, but the very possibility of intelligibility' (1999:122). The goal of feminism, for Hekman (1999:123), is to refute the universal claims of background assumptions, to displace them, and in doing so, to establish a new 'epistemology' for difference. This feminist epistemology must openly admit to being political, value laden and partial, and it must be justified according to its capacity to provide an understanding of social reality (Hekman, 1999:87). In relation to labour feminism, this would imply an acceptance of the fact that emotional labour and domestic labour are political concepts which reflect a particular set of feminist values; their inclusion in the category of production does not complete the picture of possible ways of thinking about human beings and life. Feminist ways of thinking 'women' provide a partial and incomplete view of social reality, which nevertheless provide an understanding of important elements of that reality. My discussion suggests that much feminist labour thought appears to come from the perspective of those for whom

participation in income generating production is a key aspect of a positive self-identity that is linked to feelings of 'power' and independence (see chapter six and seven). What feminist labour thought remains largely unaware of is the cultural specificity, partiality, and possible effects of this value.

With regard to thinking sexual difference and work, it is important for feminism to invoke the something-more beyond a conception of the feminine subject as the provider of degraded, but productive caring labours, involving as it does, a traditional conception of masculinity as not-caring. Butler's work suggests a view of these labours, not as expressive of identities that are in any way fixed and inevitable, but of a performance which must be endlessly repeated in order to maintain its persuasive hold. A liberatory practice would disrupt the pervasive productivity discourse by highlighting its contingency, bringing to attention alternative ways of valuing and giving meaning to human life, while at the same time disrupting a conception of the world as made up of caring women and dominating men. Highlighting the contingent, rather than the necessary, nature of identities based on comparative levels of productive success, as well as the negative effects that flow from these identity positions, constitutes a promising, additional, and alternative kind of resistance to the existing system of production than is currently being mounted by feminist labour thought and the Left in general.

Conclusion

A Foucauldian re-conceptualisation of power suggests that political action is not as easy as opposing everything that the Left associates with dominant social interests, or of supporting everything labelled liberatory. Power produces the whole complex social field; it cannot be reduced to an 'economic' effect. To struggle to attain the freedoms produced by power without an understanding of their historical ascendance would be to accept the existing order without reflection or question, risking a complicit repetition of its practices. The subversion of identity and community entailed by a Foucauldian analysis in no way obscures or distracts attention from economic inequalities. A denial of universal truths is necessary in order to avoid moral prescriptiveness and a form of cultural violence that acts at the material level. A feminist political philosophy of work might be less concerned with freeing the productive potentials of women, and more concerned with exposing the regulatory practices by which these identities are produced as normative. Instead of understanding 'power' as something that flows to women when they have skill, money, and status at work, feminist labour thought might consider the power of subjectivity to reproduce existing inequalities between workers. This might be achieved by bringing into consideration discourses that are currently

discredited by the productive subject. This tactic could be adopted, not in order to 'represent difference', but to denaturalise the regulative norms that render the current organisation of production intelligible. It also acts to prevent the exclusion and possible extinction of 'other' positions, and supports a practice of liberty.

9
CONCLUSION

The thesis has developed the argument that several key assumptions and conceptual operations within feminist labour thought are implicated in the reproduction of the existing normative order. In chapter two I argued that, although feminist labour discourse disrupts the sexist assumptions inherent to mainstream economic discourse, and develops crucial alternative explanations for women's economic disadvantage, at times its theoretical premises render it insensitive to the cultural contingency of the subject. Of particular concern is the tendency to conceptualise power in negative or repressive terms, and to draw an epistemological distinction between truth and politics. These assumptions have led to a failure to politicise core features of the subject of feminist labour discourse. The subjective qualities that I emphasise in the chapter include the possession of an inclination toward the expression and development of labour, especially activities that attract a monetary return. Feminist labour thought has also sought to establish the peculiar domestic, emotional, sexual, and inter-relational propensities of the 'woman worker'.

Chapter three explored some of the possible origins of the subject of feminist texts by tracing Foucauldian genealogies of the modern Western individual. Here I argued that the core qualities attributed to the subject of labour, as well as the split between politics and truth within many feminist texts can be seen, not only as products of the contemporary normative order, but also as the means by which it is supported and reproduced. The sum effect of discipline, bio-politics, and governmental techniques is the production of knowledges and practices which both persuade and oblige persons to adopt lifetimes, identities, and forms of social organisation that give priority to domains and conducts that support the market conditions deemed to provide collective economic prosperity. The remaining chapters explore the extent to which the knowledges and practices supported in feminist labour texts can be seen to participate in this project. Chapters four, five, six, and seven, explicate the

precise assumptions that must be problematised in framing a more subversive feminist analysis of work.

Chapter four questioned the constitution of 'women's work' and 'men's work' as fixed domains arising in, or defined by, sexual and reproductive drives, 'socialisation', or patriarchal ideology. In these explanations, men's work is often seen as uncaring and unemotional to do with the production of objects and the domination of nature and other people. Areas that employ a majority of women are classified as 'service' occupations or industries and are often associated with caring and sexuality. Instead of seeing the way these meanings participate in the constitution of 'women's work' as more libidinal, domestic, and emotional than 'men's work', feminisms in the field of labour thought often accept that these qualities can describe something substantial and fixed about 'women' and 'women's work'. In this sense, many feminist texts do not unsettle the centrality of production to the subject, but constitute 'women' as the possessors of a specific set of productive values.

I argued that a better approach would accept the impossibility of attaching particular activities or 'skills' to the bodies of men and women as a matter of predetermined theoretical knowledge. Instead feminist work studies could adopt a readiness to consider the way that workers negotiate complex fields of meaning and the effects of these negotiations within specific contexts.

A similar approach could be taken with regard to feminist redefinitions of the citizen subject. In the same way that feminist discourse about 'women's work' seeks to extend the category of 'labour' or 'production', feminist welfare texts claim to transform the 'citizen' in order to include all members of society. Chapter five argued that feminist versions of the citizen subject do not complete the unbalanced picture of Australian life given to us by masculine economics. Rather, much feminist welfare literature seeks to include the morally sanctioned familial roles of women within existing definitions of the citizen who continues to be thought in terms of an essentially productive nature. That is, much of the literature imagines the 'citizen' as a person who is either engaged in paid work, experienced as the key to independence and security, or a woman who, whether employed or not, is involved with the care of kin within the heterosexual nuclear family. Feminist welfare texts also frequently associate the value of caring labour with its economic contribution to the nation. There is a tendency to overemphasise, and thereby naturalise, a subject whose activities are centred around family and market, and to imagine state 'security' in terms of 'empowering' citizens to contribute to work. This gives rise to an overemphasis upon extensions of welfare that can include those whose unpaid labours support the accumulation of national wealth. It may

also provide a backhanded form of support, or at least fail to explicitly challenge, the rationale that underpins measures like 'work for the dole' and increased employment obligations for single parents, which also emphasise the citizen's responsibility, independence and self-worth in relation to work.

In effect, feminist versions of the citizen could provide a more destabilising critique of the privilege accorded to production within ways of thinking about social rights and responsibilities. There is a tendency for the discourse to chime in with a welfare system whose rules and procedures oblige citizens to find paid employment, or involve themselves in activities that can be seen to provide an indirect support for the generation of national wealth.

A more subversive challenge would question the links made between productive activity and citizenship rights. Instead of universalising and valorising 'productive' lives, feminist welfare discourse might actively condemn moral grounds for welfare provision and seek to extend welfare to all inhabitants of Australia regardless of the extent to which they conform to traditional social norms.

The subject's investment in production within much of the feminist labour literature is most directly illustrated in its discussion of industry and economic reform and historical analyses of sex segregation. Here many feminist thinkers link the development of women's labour with individual happiness and the collective good. Although socialist positions question the view that freedom is found in paid work, they continue to pair power, freedom, and security with market activities and investments. There is also general agreement that disadvantage, typically understood as a lack of access to economic freedom, can be remedied by providing more access to education and employment.

Chapter six summarises the Foucauldian literature which suggests that subjects within advanced industrial Western economies are regulated toward more economically 'efficient' and 'productive' ends by interventions, which emanate from a diverse array of sites within the population, and link the productive nature and freedom of individuals with collective national goals. The normative knowledges deployed by a range of social authorities act to inspire and oblige individuals to devote the time of their lives, in the name of their own empowerment and the collective benefit, to the development of skills that can be traded in the market place. It follows that, to the extent that feminist labour thought assumes that production is a normative feature of humanity, it participates in dominant modes of regulation. Complicity of this kind introduces the danger that progressive struggle around

work limits itself to establishing the 'right' of all to access, develop, and evaluate their contributions to the productive order. In this conception, the benefits of employment are usefully extended to the activities of persons who were previously deemed 'unproductive'. However, the naturalisation of a productive freedom also acts to universalise the obligation to prioritise economic goals within the lifetime.

The means by which a normative view of humanity operates as a form of social control was explored in more detail in chapter seven. There I developed Foucauldian analyses which consider the role of job description and evaluation, among a barrage of techniques developed within occupational psychology, in the production of knowledges which enable work to be rationalised in more 'productive' and 'efficient' directions. Chapter seven reconceptualised the relations between power and processes of job evaluation. Instead of viewing job analysis as a tool in the hands of repressive powers who fail to recognise the value of 'women's work', I suggest that feminist criticism of job analysis consider the effects of the knowledges that it produces, and which support its continued operation. Such knowledges are involved in the objectification of individuals as productive units of the economy. They are utilised in the rationalising drives that order the field of labour, and they produce ways of thinking the self that motivate individuals to harness their energies in more productive and efficient directions. The action of these knowledges to effect social control, regardless of the interests that are seen to inform them, are given too little attention within traditional left critiques. One result of this neglect is a failure to comment upon the legalisation of feminised roles in jobs traditionally performed by women as a result of feminist efforts to 'recognise' the value of 'women's work'.

The tendency to view comparable worth purely in terms of its legitimation of economic inequalities, also gives rise to a disinterest among the left in the use of job analysis to shape the content, intensity, and boundaries of jobs. Feminists must question the use of job analysis to 'capture' the value of 'women's skills'. However, feminists might still intervene in job analysis processes in order to act upon the condition, organisation, and direction of work. Examining work and comparable worth purely in terms of its capacity to reflect value and distribute resources, overlooks the possibility of using the technology to impact upon the shape and effects of work.

In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) one gets the sense of a world obsessed with order and conformity to the perceived needs of an ever expanding advanced industrial economy. It is a normative order that tolerates no deviation from lifetimes organised according to its requirements. There is a continuity between behaviour that undermines the economy, first

with illegality, but gradually, and in our time, with immorality and abnormality. In this view, the problem is not the exclusion of persons and activities from the domain of economy, but the normalising drive that imposes an economic meaning upon fields of human diversity with the aim of harnessing and pushing them in directions deemed to be more economically viable.

For some, the diffuseness of power and the destabilisation of the subject that inform this description of the problem of labour, have been read to represent a form of nihilism or fatalism that renders political struggle impossible. In chapter eight I argued that my application of Foucauldian thought to feminist problematisations of labour does not collapse feminist labour activism, but implies an extension of its concerns. I have suggested that the problem for labour feminism be extended to include, not only the lack of equality among gendered activities that arise from narrow political interests, but also widespread normative values that inform our most intimate ways of thinking about ourselves. Specifically, the problem for individuals within advanced Western societies is not only forms of discrimination and exploitation, but the obligation to develop the economic value of the body in the name of its 'natural' inclinations. In effect, 'success', 'normality', and 'security' must be achieved within competitive educational and workplace hierarchies, and this within a climate of increasing specialisation, mechanisation, and high unemployment. In addition to resistance against exploitation and discrimination, and in order to strengthen its refusal of these conditions, feminist labour activists must challenge the essentialist visions of the subject which support them. It must reject not only the lack of access to economic forms of independence and value, but also the reduction of human life to an economic meaning. The thesis has argued that feminist labour thought needs to explicitly challenge the view that human beings necessarily find fulfilment, independence, identity, or worth in the development of market-valued labours.

Future research might destabilise the normative authority of the re/productive subject by bringing into view alternative positions in which notions of 'the economic' and 'work', and the problems associated with them, are not central to identity and life. This may be of more benefit in feminisms' attempts to make links among women in different places than the desire to spread Western 'privileges' to all parts of the globe. The approach developed in the preceding discussion does not so much block political activism, as render obsolete the generalised theoretical categories and concepts that inform it. It advocates a form of subversion that consists of questioning the idea that there is a rule for human life that can inform governmental programmes, while continuing to problematise the negative material circumstances affecting particular cultural positionings.

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