Professional Women, Inner City Living and Declining Fertility: Should Women be having more *Sex in the City*?

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science (Honours)

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Paid Work and Family Responsibilities Submission
Sex Discrimination Unit
Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
GPO Box 5218
Sydney NSW 2001

14 October 2005

To HREOC Sex Discrimination Unit,

Please accept my submission on issues raised in the 'Striking the Balance' Discussion Paper. The following submission is a draft of an Honours Thesis to be submitted to the School of Geosciences of the University of Sydney on 28 October 2005 in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Science (Honours).

The author is happy for the material to be listed as a submission, referred to and published by the Commission as it sees fit. However, the author at all times holds the copyright for the work and retains the right to publish it as she sees fit in other arenas.

If you wish to discuss further any of these matters, or indeed any issues raised in my submission do not hesitate to contact me through the contact details provided above.

Sincerely,

Bronwen Burfitt

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND CASE STUDIES

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AGOFW	Australian Government Office of the Status of Women
AWA	Australian Workplace Agreement
BPW	Business and Professional Women's Sydney Club
CEDAW	*Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DEWR	Department of Employment and Workplace Relations
EOWWA	Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency
FaCS	Department of Family and Community Services
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IR	Industrial Relations
LGA	Local Government Area
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OFWNSW	Office for Women NSW Premier's Department
SMH	Sydney Morning Herald
WEL	Women's Electoral Lobby
Zonta	Zonta Club of Sydney

1 Introduction: what do women want?

Australia's fertility rate has been declining since 1962 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005). In 1976 the fertility rate fell to the population replacement level of 2.1 and has been below replacement levels since (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2005). The most recently published statistics place Australia's fertility rate at 1.75 in 2003 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2004). This has prompted a great deal of discussion in society-at-large. It raises issues of whether declining fertility is desirable or sustainable for the country's future, and what governments can and should do to deal with the perceived problem.

A growing body of literature surrounds the issue of declining fertility. However, much literature on this matter relies on quantitative research, examining the issues through the lens of demographic and statistical indicators. Consequently, it is often the case that academics and policy makers seek to address the issue of declining fertility based upon assumed stereotypes about reproductive choices. In other words, research is often undertaken without consulting the women themselves (Hakim 2001). Social scientists have blamed the failure of such approaches to appropriately circumvent continuing decline in fertility upon their lack of connection with the targets of these policies. This has been highlighted as an area needing further research and insight by a recently completed Monash University study 'What Women (and Men) Want: Births, Policies and Choices' which claims to be a first of its kind in the use of qualitative rather than merely quantitative research[1] (Maher et al. 2004).

Debate surrounding declining fertility bridges disciplines including sociology, gender studies, political science and human geography. The Monash University study was conducted through the School of Political and Social Inquiry. While there was a geographic focus for subject selection, the spatial processes impacting these women's decisions were not given full consideration. Indeed, there has been little geographical discussion of these matters overall. Rather, the literature is dominated by political scientists, and feminists who tend to give little regard to the geographical contexts which construct the issue of declining fertility. The spatial construction of these social relations and processes allows unique insights to be contributed by human

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[1] That study was based upon qualitative interviews with approximately 100 women from four selected areas of Victoria examining the factors impacting upon women's childbearing decisions.

1 Introduction

geographers to academic thought on these issues (Massey 1984). As such, there is an important and unfulfilled need for research on declining fertility to be undertaken from a geographical point of view. In this context, this thesis aims to look at the impacts of societal structures and place-specific factors upon the fertility rate. It seeks to extend on the research to date by providing a qualitative examination of women's child-bearing decisions in Sydney, our nation's largest city and economic capital, from a geographic perspective.

Feminism has resulted in a reappraisal by women of their role in society with a shift away from homemaker and towards breadwinner. This reconceptualisation of gender relations has been a factor influencing a move away from the site of traditional family models, the suburbs, and into the inner-city. This move has been led by professional women searching for places to redefine themselves and accommodate their attempts to combine work and family. However, the enduringly patriarchal nature of society continues to make this combination difficult. The result of women's emancipation into the traditionally masculine space of the city is arguably linked to declining fertility. Hence, the reproductive decisions of professional women are of vital importance to the debate surrounding Australia's declining fertility (McDonald 1998; Barnes 2001). Highly qualified, professional women, have the lowest fertility rate of any major social category in Australia, with Franklin and Tuneo (2003) observing an inverse relationship between number of children and tertiary qualifications.[2] To effectively address the declining fertility of these women we must determine what is influencing their child-bearing choices (Hakim 2001).

This thesis seeks to determine the personalised dynamics of professional women's reproductive decisions, giving particular consideration to the impacts of feminism and non-traditional lifestyles associated with inner-city living. In particular, it asks if women were truly allowed equal participation in the city and public sphere, would there be more children in inner-city households? Utilising a qualitative feminist methodology using in-depth interviews to ascertain first-hand the views and experiences of professional women, it seeks to discover 'what women want' (Maher

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[2] Women with no qualifications can expect 2.3 children, women with one degree 1.8, and only 1.3 for women with multiple qualifications (Franklin and Tuneo 2003). These figures are based on 40 year olds from the 1996 census.

1 Introduction

et al. 2004). The geographic focus of this study is shown Figure 1 being centred upon Sydney's inner-city and surrounds.

The following chapters consider the key phases of research conducted for this thesis. Chapter Two examines the theory surrounding motherhood and women's workforce participation. It starts by looking at the patriarchal structuring of society and feminist theories surrounding women's changing role in society, then moves to the more practical manifestations of these concepts through women's workforce participation and involvement in the urban and public sphere. The current government policies to assist families and to regulate the workforce are examined in Chapter Three. This chapter seeks to determine the adequacy of governmental approaches to declining fertility and compare and contrast them to approaches taken overseas. Chapter Four is an exposition of the methodology involved in conducting the study. The theory behind qualitative research is discussed and the special requirements demanded of a feminist methodology are examined. This chapter recognises the importance and integral nature of the research design to the final determination of women's true feelings and desires. Built upon the theoretical and methodological considerations of the preceding chapters, Chapter Five details the research data obtained from 40 interviews with professional women living in metropolitan Sydney. It determines the trends and themes in women's experiences in the workforce and family life, linking back to theory and policy discussed in Chapters Two and Three. Finally, Chapter Six draws conclusions from a consideration of the five preceding chapters and discusses the major findings of the research. It makes recommendations for ways to more appropriately facilitate women's dual role of worker and mother and thereby address problems of declining fertility.

**Figure 1:
Focus area of study**
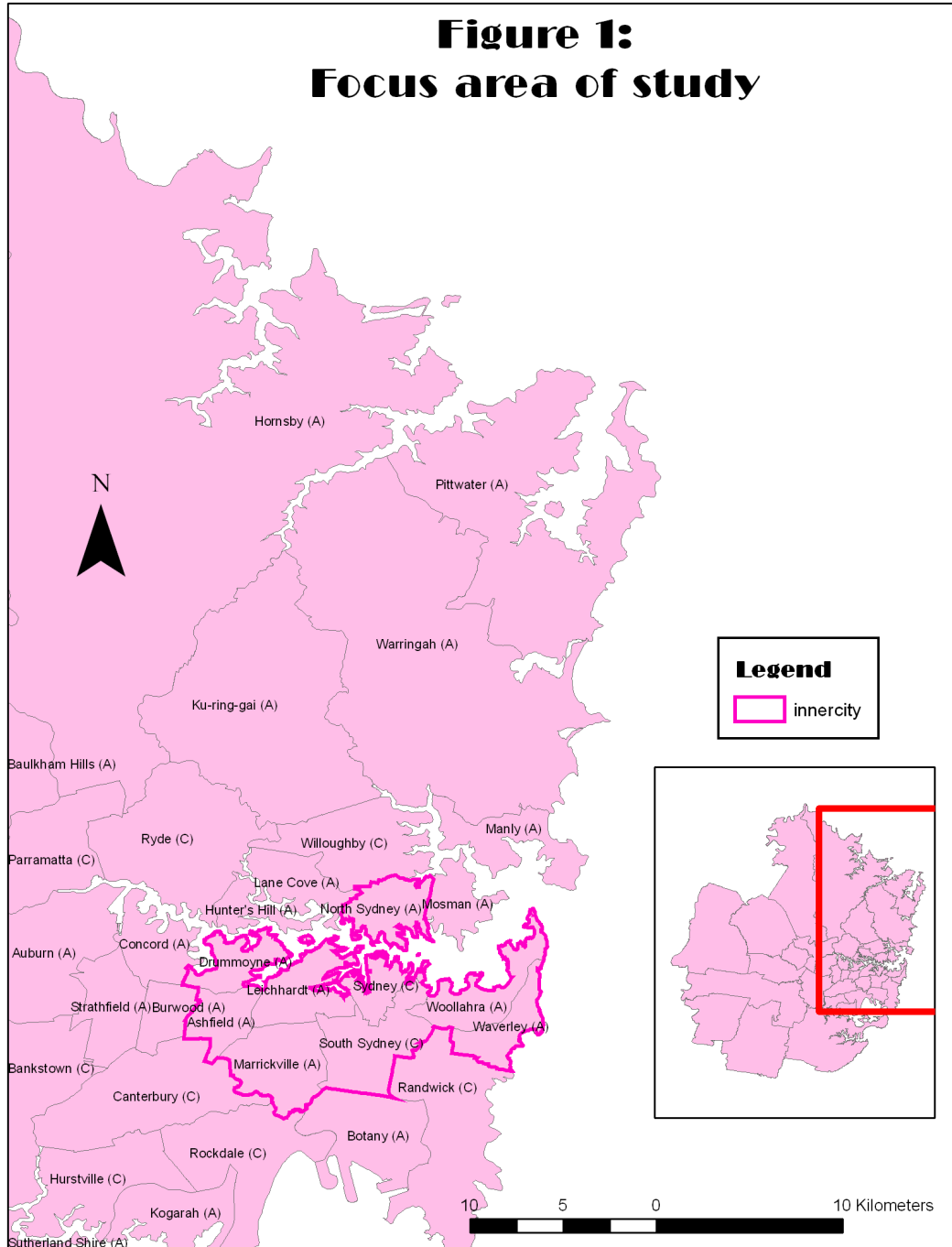
2 Theoretical Background: Women in theory

This chapter critically reviews the body of published literature that will inform the research question. Four key insights are observed from this literature review. The range of feminist theories on fertility will be discussed, with special attention to the impacts of the patriarchal nature of society upon women, and the impacts of feminism itself. The practical manifestations of these theories will be examined looking at the relationships between women and labour; and women and place. These will be dealt with in turn to determine the options to give women options in their childbearing decisions.

2.1 Women and patriarchy: the global citizen is male

The enduring patriarchal nature of society generates fundamental barriers to professional women's fertility (Cannold 2005). The incomplete transition towards gender equality has provided women with many of the opportunities available to men, while not altering the fundamental structuring of society around traditional gender roles. Although the traditional roles are under challenge, the prevailing structures to which men and women attempt to conform reinforce them (Barnes 2001; Bryson 2001). Countries which have achieved greater progress towards gender equity through more fundamental changes to the structuring of society generally boast higher fertility rates (Bittman et al. 2004).

In Australia, women experience inequity both in the workplace and in the home. The structure of the workforce with its emphasis on full-time, long-houred work reproduces patriarchal gender relations, making childbearing women unable to effectively participate in this sphere (Peet 1998; Barnes 2001). The family-unfriendly policies of many workplaces make it difficult to combine work and family, and women attempting to achieve this balance experience lost income and seniority (Grose 2002; Cannold 2005; Goward et al. 2005). Indeed, Australian females have a labour force participation rate of only 57.1 percent, compared to 72.3 percent of males (ABS 2005, p.37). This is considered moderate by the OECD who observe the presence of young children to be a major barrier to employment in Australia (OECD 2002). Moreover, they observe having children

2 Theoretical Background

'…under 15 years of age has a significant dampening effect on mothers' employment rates'[3] (OECD 2002, p.77; see also Goward et al. 2005).

Men can evade these problems as, although they are often enthusiastic about the ideals of shared-parenting, this generally does not translate to a reappraisal of their gendered identity as breadwinner, and they do not allow children to impact upon their careers (Bittman et al. 2004; Craig 2004). The low uptake of paternal leave provisions is evidence of this; the Monash study finding it to be a rarely considered option (Maher et al. 2004). In fact, the perception of many employers is that men shouldn't actually utilise these leave provisions; they are merely a safeguard to prevent discrimination suits (Bittman et al. 2004; Goward et al. 2005). While some men are making the choice of equal parenting, in these situations generally neither partner has a 'conventional male career' (Deutsch 1999; Bittman et al. 2004). Furthermore, in the home, domestic roles aren't changing as much as some would like. There is little evidence of an increased uptake in housework by men[4] (Waitt et al. 2000b; Bryson 2001; Grose 2002; de Vaus 2004; Goward et al. 2005). Craig (2005) points to the share of domestic load following children as contributing to a lower birth rate. Rather than gender equality being achieved, increased inequality in workloads is observed with women carrying the dual load of breadwinner and homemaker.

Through globalisation our gendered society is essentially being replicated at a global level with the global citizen conceived of as male (Bryson 2001). Bryson (2001) argues that while society is becoming aligned away from gendered family lines towards increasing individualisation, the individual citizen as defined by the liberal model is male. While market-orientated countries are theoretically gender blind, they

'…do not actively facilitate women's independence from caring duties or their access to paid work' (Craig 2005, p.19).

Craig (2005) argues this lack of social assistance for mothers under liberal regimes generates a marked shift from paid to unpaid work, and accentuates the gender division of domestic work. As a result of this women are forced into a masculinist

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[3] Compared to women with no children over 10 percent less women with one child and over 20 per cent less women with two or more children participate in the workforce in Australia (OECD 2002, pp.77-78; see also Goward et al. 2005)

[4] Recent ABS data indicates women are still responsible for approximately 70 per cent of domestic work with men only bearing 30 per cent of the load (Waitt et al. 2000b). ABS data from 1997 shows 25-44 year old women in partnered relationships do on average 71 minutes more housework a day than their male partners (de Vaus 2004, p.293; Goward et al. 2005, p.27). Moreover, parenthood increases the time women spend on domestic work but reduces the time spent on domestic work by men (Craig 2002; Goward et al. 2005).

mould through the primacy given the paid worker, devaluing the role of family worker and making the choice of motherhood less desirable:

> 'Women come closest to equality with men when they do not have children' (Bryson 2001, p.21).

Accordingly, working women's childbearing desires must be accommodated, and traditional female roles need to be valued as an equally viable choice, if declining fertility is to be appropriately addressed (Bryson 2001; Hakim 2001).

2.2 Women and feminisms: no longer 'our bodies, our choice'

'The basic site of women's oppression is the social reproduction of labour power, particularly women's ability to bear children' (Peet 1998, p.276).

The majority of branches of feminism view society to be constructed upon a gendered division of labour to facilitate generational replacement. This denigrates the status of women, whose biological role is reproduction, and reinforces male domination (Peet 1998). Feminism's goal is to prevent women's oppression by seeking women's participation in the public sphere (Massey 1994c). Increased participation in the public sphere has put increased pressures on women, resulting in less time for child-bearing (Barnes 2001). As Cannold (2005) discusses, feminism is sometimes blamed for women's failure to produce sufficient children (see also Sullivan 1996). However, she points out that this is better attributed to the imperfect result feminism achieved in attempting to alter our sexist world (Craig 2004; Cannold 2005). The failure of feminism has been its inability to move

> '…cultural values away from the economic and the competitive, towards the supportive, caring and integrative' (Bryson 2001, p.20).

This failure has led to interpretations of feminism clashing with ideals of traditional family structures, generating a conflict of identity in relation to motherhood (Pocock 2003). Society appears to have adopted an ambivalent attitude to motherhood (Maher et al. 2004). Women are torn between the enduringly pervasive traditional notions of the "good stay-at-home-mother," on the one hand, and the contemporary notion that women ought to work to achieve fulfilment, on the other (Lupton and Schmied 2002; Goward et al. 2005). Women feel guilt at not being able to always be there for their

children if they work, and they feel looked down upon if they choose not to work (Lupton and Schmied 2002; Pocock 2003).

To overcome such interpretations, recent articulations of feminism emphasise the importance of women's freedom of choice, rather than prioritising a single life choice for women, a precept central to the women's movement is to emphasise women's freedom of choice (Manne 2001; Cannold 2005). Feminism sought to liberate women from confinement in the private sphere, but it never intended to denigrate the valuable contribution of women who freely chose motherhood (Gough 1996; Bryson 2001). In this context, declining fertility can be seen to represent a limitation of women's autonomy in life choices (Cannold 2005). The goals of feminism are being subverted by women's 'emancipation' into the patriarchal public sphere. Cannold (2005) observes the outcome to be a phenomenon she terms 'circumstantial childlessness'. Women are finding themselves childless as a result of the circumstances society has forced them into rather than their free choice (Franklin and Tueno 2003; Cannold 2005). As well as this removal of a central control in life, the rise of circumstantial childlessness is feared by feminists to be depriving those women who actively choose to remain childless of the power this status gives them (Cannold 2005).

Policies of 'active neutrality', that support all life-choices equally, best restore women's choices in these fundamental matters (Manne 2001; Goward et al. 2005). Manne (2001) argues no particular choice be given supremacy over another; this is what relegated women to the role of wife and mother for far too long. The full spectrum of women's choices can be attributed validity through policies which give women options, rather than punishing particular courses in favour of others (Manne 2001). She criticises McDonald for favouring policies which support the combination of work and family to represent the choice of the 'majority', as another attempt to force women into male moulds (Manne 2001; McDonald 2001b). Hakim supports this argument, identifying heterogeneity in women's preferences ranging from home-centred to career-focussed (Hakim 2001). Further, Bryson's (2001) analysis of feminist theory argues for valuing and accommodating the viability of both traditional and less traditional female role selection. Policies based on active neutrality have achieved an increased fertility rate in France, and it has been argued that such policies could be deployed in Australia to similar effect (Manne 2001).

2 Theoretical Background
2.3 Women and work: the juggling act

The combination of women's traditional labour of reproduction[5] with their relatively new public sphere labour is proving difficult (Peet 1998). Low fertility rates are seen to be the consequence of a

> '…failure to facilitate women's engagement in the dual roles of worker and mother' (Bryson 2001, p.13).

Indeed, OECD countries which experience the highest levels of fertility also have the greatest female workforce participation (Castles 2002). In the Monash study all women identified the work/life balance as challenging and workplace experiences were found to be crucial to reproductive decisions (Maher et al. 2004). Three reactions to this difficult balancing act are observed.

Firstly, women are putting off children or not having them at all to mitigate against adverse consequences for their career (Franklin and Tueno 2003; Cannold 2005). Women face significant opportunity costs associated with child-bearing (Barnes 2001; Franklin and Tueno 2003). This comes in the form of lost earnings due to time away from work and reduced earnings where full-time work is abandoned in favour of part-time work (Franklin and Tueno 2003; McDonald 2003). Career aspirations are also impacted by childbearing, as part-time work often removes the possibility of climbing the career ladder (Grose 2002; Franklin and Tueno 2003; Maher et al. 2004; Goward et al. 2005).

Secondly, women seek flexible working arrangements to combine work and family (Maher et al. 2004). They do so for economic and personal reasons (Bianchi 2000; Lupton and Schmied 2002; Maher and Dever 2004). Rearing children is a costly exercise which many families find requires a dual-income (Barnes 2001; Maher and Dever 2004; Goward et al. 2005). According to Bianchi (2000) mothers are now viewing their duty to their children as encompassing both financial and emotional support. Women's engagement in paid work is central to their notions of self and their fulfilment in life (Lupton and Schmied 2002; Maher et al. 2004; Goward et al. 2005). Work and family life can combine positively and increased workforce participation

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[5] Pun intended – interesting that there is no other word for the process of giving birth.

does not appear to have impacted upon mothers' time with children[6] (Bianchi 2000; Grose 2002).

Thirdly, women leave their family-unfriendly job to have children. Women in this situation will either become stay-at-home-mothers or seek to move into a more family-friendly career. In the former case women engage in what Cannold (2005) refers to as 'role-specialisation' they allow their husbands to be involved in full-time paid work while they take on the role of unpaid homemaker. This denies women fulfilment outside the home and, moreover, imports a class distinction – only the very affluent can afford to arrange their childrearing thus (Barnes 2001; Cannold 2005). In the latter approach women seek to engage with the workforce through running their own business, becoming an academic or moving into the public service; all options perceived as more easily combining with family responsibilities (Maher et al. 2004).

Workplaces which cultivate family-friendliness are better equipped to accommodate women's combination of work and family and prevent women's alienation from the public sphere. This can be achieved through increased flexibility for both parents and the ready-availability of part-time options (McDonald 2001b; Maher et al. 2004). Further, the stigma associated with part-time work can be removed through allocation of the same benefits that accompany full-time work (Grose 2002; Bittman et al. 2004). Support for family-friendly policies in the workplace and generally in society improves the efficacy of such measures (Maher and Dever 2004). Family-friendly policies have been seen to have positive impacts for the employer, encouraging lower turnover, reduced absenteeism, and more productive and committed staff (Grose 2002; Bittman et al. 2004; Maher et al. 2004).

2.4 Women and place: no children past this point

The oppression of women has a specifically spatial element through the construction of cities along gendered lines, with the geographic separation of the home and the workforce, and the confinement of women to the domestic sphere (Winchester 1992;

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[6] Bianchi does a comparison of time spent with children for stay-at-home mums and working mums. She concludes that while stay-at-home mums spend more time in the presence of their children the time spent on active care by both types of mothers is very similar (Bianchi 2000).

2 Theoretical Background

McDowell 1993; Massey 1994c; Waitt et al. 2000a). The zoning of 'western' cities into urban and suburban areas is a result of industrialisation and the concomitant class separation of the 19th century, the urban zone for paid productive work, the suburban home for unpaid reproductive work (Monk 1992; Darke 1996; Waitt et al. 2000b). This has allowed the structural enforcement of heteropatriarchy[7] (Waitt et al. 2000b). Women's 'natural' place is construed as homemaker, with suburbia the feminine sphere and the site of women's confinement (Waitt et al. 2000b). Johnson (1993) demonstrates that gender is constructed into the suburban home allowing no private space for women, only spaces in which to work.[8] Monk (1992) and Darke (1996) discuss the limited horizons for women in suburbia. They point to the poor off-peak public transport, combined with a woman's multiple household duties as often preventing women from working and thus confining them to their gendered role (Monk 1992; Darke 1996). According to Massey (1994c), escape from the spatial confines of the home engendered the masculine fear that women may become less willing to perform their domestic roles. She argues this occurred particularly in cities, where barring women from the public sphere became increasingly difficult as metropolitan life diminishes patriarchal control (Massey 1994c).

In Sydney since the late 1960s the inner-city has undergone gentrification with the relocation of many young professionals (Waitt et al. 2000c). The move to the inner city and away from the suburbs decreases the separation of work and home (Massey 1994a).

> '[G]entrification stands in opposition to…the rigid separation between city and suburb…' (Bondi 1992, p.164).

It is a rejection of the notion of separate gendered spheres, allowing for greater diversity and less polarisation (Bondi 1992). Bondi (1992) views women, particularly those with well-paid careers, as 'agents of gentrification' moving to the inner-city to facilitate the combination of work and family (see also Waitt et al. 2000c). The high workforce participation of women living in the inner-city is demonstrated in Figures 4

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[7] A form of gender relations positioned within societal norms of heterosexuality where men are dominant over women (Waitt et al. 2000b).
[8] She examines a display home. It allows private space for the male with garage and study and two private bedrooms for children. The only spaces which are gendered female are the kitchen and laundry, the woman sharing all other collective spaces such as the main bedroom (Johnson 1993).

2 Theoretical Background

and 5.[9] Further, the inner-city can be seen to be more tolerant towards non-traditional households and conducive to developing alternate ideals of femininity (Bondi 1992; Waitt et al. 2000b).

Figure 4:
Proportion of Women in the Workforce in LGA

Legend:
Proportion Women Working

- 0.438958 - 0.478603
- 0.478604 - 0.566518
- 0.566519 - 0.613391
- 0.613392 - 0.664869
- 0.664870 - 0.715454
- innercity

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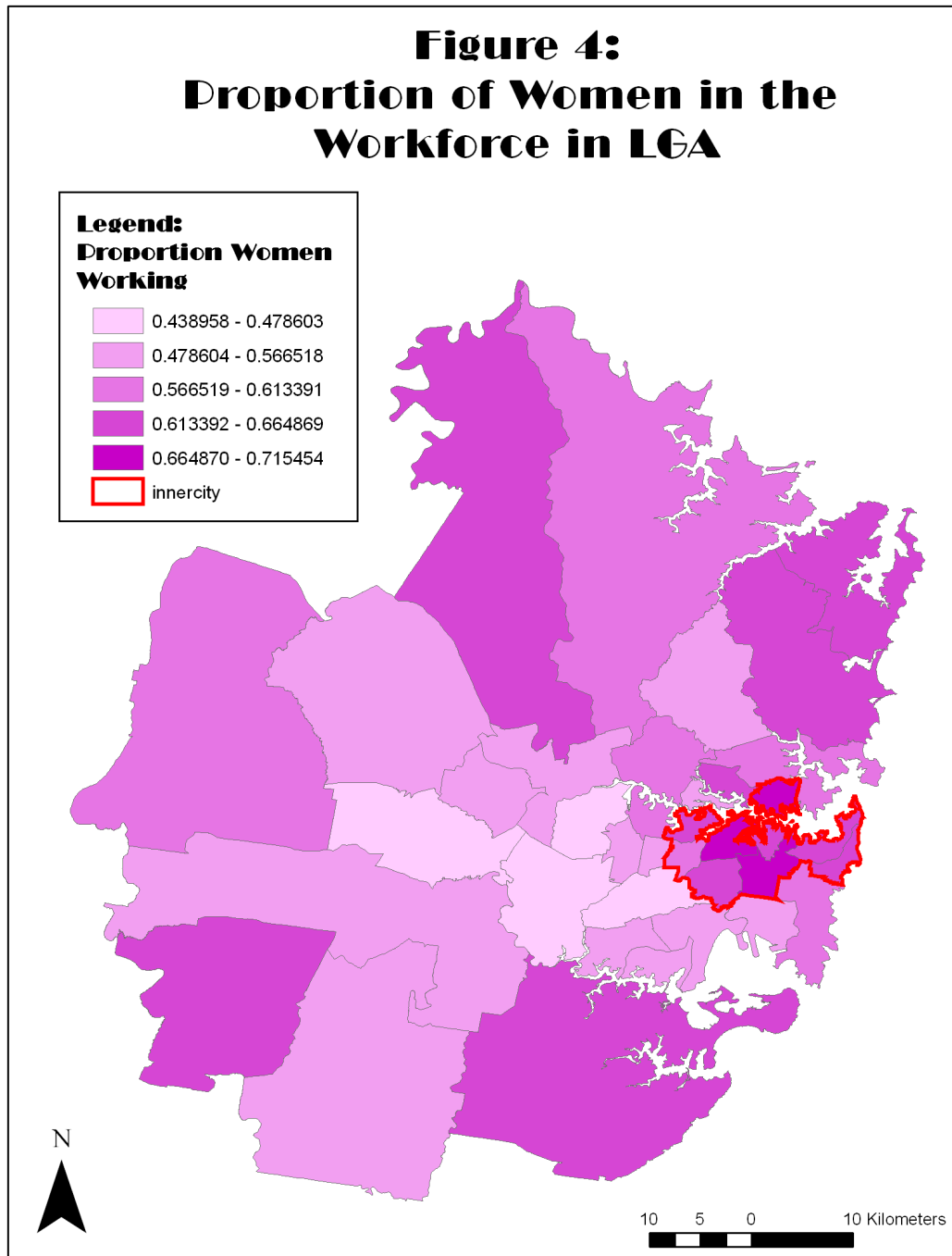
[9] Figure 4 demonstrates the high proportion of women living in the inner-city who are involved in the workforce. Figure 5 further indicates that a high proportion of these women have a full-time commitment to the workforce.

**Figure 5:
Proportion of Women
Working Full-Time in LGA**

Legend:
Proportion Women
Full-Time

- 0.454433 - 0.507619
- 0.507620 - 0.551395
- 0.551396 - 0.605277
- 0.605278 - 0.648580
- 0.648581 - 0.714650
- innercity

N

10   5   0   10 Kilometers
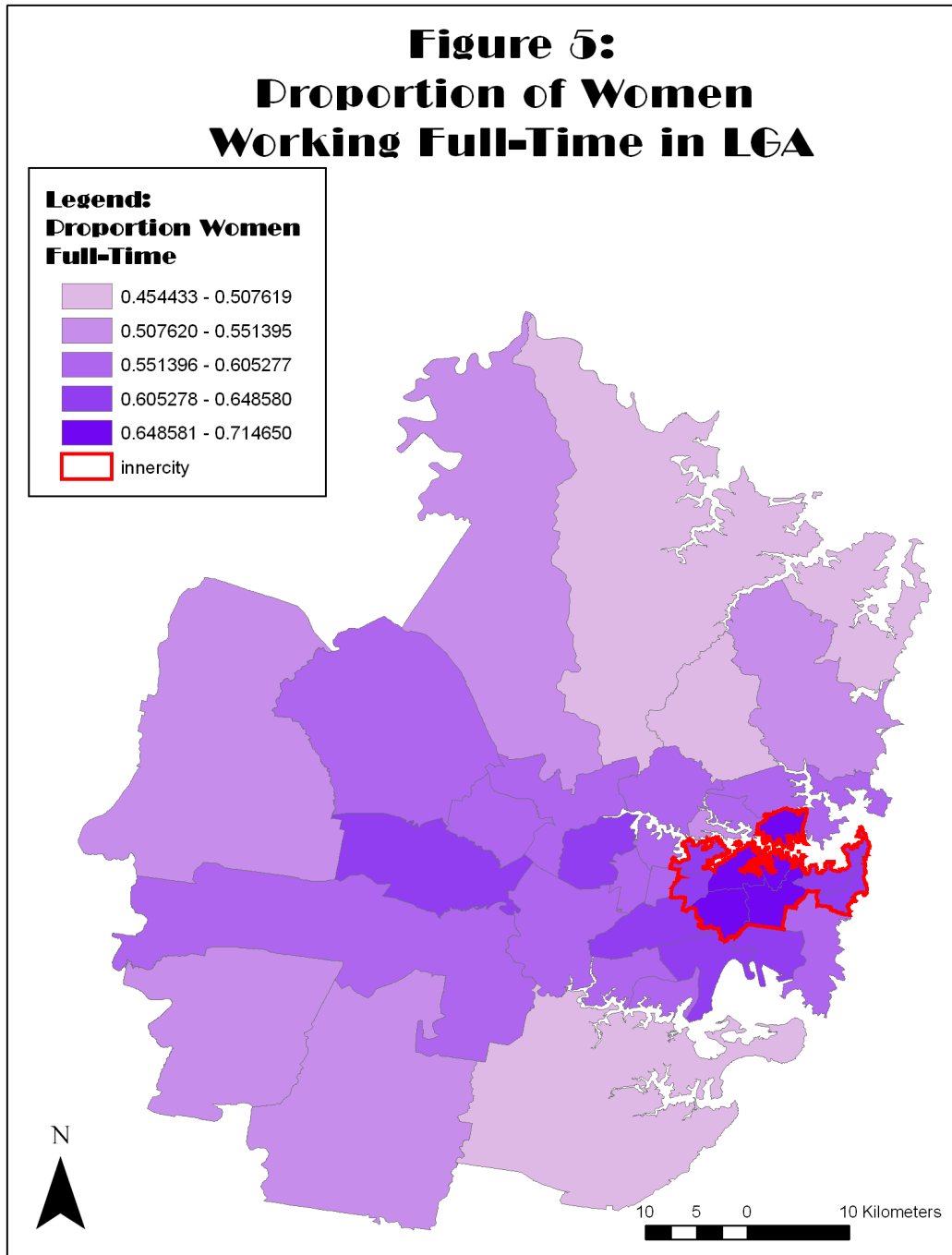
2 Theoretical Background

However, inclusion in the public sphere does not mitigate against patriarchal control. The public metropolis is men's 'natural' place and heteropatriarchal ideologies are

> '…inscribed on the urban landscape through the practices of male-dominated professions,' (Bondi 1992, p.162; see also Waitt et al. 2000b).

Winchester (1992) argues that the ideologies of capitalism and patriarchy are the major influences upon the consdtruction of Australian spaces, continuing female oppression. Gentrification has merely re-presented gender relations, it has failed to transform them (Bondi 1992). As city culture pertains to men, by 'emancipating' women to the city they are again being pushed into male moulds (Bondi 1992; Monk 1992; Massey 1994b). While the inner-city woman arguably has more equality, the equality is still male, and their inclusion in the traditionally male landscape of the city influences them to have less children (Bondi 1992; Barnes 2001). Figure 3 is stark evidence of this, showing the low proportion of children in inner-city areas, in contrast to much higher proportions of children in more suburban areas. Bounds (2001) finds that those who live in the inner-city have a far greater tendency to defer marriage than people from the outer-suburbs of Sydney, and the proportion of children in the inner-city is fairly low.[10]

Perhaps with deliberate provocation, but nevertheless echoing an element of truth, a recent *Sydney Morning Herald* series of articles portrayed the inner-city as a 'child-free zone'. Notions of the urbane and the culture of cafes, bars and restaurants that has developed in these areas leaves little space for children (Grose 2002). The profusion of medium- and high-density housing within inner-city suburbs is in complete opposition to the Australian family ideal of the quarter-acre block (Horin 2005). The ideas expressed by Sydney Morning Herald readers in 'Children can't play cricket in an apartment' show such somewhat archaic views are still pervasive (Sydney Morning Herald 2005). Promoting conceptions of the inner-city as a child-friendly place alongside increased development of facilities for children and families could go some way towards encouraging inner-city women to have children.

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[10] He looks at Pyrmont particularly finding only one in five households has one or more children (Bounds 2001).

Figure 3:
Proportion of Children in LGA

Legend:
Proportion Children
- 0.088781 - 0.094718
- 0.094719 - 0.154808
- 0.154809 - 0.190917
- 0.190918 - 0.226129
- 0.226130 - 0.265104
- innercity
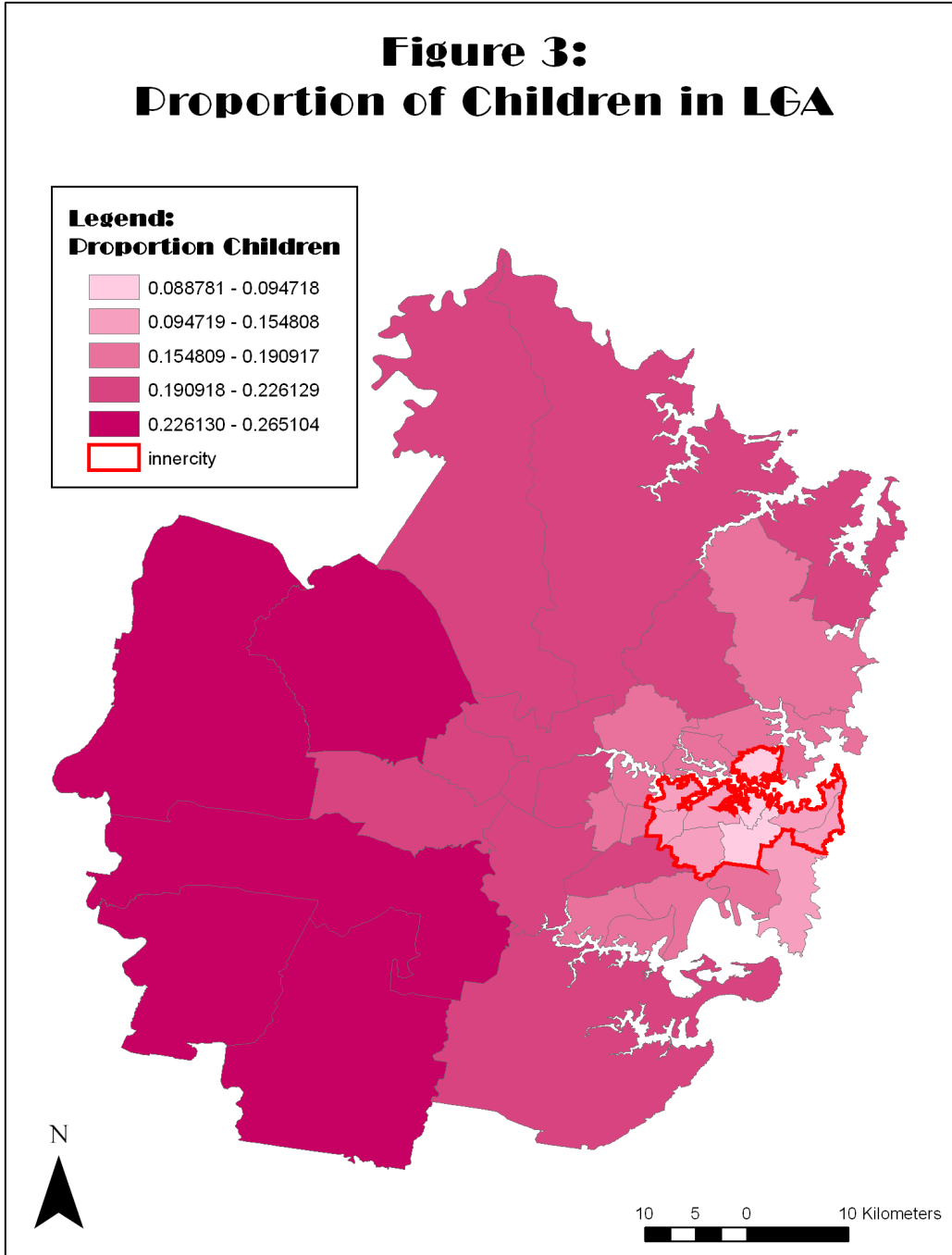
2.5 Conclusion: giving women options

In order to appropriately address declining fertility we must recognise that our underlying social structures remain patriarchal in nature. As McDonald puts it

> '[t]he liberal economic agenda…needs to find space for children' (McDonald 1998, p.12).

Policies must be adopted to promote attitudinal shift and address the promotion of increased gender equality (McDonald 1998). These need to target workforce structures, spatial organisation, and domestic relationships. Women need to be supported in their lifestyle and reproductive choices, whatever they are. As Cannold (2005) indicates 'enabling social policies' are required to provide women with both attitudinal and practical support to return them to a position of power over their child-bearing choices. Research aimed at how best to prevent declining fertility will be needed to inform policy (Barnes 2001). Most importantly, as Hakim points out:

> '…social engineering can be effective, but only if social policies start from a solid information base, rather than assumptions and stereotypes about what women want, or from ideologically-driven notions of the 'ideal' family.' (Hakim 2001, p.5)

This will only happen if research targets, and effectively determines, what women themselves want.

3 Policy Background: Women in policy

'To paraphrase Marx, women make their own reproductive choices, but they do not make them just as they please; they do not make them under conditions they create but under conditions and constraints they, as mere individuals, are powerless to change. That individuals do not determine the social framework in which they act does not nullify their choices, nor their moral capacity to make them. It only suggests that we have to focus less on 'choice' and more on how to transform the social conditions of choosing, working and reproducing.' (Petchesky 1990b, p.11)[11]

This phase of the thesis is a consideration of the corporate and public policies which impact upon professional women's childbearing decisions in both Australia and overseas. Addressing Australia's declining fertility rate has come to the forefront of policy-makers' agendas in recent years (O'Neill 2004). Over the past year the Federal Government's 'baby bonus'[12] and its apparent success have received a great deal of media attention. Policies to facilitate the combination of work and family have also received increased attention. They are seen to be a means of addressing the 'demographic time bomb' of ageing populations and declining fertility which could stunt economic growth (O'Neill 2004, p.2). The efficacy of these policies will be considered and possible further measures discussed. According to Manne (2001, p17), Australian government policies continue to work against combining work and family:

> '…glass ceilings, male resistance on the domestic front, few family friendly benefits for part time workers, and…by OECD standards, minimal parental leave, mean even if the male breadwinner model has not been 'reinstalled', nonetheless patriarchy remains imperfectly dismantled.'

If Manne is correct it is not merely policy change that will effectively address our declining fertility, but rather a complete structural overhaul of work and family relations.

This chapter seeks to build upon the themes discussed in Chapter Two, and their practical manifestations in government policy and the workplace. Three key areas of policy impacting women's childbearing choices are identified and discussed. Firstly, fiscal incentives will be considered, looking at family tax benefits, the baby bonus and

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[11] citing Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), p15.

[12] The non-means tested payment to a family by the Australian Government of $3000 for each child born set to rise up to $4000 in July 2006 and $5000 by July 2008 (Paine 2005)

issues of maternity and paternity leave. Secondly, structural incentives in terms of equal opportunity legislation, and childcare provision will be examined. Thirdly, private sector policies will be considered, looking at workplace initiatives to facilitate combining work and family. Finally, work-family policies of other OECD nations will be considered and recommendations for policy development made.

3.1 Fiscal Incentives?

3.1.1 Tax Benefits and Baby Bonuses – Smoke screens and Mirrors

In an effort to address our nation's declining fertility, the 2004 Budget introduced a $3000, non-means-tested, bonus to any woman giving birth (O'Neill 2004). In 2005, a slight rise in the country's fertility rate to 1.77 has been observed (Australian 2005b; Bell 2005). This has been hailed as a 'baby boom' in newspaper articles such as 'Mums deliver a baby boom' and 'Policies praised for birth boom' attributing the rise in births to the $3000 'Baby Bonus' (Markson 2005; Pirani 2005). So are women really closing their eyes, lying back, and thinking of Peter Costello? This attribution is rather simplistic, failing to account for other demographic factors that may have caused the population blip. More realistic views are expressed in 'Talk of baby-bonus boom simplifies significant shifts' which attributes the rise in fertility to a diverse combination of factors (Dunn 2005). 'Gen Xers give suburban life the push' suggests the boom is an echo of that of the early 1970s with a whole generation of 30-something women realising it's time to have children (Lucas 2005). Indeed, Munro (2005) believes that the baby bonus is an outright, vote-buying bribe, and a stingy one at that.

The other financial incentive the government has provided for is Family Tax Benefits A and B. Family Tax Benefit A is income-tested and only really of assistance to low-income families; once a family earns a combined income in excess of approximately $90,000 no benefit is accrued[13] (Centrelink 2005a). Family Tax Benefit B assists single income families and sole parents. This benefit does not test the income of the primary wage-earner but the secondary wage earner is allowed to earn very little

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[13] For the statistical group chosen in this study, it is assumed Family Tax Benefit A will not be of assistance.

before the benefit becomes negligible (Centrelink 2005b). This is an incentive, in effect, for the secondary wage-earner (usually the wife) to stay at home, rather than work, and propagates the traditional male breadwinner family model (McDonald 2001a; Toohey and Beer 2004; Goward et al. 2005). Goward et al. (2005) point out that this single-earner incentive exists in the absence of incentives for both parents to work part-time and engage in equal parenting. Further to this, based on horizontal equity, and recognising the importance of children in society, McDonald (2003) argues all parents be given tax benefits as they incur greater costs than those without children.

As far as many commentators are concerned, both these fiscal incentives inadequately account for women's participation in the workforce.

> 'How can the Federal Government purport to increase our population with a token baby bonus payment while it stubbornly refuses to implement sufficient maternity leave schemes and makes it increasingly difficult for mothers to stay at home and provide adequate care for their children?' (Shea 2005, p.10)

In order to enable women to participate in the workforce and still have children, government policies must address a wider spectrum of work and family issues, notably including both maternity and paternity leave.

3.1.2 Parental Leave – for women AND men!

Paid parental leave is a fiscal incentive the government is currently not providing. Parental leave is a necessity preceding and following the birth of a child. It gives parents time to adjust to their new roles, to alter their lifestyles to accommodate a child and to spend invaluable bonding time with their baby. Under the Schedule 14 of the *Workplace Relations Act* (Cth) 1996 parents' entitlement to take parental leave is established. An employee and their spouse are entitled to a total of 52 weeks unpaid parental leave to care for their newborn child.[14] Apart from one week beginning from the child's birth both spouses cannot be on leave at the same time.[15] Rather, they must take leave separately for the purpose of being the child's primary caregiver.[16] The Act

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[14] Schedule 14, s170KB(1)(1) *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth)
[15] Schedule 14, s170KB(1)(4) *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth)
[16] Schedule 1A, ss4(3)&18(1)(a) *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth)

stipulates that under most circumstances the parent has a right to return to the same job following their leave.[17]

There is currently no national legislative scheme for paid maternity and/or paternity leave. Rather, it is provided[18] for through industrial agreements or awards and individual employment contracts. This is rarely[19] provided for men, and not provided adequately for women.[20] For professional women wishing to have a child, contemplating 6 months to a year out of the workforce unpaid is a difficult financial equation, not made much easier by a baby bonus which would cover at most a month's salary. Further, the emphasis on maternity leave rather than parental leave retains gender inequality within the workplace and propagates the traditional breadwinner model where it is assumed to be the woman's responsibility to care for infants (Goward et al. 2005). This is in conflict with the spirit and intendment of the United Nations' *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW), which Australia has ratified and is thus bound by. CEDAW establishes in its preamble that:

> 'a change in the traditional role of men as well as the role of women in society and in the family is needed to achieve full equality between men and women.'[21]

Unless parental leave, particularly the paternal aspect of it, is emphasised by government policy, traditional conceptions of fatherhood and motherhood will remain firmly in place (Jenkins 2004). This reduces the prospects for women's equal opportunity in the workplace, and makes the choices between career and children more stark (Jenkins 2004; Cannold 2005). Moreover, it denies men time with their families, which they are increasingly seeking (Russell et al. 1999; Goward et al. 2005). Indeed, paid parental leave is one of the few policy measures which has been proved to help reverse declining fertility in Scandinavia, with generous paid parental leave resulting in greater gender equality in the workplace and at home, and hence, increased family formation (Wilkinson 1998; Jenkins 2004; Goward et al. 2005). A

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[17] Schedule 14, s170KB(1)(8) *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth)
[18] Or more often not provided
[19] if ever
[20] A 2000 ABS survey found 51 percent of full-time, and 21 percent of part-time female respondents were entitled to paid maternity leave (FaCS and DEWR 2002). While these figures are not insignificant, paid maternity leave is still not adequately and uniformly provided for.
[21] Preamble, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*

national scheme of paid maternity and paternity leave could achieve the dual goals of boosting Australia's fertility rate and encouraging couples to share the care of their children equally.

3.2.2 Structural Incentives?

3.2.1 Equal Opportunity – equating women and men, parents and individuals

'Not a revolution. Not this time. In 1962, 1977, and even 1985, the women's movement used radical rhetoric and legal action to drive out overt discrimination, but most of the barriers that persist today are insidious – a revolution couldn't find them to blast away. Rather, gender discrimination now is so deeply embedded in organisational life as to be virtually indiscernible' (Meyerson and Fletcher 2000, p.127).

It would seem that the days of women protesting for 'equal pay for equal work' are over. There are no longer such obvious constraints to gender equality; it would be discriminatory to overtly choose a male employee over a female or endow a different salary package based solely upon a person's gender. The *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth) establishes that employers must give 'equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value.'[22] The Act further prevents termination of employment on the basis[23] of sex, marital status, family responsibilities, pregnancy, and absence from work during maternity leave or other parental leave.[24]

In addition, the *Sex Discrimination Act* 1984 (Cth) makes discrimination against persons on the basis of sex, marital status, pregnancy or potential pregnancy unlawful in the workforce, and other areas of life.[25] The Act also outlaws discrimination or dismissal based upon family responsibilities,[26] but HREOC themselves recognise these provisions are 'relatively limited' (Goward et al. 2005, p.83). In fact, the Act is

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[22] s170BB(1) *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth)
[23] amongst others
[24] s170CK(2)(f)&(h) *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth)
[25] ss5, 6, 7, 14-18. & 21-27 *Sex Discrimination Act* 1984 (Cth)
[26] This can include 'constructive dismissal,' where an employee is forced to leave employment due to their employers actions (Goward et al. 2005).

particularly problematic in omitting to cover indirect discrimination, meaning persons can only make out discrimination on the basis of family responsibilities if they have been treated less favourably than someone with no family responsibilities[27] (Goward et al. 2005). Moreover, Goward et al. (2005, p.86) suggest that as men are unable to seek redress for discrimination based upon family responsibilities[28] which in fact discourages men from taking on greater family responsibility:

> '…this failure of the anti-discrimination framework effectively locks men into the breadwinner model.'

This prohibition on male redress for discrimination based upon family responsibilities is contrary to another object of the Act which is to promote community acceptance of the equality of the sexes.[29]

Indeed, the *Sex Discrimination Act* 1984 (Cth) is an attempt to give effect to certain provisions of CEDAW[30] (Goward et al. 2005). CEDAW requires governments to take measures, in all fields, particularly politically, socially, economically and culturally to ensure women's equality with men[31] and moreover, to eliminate discrimination against women in employment[32] (Goward et al. 2005). The Act also gives effect to some provisions of the International Labour Organisation's *Convention Concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women*[33] (ILO 156) (Goward et al. 2005). ILO 156 establishes in its preamble

> 'the need to create effective equality of opportunity and treatment as between men and women workers with family responsibilities and between such workers and other workers.'[34]

However, it seems these honourable motives are not translating into effective practical application.

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[27] There is no redress where workplace requirements appear to apply equally to all employees but indirectly disadvantage persons with family, for example where overtime is required which such persons cannot meet (Goward et al. 2005).

[28] Men cannot argue sex discrimination on the basis of family responsibilities due to their traditional role of breadwinner, not homemaker (Goward et al. 2005). This means family responsibilities are not associated with their sex and they thus have no redress for sex discrimination on that basis (Goward et al. 2005).

[29] s3(d) *Sex Discrimination Act* 1984 (Cth)

[30] which is included as a Schedule of the Act

[31] Article 3, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*

[32] Article 11, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*

[33] Another international convention ratified by Australia.

[34] Preamble, *Convention Concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women*

3 Policy Background

We also have legislation which actively seeks to promote gender equity and eliminate discrimination in the workforce in the form of the *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act* 1999 (Cth). It requires any workplace which employs 100 or more staff each year to develop and implement at least one program which facilitates women's employment and advancement in their organisation[35] (EOWWA 2001-2004a). Yet still, Australian women receive on average 84% of men's' full-time weekly earnings, doing the same work for a full-time week (EOWWA 2001-2004c). Clearly something's going awry when the very Agency enacted to supervise the effectiveness of equal opportunity measures, continues to publish statistics which would indicate their failure.

Perhaps it is as Meyerson and Fletcher (2000) suggest, equal opportunity measures which do not address the fundamental structuring of organisations around male work models, are bound to fail. Men have tried to make women 'fit' male roles to address gender inequality, they have eliminated structural barriers and created women-friendly paths, or they have placed women in jobs suited to their 'different' attributes (Meyerson and Fletcher 2000). While

> '…these approaches have helped advance women's equity in the corporate world,' they can help no further as '…they proffer solutions that deal with the *symptoms* of gender inequality rather than the sources of inequity itself' (Meyerson and Fletcher 2000, p.130).

The failure of such measures is that they do not address the fundamental basis of our society and workplace which is the traditional male breadwinner, female homemaker model. This leads to a chicken and egg scenario – women earn less because they take primary responsibility for childcare, so they continue to sacrifice their careers to care for children as their partner earns more, so women continue to experience pay inequity, and so forth (Cannold 2005; Goward et al. 2005). Further, even where women are committing to full-time paid work, they have less time to devote to it than men as it is still women who are doing the majority of domestic work (Jenkins 2004; Cannold 2005; Goward et al. 2005). The conspicuous lack of policies targeted at redressing the gender inequality in unpaid work must be noted (Goward et al. 2005). It is argued that this is a fundamental barrier to the equality of women as it fails to address their greater role in unpaid work which then impacts upon their ability to effectively participate in the workplace. Due to the workplace assumption that all

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[35] s6 *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act* 1999 (Cth)

employees are individuals with no demands on their time other than for employment, women lose out (McDowell 1999a; Mitchell 2004).

Such problems will not be combated by legislation which merely forbids overt gender discrimination. Indeed, Goward et al. (2005, p.68) have recognised that there are more subtle factors underlying life choices made by men and women which are not addressed by current legislation:

> 'Options such as both parents working part time while children are young, fathers working shorter hours or other more flexible arrangements may be appealing to some families but simply not encouraged by systemic or cultural supports.'

Rather, legislation combined with programs to fundamentally alter the structuring of our society will be necessary, in accordance with Art 6 of ILO 156:

> 'competent authorities and bodies in each country shall take appropriate measures to promote information and education which engender broader public understanding of the principle of equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers and of the problems of workers with family responsibilities, as well as a climate of opinion conducive to overcoming these problems.'

This needs to be achieved through measures which alter both our homes and our workplaces.

> 'What is imperative is the reconstruction of society in general, and the workplace in particular, to enable men and women to share the work of raising children equally.' (Cannold 2005, p.299)

3.2.2 Childcare: do they care or don't they? That is the question…

The use of childcare is a contentious issue. Women are divided on the question of whether they think it is good or bad for their child.[36] For some, however, it is merely a necessity. Castles (2002) sees affordable childcare as the most straightforward way of facilitating women's combination of work and family and moreover he correlates it to higher fertility rates (see also Cassells et al. 2005). The Monash study found that affordable child care was important for child bearing decisions and around 60 percent of the study's respondents favoured its use (Maher et al. 2004). Difficulty in access to affordable, high-quality childcare can inhibit mothers' workforce participation (Hofferth and Collins 2000; Cassells et al. 2005). Moreover, Hofferth and Collins

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[36] Academic opinion is also divided. Manne (2001) indicates the greater time spent in childcare, the more likely the child is to have behavioral problems. Whereas Cassells at al. (2005) point out the benefits of childcare for an infant's socialisation and mental and physical development.

(2000) point to such difficulties as continuing to enforce gender inequality in the workplace and the home (see also Leira 1992).

ILO 156 establishes the need for measures to be taken to develop and promote childcare.[37] Indeed, the Coalition Government has finally recognised that childcare is vital in enabling families to participate in the workforce or further their skills (Gunn 2004; The Howard Government - Election Policy 2004). To this end a childcare rebate has been introduced which gives families a 30% rebate for their out-of-pocket childcare expenses (The Liberal Party of Australia 2004). However, this incentive has two flaws. Firstly, the government is not recognising the problem with childcare is not only affordability but also availability, with demand often outstripping supply (Brennan 1998; Jackman 2005). Availability of childcare is identified by Hofferth and Collins (2000) as a problem which transcends socio-economic grouping and it thus needs to be targeted as a policy objective to assist all women. Secondly, childcare is plagued by funding issues. On the one hand parents want high quality care for their children, whilst on the other, the care needs to be at a reasonable price. Childcare workers are notoriously underpaid and a new Government rebate may be taken as an opportunity to raise fees and effectively absorb any benefit to families (Brennan 1998; Manne 2001; Gunn 2004; Cassells et al. 2005).

> 'The problem is that high quality care is expensive care. This means that Australia is, on regulations and ratios, locked into accepting lower than internationally recognised standards, unless we substantially raise government subsidies.' (Manne 2001, p.18)

When childcare becomes too expensive women[38] will simply be forced out of the workforce due to economic logic – where outlays in childcare make earnings negligible there becomes little financial incentive to work (Brennan 1998; Toohey and Beer 2004). Government assistance with more available, and more affordable childcare has been shown by Leira (1992) to assist in shifting traditional attitudes towards the need for mothers to stay at home whilst at the same time actively assisting both parents' workforce participation.

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[37] Article 5, *Convention Concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women*
[38] and a few men

3.3 Workplace Incentives?

3.3.1 Family-Friendliness – Why can't we be friends?

'Not long ago, Australia's Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Pru Goward, made a passionate plea for increased family-friendliness in the workplace, arguing that when women are forced to choose between 'a job and a dirty nappy/diaper', many today choose the job.' (Cannold 2005, p.90)

Many organisations in Australia are in the process of introducing 'family-friendly' working arrangements (Mitchell 2004). ILO 156 establishes that national policy should aim to allow workers to engage in employment without conflict with their family responsibilities.[39] The promotion of family-friendliness is enshrined in government policy as an object of the *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth)[40] (FaCS and DEWR 2002; AGOFW 2005). The Act however does not legislate to entrench family-friendliness at a national level by placing positive obligations upon employers. The scheme promoted by the legislation is one where agreement-making at an industrial and organisational level is the method of generating family-friendliness with another object of the Act ensuring employers and employees have primary responsibility for determining their relationship[41] (Earle 2002). This allows individual employers a great deal of autonomy in whether or not to implement family-friendly provisions and grants employees very little bargaining power. The proposed Industrial Relations (IR) reforms will arguably endow employers with further power and reduce the bargaining position of employees. Indeed, O'Neill (2004) observes enterprise bargaining has not led to significant growth in family-friendly provisions in agreements[42] with such agreements providing limited work-life balance measures to a small proportion of the workforce (see also Goward et al. 2005). He also perceives

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[39] Article 3, *Convention Concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women*
[40] s3(i) *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth)
[41] s3(b)&(c) *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth)
[42] In some cases, such as paid maternity leave, the proportion of agreements which provide for it has fallen (O'Neill 2004)

individual employment contracts to have increased rather than decreased ease of juggling work and family[43] (O'Neill 2004).

A major problem for employers is that family-friendliness is perceived to be costly and contrary to the economic rationalism upon which companies are based (Gray and Tudball 2002). If employers do not see such policies as beneficial to them, they will not institute them. According to McDonald (1998) family-friendly policies are being abandoned by employers as a cost-cutting measure (see also O'Neill 2004). He sees a reversion

> '…to the male-bread-winner model under which the employee is expected to put the workplace first, to be available out of hours and not to have children who get sick or have school holidays' (McDonald 1998, p.12).

This is supported by Bryson (2001) and Craig (2005) who argue further that individualistic models push women into male moulds and contribute to declining fertility. Contrary to this, Barnes (2001) argues that there is an increase in family-friendly provisions in workplace agreements, however, adds the qualifier that the agreements often only contain one clause, the most common being flexible hours. Indeed, bargaining on an individual level, and the cost of family-friendliness has promoted a 'flexible use of time' attitude rather than extensive workplace provisions and policies (O'Neill 2004, p.3). Moreover, even where family-friendly policies exist on paper, the culture and practice of an organisation may go against the effectiveness of such provisions (Bittman et al. 2004; Mitchell 2004; Goward et al. 2005). This, combined with perceptions that those using family-friendly provisions are not committed employees, and a lack of promotion opportunities for part-timers, de-rails the careers of parents seeking work-life balance (Bittman et al. 2004; Jenkins 2004; Cannold 2005). The lack of family-friendliness in Australian workplaces is adversely impacting parents' ability to combine work and family, and reinforcing the gendered structuring of society**.**

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[43] Evidence indicates Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs), a common form of individual employment agreements, are more likely to be used by employers to extend working hours rather than enhance family-friendliness (O'Neill 2004; Goward et al. 2005).

3.3.2 A friend to the company pocket?

In order to increase the implementation and acceptance of family-friendly provisions in the workplace, their cost-effectiveness needs to be demonstrated to employers (Gray and Tudball 2002). Superficially it might appear that family-friendliness increases employers' costs, but this might not always be the case. Employers who refuse to institute family-friendly policies could be doing themselves a disservice. Family-friendly workplaces may increase employees' autonomy, therefore making them more focussed and decreasing their stress levels (Earle 2002; Grose 2002). Further, they may make for more productive and committed employees and reduce turnover and the incidence of absenteeism (Gray and Tudball 2002; Bittman et al. 2004; Maher et al. 2004). The AMP Society calculated its investment in family-friendly policies to yield a 400 percent return through lower labour turnover and higher productivity (Earle 2002, p.13). Further, with anticipated skills shortages over the next 10 years, employers will need to institute policies that are beneficial to employees, rather than their bottom line, in order to keep business running (EOWWA 2001-2004b; Earle 2002). For business to prosper it will need diverse and talented employees; it's own policies will come under the microscope in recruitment, and if they do not provide work-family balance, the skilled employee may go elsewhere (Earle 2002). For graduates worldwide, a PriceWaterhouseCoopers study found in choice of employer, work-life balance was important for 45 percent of graduates while salary was important to only 22 percent (Earle 2002, p.13). Clearly, work-life balance policies are a great influence upon choice of employer and both employees *and* employers would ultimately benefit from their implementation.

3.3.3 Career friendly?

Despite their increased implementation and acceptance in the workforce, women[44] who choose to take advantage of family-friendly provisions tend to find the positive affect upon their lifestyle is countered by a negative impact upon their career (Jenkins 2004; Cannold 2005). A study by Mitchell (2004) found that women advocate waiting to have children until in a position of considerable experience and seniority, to

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[44] and men

mitigate against adverse impacts from taking time out and moving to more flexible working arrangements. A significant problem faced by working mothers[45] is part-time work. While this is favoured by many as a way of balancing work and family responsibilities, it often effectively forestalls or delays career advancement (Jenkins 2004; Cannold 2005). The right to return to work part-time after the birth of the child until its second birthday for men and women is entrenched in the *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth).[46] However, unfortunately the Act does little to alter perceptions about part-time work nor attribute similar benefits as full-time work attracts. According to Jenkins (2004), part-time workers are plagued by assumptions that prevent them from advancing their career. It is assumed that they would not be interested in increased workplace responsibility, and in some cases that they are unreliable (Jenkins 2004). Moreover, there are often few promotion opportunities for part-time workers (Bittman et al. 2004). This is clearly a problem that must be addressed if family-friendly policies are to be truly effective. Part-time employees need to be accorded the same rights as full-time employees, including opportunities for promotion and career advancement. This requires attitudinal shift amongst the workforce in relation to the acceptance of part-time workers. This could best be achieved through government encouragement of the implementation of family-friendly policies in the workforce with increased availability of part-time work and options such as job sharing.

These problems become further pronounced when men attempt to avail themselves of provisions to assist their participation in family life. Often fathers are perceived as not committed to their work if they want to make more time for their family (Hand and Lewis 2002; O'Neill 2004). There are more attitudinal barriers towards men utilising these policies. Often they may be in writing in workplace contracts but the company practice goes against men using them (Bittman et al. 2004). Patriarchal workplace inertia is preventing men from fulfilling desires to be an 'involved parent,' which research has shown to be increasingly important to Australian fathers (Russell et al. 1999; Hand and Lewis 2002; Goward et al. 2005). Where men are pursuing fatherhood it is found that they are experiencing career sacrifices similar to those experienced by working mothers (Cannold 2005; Goward et al. 2005). Family-friendly workplaces are really an issue for mothers *and* fathers and should be

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[45] and fathers
[46] Schduele 1A, s42, *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth).

recognised as such in order to develop a more gender equitable workplace and society, and thereby allow children the benefit of time with both their parents (Goward et al. 2005). Indeed, it is argued that work-life balance policies should be encouraged for all workers, not just parents, this will increase widespread acceptance and uptake of such policies (Cannold 2005).

3.3.4 Long Hours = continued male power

While some inroads are being made with respect to family-friendliness in the workplace the work hours are increasing.

> 'In other words, changes in full-time work have not simply lagged behind the trend towards a workforce with increased family responsibilities; they have diametrically opposed it' (Weston et al. 2002, p.19).

Heavy workloads and long working hours are becoming more common, greatly diminishing family friendliness[47] (Bittman et al. 2004).

> '...[C]orporate Australia is often indifferent to family concerns, demanding the second longest working hours in OECD countries.' (Manne 2001, p.17)

These long hours do not merely diminish work-life balance, they are yet another way in which women are denied equal opportunity in the workplace (Cannold 2005; Goward et al. 2005). This is because, in effect, long working hours are based on the traditional family model. The economic rationalist idea of working less people for more time relies on this model. It assumes every worker is able to devote infinite hours to the workplace because they have an unpaid 'wife' who attends to all extra-curricular responsibilities (Mitchell 2004; Cannold 2005). Apart from the blatant gender inequity problem that arises here, we also find a class issue. In order to raise children, and enjoy a reasonable standard of living in today's society it is generally recognised that, unless one of the privileged few, a dual-income is required (Barnes 2001; Cannold 2005; Goward et al. 2005). The long hours model of work is only manageable by wealthy families who can afford to have one partner at home full-time; domestic-load sharing, dual-income mums and dads cannot compete with the commitment these workers are able to give to the workplace (Cannold 2005).

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[47] The planned abolition of penalty rates in the IR reforms is argued to further encourage the culture of long hours (Dodson and O'Malley 2005).

Thus, two opposing problems become manifest in women's lives. On one hand, women are taking on these long work hours, giving them cause to choose career over children and contributing to the country's declining fertility (Cannold 2005). Conversely, successful women sometimes feel forced to abandon jobs in which they find fulfilment and economic independence when they become mothers due to long hours and general lack of family-friendliness in the workplace (Cannold 2005). They're damned if they do and damned if they don't. Making these women's lives more difficult is the long-houred work expected of men, who are thereby disenabled from participating in equal parenting (Goward et al. 2005). It is, of course, the women who are expected to pick up the slack.

> 'It has been estimated that up to two-thirds of Australian fathers work more than 41 hours per week, …' (Millward 2002, p.45).

Until working hours are wound back women[48] will continue to be disadvantaged in the workforce, and traditional patriarchal values will be perpetuated. Working hours need to be shortened for everyone in the acknowledgement that we all have responsibilities outside the workplace. By continuing to enforce long hours the workplace remains unequal giving unfair advantage to those members of society already so imbued with privilege – white, middle to upper class males.

3.4 European comparisons

3.4.1 Southern European Machismo: getting Women into the office, not the bedroom

If Australia wants an example of policies that *do not* promote fertility it need look no further than Italy and Spain both with a fertility rate of 1.28 (CIA 2005b; 2005c). McDonald (2001a) and Cannold (2005) have suggested that Australia is currently in pursuit of policies to promote ideals of the traditional family, through policies such as the Family Tax Benefit B which is solely for single-income families, encouraging stay-at-home-motherhood[49]. As evidenced in these Southern European countries, entrenched male-breadwinner policy models are influencing young women to abandon motherhood for the pursuit of success in a patriarchal workforce. This is

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[48] and again men who wish to be active parents
[49] and rarely fatherhood

exacerbated by a highly unequal split of domestic labour along gendered lines (Craig 2005). The Southern European experience confirms Cannold's (2005) observation that wherever there is a lack of policies to facilitate workers family responsibilities, women are inevitably forced to choose between work and family, and declining fertility rates show that work is winning.

3.4.2 The French do it better, *mais bien sur!*

In stark juxtaposition to the falling fertility of the misogynist Southern European countries, France has a birth rate of 1.85 (CIA 2005a). According to Dyer (2005), while below replacement levels, this rate is enough to assure continued population growth with minimal immigration. Indeed, France's fertility rate appears to be rising where others are falling (McDonald 2001b). This fertile anomaly can be attributed to four factors. Firstly, women in France experience ostensible equality inside and outside the home:

> '(T)he traditional male-dominated family is all but extinct – almost half of all French children are born out of wedlock' (Dyer 2005, p.13).

More progressive attitudes to family-formation allow women more opportunity outside the home with 80 percent of French women of childbearing age[50] in the workforce. Secondly, the French government supports women having children, and families in general. There is compulsory, government subsidised, paid maternity leave for up to 16 weeks, and two weeks of paid paternity leave (Heron 2002). After these periods either partner may take up to three years of unpaid parental leave and retain job security (Heron 2002). This combines with free early childhood education linked to government subsidised childcare and holiday camps from age three, and general cash benefits and child-related tax allowances that are not subject to income testing (McDonald 2001b; Heron 2002). Thirdly, the French government pursues actively neutral social policy, allowing plurality in women's life-choices[51] and thus encouraging all women to have children (Manne 2001). Finally, France supports its people as multi-faceted individuals through its entrenched 35-hour working week giving the French people time 'to really live' – time to care for children, time for

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[50] 24 to 49

[51] For example, for the first three years of a child's life women have the option of utilising government funded childcare if they wish to return to work, or taking a government maternity payment if they wish to care for their children at home (Manne 2001).

family members, time to form relationships, time to do enjoyable and meaningful activities like reading or travelling (Cannold 2005, p.299). Ultimately, what all this adds up to is that children are not avoided because

> '…French women do not feel they must choose between motherhood and a real life outside the house.' (Dyer 2005, p.13)

3.5 Conclusion: transform policy to practice

Sadly, the current policy environment appears to be forcing women to make that very decision. It is apparent that current policies are not acting against gender inequality, nor are they facilitating work-life balance. The government needs to pay more than lip-service to its obligations under international conventions such as CEDAW and ILO 156. The implementation of legislative instruments with noble statements regarding the promotion of gender equality and facilitation of work and family for men and women is not an adequate means of addressing these problems. Goals of gender equality and family-friendliness should be backed up with practical programs to achieve them. If there are no grassroots initiatives to promote culture change and alter the patriarchal structuring of society, such statements will continue to be nothing more than empty promises. According to O'Neill (2004, p.2) the government needs to make

> '…work/life balance policies a reality in workplaces rather than merely policy positions.'

Moreover, when legislation is promoting bargaining on an individual level, rather than providing broad schemes to achieve equality and family-friendliness in the workplace, the employer has too much power and progress towards these goals is stunted.

Both the *Workplace Relations Act* 1996 (Cth) and the *Sex Discrimination Act* 1984 (Cth) place negative obligations upon employers, if an employee finds their rights are infringed they have an avenue to seek redress. However, there is no positive obligation placed upon employers to institute initiatives to redress gender inequality or generate family-friendliness in the workplace. The *Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act* 1999 (Cth) does place a positive obligation on employers to institute family-friendly policies however it is argued that this is a piecemeal approach where employers can pick and chose what measures they wish to implement. Gray

and Tudball (2002) suggest that such an approach will not engender widespread acceptance of the usage and implementation of such policies (see also Goward et al. 2005). Indeed, it is argued that as a result of these downfalls the current legislative framework does not promote systemic change (Goward et al. 2005).

CEDAW recognises:

> 'that the role of women in procreation should not be a basis for discrimination but that the upbringing of children requires a sharing of responsibility between men and women and society as a whole.'[52]

This ideal needs to be followed and enshrined by government policy and practice. Policy needs to be implemented to promote gender equality in the home, and in the workplace. Moreover, policies need to be developed by the government to recognise the importance of children in society, and share the responsibility for upbringing children with parents. The fundamental aspects of such policies should be a scheme of paid parental leave and government-run, government-subsidised childcare. The provision of such structural initiatives can go a long way towards promoting equality in the home and the workplace (Leira 1992). These need to be combined with education campaigns to address the attitudinal and cultural problems in society and the workplace which are hampering progress to effective gender equality. Gender inequity cannot adequately be addressed with piecemeal fixes aimed at how women act and what work they do:

> 'It will be undone by a persistent campaign of incremental changes that discover and destroy the deeply embedded roots of discrimination.' (Meyerson and Fletcher 2000, p.131)

The ensuing chapter will detail the methodology chosen to address the deficit in the current policy framework. It will seek to address how women are experiencing their combination of work and family under current conditions. Further, women's views upon policy initiatives will be ascertained and their ideas for directions policy should take determined

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[52] Preamble, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women*

4 Methodology: Methodologies for women

'If you want to know how people understand their world and their life, why not talk with them? In an interview conversation, the researcher listens to what people themselves tell about their lived worlds, hears them express their views and opinions in their own words, learns about their views on their work situation and family life, their dreams and hopes. The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' points of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations.' (Kvale 1996, p.1)

The above passage sums up the goals which this research set out to achieve. If you want to know how women understand their world, and their life, why not talk to them? According to Dwyer and Limb (2001), the choice of methodology is inextricably related to the research question to be answered (see also Wragg 1978). When seeking to determine 'what women want', the most appropriate methodology would seem to be a qualitative in-depth interviewing technique. This choice of methodology is influenced by the aim of this research, and also by the importance of conducting research on women in accordance with feminist research methodologies.

The methodology of this project is integral to the production of the thesis, and to the final outcomes. With this in mind, this chapter sets out to elucidate the methodology undertaken to determine the impacts of feminism, increased workforce participation and inner-city living upon women's childbearing decisions. The methodology will be presented alongside a discussion of its significance, and reasons for its selection, both generally, and from the perspective of feminist research; its limitations; and its influence on the final outcomes.

4.1 Qualitative Research

The popularisation of qualitative research within human geography has resulted from a rejection of structuralism and positivism in the 1980s and their concomitant emphasis on quantitative analysis (Eyles and Smith 1988; Winchester 2005). This has been combined with the decreased influence of mainstream economics within human geography, and an increased influence of sociology and anthropology, serving to

consolidate the validity of qualitative methodologies (Smith, D.M. 1988). The type of qualitative methodology utilised in this research derives from the links to these other social sciences, using ethnography and grounded research to understand the experiences of women in their social and spatial setting (Dwyer and Limb 2001; Winchester 2005).

The epistemological starting point about the nature of social reality for qualitative research is that no 'real' world exists independent of the researcher/subject relationship – there can be no true objectivity (Dwyer and Limb 2001; Smith 2001). For its proponents, qualitative research acknowledges this, and thus can better and more accurately understand social reality (Dwyer and Limb 2001). From this starting point, the qualitative researcher can go on to clarify and interpret meanings so as to build 'grounded theory', rather than test pre-existing theories (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Dwyer and Limb 2001).

The choice of a qualitative methodology is, to a large extent, shaped by the aim of the research. In this case, it is to determine what is, in reality, impacting upon women's work and child rearing decisions, and what women perceive would make combining work and family easier. It makes sense to employ a qualitative methodology and talk to the women themselves about these matters. However, I must also recognise that my understanding of social reality, and my philosophical position regarding the production of knowledge influenced my choice of qualitative methodology (Dwyer and Limb 2001). Smith D.M.'s (1988) view that there can be no true objectivity in social reality is supported in this research. Knowledge is situated and partial (Dwyer and Limb 2001). Moreover, choice of methodology is influenced by political choice, and the researcher's attitude towards her research subjects:

> '…qualitative methods…stem from a particular if rather broadly cast belief (or ontological position): that the world is not real in a fixed, stable or predictable way; that it is not entirely accessible; and that it does not appear empirically the same to everyone,' (Smith 2001, p.24-25)

This is the ontological position taken as a starting point for this study, that women will experience the competition between work and family differently from policy makers, and indeed, differently from one another. Each woman's experience is unique, and should be given validity through an approach which takes account of differing perspectives. The choice of methodology also recognises the importance of

'lay' perspectives, the relevance of women's own perspective on the practicalities of their lives (Smith 2001). It is a methodology to challenge the structuring of society and the idea of women as a 'tidy policy-relevant unit' (Smith 2001, p.25). The use of a qualitative methodology enables engagement with the complexity of everyday life and allows it to be accounted for in the research outcomes (Dwyer and Limb 2001; Winchester 2005).

4.1.1 Feminist Research Methodologies

The choice of a qualitative research methodology is closely tied to the importance, when researching women, of utilising emancipatory feminist research methodologies to empower women:

> 'Very simply, to do feminist research is to put the social construction of gender at the centre of one's inquiry. … The overt ideological goal of feminist research in the human sciences is to correct both the *invisibility* and *distortion* of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position.' (Lather 1991, p.71)

With the historical perpetuation of women's oppression, it is important to tread carefully when researching women (Minichiello et al. 1995; Manne 2001). Feminism imports 'distinctive methodological and epistemological implications' (Hammersley 1995, p.45; see also Jenkins 2004). Manne (2001) discusses the importance of finding out what women's preferences really are, rather than overriding their voices and deciding for them. As McDowell (1992, 1993) suggests, women have been traditionally excluded from research, due to their exclusion from the public arena (see also Waitt et al. 2000a). Early feminist geography was concerned with making women's lives and activities visible (Bondi 1992). To this end, McDowell (1992) examines appropriate methods of conducting feminist research, indicating conventional research methods often produce inadequate information. Feminist research methodologies generally predicate a qualitative approach through their validation of personal experience in opposition to structured statistical analysis (Minichiello et al. 1995; Jenkins 2004). The ideal of a non-political, objective interview methodology is debunked as impossible (McDowell 1992). Rather, account should be taken of the positionality of the researcher and her research subject (McDowell 1992; Yeandle 1996). Indeed, in a situation such as this, with a woman interviewing women, small-scale, in-depth collaborative interviewing techniques are seen to be most effective and appropriate (McDowell 1992; 1999b). A distinctive

'feminist standpoint epistemology' is developed based upon women's differing viewpoint, derived from their role in reproduction and childbearing (Hartsock 1983; McDowell 1992). Hammersley (1995) extrapolated this to prompt the conclusion that:

> 'only a researcher of the same identity can fully understand a woman' (Jenkins 2004, p.89).

McDowell (1999) indicates that feminist scholars generally agree that collaborative methods are integral to a feminist research strategy. Commonalities of experience should be recognised in a mutual exchange, where the development of interconnections and friendship between the interviewer and her subjects should be promoted (McDowell 1992; Minichiello et al. 1995; Yeandle 1996; McDowell 1999b). Such methods are seen to encourage a more egalitarian relationship between researcher and subjects, and draw:

> '…on women's…abilities to listen, to empathize, and to validate personal experiences as part of the research process' (McDowell 1992, p.406; Yeandle 1996).

Oakely (1981) supports this, pointing to the traditional research interview as a masculine mode of research. According to Peet (1998; p.271), issues affecting women are

> '…best examined by attending to women's everyday lives.'

This is supported by Kvale (1996), further predicating the oppression of women as a basic assumption of such research and the political commitment this involves. Through utilisation of these feminist research techniques, 'what women really want' can be best determined. This research design has been developed with this in mind, seeking to produce knowledge to better the lives of women through talking to them about their actual lived experiences (Jenkins 2004):

> 'To see what is there, not what we've been taught is there, not even what we might wish to be there, but what is.' (Du Bois 1983, p.108)

4.1.2 Why intensive, case-study-style qualitative research? (Interviews for *Inter Views*)

In accordance with feminist theories surrounding research, the most appropriate methodology is intensive, case-study-style qualitative research. The in-depth interview generates proximity to the everyday life and social reality of research subjects and facilitates the understanding of it (Minichiello et al. 1995; Kvale 1996).

4 Methodology

In-depth interviews induce a more empathetic, egalitarian relationship between researcher and informant, in contrast to the power imbalance of survey methods (Minichiello et al. 1995; Dwyer and Limb 2001). Moreover, this methodology is about theory-building, rather than hypothesis testing, it seeks and values the account of the informant, rather than merely being an attempt to validate the researcher's view (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Minichiello et al. 1995; Winchester 2005).

Minichiello et al. (1995) highlight the importance of ontological position, if meaningful interaction between persons is the basis for social reality, it can only be understood through the sharing of views and interpretations. In-depth interviews allow for such a two-way interaction (Herod 1993; Minichiello et al. 1995):

> 'An interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest' (Kvale 1996, p.14).

This thesis seeks to elucidate the subtleties underlying decision-making. In-depth interviews make these clear, whereas larger, statistical approaches often obscure them (Herod 1993; Jenkins 2004). Indeed, according to Kvale (1996), focussing on single cases enables greater investigation and understanding of relationships between individuals and situations:

> 'In relation to research on women's negotiation between home and work, intensive methodologies allow for the unpacking of experiences, interdependencies and the process of decision making of women in an informal setting' (Jenkins 2004, p.84).

4.1.3 Why not quantitative research? Can women count?

Minichiello et al. (1995) contrast qualitative research, as a way of capturing 'people's meanings, definitions and descriptions of events,' with quantitative research, as counting and measuring. For the purposes of this thesis, it is indeed the former which is sought to be achieved. The process of counting and measuring has been repeated *ad infinitum* through published reports on fertility rates, workplace involvement statistics, demographics, and so on. As discussed earlier, the assumptions and stereotypes derived from this form of analysis have failed to consider what women themselves want (Hakim 2001). With a primary aim of this thesis being to capture how women define themselves in relation to working and mothering, and how they describe their related experiences in the workplace and society, it would seem appropriate to use an extensive qualitative research methodology.

4 Methodology

Quantitative researchers see their role as interpreting and ordering the blurry understanding an informant has of her/his social world to determine what is really occurring (Minichiello et al. 1995). This is inappropriate for this research, which is about asking women themselves their view, and giving respect and primacy to that. At the same time, qualitative methods are often criticised as being unable to produce generalisations (Kvale 1996). They have too small a sample size for statistical validity (Dwyer and Limb 2001). But this obscures the differing purpose of qualitative research:

> 'A major distinguishing characteristic between qualitative and quantitative approaches is the way in which the research phenomenon is identified for inquiry. …qualitative researchers challenged the assumption that human beings can be studied by a social scientist in the same way as a natural scientist would study things, they argue that human behaviour is different in kind from the actions of inanimate objects. … The focus of qualitative research is not to reveal causal relationships, but rather to discover the nature of phenomena as humanly experienced.' (Minichiello et al. 1995, pp.10-11)

Qualitative methods are also criticised for their lack of objectivity (McLafferty 1995; Winchester 2005). However, McLafferty (1995) recognises that true objectivity is unattainable, and while qualitative methods recognise their subjectivity, and account for it, quantitative methods hide it under a guise of objective, scientific validity. In feminist methodology, quantitative research has often been seen as too black and white; intensifying female oppression through the use of binary oppositions like male/female (McLafferty 1995).

4.2 My Interview Design

A research design was developed using in-depth, semi-stuctured, qualitative interviews to interview professional women both with and without children, predominantly living in Sydney's inner-city. The initial research aim was to interview 30-40 women between 25 and 45. The final outcome was interviews with 40 women aged 27 to 58. This resulted in at least 140,000 words of transcripts from around 40 hours of interviews. In compliance with an approach approved by the University of Sydney Human Ethics Research Committee, two professional and business women's

organisations were used to identify interview participants: the Business and Professional Women's Sydney Club (BPW) and the Zonta Club of Sydney (Zonta). Arrangements were made with the club secretary of BPW and the club president of Zonta to forward information about the study to their fellow club members via their electronic mailing lists. Indirect snowballing technique was then utilised to contact further interview subjects by asking each woman interviewed to pass details of the study onto colleagues and friends. Initial contact was made with interested parties via email, then telephone contact was made to arrange a suitable time and place for the interview. The researcher attempted to be flexible with these arrangements, in the awareness that these women would have fairly busy schedules. The interviews were usually conducted in a café, or in the women's offices or homes, they lasted between half an hour and an hour and a half, and were recorded using a digital recorder.

Interview questions were constructed based upon themes discerned from a review of the literature and an analysis of similar research studies, particularly Monash University's project 'What Women (and Men) Want: Births, Policies and Choices' and Jenkins' thesis 'Gender, Place and the Labour Market' (Jenkins 2004; Maher et al. 2004). From these, a set of sample questions was developed. These questions were designed to cover the main themes identified through the literature and policy reviews, with the goal of producing responses under six categories: (i) Women and patriarchy; (ii) Women and feminisms; (iii) Women and children; (iv) Women and work; (v) Women and place; and (vi) Women and policy. The questions were used merely as a guide, around which to structure the interview, and assist in keeping to the subject. The interviews were run in a semi-structured manner, and were very much conversational. The differing experiences and views brought up by the women interviewed guided the topics discussed. Particular issues were covered in more depth if they appeared important to the respondent, and other issues skimmed-over if they were not pertinent. Questions were worded appropriately, with an awareness of each woman's situation so as not to offend or upset. The researcher sought a balance between spontaneity, to illicit lively unexpected responses, and structure, for ease of analysis (Kvale 1996).[53]

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[53] The research methodology utilised here can be paralleled to a very similar study looking at the influence of place on women's workforce participation, and family management in the United Kingdom conducted by Sarah Jenkins. She conducted interviews with 38 women from two regions of

For relevance, a sample size of 40 women seemed appropriate, however:

> 'In qualitative interview studies, the number of subjects tends to be either too small or too large' (Kvale 1996, p.102).

If the purpose of a study is to explore and describe in detail attitudes towards a particular issue one can reach:

> '…a point of saturation, where further interviews yield little new knowledge' (Kvale 1996, p.102; see also Baxter and Eyles 1997).

The problem Kvale discusses was experienced in this study. While all women had differing experiences and points of view, once about 20 interviews had been conducted a great deal of repetition in responses arose. Whilst this might indicate 'too many' women were interviewed, it is argued rather that the validity of women's responses is augmented, demonstrating many women are experiencing similar problems and highlighting the pervasiveness of particular experiences and opinions. The larger sample size allows analysis to focus on the diversity of views and upon finding commonality within their experiences.

4.3 Conducting the Interviews

Interviews often commenced with an informal 'get-to-know-you' chat between the researcher and the informant. This served to establish rapport and make the subject feel at ease and inclined to be open. Once a rapport had been established I would give a general explanation of how I liked the interviews to run, and what was hoped to be gained from them. The women were informed the interviews were intended to be an informal conversation, with the questions merely serving as a guide to that conversation, and that depending on their responses, the discussion would be led in different areas. The women were assured of the ethical requirements of the study, notably its confidential nature, and provided with appropriate documentation that set out the rights of both the interviewer and interviewee. They were told that the general purpose of the interviews was to determine themes in what women are thinking about these matters, and if they were to be quoted it would be in a de-identified manner. Interviewees were given the option of approving the audio recording of the

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Britain, to determine their workforce participation and child-rearing decisions, and the factors that influenced these decisions. She used semi-structured interviews based around an informal discussion format, with the researcher setting out the broad parameters for discussion (Jenkins 2004).

interviews. They were assured that this was merely for personal use, and all audio and related files would be stored in a confidential manner. I would show them the recording device in an attempt to put them at ease with its usage. They were often quite interested in the technology and asked questions about it which were happily answered. I allowed them to ask any further questions they wished regarding the study, and upon agreement, they signed a consent form to that effect. A pre-interview briefing, rapport-building practice such as this is advocated by Kvale (1996).

As with Jenkins' study:

> 'Although there were some key questions and themes I wanted to discuss with each individual, often the conversation just flowed, following the life story of the woman' (Jenkins 2004, p.90).

It was important that an atmosphere was established to put the informants at ease and enable them talk freely about their experiences and feelings (Kvale 1996). The interviews were conducted in familiar places of the subject's choosing – their offices at work, a favourite café, a park or their own homes – as this was designed to make them feel at ease and remove any pressures or hassles from the interview participation. As suggested by Kvale (1996), I listened actively and showed interest and understanding towards the subject's story, whist being clear about what I wanted to find out. Some women were easier to establish a rapport with than others, which affected the success of the interview to an extent. But, generally, the women were fairly at ease, frank and open, and useful information was gleaned from all interviews. Of course,

> '[t]he outcome of an interview depends on the knowledge, sensitivity, and empathy of the interviewer' (Kvale 1996, p.105).

Being acutely aware of this, efforts were constantly made to be well-prepared, as well as sensitive and empathetic towards the informant, whilst remaining natural. I was most aware of respecting and maintaining the dignity of research subjects when interviewing circumstantially childless women. This can be a very difficult fact to come to terms with, and, out of respect to the women, I tried to be as empathetic as possible, yet without being condescending. At the same time, of course, I sought also to discuss the matter in as much detail as the situation allowed, due to its importance to my research.

Being slightly younger and at a different stage in my life to the respondents was another matter that was necessary to take into consideration. In some ways this can be seen to be an advantage as, having not yet navigated the landmine field of career and child bearing decisions, I have not formed decisive opinions on how best I think these matters should be managed. This has granted me a degree of open mindedness and impartiality that may not be present had I already carved my chosen path. Conversely, it meant I did not have personal experience with many of the issues discussed in the interviews, and hence, I had to make a special effort to empathise with their situations and understand their decisions. Of course, being a female in my mid-twenties who is about to go into the workforce, and thinks and talks about these issues fairly frequently, being able to empathise with the women interviewed was not too difficult.

As Kvale (1996, p.128) suggests:

> '…a common experience after research interviews is that the subjects have experienced the interview as genuinely enriching, have enjoyed talking freely with an attentive listener, and have sometimes obtained new insights into important themes of their life world.'

I found this to be the case in the majority of interviews, with women having enjoyed participating and sharing their views, and being genuinely interested in the outcomes of my research and hopeful that it may engender some positive impacts. Indeed, a very kind response was received from one participant following her interview:

> 'It was…a pleasure to meet someone with such thoughtfulness and obvious interest in the subject matter. I thought you listened to and considered my responses to your questions very carefully.'[54]

4.4 Ethics

In conducting research it is important to recognise the ethical obligations a researcher has towards their research subjects (Dwyer and Limb 2001). Through the University's research ethics requirements, these were canvassed thoroughly, with the requirement that all research methodologies ensured they met approved standards. These standards were adhered to at all times. But more than this a researcher makes:

> '…an ethical commitment, not only in the larger sense of making the world a better place but in the more immediate sense of understanding and taking responsibility for how one sets in motion the complex emotions that flow back and forth in the course of a research encounter, sometimes reaching beyond that moment to affect people's

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[54] Email from respondent 27.7.05

lives in more permanent ways, over which we may have no control.' (Kobayashi 2001, p.60)

This was something the researcher made an effort to carry with her throughout the task.

4.5 Methodological Limitations

With qualitative in-depth interviewing methodologies two common problems arise. The first is often people's accounts of what they do differ from their actual practices (Gillham 2000; Jenkins 2004). Through the relaxed and extensive discussion process conducted for this research, it is believed women came to grips with the issues and truly articulated how they do and feel. Further, as expressed similarly by Jenkins (2004), the interview process was not about a justification of actions; there was no right or wrong answer, the respondent remained non-judgmental at all times and open to whatever the women themselves cited as important. Secondly, as mentioned above, the results of the study are dependant on the skill of the researcher (Kvale 1996; Baxter and Eyles 1997). To circumvent this problem I ensured I was always well prepared for the interviews, having a good handle on the questions to be asked and mentally preparing myself to be friendly and open with the women.

Problems specific to this methodology are in relation to the sensitive nature of the subject matter, and making women feel at ease to discuss it in a full and frank manner. Firstly, as interviews were often conducted in cafes or similar public spaces, this issue of having an 'audience' meant women may not have been as frank as they could have (Wragg 1978). Despite the presence of other parties, the women tended to feel at ease. To preclude this issue further, I was careful to be discrete and spoke reasonably softly. Secondly, the place of conducting an interview constructs the power and positionality of the research encounter (Wragg 1978; Elwood and Martin 2000). For this reason, the comfort of the respondent was of paramount importance in selecting a site to conduct the interview, so the choice was left to them in the most part. Finally, the use of a recording device can lead to discomfort and power issues in interviews (McLafferty 1995; Minichiello et al. 1995). However, once the use of the recorder was discussed, the women seemed fairly at ease. It is noted that issues of power and intimidation in conduct of the interviews were obviated to an extent by the very equal

status with which I met the women, they were not disadvantaged, marginalised members of society, so were fairly comfortable with, and adaptable to anything that came up (Dowling 2005).

4.6 Subjective role of researcher

The philosophical position of this research was discussed earlier in this chapter. This

> '…recognition of knowledge as partial, situated and socially constructed and contested shapes all stages of the research process' (Dwyer and Limb 2001, p.8).

In order for this research to be valid I must recognise my positionality within in it; both whilst conducting the research and whilst analysing it (Butler 2001). Furthermore, as the 'author' of the research my personal characteristics are inscribed upon the interviews (Baxter and Eyles 1997). My position in relation to my interviewees, and the power relations therein must be made clear so that it can be appropriately accommodated within the research (McDowell 1999b; Butler 2001). This is particularly important when feminist, emancipatory research methodologies are undertaken (Butler 2001):

> 'Even when all interview participants are of the same sex, gender relations not only still shape the social interactions between researcher and interviewee, but they also underpin the very context within which the interview itself takes place.' (Herod 1993, p.306)

In fact, Haraway (1991, p.190) has developed the idea of 'feminist versions of objectivity' whereby acknowledgement of positionality and situated knowledges is explicit, and through this objectivity is achieved (McDowell 1992; Mattingly and Falconer-Al-Hindi 1995).

Whilst making every effort to be impartial, it is important to recognise the potential for my own personal bias, allowing for this in the way interviews were conducted and in my interpretation of the results. Through recognition of this positionality, research outcomes gain increased validity and credibility. Indeed both Dwyer and Limb (2001) and Butler (2001) attest that engaging with the contradictions and complexities of subjectivity and positionality is a strength of qualitative research, enabling a more complete picture of society. Public perceptions are often most authentically represented through qualitative methods, however their validity rests on a self-conscious understanding of the impacts of the analyst's *self* upon the choice of

problem, the methodology, and the conduct and analysis of the research (Smith, S.J. 1988).

In general the researcher/researched relationship in this research was a 'reciprocal' one where both parties are in comparable social positions and, through similarities with the informants, the researcher would be classed as an 'insider' (Dowling 2005). However, during some interviews I was acutely aware of my position of power in relation to my research subjects, mainly based upon education and socio-economic status. I found in such circumstances I adapted my persona and interview style to accommodate the situation. Conversely, I found I had much more in common with other research subjects, and this impacted upon the progress of the interview, often leading to a far more relaxed, jovial atmosphere. In accordance with McDowell's (1992) view that the positionality of the researcher and interview subject should be taken into account, I recognised my differing interactions with my respondents, and have sought to take these into account in the analysis of interviews in the following chapter. As Baxter and Eyles (1997, p.508) suggest:

> '[t]he implications should be stated, since similarities between interviewers and interviewees may, for example, foster or stifle interview conversations.'

4.7 Chapter Summary: for women, by a woman

The research methodology has been integral to the conduct of this study. It is derived directly from the research question to be answered. In order to appropriately address women's declining fertility it is important to determine what they themselves want. That is what this research design has set out to do. The research design recognises the importance of utilising a feminist methodology when studying women. An in-depth, qualitative interviewing technique is critical to determination of women's feelings and desires in such personal matters. This chapter reflects on the research methodology adopted, looking at both its benefits and its limitations. It recognises the positionality of the researcher as 'author' of the research and the impacts of this subjective role upon the final outcomes. The subsequent chapter will go on to describe and discuss the findings obtained from the implementation of the research methodology.

5   **Findings and Discussion: Finding Women**

'One of the most important ways in which qualitative research is often seen as offering space for the voices of respondents is in the use of direct quotes from participants. Through the use of direct quotes from interview transcripts in written reports, the voices of those interviewed, it is argued, can be heard.' (Butler 2001, p.267)

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the research conducted. It looks at themes as discerned in Chapters Two and Three, and how they have manifested in the outcomes of the research. A primary aspect of this chapter seeks to fulfil an aim of the thesis, as discussed in Chapter One, which is to allow women's voices to be heard. In line with this, and Butler's (2001) quote above, the responses of women interviewed will be quoted extensively throughout the discussion. This chapter is about discerning, presenting and interpreting the voices of the 40 respondents who are the authors of this thesis as much as the researcher herself. With consideration given both to the differeing opinions, and the commonalities of viewpoint as articulated by the respondents. This chapter will first consider briefly shortcomings of the research analysis before moving to an in-depth consideration of the themes manifested in the research. The respondents' experiences within patriarchal society and the impacts of feminism upon their lives will be considered. Their feelings and experiences about children, work and place will be examined. Finally, their views on the current policy environment and ideas of how government could better assist them to attain equality in the urban sphere and allow them to more easily combine work and family will be discussed.

5.1 Analysing Women

In the research for this thesis 40 women in total, aged between 27 and 58 were interviewed. All women interviewed were working in some capacity. Sixteen women with children, two pregnant women, and 22 women without children were interviewed. In terms of relationship status, 21 respondents were married, two were engaged, eight were in de facto relationships, three were divorced, and six were single. The majority of women interviewed lived in the inner-city, 15 from the inner-

west, eight from the eastern suburbs, and four from the lower north shore. Thirteen women from more suburban areas were interviewed to determine differing perceptions between inner-city and suburban living. The geographical distribution of respondents can be seen in Figure 2.

Two issues became apparent during the analysis of the results from the interviews. Firstly, due to the methodology chosen, not all respondents addressed exactly the same issues. In the ensuing discussion of the findings, numbers of women expressing a certain idea are used to give evidence of a body of approval for a particular theme but cannot be taken to be statistically relevant. Moreover, the incentives and disincentives in reproductive decision making for the women interviewed will be discussed. It is important to note that such opinions are not static and throughout the course of each interview a variety of changing views were expressed related to different points in the subject's life and different situations. What will be discussed are the influencing factors both past, present and future in women's childbearing decisions. This demonstrates the complex web of interdependencies involved in such processes, and regardless of whether women have decided to have children or not they have articulated a series of pros and cons for each choice. Secondly, in analysing the results the researcher experienced a phenomenon afflicting qualitative researchers known as 'drowning in voices' (Butler 2001). After conducting, listening back to, transcribing, and analysing the 40 interviews conducted, the researcher became consumed with the idea that every word uttered by every respondent was of utmost importance. In effect I was drowning in their voices. But, in accordance with Bulter's (2001) quote at the beginning of this chapter, allowing individual voices to be heard is a strength of qualitative research and moreover allowing women's voices to be heard is a fundamental aim of this thesis. In order to allow these voices to be heard without obscuring the larger picture I have chosen an approach which utilises some more quantitative numerical data, uses qualitative data to build themes, and finally uses case studies so that not every women's voice gets drowned in the masses.

5 Findings and Discussion
5.2 Women and patriarchy

The fieldwork has indicated that while women are experiencing a greater deal of equality with men, the traditional male breadwinner/female homemaker model is still pervasive. This is impacting women and men both in the workplace and in the home making the combination of work and children difficult, particularly for women.

5.2.1 Patriarchal Workplaces

Women are still experiencing gender inequality in the workplace. Twenty-four women interviewed felt women are still discriminated against in the workforce while only six women experienced none. While women without children generally feel equal to men in the workplace, the disadvantage becomes apparent when women have children. Sixteen women felt the way they are perceived by others in the workforce changed or would change once they became a mother. Respondent KK felt it was a 'subtle change' when she was due to go on maternity leave her employer stopped sending her projects and withdrew her from a training course:

> 'The investment that my employer wanted to make in me changed.'

For Respondent JJ, having children caused her to miss out on job opportunities:

> 'The last job I went for, the words that stick in my mind, he said 'corporate discipline, this is a job where we need corporate discipline. We've got to get it done come hell or high water.' And I stupidly threw in the word 'childcare' and I think he flinched. He might not have but I feel like he did flinch and I didn't get a second interview. So, I don't know if you'd call that discrimination, or him being practical, cos it was the kind of work where you had to put work first, you couldn't put family first.'

Workplaces such as this which do not allow family to be a priority propagate patriarchal gender relations, as discussed by Peet (1998) and Barnes (2001). Moreover, of the 40 women interviewed, 27 raised these issues explicitly: 11 felt they worked in male-dominated careers or workplaces; nine felt that the glass ceiling still exists; and seven discussed the idea that women still do not attain equal pay in part because female dominated vocations continue to be undervalued. As articulated by Respondent BB, these problems are systemic and difficult to counteract:

5 Findings and Discussion

> 'The general issue of people in power, I'm in a very female-dominated Faculty …
> and … I think there's a more favourable environment than in many places, yet I still
> see that, I think it's systemic. In many ways, there's an influence of the male side of
> views that comes into it, of just the way things are, and I don't have any easy answers
> cos I don't see as much change as there ought to have been in my lifetime.'

Supporting discussion in Chapters Two and Three, a ubiquitous manifestation of patriarchal gender relations is long-houred work. Women who wish to succeed in the corporate sphere are forced to work long hours, making having children difficult as pointed out by Respondent DD:

> 'I get the expectation that working long hours is standard, it's normal, means that,
> that's not very conducive to having a family.'

Respondent T commented on the change in hours she experienced moving from the corporate to the community legal sector:

> 'When I came here and I was looking at our enterprise bargaining agreement,
> something in our enterprise bargaining agreement said 70 hours, and I thought '70
> hours a week, yeah that's fair enough.' That was what I was working before. So,
> when I realised it was 70 hours a fortnight I thought 'wohoo!' So [in my previous job]
> I was working long long hours, I was working, I had billable hours, so I had to do 7 ½
> billable hours a day which took 11 hours a day sitting at the desk to actually do.'

Sixteen of the women interviewed work in excess of 40 hours a week; eight work a 'standard' 40-hour-week; eight work a 35-hour-week; and the remainder work less hours based upon flexible arrangements with their employers. Of the women interviewed, as many work a long-houred week as work a standard 35-40 hour week, and the average hours worked by all 40 women is 43 hours a week; three hours over a 'standard' working week. And often for these women, the work does not stop when they leave the office. Fifteen women were in the habit of taking work home with them, and 21 felt work impacts upon their free time. These hours and working conditions are not those of a person who wishes to take an active role in their child's life, or have a child for that matter further supporting the stance of Peet (1998) and Barnes (2001). Respondent KK believed that in general workplaces are not supporting mothers:

> 'I work in a good workplace, but if you asked me in general what I think, I deal with
> the finance industry, I'd have to say no (they don't support motherhood), there, the
> higher you get up, it is really hard for women. Particularly with all the targets they've
> got that they have to achieve, it's really difficult. There's so much unpaid overtime.'

5 Findings and Discussion

Respondent R saw working those long hours prevented her from becoming a mother:

> 'Long hours really, and I wonder if that had a big impact on fertility, at that point, that may have been a time when I could potentially have had a child, but you can't have a child if you don't have sex, and you don't have sex if you're not at home, at all, and you're exhausted, so I would be working 70, 80 hours a week and on call evenings, doing weekend work, a whole range of things, so, you know, it wasn't going to work. And there certainly is that pressure on any woman who gets to a point of some level of management, or whatever, is expected to work ridiculous hours. And that's usually when it's a male dominated culture. That hopefully will change as we get beyond that, successful women just becoming men in a sense, rather than women taking control a bit more and saying 'this is ridiculous, we need a balance, we're not playing those silly games of just being there, even if you're not productive.''

What is being observed is in accordance with the role-specialisation discussed by Mitchell (2004) and Cannold (2005). Each long-hour worker needs a 'wife' in the home to care for the children and cater to all the domestic needs. This was felt by Respondent X, working in a corporate law firm:

> 'Partnerships are typically dominated by men who have wives at home, who look after everything. And sometimes as a female in that sort of workforce you feel that really you need a wife at home looking after you as well.'

The inequality in abilities for career advancement between men and mothers was discussed by respondent T:

> 'I don't think feminism's there by a long shot. Equal pay, I think that in the legal profession, men who can spend endless hours at work are rewarded over and above women who have to get home to their families. … I think that our profession in particular tolerates a hell of a lot of sex discrimination. Under the guise of competition and 'well, you've got to be there to do the work, and the work needs to be done.''

This also reveals an aspect of Bryson's (2001) individualistic global citizen whereby women are pushed into male moulds and value their earning potential whilst devaluing motherhood as a choice. As articulated by Respondent CC:

> 'I think there's a huge pressure on us to earn more money, have more stuff, live a certain lifestyle, do certain things. And that that makes working seem more and more necessary, and working more hours, and all that kind of stuff. To earn more money, to have more stuff, to earn more money, to have more stuff. Which is a horrible kind of cycle to be in. And so, if you're striving to have more and more and more stuff, then sure, having kids would actually send that off the rails. Because, as somebody said to me the other day, they'd calculated that to send their daughter to the school that they had been to in Sydney, a private school, it would cost them half a million dollars by the time she was 18. and, you just think, ok well some people would make a choice not to have kids because they want to spend that half a million dollars on a lifestyle. I think it's around, sort of individualistic politics that are sort of strong right now,

individual greed, factors reincarnated under John Howard that means we want it and we need more money to have it.'

Individualistic society indeed discouraged Respondent A from having children:

'It's too hard in today's society to have children in my opinion. Especially in my life. And, until it were made easier, I'm not going to consider going down that road. The cost of living is quite high. And time, we all seem to be running around like chickens with our little heads cut off. What people tell me is 20 years ago Australia was very much of a you went home at a certain time, you spent time with your family, you came in at a certain time, and when you left work, you left work. And that's definitely not the case in this country anymore. You do work late, you do go in early, you do take work home. And until, you know, we're back in a society where that isn't what you do, then no, it's not going to be made easier to have kids.'

Moreover, long hours will be difficult to combat when in fact women are prevented from entering politics because of the long hours that entails, as argued by Cannold (2005) and supported by Respondent JJ:

'Women can't go into politics because of the hours. So we'll never be ruling the country and having our say, unless we do a Julia Gillard and not have kids.'

CASE STUDY 1

Deborah

Age: 34
Marital Status: Married
Children: 0
Lives: Rose Bay

Deborah is a highly career-driven 'waiter and watcher' (Cannold 2005). While having children is something she would like to do, her career is a disincentive for her to have children, despite her awareness that it is something she needs to consider soon due to her age.

'Want to do, yes, plan to do, yes. The planning however keeps getting extended out as, probably money is a really big one, and the other one, which for me personally is really important, is career. Because for me at the moment, I've been in this company coming up now 5 years and coming into a role, I've got 24 people who I manage, so it's quite a big team, and I love it, absolutely love my job. So, the desire to have kids is sometimes outweighed by the desire not to want to give up all of this stuff.'

Deborah works long hours in an extremely demanding corporate job. This would be very difficult to combine with having a family. But more than that, her work is incredibly important to her and she does not want to give it up:

'At the moment I keep pushing back the decision to have kids because I'm enjoying my work so much, it's so fulfilling.'

She perceived her workforce to be quite family-friendly and supportive in order to retain long-term staff. As a manager she has provided a lot of flexibility for team members and she expected this would be reciprocated for her. There's a sense of community in her workplace which encourages contributing and having a family. However, she felt her career would take a hit if she took more that 6 months out to have children. This has encouraged her to put off children:

> 'As you get older and as you take on board mores senior positions, you're acutely aware that, if at some point you step out of the race, it takes you a long time to recover that position.'

Indeed, while Deborah perceives her job to be flexible, it is possible that she has been pushed into male roles in order to achieve career success. She has perhaps become Bryson's (2001) 'global male citizen'. Although she didn't think career success was more difficult because she's female, she found it interesting that most of the roles she's filled were exclusively male in the past:

> 'I've sort of been, not necessarily a pioneer, more that, the men that I've worked with have been surprised that I've been the best candidate for the role. It's not so much about gaining acceptance, but it's more about simply opening the doors to people considering that there might be more than just men who might apply for the job. And it's not unusual for me to sit in a business meeting and be the only female in the room. But I think with those men it's not about them questioning whether I should be there because I'm female, it's more they just accept that I'm there, it's about 'what value can you contribute?' which is the same that they would ask of any of the men they've given jobs to. But I kind of like that idea that I've been able to create that space so that then I can bring on more women who are capable, or more men who are capable to follow with me.'

The patriarchal nature of the workplace is still pervasive however. It will take more than a few women moving into traditionally male roles to subvert the years of glass-ceilings:

> 'I think the idea of, walking into a room with a bunch of guys and not getting asked to make their tea or coffee, I still get quite excited about that.'

Arguably, this enduringly patriarchal workplace is preventing Deborah from having children. The hours and commitment her job asks are those intended for the global male who can donate infinite time to the workforce as they have a housewife to tend to all their domestic needs (Bryson 2001; Mitchell 2004; Cannold 2005). Indeed, as Deborah herself admitted she is putting off children for her career. The ultimate blame for this may fall to upon her 'more than full-time' job not being designed for a woman (or indeed a man who wants an active role in his family's life). This is perhaps not assisted through her home situation where traditional gender roles may still hold some influence. Her husband he has a far more flexible job than her, but would not feel comfortable as the primary caregiver:

> 'He would be quite happy to share the responsibilities. … He doesn't actually really understand how to bring kids up. His idea is that he actually would prefer to put money aside for me, and pay me a full-time salary, so I could be at home looking after the kids, than necessarily taking time off work to do that.'

While she is quite comfortable being the primary caregiver she felt she wouldn't want to give up the fulfilment and intellectual stimulation she derived from her job.

> 'I just don't know if I'd want to not work at all. The idea of not being intellectually engaged everyday is a bit frightening for me. More than happy to be the primary carer, but would possibly like to, and I could well do that, would like to have the capability to work from home. Because I really think I'd still like that intellectual stimulation. Partly because the majority of the people that I work with, they are all men. I feel that everything I've done in my career has been, I think, an achievement to get to where I got, so I don't really want to step out of that, cos to do all that again would just be really difficult. And the fact that I enjoy work, that it's really fulfilling to me. I think the idea of suddenly not having that would leave me a bit unfulfilled.'

This brings home the enduringly patriarchal nature of society – both in the workforce and in the home. Deborah could be perceived to be a woman who is being prevented from realising desires to have children due to a combination of career pushing her into male roles and an enduring perception in the home that the woman should be the primary caregiver.

5.2.2 Patriarchal homes?

Preventing women from participating in long-houred patriarchal workplaces is the enduringly traditional labour split in the home. Respondents commented that their partners did not carry as much of the domestic load as them, supporting Waitt et al.'s (2000b) assertion that there is not an increased uptake in housework by men. Eight interviewees indicated they bore the brunt of the domestic load in their household. Respondent JJ saw herself as 'really lucky' that her husband's always home by 7pm to put the kids to bed. She perceives the allocation of labour in the home is still such a big issue for women:

> 'I think just about all women get ripped off in that area.'

Respondent L echoed these sentiments:

> 'I'm deeply cynical about men's ability to kind of take on half. Especially living with my partner, who cooks, he does all the cooking, but you know, I'm still clearing undies off the lounge-room floor, and clearing the bathroom, and doing all that stuff. And, you know, cooking for him might be cathartic, and relaxing, and all those things, but, bloody hell, cleaning's not cathartic for me. … Certainly in my own experience, I'm not finding that men do half. They probably think they do half.'

In terms of changes in work patterns, it appears that men are impacted less than women. For nine women their partner was the primary breadwinner. Ten women had

changed to part-time work or would change to part time work when they had children, while their partners remained in full-time work. For five women, whilst both they and their partner worked full-time, it was still the woman taking greater responsibility for their family. Promisingly, it was the case for only two women that there was no change in their partner's work patterns as a result of having children. For those women without children eight felt it was likely they would be the primary caregiver. Respondent J perceived women are the ones doing all the work and making all the sacrifices:

> 'And also, it's usually the woman that tries to be the flexible one, not the bloke. Before I had my son I thought, 'I can see how you can have a bit of partnership,' and so on. But it's the woman's life that changes, more significantly. … Because the woman has the baby, does the breastfeeding, it's the woman's body that changes, and it's usually the woman that has to make these changes to her lifestyles. (***cut???So my sister-in-law for example, my brother has had the same job for a long time but she feels like she's the one who has to be flexible. … and she said to me on the phone the other day…'I just feel so tired.' She said 'Because I've been doing this for so many years, always having to work around my husband.' … and I think that I've come to the same conclusion,***) it's usually the woman, the partner has his job and he still goes to work in the morning and comes home at night, normally, and then it's the woman who has to think, 'well how am I going to get the kids to school?' and when I drop my son off at cottage, I see some fathers, sometimes, but generally it's the mothers that are dropping the kids off and picking them up.'

Respondent G believed the traditional male breadwinner/female homemaker role is still thriving in the domestic sphere and it entrenches patriarchal gender relations in the public sphere:

> 'And I mean, the distressing thing is, in my…intake year we were 50/50 men and women…my disappointment over the years has been seeing the attitudes of the men who are my friends and my contemporaries at university become as entrenched as the last generation of male lawyers. … They basically re-live the conventions of the 50s and 60s in terms of, the majority of their wives don't work, they're not treated as equal citizens. There are some remarkable exceptions, some fantastic exceptions, but they are the exceptions.'

However, these exceptions may be becoming the norm as a move away from traditional home models was observed in the women interviewed. The most common arrangement in partnerships was equal share of the domestic load with 16 women in relationships where this occurred. Nine women had partners who changed their work patterns as a result of having children and five women had partners who would change their work patterns if they had a family. Eight women experienced an

inversion of the traditional model with the female being the main breadwinner in the household, as discussed by Respondent LL:

> 'I have certain friends where it's pretty much given that the woman will be the breadwinner and the husband will be the house father, and that's a perfect situation as well and in those cases the dads are absolutely thrilled about it. I'm not quite sure if mine would be so thrilled, I think he'd be a little scared, but I'm sure it's something that can be talked about. … I would hope and expect that he put in his fair share of dad time as well. Especially if he was still doing freelance.'

Eleven women echoed the view that ideally when they have children, they would like to be in an equal parenting relationship with their partner. Further to this, three women said they would only have children in an equal parenting relationship. For six women their partner actively wants to be the primary caregiver. This seems to be evidence of a change in attitudes coming through in younger generations. This change is perceived by Respondent X:

> 'I think the younger guys coming through are just more open to taking time out generally. And whether or not it's taking time out to spend with your family, or take, you know, a career break, or whatever. They're much more open to that and almost expect it. They also have a much more balanced view in terms of what's reasonable in terms of work hours. It's been a really interesting change in the last 5 years just watching grads come through, and saying 'well, no, I'll work til 7 o'clock, and then I'm going home, cos I've worked for 10 hours today. That's all I can do, I can't do anymore work, I'm going.' Whereas…8 years ago we were saying 'are you sure that's all you need me to do?' and 'ok, I'll stay til 11 o'clock to get it done.' It's quite different, people are drawing much stronger boundaries between how much work can impinge on their lives generally.'

While men are more open to sharing the domestic load, there is still inertia in relation to them being the ones to bear the majority of this load, with this occurring for only two of the women interviewed, in contrast to eight women who were the primary load bearers. This supports the finding of Craig (2004) and Goward et al. (2005) that men spend much less time in sole care of children than women. Moreover, in the case of only two respondents did both partners work part-time in true equal parenting style. Respondent R found the search for a man willing to form an equal partnership was difficult and ultimately a factor in her childlessness:

> 'Because I'm pretty strong about, I'm not there to do the cooking and ironing, and do all those traditional female roles. So, I wouldn't have settled for anyone who expected that of me. So it's hard to find a man that you're compatible with as well.'

5 Findings and Discussion

For 15 women the choice of primary carer for their children would ultimately be based upon the 'gender neutral' indicator of finances, whichever partner earns most will continue full-time work. However, the views from Section 5.2.1 indicate that the workplace is not a gender neutral place. In the words of Respondent H:

> 'So I think for me, the prohibition on career tends to be more around that you're trying to, within the same family unit, trying to manage two careers. Very often it's the woman's career that comes second because, often it's the man that's earning more, therefore the woman's career comes second, therefore, you know, she follows his job around, and hence you don't get the career moves that you might have otherwise.'

CASE STUDY 2

Nina

Age: 32
Marital Status: Married
Children: 2
Lives: Frenchs Forest

Nina had always wanted children and her husband felt the same. While she recognised there are many reasons to put off having children their desire to have a family overrode these:

> 'We really wanted to have children. I didn't look at it in terms of dollars or anything like that because in my opinion if you say 'when have I ever got enough money to have children?' You never have enough money, you're never stable enough, and your home is never big enough. So, I think in my opinion, you've just got to jump in and do it, because you want to have children. It's as simple as that.'

Nina runs her own business. This has made having a family easier as she is able to arrange her work around the needs of her family. However, due to financial issues she returned to work only 4 weeks after the birth of her first child, and two weeks after the birth of her second. While she had no choice but to return to work she saw her job as important to her fulfilment in life:

> 'It's not just about money. It's about, when you're a parent, I didn't like the idea of just being someone's wife, someone's mother. I wanted to be a person in my own right, and by working I think you actually have that. And even maybe more so, when the children are small, you can get carried away by children's activities when they're older, but when they're younger and there's a lot of 'goo' and 'gaa', and you're only just hanging out with other parents who are doing the same thing, I think it's actually nice to come to work and have proper conversations about things that don't just relate to children's bodily functions.'

Nina's high level of workforce participation was only possible through the choice her husband made to work part-time only 2 days a week and stay-at-home with their

children to allow Nina to be the primary breadwinner. This was a financial decision, and Nina felt quite acutely that society judged her for going back to work. Conversely, she articulated that her husband was treated like a saint for filling the role normally expected of women:

> 'I think my perception from the community has changed. When I was a mother that wasn't at home full-time, particularly when my children were very small, there was a perception that I wasn't a very good mother, and I couldn't possibly have loved my children enough if I could have had them, and then gone back to work. … I acutely felt that people didn't feel that I'd loved my children enough if I'd of gone back to work. And I think people questioned, I think I was treated differently at the baby health clinic. So, my husband was treated beautifully when he would go to those places and take the babies, and yet, when I would take time out of work to make sure that I went, I felt that I was treated indifferently, and he was treated a bit like 'oh you're such a good man to do this' and at the end of the day they were his children as well, and I felt that he got preferential treatment, and he was definitely treated differently in supermarkets, women would bow and scrape to help him out, and then, you know, if I was walking around with a backpack with one child in the backpack, one child in the front pack, nobody gave a rat's arse, to be honest. … I think men get all the accolades when they're the one looking after their children … and really, why should they? Women have been doing it for centuries.'

Now she and her husband share care of their children in an equal-parenting arrangement where both of them work 4 days a week. They have time for their work and time as a family. As a result of this unorthodox arrangement Nina felt that her husband's relationship with the children is far stronger.

> 'I think, when we did it, there weren't too many men who did what my husband did, and there weren't too many men who were prepared to do what he did, and so, I take my hat off to him for that, but I think he's reaping all the rewards of that now, because with children, you reap what you sow, if you put nothing in you get nothing back. And I think that shows in the type of relationship he has with the children.'

Further, Nina felt this arrangement has proved beneficial for their children and has given them all a balanced life.

> 'I felt that for us, as well as for the children probably, we had quite a balanced existence. They saw a bit of their mum, they saw a bit of their dad, we had some family time. … I feel neither of us had enough time in our job to feel annoyed with our working arrangement, but we also didn't have too much time with the children that we were sick of it.'

In this way equal parenting relationships can be seen to be beneficial by allowing women to continue their careers, allowing men to build a stronger bond with their children, and giving their children a more balanced upbringing.

Alison

Age: 35
Marital Status: Married
Children: 2
Lives: Dulwich Hill

Alison always wanted children. When she met her husband it was something she established with him from the beginning. He had thought he wouldn't have children but she convinced him otherwise. Had he not wanted children she would have found another partner.

She works in a fairly demanding corporate job and saw the best way to have children without severely impacting her career was to do it early:

> 'I've worked in the finance industry all my life. And I've seen over and over again these career-driven women get to 35 and not have had a baby and then really have issues as well, you know fertility is impacted 35 on, and you know, 35 is not the time to find out you can't have children for some reason. So, I just thought 30, you want to still have a bit of youthful energy, you know, it's tiring, it's hard work, and it's early enough in your career that you don't have to worry about making this huge gap in your life.'

She changed workplaces after having children, as her prior employer had no family-friendly policies in place. It was expected that long hours would be put in and once she had children was not prepared to do that:

> 'Certainly in my last company there was a perception that 'last man standing' was the one who was really putting the hours in and you know 'oh I didn't leave until 7.30.' And I always thought 'well, why can't you get your work done during the hours that you should be getting it done in.' But, I suppose there's the danger that there's always the perception that you're a 'nine to fiver' or you're a 'clock watcher', or whatever it is, and as a result, you know, you can't be depended to be there for a late night conference call or whatever it is.'

Alison's new workplace is a large global company with explicit family-friendly policies in place. She works a 45-hour-week and her work is flexible if she needs to care for her children. Alison didn't perceive a career setback as a result of her decision to become a mother but she doesn't feel she's a very ambitious person. However, work is important to for Alison's intellectual stimulation, and she felt guilt in relation to her desire to return to work and the impacts working has on her family time:

> 'The perception that you should want to stay at home with the little buggers. That's the one I found hardest to work through for myself. That it's ok to want to go back to work, that it's ok to say, this is actually quite boring a lot of the time. But it takes a lot to be able to say that and not feel bad about it. I feel that I don't give my kids enough time, and I'm not giving my husband enough time for his own professional life. So even now I'm working 8 to 5, I'm still working, that's a long day, I can't really interact with my kids much in the morning, or realistically in the evening.'

5 Findings and Discussion

What made Alison's workforce participation easier is her husband has a more flexible job and drastically altered his work patterns to allow him to care for their children. Alison is the primary breadwinner and it's her husband who drops off and picks up the kids.

> 'He's made a decision that, if we want me to work, I'm the primary breadwinner, I always have been the primary breadwinner, and that means sacrifices on his part, and he's consciously made those sacrifices. So we have don't have arguments cos I would cheerfully do more but he wants me to work cos I make a lot of money.'

Moreover, both sets of grandparents are heavily involved in the care of the children meaning problems of childcare and associated issues of guilt have not impacted on Alison.

In this way Alison seems to have been able to 'have it all'. However, this was only achieved through serious sacrifices on her husband's part, a supportive family network, and a family-friendly workplace. Not all women are yet lucky enough to attain such serendipitous circumstances.

5.2.3 Men and Patriarchy

Preventing these progressive families from fully realising their ideals of equal parenting is the patriarchal inertia of the workplace and society. As Bittman et al. (2004) discuss, even where men are in a workplace with explicit family friendly policies they are not likely to take advantage of them. As Respondent KK indicated:

> 'I think, more and more, men want to get involved, and it's harder for them, because it's just not acceptable. And, you know, often their employers just aren't as supportive to enable them to do those things. Definitely, I know a lot of my friends, their partners want to get as involved as possible but it's hard. But, it's also their careers and how it gets perceived, I mean, it's hard enough on women in workplaces, let alone the men being able to do that.'

It is, in part, an issue of unwillingness on the part of employers; but more than that it is also an issue of reluctance on the part of men to ask for these things as it is not perceived to be acceptable. According to Respondent P:

> 'The assumption that it's in the 'too hard' basket, that is what kills the whole progress in it. Whereas, the assumption that something should be possible would, I think, open up more avenues. And a lot of men could go to their employer and say 'look, how about if I work 4 days?' … And that's a societal awareness thing as well, where the government comes in again, saying 'this is actually, you're doing a fantastic job in society if you do that.' Rather than being some, you know, slacker. Which is probably what a lot of men think if they ask for that, that, other men in the organisation will think that they're, just, not really serious about their job. Which can be totally the

other way around, they can be really serious about their job, but they want to combine everything, and be committed to all those things.'

Of the 16 women interviewed with children only seven of their partners took time off work when they gave birth, and five have workplaces which are supportive of their parenting duties. Of all the women interviewed, 12 had partners in particularly demanding long-houred work. Only four women commented that their partner's workplace was inflexible, whereas 12 felt their partner had a flexible workplace and for 10 women the partner was in control of the hours he worked.

Men do want to participate in their families lives more and more. Twenty women interviewed articulated this. And those men who do take a more active role in their children's lives draw immense satisfaction from it and benefit with improved family relationships. This is evidenced in the case study of Nina and in the words of Respondent P:

> 'I know plenty of examples of husbands who've had the opportunity to do the kid stuff for a while, and they say it's just fantastic, 'I've finally got in touch with my kids.' Cos they used to see them, what, between 7 and 5 past 7 when they go to bed.'

But what women also articulated is the idea of a 'good dad' versus a 'good mum'. This is a phenomenon associated with hundreds of years of patriarchal society. When a man does make an effort to be involved in his child's life he is heaped with praise, whereas a woman who does the same is seen as lacking workplace commitment, as articulated by Bittman et al. (2004). According to Respondent J:

> 'If the guy says 'oh, I've gotta go early today and pick up the kids' he's seen as a bit of a hero, 'oh he's a good bloke, isn't he?' But if the woman does go, then she's shirking her responsibilities at work, and I think that perception is still there.'

As Respondent EE saw it, the more men make an effort to be involved, the easier it will be for them and, perhaps more importantly, the pressure will be taken off mothers to always 'be there' and allow them to devote more time to the workplace if they so desire:

> 'I think it's quite hard for them in that way. But that's a vicious circle, because if more men, fathers, said 'I'm going to go to this, I'll be back in an hour,' or whatever, then perhaps that culture might shift a bit. But you're always there, you're always accessible to the boss or whoever it is, it's difficult to kind of get away. I wish that it was different, because it would take the pressure off women, because, for example, the kids expect me to be at the assembly when they're getting an award, or when

they're doing some performance, or whatever it is. … And if I don't go I feel guilty, and for them they're sort of noticing that I've let them down. … But if daddy turns up it's such a fantastic thing, and it's a one off and it's a big occasion. So you don't get the credit…there's no expectation from the kids that dad's going to show up in most circumstances. … If dad shows up, it's really 'special', if mum shows up, it's the duty that she has to perform. I think a lot of the mothers do feel that way.'

5.3 Women and feminisms

The interviews conducted indicated feminism has impacted positively upon the lives of the respondents. Many of the problems attributed to feminism discussed in Chapter Two appear to have been overcome, but feminism is still facing difficulties overcoming the fundamental patriarchal nature or society.

5.3.1 Feminists or feminists?

Twenty-three of the women interviewed identified themselves as feminists. Of these women seven made the comment that they didn't think of themselves as 'hardcore' feminists. As expressed by Respondent GG:

'I'm a feminist with a little 'f'.'

At the other end of the spectrum, nine women explicitly stated they did not identify with the women's movement. These women were put-off either by what they felt was the 'radical' nature of the movement, or because they did not think the processes involved should exclude men. These failures of women to identify with feminism would seem to reflect, in part, the image problem the movement has suffered; as discussed in 'Deathwatch for the sisterhood' (Meryment 2005). Respondent R viewed this with concern and perceived the movement to be going backwards:

'Compared to my day, a lot more men spend a lot more time with their children. It's still not there, there's always room to improve. And, you know, as I say, there's at least 400 years before we have anything touching on equality between the sexes. So, it takes a long time, and that's why it's a bit of a worry maybe when younger girls don't realise how far we've come but also don't realise how much further there is to go. And that whole backlash thing, which we certainly have. Even things like the church, I cannot believe that the issue of women's ordination is still on the agenda and women are still not being ordained. I mean, I thought that was a dead issue centuries ago... So we've really gone backwards in many respects. And I mean with the war on terrorism there's always this 'back to conservatism', conservatism in the negative sense. And withdrawing back, and getting very selfish again, and inward looking

instead of outward looking, and, you know, blaming women, blaming homosexuals, blaming Muslims for everything is just a reaction to that insecurity I guess.'

Seventeen women felt that feminism has not yet achieved its goals. In the words of Respondent W:

'Yeah, we've got the vote but we haven't got very far, and, you know, what else have we actually got? We are working, but I'm also watching people work and then drop out of the workforce left, right and centre and making other choices because it's just too hard within the system. It just doesn't feel like we've got much further than getting the vote and going to work.'

Thirteen women echoed Meyerson and Fletcher's (2000) sentiments that what is now required is small, incremental change. This is a more difficult and insidious task as it requires challenging preconceptions at the foundations of society. According to Respondent BB:

'They (changes) will have to be more subtle now because the biggish stuff, sort of has happened.'

Six women felt that, while there is no longer need for the women's movement, more needs to be done and this change should come from men as well as women. The women's movement needs to redefine itself and regroup to include men in what these women perceived to be a matter of rights for all to equality in society and the workplace, and improved work-life balance. Men need to change their attitudes and recognise the rights to equality women have in the workplace and in the home. These women perceived the key issue as freedom in life choices for all, and the more men who seize these opportunities the quicker society will change, as articulated by Respondent AA:

'I don't think that feminism can necessarily do a lot more. It's really men that need to change the way they're thinking, and that's something that, you know, is only going to come about slowly, and as society makes it more and more acceptable and desirable for men to view families as something that should take a large part in their lives. So, the more SNAGS you have, the more the weight of numbers is towards things happening that acknowledge to them, I mean every time a man has a daughter, for instance, he immediately becomes aware of a huge raft of things that he's never noticed before, just in the way society treats women, in the advantages they have, the disadvantages they have, the way the media portrays them.'

Nevertheless, based upon the views of the 40 women interviewed, where feminism does seem to have succeeded is in its goal of providing women with freedom of choice as discussed by Manne (2001). Whether or not they identified with the

movement none of the women could deny that feminism has improved women's lives. Nineteen women perceived feminism to have impacted upon their upbringing, and 20 women felt it had impacted upon their choices in relation to work and motherhood both directly and indirectly. As expressed by Respondent V:

> 'We're all part of that generation of women who, we were all born in the late 1960s. so, our mothers weren't necessarily feminists, … That's why I think it's probably women of our age group, where there's a kind of dip about breeding and things as well, because there was that expectation, when we were growing up there were adds on trains saying 'girls can do anything' and drawings of girls in overalls and things. … The teachers I found inspirational at school and things, they were all feminists. And, there was that whole thing about 'why would you want to do that?' and, I promised myself when I was 8 that I was not going to be my mother, and I was not going to have children, and I was not going to spend my life unhappy, and I was not ever going to ask a man for money.'

Generally these women were very positive about the impacts of feminism on their lives. However, 11 felt that motherhood is undervalued and, while they did not attribute this to feminism it can be seen to support Sullivan's (1996) view that the non-traditional lifestyle feminism prescribes does not make space for children. Respondent LL suggested that motherhood was devalued when she was younger, and that building a career was perceived as much more important:

> 'Definitely I think that there was the attitude that that was the last thing you thought about as a young woman. … There was a point for a lot of us of a certain age that we were brought up devaluing it. Certainly I remember being sort of younger, as in maybe a late teenager, and everyone would talk to me about my career, but no-one would talk to me about the importance of planning for family in there as well. So it never really occurred to me until my late 20s that maybe it was something that I should have planned for.'

Yet at the same time, respondent V refuted the views expressed by Sullivan (1996), and instead supported Manne (2001) and Cannold's (2005) standpoint that feminism gives women power of choice:

> 'I think that feminism allows you choices and gives you the strength. So I don't think it made me decide not to have children. I just I think I found strength within that for my choice. … So, rather than me thinking 'ok if I'm going to be a feminist I have to decide not to have children.' … But it's definitely made me feel better about being able to stand-up and go 'no'.'

At the end of the day, perhaps the most telling outcome was that 18 women felt whatever life choice they made would be supported thanks to feminism, and they

were free to choose motherhood as a result of this support. The freedom of choice feminism provides was articulated by Respondent DD:

> 'In my group of friends, the people I associate with, it's actually quite ok to think about not giving up work. There are a lot of women who, because of the group they mix with, the expectation is they'll have kids then they'll be a stay-at-home mum. So, in my group of friends, who I would say would identify themselves as being feminists, or as being reasonably strong women, they're women who run their own businesses or who have quite an independent outlook. So I think absolutely that has shaped it. And I think too, although most of my friends have already had their kids, I also have a lot of friends who don't have kids and who have not married. … I think because they identify with this sort of feminist or independent school of thought, then life is not about needing to achieve these signifiers of success like being married, having a child, buying a house. I think that's absolutely impacted there.'

5.3.2 Crisis of motherhood averted?

Another positive development appears to be the declining stranglehold of the myth of the 'good stay-at-home-mother'. The conflict of identity in relation to motherhood discussed by Pocock (2003) is being resolved. There is now the idea of heterogeneity in parenting moulds, as articulated by Respondent CC:

> 'I think 'the good parent' comes in many shapes and sizes.'

While 13 women did feel society has an in-built preference for mothers to stay at home with their children, none of them felt influenced by this in their own navigation of motherhood. Rather, they seem to be more emancipated from its impacts, and are developing their own ideals of how they themselves can be a good mother, and what is best for them in their individual situations. Fourteen women articulated the idea that children need a mother who has interests other than motherhood. In the words of Respondent T:

> 'I think a good mother has to have more than just being at home to be stimulated. I think good mothers still have some investment in their personal development and intellectual needs. All my friends and family who are stay-at-home mums are also studying.'

The women interviewed were all seeking to define a good mother in different ways, but at times, the navigation of these ideals was fraught. Some women defined the concept of a good mother in a way that appeared to assuage their guilt in relation to combining work and children, as indicated by Respondent CC:

> 'When I go back to work, I'm sure I'll feel guilt about leaving her, because a good parent would stay with her the whole time. … On the other hand, for me, I want to be a rich person, not rich in money terms, but have a richness about me, because I see that as a positive thing for her, and so it really isn't about the money. … but, I don't know, I mean there probably will be some people who would think I should stay home with her.'

These sentiments were also echoed by Respondent KK, who saw the task of being a good mother as much more about the quality of the time you have with children, rather than the quantity of time you spend with them, supporting views expressed by Bianchi (2000):

> 'And more quality time as well, you know, being able to do things that I think are fulfilling…to be things that they get to experience different stuff in life.'

Conversely, the perception is still there, and is influencing some women adversely. Respondent DD found the idea that a 'good mother' should stay at home was influencing her not to have children. The demands of being a 'good mother' were a strong influence on Respondent JJ who denied herself career fulfilment as a result:

> 'I want to be a good mother, I have to be a good mother. I just insist they get a good mother and nothing's going to stand in the way of that. Even though I enjoy working, probably more than I enjoy mothering, I get more fulfilment out of it, the most important thing is them and there's no way I'll let them suffer or be neglected.'

Respondent EE believed that the ideas mothers such as Respondent JJ have about their responsibilities towards their children need addressing to prevent the constant feeling of guilt. Four women discussed feeling angered at the perception that they weren't really maternal or worse, didn't really love their children if they returned to work. They felt this was not the case at all, as discussed by Respondent S:

> 'I see this in my workplace, where, particularly amongst women, but also amongst men, I think that they view women that stay at home with their children as more maternal, and that the more caring you are, the more likely you are to stay at home with your children. … It hasn't personally affected me, but there are comments all the time. … I think that those are very unfair sentiments, and I don't think that they reflect motherhood, and I don't think that they accurately reflect really some of the other reasons that people come back to work, such as economic necessity.'

Their emancipation from these sentiments is testament to the positive impacts of feminism in liberating women from traditional societal conceptions.

5 Findings and Discussion

When women are making the choice to stay at home there is the converse perception that they should be working. This is discussed by Lupton and Schmied (2002) and was expressed by five women. In the words of Respondent DD:

> 'I think there are still some people who think 'if you're a stay-at-home mum you're worthless.' I think there are still some perception issues that need to be changed there.'

Respondent O articulated similar sentiments and feels the pressure to combine children with work:

> 'I suppose it's my own perception. When I walk out my door on a weekday and I see all these babies, and I think 'oh how depressing' but I think it won't be like that for me. So the social perception is, you stay home, you don't really do much during the day, you feed this baby, you know, now I know it's not like that, your day's filled with this thing. But I think the social perception's kind of mother's have it a bit easy. You have this time off, you know, taking time off to have a baby, instead of doing your career, isn't necessarily valued. Like, you're boring, you're different, or that kind of attitude, I see as my own immediate social world that I'm in. … To keep working, to almost pretend, to fit it into life, to not actually take time out of work to be a mother but to just slot it in. … Maybe you see the impact of those kind of assumptions in the decision not to have children. So, 'oh god, no, if I had a child now, how would I slot it in? how would I kind of keep going with my life? Well, I couldn't, therefore I won't have children.' Rather than having a child and going 'how will I slot it in? ok, I'll do it this way, this way and this way.'

The women interviewed love their children and are searching for ways to mother them in the best possible way. The individual nature of these choices should be recognised and diversity of approaches allowed. Women need society to help, rather than hinder them in this goal.

5.3.3 Having choice or having to choose everything?

However, feminism is still conflicting with the enduringly patriarchal structure of society, to inhibit women as mothers, as discussed by Cannold (2005). Two results are observed. Firstly, the idea that women can have anything has been replaced with the feeling that women have to do everything. This idea was articulated by Respondent FF:

> 'The achievements have been great in the sense of an attempt to educate society at particular levels of the importance of women having choice, and having a wider choice than they had had. But I think that it hasn't necessarily worked as well as, the idea was perhaps, you can have a choice of this or a choice of that, but it doesn't

mean you have to do both to be feminist. So you can have a choice of working at home, or you can have a choice of working as paid work, cos working at home's really unpaid work, or you can choose to do something else, not that, as a feminist you choose, or in a sense you really don't choose, but you're expected to work at home as unpaid work, work at work as work work, and then perhaps work in another manner as well. I think it's backfired because I don't think it's understood. So women can have it all, but the expectation is that women will do it all to have it all. And having it all doesn't mean having everything, it means having what is important to you, not at the expense of others obviously, just what's important to you, and being accepted for it.'

The misinterpretation of feminism discussed by Respondent FF was personally perceived by Respondent M:

'Overall it's a struggle for women who're expected to do everything now, expected to have a career, expected to jump out of that, you know, have a couple of children, and then somehow get back into it, and keep paying the mortgage. And I think there's a lot of pressure. And until something happens along those lines where it's really accepted that that is going to happen, and that women should be treated fairly in that regard, I think women are always going to feel that pressure to. And not having gone through it myself I don't know how some women cope, having to sort of go out, because they want to, but then feeling this guilt that they need to get back, and it must be a really difficult time.'

Eight women discussed the pressure and/or desire they felt to 'do it all,' while six women were aware of this notion but rejected it, pursuing single rather than multiple choices. This perception is encouraging women to postpone or reject motherhood. It generated a rebellion in Respondent LL and her friends, who put off children as a result:

'I think that there's been in the last few years a more holistic emphasis on different career paths rather than just that whole stereotype 'super-mum', which I think we all rebelled against quite strongly. That idea of the 'you can do anything' thing but somehow along the way that turned into 'you must do everything or you're just a bit of a failure.' … Most of us went, well, 'we want to have this career, and we want to be these fabulous people that we have in our minds,' and the kid thing would just derail all of that.'

The second result, discussed by Manne (2001), preventing women from realising their childbearing desires, is feminism has been perceived to seek women's equality with men and is thus pushing women into male moulds. According to Respondent FF this is not what feminism sought to do:

'I think a mistake that the feminist movement made was giving the impression that women were looking to be empowered to the extent that they were considered equal with men. I think that women have always been at least equal with men, and perhaps even more empowered than men, and I don't mean that in a formal hierarchical sense,

> I mean it in the way that the family itself works, because without a woman there would be no family.'

This misinterpretation has led to women, like Respondent DD, who perceives she experiences total equality with men, in fact pushing herself into male workplace moulds, working 12 hour days, and being prevented from having children.

5.3.4 It's ok to do both

Despite these adverse perceptions more and more women feel, as a result of feminism that it is ok to both work and have children. This is a positive impact of feminism expressed by 21 respondents. For Respondent AA:

> 'I don't see any reason why my career should be adversely affected by my decisions to have a family, you know, any differently than a man. So, there should be no effect on my career because of my decision to have a family, unless that same effect would result in the case of a colleague who was male.'

Society and the workplace need to catch up to women's perceptions to ensure they are easily able to do both.

5.4 Women and Children

5.4.1 Pro-Natalists – Reasons for having a child

A diversity of incentives to have children was articulated by the women interviewed. Some reasons were more common, however. The most common factor encouraging women to have children was feeling they were at the right age with 31 women mentioning this as a factor when they had children or influencing their desire to have children. It appears these women are better informed about the rapid decline in fertility after age 35, unlike earlier women who felt misled by the feminist movement. Respondent R was one such woman whose childbearing desires were subverted by her emancipation into the patriarchal public sphere:

> 'Certainly in my day you were never told it's so much harder to bear children at a later age. So there were those deceits as well, intentionally or otherwise, … so that was a bit of a shock to discover that that was the case. So, I never had an expectation that I couldn't have children.'

5 Findings and Discussion

Respondent H was better educated:

> 'I actually got to sort of 30 and kind of went 'hm', well I kept thinking this maternal rush to have children would arrive, and it didn't. So mine was almost like a more rational thing of 'look, I'm pretty sure I want them, um so let's sort of…' … So it was probably turning 30 I kind oh went 'well, if we're going to have them, then, we need to get on with it, let's do it now cos otherwise we'll be too old, or you never know what might happen…' It was almost like a more rational decision to have them and once I was pregnant and was about to have kids, then I kind of got the maternal rush and now I wouldn't be without them and I love them dearly.'

Indeed only six women felt overwhelming 'biological clock' style maternal instincts in relation to motherhood and only three women expressed the idea that they 'didn't want to miss out' on having children. Nineteen women, however, stated they had always wanted children or it had always been something they had assumed they would do.

An important prerequisite to having children for 24 of the women was being in a stable relationship, however, only two women felt it was important to be married, indicating the demise of traditional views of the family. Of the 31 women in partnered relationships 17 were in a situation where both they and their partner wanted children. Nine women had partners who were more enthusiastic about having children than them, and this was influencing their views in relation to starting a family. For two particularly feminist interviewees they needed to feel able to manage as a single mother before having children, as they felt the ultimate responsibility would lie with them. Thirteen women felt the impact of their larger family and experiences from their childhood as influential in their childbearing decisions.

Career was an important factor in reproductive decisions for these women with 12 women having or contemplating children as they felt they were at the right point in their career to enable them to take time out to have a child. Related to this, 10 women articulated that as they felt financially stable, they were able to have children. According to Respondent Y there's really no 'right time' to have children, ultimately you have to accept the situation you're in or you'll wait forever:

> 'You'll always need something, there'll always be something else you want to do first. But, you just do it and everything else fits into place.'

5 Findings and Discussion

Ten women felt they were at the point in their life where they were ready for the lifestyle change children would bring and this influenced their decision to have a family. In the words of Respondent Z:

> 'I said to my husband, 'I don't want to look up in 10 years and have you go 'I married you, and I didn't get to travel, and you know, we've got a family and now I won't be able to for another 20 years.' And have you angry and resentful, so lets take that trip, or, move to Sydney and do that, so that when we do have the family there's not that 'oh if only' or 'but I really wanted to.' And I think that's one of the reasons why we're really enjoying this with our daughter, because we've eaten at the nice restaurants, and we have travelled, and we have bought that stupidly expensive bottle of wine and drunk it and not felt guilty. So now that it's hard to go up the street for a coffee, you're not thinking, 'oh crap, if you weren't here, I'd be doing this' we're enjoying it instead.'

5.4.2 Anti-Natalists – Reasons children postponed/decided against

The reasons women are not having children, or postponing having children are basically the inverse of the reasons cited by women to have children. Only two women interviewed had made the firm choice to be childless, in the words of one such woman, Respondent A:

> 'The sky could be falling down and if someone were to say to me 'you could keep the sky up by having children' well then the sky's going to fall down…'

In addition to this six women interviewed had initially decided they didn't want children, and had thus postponed childbearing, but they had ultimately reconsidered their viewpoint. Respondent V articulates her shock at having ended up a mother:

> 'I was never going to have children, … I'd never seen myself as a mother, or a parent, I didn't even want to have a cat because that was too much responsibility. … I was sick of always being the responsible one, and terrified of being responsible for a child, and a partner, and keeping everything going.'

Five women were postponing their decision due to their ambivalence about having children and five women experienced fertility problems which made having children more difficult.

While only six women identified as maternal 11 cited not being maternal as a disincentive to having children. Again, being in a relationship was important with 10 women citing not having a partner (presently or in the past) as preventing them from having children, and four being prevented from having children by unstable

relationships. Moreover, 12 women commented that they did not want to be a single mother and seven women had partners who didn't or hadn't wanted children.

For these women career, financial and lifestyle issues were the most common reasons to postpone children. Sixteen women were putting off or had put off children to focus on their career, this will be discussed further in section 5.5. For 18 women not feeling financially able to provide appropriately for a child was a dissuasive factor. Respondent Z articulates the competing considerations:

> 'When we had kids I'd always envisaged we'd be in our own house, we'd have the mortgage, we'd be settled. … I wasn't at the place that I thought I'd be. You know, raising a child in a rental property is quite normal, but mentally it was like 'no that's wrong!' and also, 'where is my career at? And if I do this what will happen? Am I ready to be a mother? Will I be a good mother? Will I be able to bring up this child how I want to? Or the right way?''

Twelve women feared the impact children would have on their lifestyle. They saw their lifestyle was not conducive for children and would have to be altered heavily. As perceived by Respondent L:

> 'The thing that I'm scared of is that I'd have to sort of retire from life when I have children. I know you have to give up all sorts of things, but I don't want to become this fat mumsy chick who pushes trolleys around supermarkets for the rest of my life. Awful. I guess I selfishly want my child to fit into my life.'

5.4.3 Care of children

Generally women are using a combination of paid childcare, family care of their children, and their own care of their children through work arrangements, to facilitate family and workplace participation. Three women interviewed use childcare full-time, nine use child-care part-time and one woman used a nanny full-time. One woman had family members who cared for her children full-time and six women had family members assisting with care of their children part-time. No women stayed at home full-time with their children, however one woman's partner cared for their child full-time when the child was under two as he was unemployed. Eight women stayed at home part-time to care for their children and four women had partners who stayed at home part-time. For the women without children eight felt they would have to use childcare full-time. Five women would only want to use childcare part-time, three wouldn't like to use it at all, and four women wanted to care for their child full-time

until age two or three. Five women said they would prefer to have family members caring for their children.

In terms of women's views on the usage of childcare, six women felt it was an important part of their children's development, and 14 commented that it was good for the socialisation of their child. As articulated by Respondent S:

> 'I feel that my daughter is having robust and beneficial experiences at daycare. So I don't feel guilty that I'm leaving her with a third party carer. I don't feel that, I feel she's having experiences that are adding to her growth in ways that I'm not confident I could as a stay-at-home parent.'

Eight women commented that their child enjoys going to childcare and another eight women did not perceive any negative impact upon their relationship with their child as a result of using childcare.

Particular attention will be given to the impacts of career and place upon women's childbearing decisions in the ensuing paragraphs.

5.5 Women and work

5.5.1 Combining work and family

In concurrence with the Monash study, all women interviewed found the combination of career and children difficult to varying degrees. Generally, the more attached the woman was to her job, the more it factored into her decisions in relation to children. In terms of prioritising work and family, work was the first priority for 10 women, these women tended to be the more career-driven, generally childless. For 10 women family was their first priority. On top of this, 16 women made specific career choices to facilitate motherhood. The remainder prioritised them equally but were clear that in the case of an emergency, such as a sick child, family would always come first. A sentiment commonly articulated by the women with children, was having time for themselves became a much lower priority, supporting findings of Craig (2004) and Goward et al. (2005). As articulated by Respondent G:

5 Findings and Discussion

> 'There's no me time. What gets lost in the equation, my son and work come first, when I say they come first, obviously my son would come first in terms of if it was a disaster or something else, and in terms of priority they run parallel, one gets higher than another depending on whether I have a case on. Ideally I'd like to be a full-time mother, no I wouldn't, that's crap, I'd go out of my brain, poor kid he'd be tormented within an inch of his life. So the priority is there, and then what slips is your own social life, taking care of yourself, doing housework, that sort of thing.'

For 37 women interviewed, almost all informants, working was seen as important to their sense of self, and 29 women would not want to stay at home full-time with children, if given the choice. This supports findings of Lupton and Schmied (2002) and Maher et al. (2004). As expressed by Respondent CC:

> 'I do feel quite strongly about not being a stay-at-home mum. For my own fulfilment and satisfaction, and sanity actually, I need some other kind of mental stimulation. … It's an important part of who I am.'

This desire to combine work and family needs to be accommodated, as articulated by Respondent II:

> 'I've got girlfriends who say 'I've lost my identity.' And I can relate to that because work is such a big part of people's lives, it's a social life…and I think I'd resent, not resent, but you can see how women get, you know, hubbies off at work doing great things, having a great time, and you're cleaning up vomit and poo. You've got to be able to appreciate both sides of the coin.'

As Bryson (2001) has suggested, the workplace is not easily facilitating women's work/life balance. The three reactions to this balancing act discussed in the literature review were observed in the women interviewed.

The delayers

Firstly, as discussed by Franklin and Tuneo (2003) and Cannold (2005), women delay childbearing to protect their career development. Eleven childless women were putting off children to build their career. Unfortunately, careers are built during the same years in which women are most fertile, as articulated by Respondent LL who felt torn between career-building and motherhood, career winning out for the moment:

> 'It's a cruel factor of timing that it tends to be when you're 30 to 35 that it's the best time for you to have kids, and it's also the best time to make your mark work wise. I think that's something everyone's very aware of.'

5 Findings and Discussion

Seven women with children had postponed having them until they felt they had reached an appropriate point in their career, as expressed by Respondent H:

> 'I'd got to a certain point in my career where I felt that I'd got so many rungs on the board. … I'd got to the point where you've got, sort of that first tier management level, where, you know, you've got a team to run, you get to a certain level. So it was kind of, I felt that I'd got to that point, so it was somehow, that was ok, I could go off and my career would sort of be ok. That was sort of part of the feeling as well.'

Twenty-four women talked to described themselves as career-driven. Of these, 15 women felt having children means sacrificing career. Respondent X, who has thus far postponed children, discusses how children don't 'fit' into a corporate 'career path':

> 'I had a very, in my mind, defined career path, and knew that, or at least had the perception that, if I wanted to be a partner in a law firm, I had to be a partner before I had children. If I had children before I was a partner, then that would be almost closing the door on it. I work for a law firm which has five women partners, none of whom have gone through the process of having children while they've been working.'

Respondent P, likely to remain childless, along with four other women, felt that she would in fact have to give up her career entirely to have children, due to the lack of supportive policies for working mothers in Australia. Career impacts were perceived more strongly the higher a woman climbed in an organisation. Respondent D discusses the demands of managerial roles, and the difficulty of combining these with motherhood:

> 'That's my biggest fear, all the work I've put in, all the training, and everything that I've done, and say if I'm in a manager's position now and you know in a couple of months if I get director's or whatever, then I come back I've got to start back from scratch.'

This view was common, 14 women feared their career would be set back if they had children, and seven women with children had experienced career setbacks as a result of becoming mothers. Respondent T expressed this very succinctly:

> 'Successful women don't have kids, and women with kids aren't successful.'

Of the women interviewed with children four felt having children had no impact on their career while 10 women had made significant changes to their careers to combine them with motherhood. These women will be discussed below.

5 Findings and Discussion

The part-timers

As drawn from the literature review, part-time work is seen as the favoured way women combine work and family (Maher et al. 2004). Seven of the women interviewed achieved work-life balance through part-time or contract work, six of these women had children, further two women currently on maternity leave planned to return to work initially on a part-time basis. Twelve of the women without children saw working part-time as how they would attain work life-balance. The women who had such arrangements were very happy with them, but they were also aware of the fact that their career progression was hindered as a result of working part-time; supporting observations by Grose (2002) and Franklin and Tuneo (2003). Respondent EE sees that if she hadn't had children she would still be working full-time, and she would have progressed further up the career ladder:

> 'I made conscious decisions when I got to a certain point in an organisation. I didn't want to apply for the next level job up, even though other people would say 'are you going to go for that particular level job that's your bosses?' Cos I just thought 'I'm not going to work full-time, I don't want to do that. I don't feel that I could do that in three days, and I'm not sure that I want to do it in four, and I'd be feeling squeezed, I wouldn't be there for the staff, or whatever.' So I left it at that level. And part of that's a self-confidence thing which is totally, I don't think related to whether I've got kids or not. But the part where the kids come into it is, I don't want to be in a situation where my work is demanding things of me that are going to crop up that are going to intrude on things I want to do, have to do, for the kids and the family.'

Part-time work was not always possible. Of the 15 women with children, four of them wanted to work part-time but were unable to due to the demands of their job and an inflexible employer. Two women without children sought part-time hours in their jobs but were denied this right as they did not have children.

The jugglers

With 33 women interviewed being involved in full-time employment the strong attachment these women have to their jobs is evinced. Women who were working full-time with children sought to utilise flexible arrangements within their full-time load to manage their work and parenting responsibilities. Respondent H is in the process of trying to arrange with her employer to work flexibly four days a week. She sees the importance of having balance between work and family life:

5 Findings and Discussion

> 'I don't think I'm as ambitious to achieve as a man in my job is. Because for me, certainly after I've had children, my career objectives are more around achieving a balance between work and life, and it's not pursue my career at any cost. Cos it's not, my job is there, my career if there for a purpose. I actually don't think I could be a stay-at-home-mum, I think I'd get bored out of my mind without the challenge of work. But equally, if it gets to the point where work demands too much of my time, and impinges on my time with my kids, then that's the wrong answer as well. So it's finding that way to get that balance.'

These arrangements generally involved working a day from home, or moving their core hours – Respondent AA shifted from a 9-6 day to an 8-5 day. These women generally had their children in full-time, long-houred childcare. Trying to juggle work and family is not easy and women find there is never enough time, as expressed by Respondent V:

> 'I just need to be 2 people to do it, cos there's not enough time. That's the fundamental problem, that there just isn't enough. I tried giving up sleep for a while, that was the only way I could get the work done.'

The job-changers

Another popular method of combining work and family was through a change in career-path. Family-friendly career paths for women were seen to be running ones own business, being a university academic, or working in the public sector, in accordance with findings by Maher et al. (2004). Three women interviewed were moving into academia due to its more flexible work schedule, and eight women had their own business or were commencing their own business to combine children and work.

Of the women interviewed, nine worked in the public sector and seven in the university sector.[55] They were generally all fairly positive about the work-life balance policies in place in their workplace, perceiving them to be good environments in which to have children. Respondent T moved from the corporate to the community legal sector and found work-life balance, something that had been lacking previously:

> 'I didn't have anytime to do anything except for work. There was a lot of pressure on me to work weekends, one time I made a special arrangement, I was going to a course actually, at 7 o'clock at night, and as I was walking out the door the boss said, she

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[55] some as academics, some in administration

was talking to me about loyalty, and saying 'where did my priorities lie?' At 7 o'clock at night, and I'd been there since 7 o'clock that morning. Cos, I'd gone in early cos I knew I wanted to leave early, and I had been there the previous weekend, both Saturday and Sunday.'

Her new workplace can better facilitate her desires to start a family:

'It is a very family-friendly workplace. I wouldn't have felt comfortable to continue working in my old job, whereas this job I look forward to be able to have maternity leave, come back part-time.'

Respondent W enforces the family-friendly nature of the public sector:

'I think a lot of women end up working in the Government sector because there is a lot more flexibility around, and a lot more offerings around family-friendly policies. So you actually see a lot of women in their mid-thirties going and working for the government as they figure that out. Because in the private sector, there's just not the availability to do that. So, a lot of women who worked in law and things like that which are very inflexible professions, end up making career choices outside of that.'

These less flexible career paths will be discussed below.

CASE STUDY 4

Jillian

Age: early 40s
Marital Status: Married 20 years
Children: 5 year old son
Lives: Fairlight

Jillian would have been classed as 'childless by choice' (Cannold 2005). She and her husband had originally made the decision that they did not want children as they felt it would have adversely impacted their careers and lifestyle. They had been in a stable, committed relationship for 15 years before she re-thought this decision:

'My husband and I have been married like nearly 20 years now, and we'd decided at the beginning we weren't going to have children. … So, we left it a long time. … Neither of us were particularly interested, I just couldn't imagine myself having all these children running around and screaming, and stuff like that. I just couldn't imagine myself like that, and my husband was certainly not into children.'

When she got to 35 she began to think she might regret not having children and her husband indicated that if she wanted to have children he would support her decision. She decided she would try for a child but it was never a desperate thing and she would have been happy either way.

'We didn't think having a child was going to make us any happier. We were happy already.'

5 Findings and Discussion

Jillian ended up having a son. Before her son was born she had a fairly high-powered corporate job in the financial sector. She was in a managerial position with about five people reporting to her. She had originally planned to go back to work at her original employer starting on two days a week, then three days and seeing how that went:

> 'What I wanted to do, I wanted to go back gradually, and they said 'no, you're in a managerial position, you cannot do that.' And I said 'well, like 'hello', what century are we in? … they said 'five days a week or nothing.' And then they said 'oh we might be able to find you something else.' And I said 'what, special projects? No thanks.''

Therefore, she used the dispute with her employer as an opportunity for a career change. She resigned and, until her son was 18 months old, she cared for him full-time whilst completing her PhD. She then began doing sessional work as a lecturer in universities and is now commencing a full-time position as a university academic. She sees this is the best possible outcome, but when she first had her son she was worried she would not be able to get back into the workforce, and she's aware that things might not have turned out so well:

> 'I see all those threads are coming together, but five years ago when my son was born I couldn't have seen this outcome at all. I thought: 'How am I ever going to get another job? Who's going to employ me?' you know, I don't want to go back and work five days a week, you know, 12-hour days and put my son in care from 7 o'clock in the morning until 7 o'clock at night.'

She finds the hours and flexibility of academia conducive to managing work and family. She has a certain teaching load, but will also be able to work from home. She'll be on campus the days that her son is in pre-school, but doesn't have to be on campus all the time.

Here we see an example of the corporate employment structure being unaccommodating to the combination of work and family and alienating women as a result. If more flexible workplace structures, as Jillian experiences as an academic, could be implemented throughout all workplaces this would much better facilitate women's participation in work and family life.

5.5.2 Workplace flexibility

Family-friendly workplaces are flexible workplaces with readily available part-time work (Maher et al. 2004). Twenty-six women, more than half those interviewed, felt that they worked in flexible workplaces, and 20 women knew of explicit family-friendly policies in place in their workplace. Nine women were in workplaces where, while there were no explicit policies in place to provide work-life balance, negotiations could be made with their employer on a one-to-one basis, so it was necessary to be proactive in gaining access to those options. Moreover, 14 women

articulated that flexibility is about a give and take, you need to work with your employers to come to a mutually suitable arrangement. Respondent BB expressed, that from the perspective of a manager, where both parties are flexible you can find the most mutually beneficial outcome:

> 'It's not just 'can I have the time off?' or not or 'I'm sorry I'm not going to be able to…' but 'how do we work together?' and I think it's a strategy.'

Where women can be accommodating, they find their employer to be more accommodating. When flexibility is allowed, it is indeed making it easier for women to combine work and family. For Respondent CC, it meant having children sooner:

> 'The decision to have children at this point in our lives was undoubtedly made easier by the fact that we're both working in institutions where there had a family-friendly leaning. If I'd been working in an organisation where it weren't so easy, and if I'd been on a career path where the impact of me taking time out to have children was, I knew, going to be significant, that probably would've affected our decision-making definitely. … I know it would have been more difficult if I were in a different sort of environment. Or if I weighted career above everything else, which I don't, career is important to me, but I acknowledge that, unfortunately we still have to…in some way sacrifice career to have children. I wish it weren't like that…particularly women.'

Respondent CC recognised that even in family-friendly organisations, having children does impact your career.

Respondent O also felt very lucky to be in a workplace which allows her control and flexibility:

> 'I couldn't be luckier in terms of the work environment that I do work in. because it's incredibly flexible. So my thoughts at the moment are to take between six months and a year off, and I'm able to do that. That's fantastic, and I'm also able to organise to go back after six months, from what I've read, it almost seems like I can dictate and say 'ok I want to come back two days a week.' Or at least I can ask for that and they might say 'look, we really need you three.' So that's really good too.'

Moreover, as suggested by Bittman et al. (2004), work-life balance policies are generating positive impacts within workforces through increased employee loyalty and productivity. Respondent J articulated the importance of flexibility:

> 'Because at the end of the day, you give back much more, there's this perception that if you're not at work, you're not working, but that's not true, because if you're at home, you know, I answer emails at 11 o'clock at night sometimes, or 7 o'clock in the morning, or whatever. But the work gets done, but sometimes I can't do it between 9 and 5 because I have other things I need to do, or other responsibilities, or whatever.

So, it doesn't mean to say that, just because you're not in the office, doesn't mean that you're not doing something.'

This feeling of goodwill towards their employers, and increased productivity and job satisfaction through gaining access to flexible arrangements was felt by 11 women. Good employers recognise the implementation of family-friendly policies as a way to retain highly-trained, valued staff members, an increasingly important concern with the impending skills shortage as discussed by Earle (2002). This was expressed by Respondent W:

'I think it's (family-friendly policies) incredibly important, and I think in the future you're going to find the firms that make a real effort to provide them are actually going to end up with a great skill-set, or some very talented people who remain loyal to the organisation.'

In Respondent DD's workplace they have a lot of long-term staff as a result of this approach:

'The way to retain that knowledge and skill base is not to disengage with them when they're having kids.'

A sad corollary of this idea is that more benefits and flexibility accrue to the longer serving, more valued staff members, as found by Gray and Tudball (2002). This perception was expressed by eight women. As pointed out by Respondent X, seniority gives you bargaining power:

'Obviously, the more senior you are, the more able you are to negotiate those things. … I think the more senior you are, the more you can make it fit you. … If you're a good fit for the team anyway, then they are going to be a bit flexible to make sure they keep you.'

This lends itself to an environment where women feel they need to put a lot of effort into building up their careers before they will be able to manage becoming mothers, supporting Mitchell's (2004) findings. Respondent U pointed out that this is a huge disincentive to having children, when career building time is also at the time most women are considering having children, during their 30s:

'There's not enough time in terms of the biological clock to do it all.'

This supports views of Bryson (2001) and Craig (2005) that the individualistic focus on private market arrangements contributes to declining fertility. Further, where women are forced to negotiate for family-friendliness, rather than having explicit

policies in place, it can put a huge burden on them to prove themselves, adding extra stress into the already stressful mix of work and family, as experienced by Respondent G:

> ''Proof of the pudding is in the eating.' In the first probably two years, I set up the Sydney office three and a half years ago, I was the first one here, and I said this is what I've done ever since my son was born. And they had a lot of resistance, I was not allowed to tell other partners that that was 'my deal'. I had a full-time budget, I've got a full organisational load, a full client load, and it's only after I've showed them that it was going to work by actually making it work, that there was an acceptance, begrudgingly, of that situation.'

Clearly such policies need to be made available to all employees to prevent career development impinging upon women's fertility.

By far the most difficult situation to navigate for a would-be-mum, is an inflexible workplace. While more than half the women interviewed felt they worked in flexible workplaces, nine women explicitly stated they found their workplace to be inflexible, and 10 women were in workplaces with no family-friendly policies in place. Respondent E still feels there is not enough flexibility in her workplace, and in workplaces in general, particularly for working mothers:

> 'I think there just has to be more slack for the working mothers… I've had his bag packed, I've finally had his teeth brushed, hair brushed, and at the door and you go 'oh' and you just get this whiff and you think 'oh my god' and you turn them round and there's baby poo from neck to knee. You have to strip them, you have to bath them, you have to dry them, you have to re-dress them and then get them out, and you know, that can take 20 minutes, half an hour. But, I can't take him to daycare like that. So you know, I just write on my time sheet now 'faecal issue', and if they want to know more I'll give them pictures.'

Respondent E has had bad experiences with flexibility, despite working in the public sector. Her commitment to her employer has suffered as a result and she is looking to change careers. Ultimately the loss in this situation is her employer's, as she points out:

> 'I really think, that if they want to keep, I mean I've been there for six and a half years, I've got a lot of knowledge that I can never ever put down on paper, but if somebody asked me a question I could tell them an answer. If they want to keep that corporate knowledge, even if it was only three or four days a week, that's got to be better than losing me totally. And if they can't accommodate that level of flexibility, then there's something wrong. There's plenty of private industry places that have done it…what's the issue?'

5 Findings and Discussion

Moreover, even where there are family-friendly policies on paper they can become lost in practice as indicated by Respondent T:

> 'My prior workplace said that they had a family-friendly policy, and they specifically advertised a couple of positions there for three days a week, which was sort of for working mums. But the working mums who were at the workplace left during the time that I was there, and my senior associate who I was working with, who was supposed to be working three days, was working six and getting paid for three. They thought they had a family-friendly environment but they just didn't. They had every good intention, it wasn't that they were deliberately flouting their own rules, it's just that the pressure of running, it was a small commercial firm, akin to a sole practice, so the pressure to build was always seen like an immediate pressure, so that always overrode the policy.'

The application of flexible policies does really depend upon the attitudes of the manager, a perspective articulated by 13 women. Respondent H is lucky to have an understanding manager, and her attempts to work flexibly have been easier as a result:

> 'He knows it's about getting the job done. It's not about the hours you put in, it's the output that you deliver, and the time you put in.'

Respondent T sums up the importance of flexibility:

> 'The main thing is I'm actually healthier, when I was working full-time all my money went on takeaway food cos I just didn't have the time to feed myself the sort of things I wanted to eat. So, I've got more time to exercise, I've got more time to eat properly. When I was working those hours I was single, so it was sort of almost compensating for the fact that I didn't have much else to do. And so, as I started developing other interests…I was getting more balanced in my life, but work didn't agree with me. So now working 35 hours a week, I've got time to spend with my family, I've got time to have a relationship.'

CASE STUDY 5

Elizabeth

Age: 38
Marital Status: Married
Children: 1
Lives: Marrickville

Elizabeth was a 'waiter and watcher' (Cannold 2005). She'd always liked children but wasn't desperate to have them:

> 'if we hadn't have been able to have children naturally then I wouldn't have been crushed by that fact. It wasn't sort of 'my life is not complete unless I have a child.' But yes, I do like children, I've always like children…'

5 Findings and Discussion

It was important for her to be in the right circumstances before having a child. They needed to be at the right point economically, and she wanted to feel established in her career and as a person:

> 'I had to be sure enough in myself that I had established myself in my career, as a person, and I had done that.'

Her ultimate decision to have a child at the time they did was due to a restructure at work, meaning her job changed. She was not as happy in the new job, so she felt it would be a good time to have a child as her career would not be so greatly impacted.

Elizabeth works for Local Council, a sector normally considered to be very family-friendly. However, she has had a lot of problems with her employer. She had a dispute with her employer about her payment over the year maternity leave she took. She wanted to take her annual leave at half-pay, in combination with her maternity leave at half-pay, so that they would have some money coming in for most of that year, but her employer did not want to set a precedent for this arrangement:

> 'In the end, the union and I took them to court and we won. And the new…award came up 6 months later and they used my case as an example in the award and now the award has changed for local government, that if you want, in a maternity leave situation, if you wish to take any accrued leave you have at half-rate, you can.'

Her workplace also made her transition back to work quite difficult, as they were very inflexible and expected her to return to a full-time load immediately:

> 'Our award states that whatever you have when you left, whatever conditions you were on, that's what you should come back to. I had to fight to get my car back, they didn't want to give me my car back. They didn't give me a mobile phone back until I had been back six months. And when I went back and said 'Look I'm having trouble adjusting, I'm trying to finish my masters degree, I'm trying to settle my child into daycare, I'm trying to settle back into full-time work,' I said 'I need to only work three or four days a week, I just can't cope.' I was given, I was allowed to work four days a week for four weeks. That was it! That was my transition back into work!'

Elizabeth would like to have an extra day off each week to allow her more involvement in her child's life, but she has been unable to make this arrangement:

> 'I'd like to have the middle day of the week off, so that, if it rains at the end of the week it's not a crushing blow to my washing. Or I can get my haircut another day of the week so I can spend more time with my son. … It just means I could take breath and our weekends could be more of a recreational thing rather than a domestic chore thing. That's why I want Wednesdays – to catch up.'

She sees herself as a productive, committed employee and feels her workplace should be more accommodating of that, as she is accommodating towards them:

> 'I figure that if I do the after hours work and don't sort of take any time in lieu or overtime or anything, if I'm 10 minutes late getting into work then, they can bear it, and you know if they can't, then stuff them, because I give my time absolutely when I'm there, and they're just going to have to learn to give me a little bit of give and take.'

Her difficulties with her employer prompted her to look for another job but she found this was difficult, partly because workforce perceptions of her had changed since becoming a mother:

> 'So I started to look for work but…I had a child, which shouldn't impair your ability to get a job but it does…'

Elizabeth is now building towards a career move into academia, as she sees this is a more flexible vocation in which to combine work and children.

She is lucky to be in an equal-parenting style relationship where her and her husband share the domestic load and arrange their work and chores in such a way as to maximise quality time with their son.

Elizabeth is a clear demonstration of inflexible workplaces losing out by alienating skilled staff members. Where workplaces are more flexible and provide policies that accommodate worker's external responsibilities, they encourage staff loyalty and productivity.

5.5.3 De-stigmatising part-time work

A further problem inhibiting women's workforce participation that was identified in the literature review is the stigma associated with part-time work. This was supported through the interviews. Five women felt part-time work was lowly paid, and nine women perceived it offers a lack of opportunities and privileges. Respondent G made 'flexible' rather than part-time arrangements, to facilitate her combination of work and family, due to the stigma of part-time work:

> 'That's why I say it's 'flexible' not 'part-time'. The minute you say 'part-time' there's an automatic revision in terms of what you are, your output, and therefore, what you're getting paid for it.'

Three women felt they would not be challenged in a part-time role, whilst six women felt that a part-time role was essentially the same workload as a full-time role, the only difference being pay. Respondent L is sceptical about the use of part-time arrangements:

> 'I don't know how effective they are. I mean, it's great to have them down on paper, but the reality of the situation is, you work until you get the job done, and then you still have the family to go home to. Really, everybody has to work, you just have to get the job done. Even if you're working three days I can just imagine that a lot of jobs take five days of your time.'

5 Findings and Discussion

Despite its stigmatisation, 23 women supported the use of job-sharing, and 22 women believed the availability of part-time work was important. If part-time work was allowed the same privileges and opportunities as full-time work, it would make women's choice to have children an easier one. In accordance with ideas articulated by Earle (2002) eight women discussed that with the growing war for talent this will have to happen. As articulated by Respondent X:

> 'At my current workplace in the last few years, we've had a few senior associates fall pregnant, but none of them have managed to successfully come back to work more than two days a week. So they haven't really managed to come back to where they left off. Small part-time hours, being excluded from interesting transactions, to the point where one's, after only six months back, said 'I'm not doing this, this just doesn't work.' So in some ways that's really discouraging when you see that happen. … At some point somebody does have to make it work, because…certainly in the legal profession, more than 50% of graduates are women, more than 50% of the intake of the clerks and stuff are women, the senior associates are getting that way as well. So where are they drawing the partners from? This little group of men? And that's just not feasible. So it has to work, and firms have to become more flexible, for survival I think.'

Respondent U's workplace experiences indicate how effective job-sharing can be in terms of attracting quality staff:

> 'Talking with some friends of mine in the private sector, we were saying how difficult it is at the moment to find really good HR people. And someone was saying that they recently advertised a full-time job and got really sort-of mediocre candidates. And then decided to re-advertise it and saying 'job-share a possibility' and just got fantastic candidates, in terms of, particularly I suppose because HR is probably more female than male people in the profession. And, if you're looking for people who've got good experience but are not just about to retire, then you're really looking at a lot of people who have got kids. Whether they're at school, or younger. So I think there are real benefits for employers right now to have that flexibility. And have those family-friendly arrangements, in terms of being able to get the calibre of people they're looking for.'

These women are available to work, just not the 'more than full-time' hours demanded of jobs today. Shutting off the workforce to them means losing talent and a wasted investment in their education, as expressed by respondent JJ:

> 'I can see a whole generation of women's education getting flushed down the toilet because we can't get back into the workforce.'

Ultimately it is the employers who will benefit from increased flexibility through higher quality and more productive employees. This was articulated by Respondent R, but she feared there is a trend towards inflexibility in workplaces:

'Unfortunately it's very difficult to find good quality part-time work, at all. Which is the only reason I took this job in the first place, cos, otherwise you'd tend to get paid ridiculous dollars, even if you've got a wealth of experience and training behind you. So often you have to start in a place full-time, and then try and work your way part-time. But yeah, so it's unfortunate, and I think it's very short-sighted, and certainly this current federal government does not support, and there seems to be a trend in business to being inflexible. Like, I'm seeing it in council, it's frightening. Just how inflexible they are in hours, and job-share is going backwards, which is really a shame. Because you get a hell of a lot more out of your part-time workers than you do your full-time workers. Without a doubt. And I've worked part-time obviously, and I know I gave a hell of a lot more part-time than I will ever do full-time. Because you're there, you get in there, do it, get out. And you're motivated because you've got free time to do other things. Now, where you're back working in this for long hours in a day, you've just got no energy to do other things and eventually you get a resentment from that. And so, you give less during the day because you're tired. So it's crazy.'

It seems attitudinal change is necessary. Respondent H discussed the need for a change in the way we think jobs can be performed, moving away from the traditional five-day-a-week roles, towards more flexible options, which better enable women to progress their career whilst having a family:

'I think it's very hard for couples today…to have two jobs of equal standing, in that family environment. … It's easier to have one that's the prime role, and one that's secondary. … But then, you know, someone's job, you always feel is taking a backseat to the other. Which, if you're both happy with that, then that's ok, but then…very often it will probably end up being the women, and then if you're trying to have a career of some sort, it's quite difficult. And a lot of women I know want to work part-time rather than full-time, and it's almost like, if you're part-time, you can't, you know, you won't get considered for promotion, there's only certain jobs you can do on a part-time basis, because…we think this is the only way the job can be done, rather than thinking, you know, how can this job be done? Can it be done by two people sharing? And all those sorts of things.'

Respondent W supported the need for attitudinal change, having personally experienced altered status in the workplace when she moved to working four days part-time after the birth of her daughter:

'It would be in the big picture, in terms of saying, if you work part-time, it isn't any less than working full-time. But I think that's a systemic perception of people in the workplace, not just here, but across Australia. Because I found that your status really declined quite dramatically coming back such shortened hours, so I think that would be one thing. And the other thing would be if there were more job-sharing practices, because that's one thing that I just haven't seen any evidence of, and it just doesn't make any sense why not. So, if that was more common practice, it would actually make it quite easy to work part-time. … The workplace in general, it's really more about perceptions, and the overall workplace feeling about what is important, and what is a full-time job, I think that's one thing that needs to be debated a little bit more fully.'

5 Findings and Discussion

It is only when such workplace diversity is accepted, that women will be able move further towards equality within the workplace and society as a whole.

5.5.4 Work-Life balance for all, not family-friendliness for some

Clearly policies which allow work-life balance are necessary, not just for women to balance work and family, but to provide a balanced life for all. This is articulated by Cannold (2005) and supported by many of the childless women interviewed. In the words of Respondent II, currently single and childless:

> 'I'm not a classic career woman at all. I hope your definition of professional extends to someone who likes earning enough money to have a happy lifestyle, but I don't want to bust my balls. I don't want a job where I'm stressed out of my head. I want a happy life, and for me the balance is really really important. I want time to exercise, I want time to read. I like my lifestyle the way it is at the moment, my job at the moment's really cruisy.'

Eleven childless women commented that there's an expectation that they will not use work-life balance policies, and as a single or childless person they can devote infinite hours to the workplace. In Respondent FF's case she was in fact denied part-time work because her request wasn't based upon family reasons:

> 'I've found that, I for example have asked to work part-time, even sort of four days a week or a nine day fortnight. And because I don't have children, and there's not an external socially acceptable reason for me to do that, other than that I'd like to have a bit of time to do other things, it's not at all been facilitated. I feel very resentful, because why should I need to have an external reason such as children to work part-time?'

Women are acknowledging the fact that they want time for many things. Six women interviewed were actively seeking work-life balance, purely for personal reasons unrelated to family. A further eight women discussed seeking work-life balance to accommodate their families. As Respondent HH articulated, flexible policies should be available to everyone to enjoy life:

> 'Because I love life too much, and I don't want to give up my life for work.'

Policies need to recognise, we are diverse people who have many facets to our lives We are not merely workers or mothers. We are all these and more, as expressed by Respondent CC:

5 Findings and Discussion

> 'While my work is important to me, it's not the only thing that defines me, just as, my daughter is incredibly important to me, but my parenting her isn't the only thing that defines me.'

While it vital that women choosing to have children are accommodated within the workplace, the desire of people without children to seek fulfilment outside their work should also be allowed. Policies need to allow time for everyone to do with what they would; be that family time, time to meet people, or just time to breathe. Only when the same rights and freedoms are granted to all workers will work-life balance policies be truly accepted, and equality achieved in the workplace. This is articulated by Respondent L, a childless woman:

> 'I think if they were put into practice, everyone would feel more comfortable about using them. I think there are a lot of women out there who don't feel comfortable using them, or asking for them. And I think, also, that there's a lot of resentment within companies towards people that do use them. And, as a single person I can see why you'd say this but, 'Why are they getting the benefits because having children is a choice?' I remember working in a department where there was a woman worked one day a week from home, but her child was seven, and it was like 'well, why? What does she do?' and there's that kind of resentment there. If you're going to have a family-friendly workplace, then it has to be more broad than that. It has to be a people-friendly workplace, because otherwise, it feels like the single people are taking the burden of the work. And that's the way I feel sometimes.'

For the needs of mothers and would be mothers to be accommodated within the workplace it is imperative that respect is given to the lifestyle needs of all workers, only then will family-friendly workplaces be truly able to flourish.

CASE STUDY 6

Pamela

Age: 33
Marital Status: De Facto
Children: 0
Lives: Bellevue Hill/Bondi

Pamela would be classed as a 'waiter and watcher' (Cannold 2005) when it comes to having children. She's the sort of woman who's neither shut off to the idea of children nor desperate to have them. Rather, she would like children if the right circumstances in terms of factors, such as partner and career came to pass:

> 'It's never been something where I go 'oh I really want children.' It's more if I had the right partner, the right situation financially, and where I live, etc. Yeah, I'd like to

be open to it. But I've never had the hormonal 'I need kids' sort of thing, beyond any other of those questions. You know, some people just want the kids and then it's like they need to find that boyfriend to do it with. Whereas for me, it was more the other way around. Like, if I have a good relationship, and that person wants them as well, I wouldn't be closed to the idea. But, I've never had the real drive. … I've never really had that clock ticking or anything like that.'

She doesn't feel the 'biological clock' that other interviewees referred to. For her, to have a child, it's very important to have a stable relationship first. This was a viewpoint articulated by many of the women interviewed.

Pamela is more ambivalent about children than a lot of women. She is quite happy in her life without children, and although she thinks she would have a lot to offer as a mother, she would be equally happy not to have children. Indeed, in her current relationship, her partner already has two children from a previous marriage, and they do not plan on having children as a couple. She is very happy with this situation as she still gets to enjoy time with her partner's children, without the perceived impacts of having her own children:

'I don't have to give up my career, I don't have to change anything about my life, to incorporate them into my life.'

Pamela is quite career-driven, and she feels this may impact upon her feelings and desires in relation to having children:

'It would be a hard one to say 'oh I'm going to give up my job,' or whatever, for kids.'

She's originally from the Netherlands, and perceives the workplace and policy environment there to be far more family-friendly than in Australia where she feels she would have to give up her job in order to have children:

'The whole part-time, or job sharing. It's very hard to organise with employers. So what I would probably do is set up my own business, and start working as a consultant, or doing part-time work, or work from home a lot, and doing a virtual office kind of thing. I find the option of staying in a company limits career prospects a lot. I've seen most women who want to come back in their role after they have had that baby. They come back in roles, if they work less than four days a week, or whatever, it's a different role, it's not as challenging. … Because your employers just say 'look, you can't be a line manager, you can't manage a team of people, if you work part-time, or you work three days a week, we don't accept that. Whereas I've seen other countries, obviously in Holland, for example, it's normal. You get two people managing a particular role, and that's more accepted by society, by people who work for those managers, but also by the employers themselves, and by clients and suppliers as well. In Australia, what they find really hard now, companies who deal with clients or customers, and the customer has to deal with a different person, depending on the day they're in the department, because there's two different women in the role part-time. They find that hard, it's not accepted culturally, you know, customers don't like it.'

Whilst Pamela is very career-driven, the need for work-life balance is also important to her. She negotiated an agreement with her employers to work a four-day-week.

5 Findings and Discussion

This was purely for the reason that she wanted more balance in her life, and time for her other interests. While her employer had made these sorts of arrangements with employees with families, she was single at the time and the arrangement was entirely about time for herself:

> 'I work four days, cos I asked for a four day work week. And not cos I have kids, so it's a really special arrangement I guess. Basically what I did, cos I have a lot of different interests apart from work, I study a lot of massage, and music. I do lots and lots of other things…and I think fice days a week is a bit out of balance in terms of, there's seven in a week, so five days at work, that seems a bit much. … So basically I wanted to spend more time studying that, and doing that so I told my employer that I could do what I do in four days, if I have some help from a junior person doing some administrative sort of assistance once a week for one day, and if I can then have four days a week work week. And initially they said 'oh what do you mean?' and I said 'well, this is what I really really want to do for myself, and personal development, etc. I can understand if it's too difficult for you, and no hard feelings if you have to say 'look we can't allow it because other people will want the same and we can't allow it for everybody. I understand, but just tell me what you want.' And they came back and said 'yeah we actually want to keep you.' You know, because I was actually doing a very good job in what I was doing. Yeah, they saw that I, sort of, had a big picture overview of how I could do the job properly. I didn't just walk to them and say 'can I have four days' I actually said 'This is how it would work…' and, yeah, that was fine. So, since October last year, so nearly a year now, I've been working four days. Which is fantastic.'

This working arrangement has given her a great lifestyle and made her a more productive employee:

> 'Cos every Wednesday, I have the day off, so it's like a, sort of, two day work week in terms of that. Whereas, in terms of the work, I mean, it doesn't really impact me that much. It's almost as though, if you get a lot of break, like if you get the weekend, and the Wednesday off, it's like you're more switched on on the days that you're there. Whereas the whole five day, I think a lot of people get less productive and, you know. And Fridays, I don't think people actually do any work, whereas I do a lot of work, when I'm there I'm actually doing it, and when I'm off, I'm off doing other stuff. I find it quite useful that way, and I'd certainly recommend it for any employer to sort of look at that sort of concept, because I get paid for four days, obviously it's not, you know, they have to expend the money on the fifth day. And I think if they do that more flexibly with other people as well, it could create a more happy and more productive workplace in that sense.'

Ultimately her employers have responded well to it, and she enjoys and values her employer more as a result. She does not feel her career has been adversely impacted by working a four-day-week and her employers still offer her the same opportunities as a full-time employee. In this way, flexible working arrangements can be seen to be beneficial for employer and employee, and for all employees, whether or not they have a family.

5.6 Women and place

The majority of women interviewed lived in the inner-city, 15 from the inner-west, eight from the eastern suburbs, and four from the lower north shore. Thirteen women from more suburban areas were also interviewed.

The increasing popularity of inner-city living was evinced among the women interviewed. Bondi's (1992) view of professional women as 'agents of gentrification' is supported in this research. Respondent E, a resident of Marrickville, believed there has been a baby boom in the inner-west over the past few years, and discussed the reasons behind it:

> 'If you look at the demographic and why that happened – in the inner-west, the young couples bought in here with high disposable incomes, and then suddenly the DINKS have gone 'holy shit, you know, we're in our late 30s or early 40s, if we're going to do it, we've got to do it now. We really don't want to move out of the inner-west, because all of our networks are here, and the lifestyle's good. And so we don't want to move, certainly don't want to move west out to the 'burbs. The north shore, yeah maybe,' but the leafy north shore doesn't hold great attractions for a lot of people. So they stay, and they're actually staying more and more. Marrickville council's changing from sort of, a house style childcare for 20 kids, to a 50 place centre they're going to build down on the park there. Because that's what they need to keep up with demand, and they won't keep up with demand.'

People are choosing to have children in the inner-city for the reasons discussed by Respondent E. These will be examined, along with factors which are inducing families to move away from the inner-city.

5.6.1 Myth of ¼ Acre Block

Despite the preference for inner-city living amongst the women interviewed, it was interesting to discover that the myth of the Australian family quarter-acre block is still pervasive. The opinions expressed by Sydney Morning Herald readers in 'Children can't play cricket in an apartment', that a garden is essential, were echoed by 13 women interviewed. Respondent X, currently living in an apartment in Rose Bay, articulated the 'Australian' backyard dream:

> 'I think it makes a real difference once you have kids, that living in a box doesn't necessarily suit that lifestyle. … I guess it is a reflection of my childhood, and what I did when I was growing up, and what you'd like to pass onto your kids. You'd like to go out in the backyard and kick a football around, or to have your totem tennis up,

and hit the ball around. … Obviously there are parks, and you can utilise parks, but it's not the same as it being your own backyard, and you can just go out and play and know that it's a safe environment.'

Of the women interviewed, 15 live in apartments, nine live in townhouses or terraces, and 16 live in houses. Six women moved when they had children, as they needed more space. Another six women said they would move if they had children, and a further eight women said they might move. Inner-city terraces or apartments do not easily accommodate children, as expressed by Respondent AA who moved from a terrace in Newtown, to a house in Dulwich Hill, to make more room for her family:

> 'When they're little it doesn't matter, but once they're up and walking, they need space. And sometimes you just want them out of the house, but they're too small to go to the park by themselves. A noisy child is much noisier inside a house than outside it. So if they can play outside safely somewhere where they can kick a ball around, have a trampoline, have a swing set, whatever it is. And you don't have to worry about some, you know, stranger danger, or anything like that. That's perfect. And it's very hard to get that with a little terrace with a pocket handkerchief sized courtyard.'

Conversely, only four women were perfectly happy to bring their children up in smaller spaces. Respondent M, who lives in Potts Point, did not see the necessity for a garden:

> 'Being next door to The Cross, I'm not sure it's the best sort of environment. But in saying that, um, I think it's a beautiful part of the world… I think inner-city living all around has its sort of limitations, you know, the way Sydney's sort of set up. But, you know, I've gotten used to that over a period of time, and I don't think it would be a tragedy to bring up a child in that kind of environment. I'm not one to have to have this huge big backyard, and, you know, this whole house set up, and all this space, and I think you can get around that with parks and shared areas and other ways of doing it.'

5.6.2 Sydney Kid/Country Kid

The ideal of space for a family is influenced by the women's own upbringing, and seemed more prevalent in those who had grown up in more rural areas, or smaller cities where larger spaces are more attainable. Nine women interviewed grew up in the country, and eight women grew up in a city other than Sydney. Nine women discussed the perceived problems associated with raising children in a large metropolis like Sydney, whilst four women felt there are a lot of positives associated with raising a child in the city. Women are feeling a conflict in relation to what they perceive is best for their children – space, safety – and what is best for themselves in

terms of lifestyle, with 21 women seeing the city as integral to their lifestyle. This contradiction was expressed by Respondent F who now lives in Artarmon but grew up outside Canberra:

> 'I'm glad we've moved back to Sydney because we are kind of city people. But I can't imagine raising a child in the city. And I've thought about this quite often 'what would that child learn?', 'Where would his adventures be?' you know, down at the park? How exciting... (sarcastic). And we'd have to take them bushwalking if we wanted to get them out. Cos I have this really kind of negative view about raising a child in the city. But then I can't imagine being anywhere else, I mean we can hardly go back to where I come from or where he comes from, we haven't got the infrastructure, you know.'

Respondent BB saw raising children in a large city like Sydney as very complex in comparison to a country town like Orange, where she lived for a number of years:

> '...the notion of raising a family in a more country town like that...is that you don't spend your life in a car. But most people that I know in Sydney, families who have children, at least one of the parents is travelling long distances, and usually both in time or space. Schools are in different suburbs, and there's issues as you go through the age groups and things. Stranger danger was coming up in Orange six or seven years ago, but comparatively speaking, the notion of do you let your children go and do things, there's a lot of factors in the city that impinges on if you've had a family, even before, I think. I would guess that people who are committed to living in a large city like Sydney, and who are thinking it though, and who are thinking about it, are thinking 'do I really want to go through with this because of the outcomes? Do I really want to go and live in Castle Hill? Out in a suburb where we could afford a house?' and then all the implications of that. I mean, obviously lots of people do, but if you're going to make a rational choice, it's getting more difficult.'

5.6.3 Getting real about real-estate

A major factor that is making it more difficult to have children in Sydney is expressed by Respondent BB above. That is the cost of real-estate. All women mentioned the financial hardships of living in Sydney, supporting views expressed by Goward et al. (2005). The high cost of real-estate in Sydney and its place specific locus is demonstrated in figures 6 and 7.[56] Eighteen women felt they needed to wait until they were financially stable to have children; a factor of this is being able to afford a house, as articulated by Respondent S, currently living in Five Dock:

> 'We rent our house, and so, that's something that is always a big part of the decision making, is the economics of childrearing, and living in Sydney is a real issue, it's a

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[56] Figure 6 shows the proportion of weekly rent in excess of $500 per week and Figure 7 shows the proportion of monthly mortgage repayments in excess of $2000 per month in different areas of Sydney.
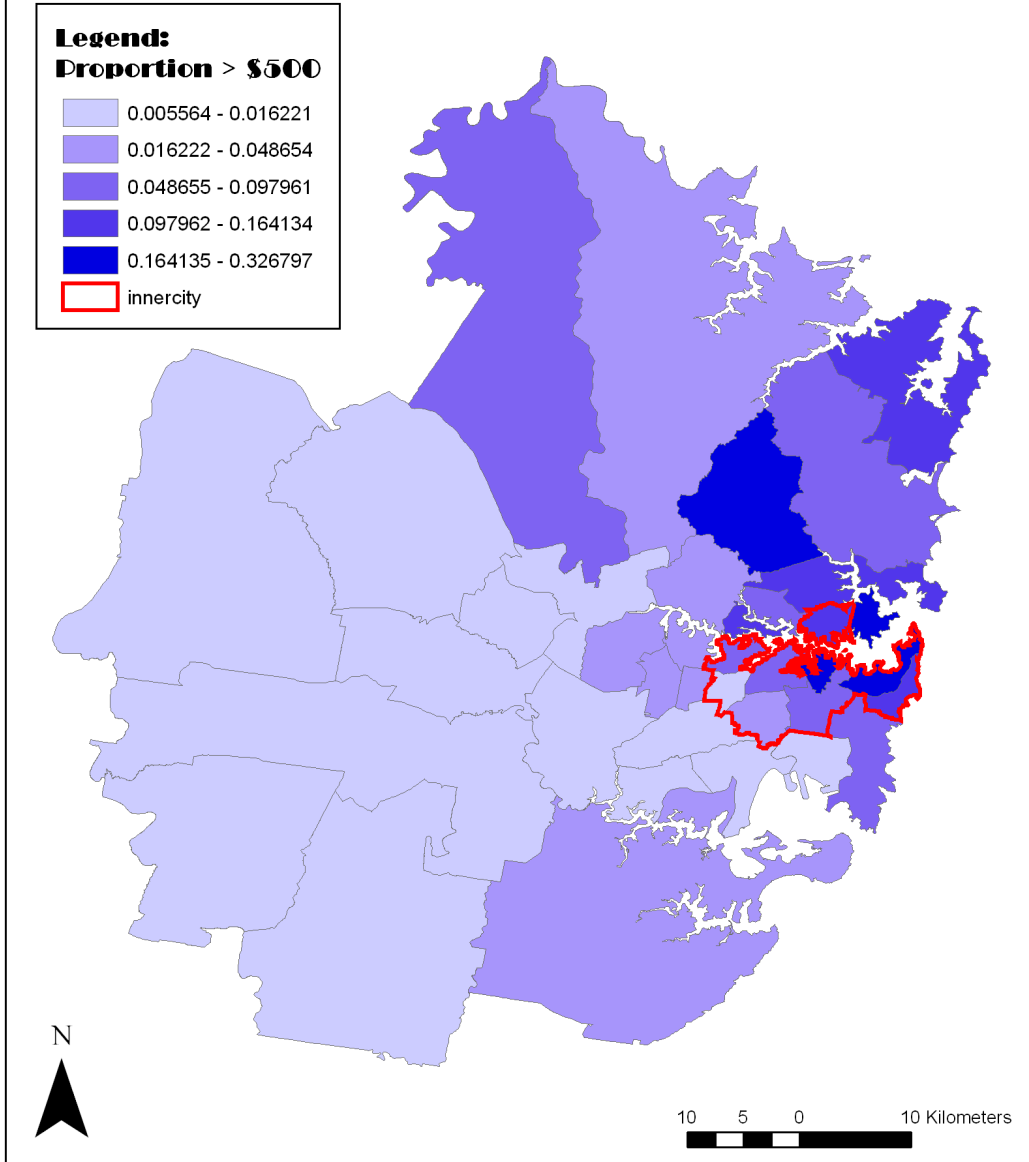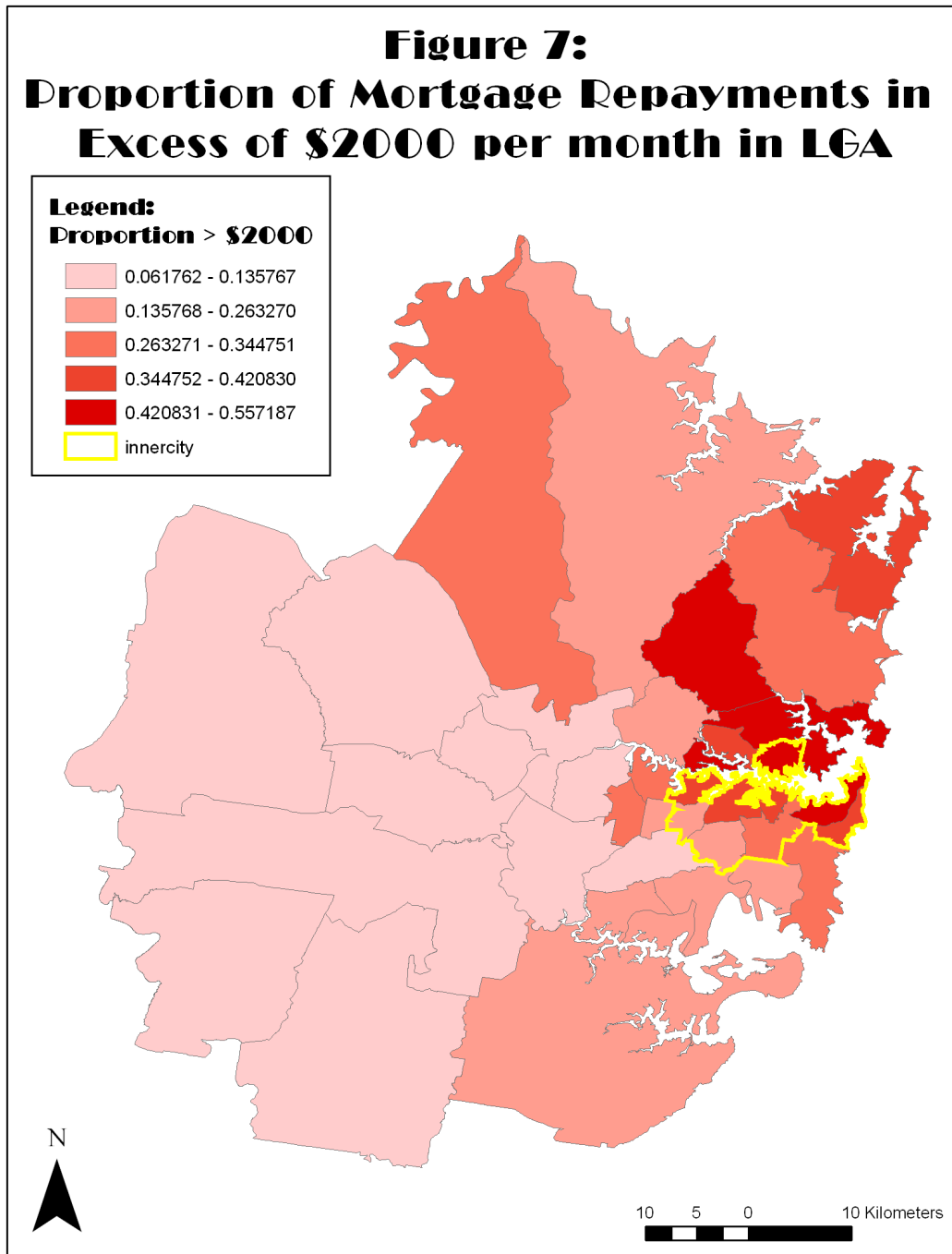
very strong contributing factor. I think, you know, many people make the decision that they won't have a family until they're financially stable, and to say you're financially stable in Sydney could mean a house with a pool and a double garage, but it's really hard to say in Sydney what financially stable is. And that is our biggest concern, that we don't necessarily have the financial resources to some of the commitments that we make as parents, so that's an overriding concern with everything that we do.'

Twenty-three women said that they perceived the area they live in to be expensive. Seven women discussed the possibility they may move away from Sydney to have children. Respondent Z who currently lives in Killara, but grew up in Melbourne was one of these women:

'We don't plan to raise children in Sydney. … Financially, we're not millionaires, we don't want to have a huge mortgage, but we would like them to have grass to play on, parks, we're between the highway and the train line. They won't be able to ride their bike up the street without one of us with them. We don't want to live two hours from where we work. So, neither of us plan to be in Sydney when we raise children, whether we move back to Melbourne, or, whether we just have a complete change of lifestyle, move to the country. Get the ¼ acre block and completely change what we're doing. But, unless you're really rich, I don't think Sydney is a great place to raise children. It's a great place to work, it's a great place to live as a young adult, or to retire to if you're lucky enough. But I don't think it's a place to raise children. It's just more the cost of living and the size of the city. I don't want to raise a child in a box which is really probably what we'd be able to afford. And by the same token, I don't want to, to get a house, or space, I don't want to be travelling two hours, that's time away from children. … I want somewhere safe for them to be able to play. I'm not saying that Sydney's not safe in that crime way. But, we're in an apartment block here, I couldn't let my daughter run around outside, highway, trainline. She can't walk up the street to meet a friend. And, my job's in the city, my husband's job's in the city. And if we stay with that sort of corporate lifestyle we're living in Wollongong, or Campbelltown, and we're not seeing her, because we're on a train.'

Figure 6: Proportion of Rents in Excess of $500 per week in LGA

Legend: Proportion > $500

- 0.005564 - 0.016221
- 0.016222 - 0.048654
- 0.048655 - 0.097961
- 0.097962 - 0.164134
- 0.164135 - 0.326797
- innercity

Figure 7:
Proportion of Mortgage Repayments in Excess of $2000 per month in LGA

Legend:
Proportion > $2000

- 0.061762 - 0.135767
- 0.135768 - 0.263270
- 0.263271 - 0.344751
- 0.344752 - 0.420830
- 0.420831 - 0.557187
- innercity

However, to uproot from your home, and move to the outskirts of Sydney, to another city, or to the country is a huge change in lifestyle. Overall 19 women living in the inner-city commented on the importance of where they live to their lifestyle whereas only three women from more suburban areas felt a similar attachment to their area. This potential loss of lifestyle could be preventing people from having children, as

suggested by Respondent GG who lives in Leichhardt, and enjoys the lifestyle and proximity to the city that allows her:

> 'I think people are holding back on having children because of the financial burden, I mean, houses are so expensive in Sydney, unless you were to move out to the edge of Penrith, you know, you kind of have to give up a lot.'

These sentiments were echoed by Respondent DD who lives in Rose Bay and who has thus far put off children for the very reason that she feels it will so dramatically alter her life:

> 'The other practical consideration is, we live in a beautiful part of town in what I like to describe as a 'shoebox' because it's such a tiny apartment. So, having kids is not only going to be change at work, it's going to cost us a million dollars if we want to move into a house in the same area.'

Respondent KK of Erskineville felt that being able to afford more space but being able to keep the lifestyle they enjoy would encourage them to have more children. The idea of sacrificing lifestyle for children is evidence supporting Bondi (1992) and Barnes (2001) in their theory that inner-city living is pushing women into male moulds and encouraging them to have less children. The greater equality these women are experiencing is a male equality based around economic competition. Children compromise this economic competitiveness through either lumbering parents with large mortgages or forcing women to move away from the inner-city, thus making workforce participation more difficult. The cost of real estate must be addressed to enable people to build families in Sydney without drastically compromising their standard of living.

5.6.4 Inner city community v Suburban seclusion

Despite these negative aspects there are a number of reasons the inner-city is becoming perceived as a desirable place to raise children. Firstly, in terms of standards of living, 19 women discussed not wanting to have to endure a long commute to work everyday. As articulated by Respondent M from Potts Point:

> 'Where I'd live might depend on work, in terms of where that is, because some of those factors might play a part, cos, you know, I'm not one to be driving millions of miles to get to work everyday or anything like that, and that's the advantage of living so close to the city, you can use that time for other things. … I think, ultimately, I'd

like to live fairly close to the city, I won't be packing the bags and moving out west or anything like that.'

Five women living in more suburban areas did not enjoy commuting to work with, Respondent FF of Eastwood feeling that two hours spent driving to and from work each day compromises her quality of life. Respondent EE from Lane Cove had to relocate her work, as she found the rush back home from the city to pick up her children up from childcare was incredibly stressful. Secondly, the services and facilities provided in close proximity to homes in the inner-city were seen as making childrearing easier. 21 women felt childcare facilities, schools, and medical facilities, including hospitals, were all very good in their areas. Eight women felt the councils provided well for families, with 20 women feeling their area had a lot of good parks. Moreover, the amenity of public transport was commented on by nine women, painting inner-city life in contrast to Darke's (1996) portrayal of the confinement of women to suburbia through poor off-peak public transport.

Nineteen women living in inner-city areas perceived their area to be good for children, and 14 women thought there were a lot of families in the area. Only six women considered moving to the suburbs for children. Some women, such as Respondent BB of Summer Hill, could not understand the allure of life in the suburbs:

> 'I have friends who live in suburban areas, and I can't see how they could bear to live there. … Suburban areas which don't also have a more, not business, community focus as well.'

While 11 women living in suburban areas felt their area was good for children, and felt there were a lot of families in the area, a surprising outcome of the research was that women in the inner-city were more positive about their area being family-friendly in general. This seemed to be due to the sense of community thriving in inner-city areas. Nine women felt there was a good sense of community in their inner-city areas. Two women (both from the eastern suburbs) felt the opposite. The benefits of inner-city living are articulated by Respondent KK, who lives in Erskineville:

> 'The community here is really amazing. There's heaps of young children, more and more all the time. And the people, I think, are just more community minded, much more friendly than say the eastern suburbs, the north shore, or anywhere like that. And there's really good facilities that are available, there's early childhood centres, there's the RPA which is where I gave birth, and more children are born there than

any other hospital in Australia. … The location in terms of public transport, schools, all those sort of things are great.'

This was not felt by mothers in lower-density suburbs who often felt quite isolated from other families, and did not perceive the same sense of community. Only three women from suburban areas commented on a good sense of community. Four women felt motherhood could be a very isolating experience, this was compounded by suburban living. Respondent JJ contrasted her feeling of isolation as a mother in Lane Cove, to the sense of community perceived in the inner-city:

> 'I don't feel like there's a lovely community spot where you can just go all the time, and there'll be someone you know there, and I'd love that. Because I do find the whole motherhood scene very isolating, and I'd love to have more of a sense of community. I'd love to be able to wander down to a park and know the people there, and the kids can play and I can have a chat to the mums. That would be really nice, and I think some suburbs you can get that. I don't know how widespread it is but this isn't one of those suburbs.'

5.6.5 Inner-City – Open-mind

Finally, as discussed by Bondi (1992) and Waitt et al. (2000b) inner-city living is more tolerant and open-minded. The women interviewed living in these areas have had more freedom from societal constraints in developing their lives in less traditional modes. The traditional suburban landscape is not so apparent. Respondent KK, in Erskineville, felt being a working mother is more accepted in the inner-city:

> 'Living in the inner-west, it's far more acceptable to go back to work after you've been on maternity leave and either go back early or after a year and put your child in childcare. Where I have other friends who, for instance, live out Camden, Campbelltown way, who, you know, there's, I guess, less of that expectation going around, there's sort of more expectation that you rear your kids, that's what it's all about. Same as in Wagga, you know, mates of mine there who've had kids, it's not as acceptable say if you went back to work after six weeks, or just using childcare, those sorts of things generally, it's not as acceptable as it is here, because there's a lot more, I guess, career-minded, university-educated people in the area, which makes it a lot easier for me, cos I'm in that category, but for people on either side.'

Respondent GG of Leichhardt felt that having a lifestyle which does not revolve around children is more acceptable in the inner-city:

> 'People have activities they really enjoy, they travel a lot, they just have a lifestyle. I think it's becoming less unacceptable to be married and not have children, depending on where you live I think.'

This is supported by Respondent R's experience living in Lane Cove, that being childless is more difficult and less accepted in suburbia:

> 'Children aren't everything, there's other things. … There's a real arrogance towards, an arrogance towards people who don't have children as well. There's a bit of an 'us' and 'them' mentality. … You do pick up on that exclusion because you don't have children. If you don't have children, you miss out on a hell of a lot in terms of interacting through the local schools and getting involved at that community level. … Poor old single women are always ostracised, but also married women without children are ostracised.'

5.7 Women and policy

Respondent M succinctly summed up the policy areas that need to be addressed by the Australian Government to facilitate women's combination of work and family:

> 'I think, you know, the whole part-time, job-sharing thing, should be more widely accepted across all organisations, to make it easier for women to know that that is something they can utilise when the time comes that they want to have children. I think paid maternity leave should be compulsory across the board. And I think, you know, it's a bit of a disgrace that Australia's so far behind so many other places in the world, that are actually actively doing a lot more in that area. I think working from home is critical as an option as well, even if you are working part-time. I think, you know, I think there's still that big brother mentality, where you have to be sitting in your chair, which is absolute rubbish, in terms of how productive you are. Yeah, and I just think there needs to be a realisation that, you know, for most women, that this is part of our lives, … it just needs to be more widely accepted I think, that women want to do this, and, um, women are the only ones who can do it, so for Gods sake let's all plan for that, and prepare for that, and make it really available, so that women don't feel this whole burden of coming to that point and thinking that they have to drop everything to go off and do it. Because I think that's why, you know, maybe in some cases women are leaving it a bit later, because they feel like they need to get to a certain point in the ladder, and then they can. You know, it should never be like that. You should be able to leave at any point, and feel confident that you can come back and continue, rather than take five steps back to move forward.'

The issues raised by Respondent M will be considered, along with a number of other points derived from the fieldwork. First financial incentives will be discussed, second structural incentives, and finally workplace incentives will be considered before final recommendations are made.

5 Findings and Discussion
5.7.1 Working on the finances

The government should pay it's dues – Paid Parental Leave

Paid maternity leave was a policy issue discussed by a majority of the women as an important incentive to assist realising their childbearing desires. Half the women interviewed had access to paid maternity leave in their workplace, while the other half were merely allowed 12 months unpaid, as legislated for. In order to prevent women from delaying children too long Respondent KK, who was taking her paid maternity leave when interviewed, saw paid maternity leave as:

> 'Absolutely essential, and it does make a difference in people delaying having children, I wouldn't say it makes a difference whether you're going to have children or not, but I definitely think it makes a difference whether you delay them or not. And we would have had to wait longer…if I didn't get maternity leave. … and the other thing is, it shows about you being valued in the home as well, because I think it's one of the hardest things about having a career, is suddenly finding your most important thing is your baby, and feeling you're not valued for what you do, and your partner goes out to work everyday, and comes home. I'm actually earning money, so at the moment, I don't have to feel guilty, is one way of looking at it, counting every penny, waiting for him to hand out money, I've actually got my own that I can spend.'

Further to this Respondent G saw implementing paid maternity leave as a means by which the government should be addressing declining fertility:

> 'It's the whole thing of paid and unpaid maternity leave. Um, that's a big issue as well, and the government won't get to grips with it until they start realising that in order to have our population coming up, we need to realistically make it easier for families to produce children.'

The importance of government subsidised compulsory paid maternity leave was articulated by 25 women interviewed. It is argued that the Australian Government should follow the lead of countries such as the United Kingdom where three months full-paid maternity leave is provided for by the Government[57] (Jenkins 2004).

A related area identified as important by the women interviewed is paternity leave. Sixteen women said they felt men had just as much right to paid parental leave as women. The government needs to recognise that, while it is the woman who

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[57] often extended to six months by generous employers paying for a further three months leave

physically gives birth, both men and women have children and should be allowed, and encouraged, to take time to spend with them. As articulated by Respondent CC:

> 'For me, having a child, and although I'm the primary carer, and will continue to be the primary carer as long as I choose to breastfeed. The decision to have children was not about me having children, it was about us having children, and so it was really really important that he was able to take some time off work to be around, and he hates going to work, he hates leaving in the morning, he'd love to stay at home. So definitely I think paternity leave, or parental leave for the partner, should be hotly encouraged. I think it's very very important. For me it was about us as a partnership having the child. You go through the trauma of the birth, and it is very very traumatic. To then not have someone to help you come to terms with the fact there's a new person in your life. … So we were a bit miffed that he had to take annual leave.'

By legislating to make paternity leave the norm, it will encourage more men to take it, and allow them the time they want to spend with their families, as indicated by Respondent KK:

> 'I think it's absolutely essential, and I think it's been overlooked a lot, because the focus has been so much on maternity leave. But I think, more and more, men want to get involved, and it's harder for them, because it's just not acceptable. And, you know, often their employers just aren't as supportive to enable them to do those things. Definitely, I know a lot of my friends, their partners want to get as involved as possible, but it's hard. But, it's also their careers and how it gets perceived, I mean, it's hard enough on women in workplaces, let alone the men being able to do that.'

The government should be implementing a scheme of parental leave which allows both parents to take time out of the workforce to care for their children. This will reduce gender discrimination in the workforce, removing the sense of career sacrifice women feel when they take time out to have a child, and also in the home, encouraging a more equitable share of parenting duties.

If the government will not provide for maternity leave from their own revenue, and expect companies to provide it, they should provide financial assistance for this to small businesses. Eleven women discussed the need for government to assist in making small businesses more family-friendly. Small businesses are more inflexible and cannot provide benefits, such as paid maternity leave, as they do not have the financial resources. This makes it more difficult for women employed in these environments, and also makes small businesses less likely to employ women of childbearing age. As expressed by Respondent AA:

> 'I think when you have a very large company, there's lots of things that I feel they can do much more easily than small companies. I have a lot of sympathy for small businesses that are being told they have to give one of their, maybe five employees, a whole year off, and that they're not entitled to know that person's ever coming back, I mean they have to replace that person while they're off. I mean, small businesses just really struggle with that sort of thing. Large companies like mine on the other hand…'

If the government were to assist small businesses with providing family-friendliness it would help both the businesses and the women working for them.

Nappies and mortgage repayments

In terms of finances, the cost of real estate is a huge problem for people living in Sydney, as discussed in Section 5.6.3. Nineteen women discussed the expense of real estate, and that they felt the government should do something to assist them with this hurdle. Indeed, perhaps the government ought to look into measures to lower the cost of real estate, as women see it as a factor preventing them from starting a family, as indicated by Respondent LL:

> 'I think the biggest issue for us is the stability of living where we want to live, and not feeling like we'll really struggle, and that and the kid question tend to go hand in hand.'

These sentiments were echoed by Respondent Z:

> 'If they want people to have children, they need to ensure that there's affordable real-estate. And if they want people to return to the workforce, then they need to have more childcare, and affordable childcare, because it's just ridiculous. You can't afford to live in Sydney without 2 wages, and you can't afford childcare. … I'm sure in a country town or a cheaper city to live in, I think the studies say you need, I think it's one and three-quarter wages to live in Sydney, so I guess they're taking the average standard of living. In Melbourne it's one and a half, so if the government wants people to have children, they've got to feel like they can afford to have them, or if they want to work, they've got to provide care.'

The government needs to make having children, and having a place to raise them, something that isn't out of couples' reach.

5 Findings and Discussion

Baby Bonus: ongoing assistance would be a bigger bonus

A monetary incentive that almost all women were in agreement about was the baby bonus. Thirty-six women felt that it was no incentive to have children, or assist with childbearing. They felt that it was a token effort that would have little impact on their decisions in relation to having children. In the words of Respondent JJ:

> 'I'm not really in favour of bribes like that. I just think of them as bribes, handing out money unthinkingly, it's a really sort-of band-aid, cosmetic, it's not looking deeply into people's situations. Cheap votes.'

Twenty women discussed how having children is an expensive exercise, and 25 women felt that ongoing assistance rather than a one-off payment would be a much greater help, as articulated by Respondent O:

> 'You get given the baby bonus when the baby's born. But, you know, it's no trade off for the things you have to go through, and the fact that the government won't support your childcare in the end. So here you are you've got this $3000 and it's all spent, you know, on the cost of the birth, and then they're not supporting at the other end.'

Similar views were expressed by Respondent S:

> 'There's some sort of smoke and mirrors baby bonus and cash-backs, but, I'm not a family accountant but I'm not too sure it's really, it hasn't impacted any choices, and I'm not too sure that our back pocket's any thicker for government policies. And I don't think that a cash bonus for having children is necessarily the best way to go. I'm not sure what the best way to go is, but I don't think that that's it. It's more about, as we all have monthly obligations we have to do, so that's why that continuity of income of some sort is what's really important.'

Perhaps the baby bonus would be of greater encouragement to women of lower socio-economic status. However, demographically these women are already having more children (Franklin and Tueno 2003). Further, these women can be seen to be more oppressed by patriarchal society. These are not the women that should be being encouraged to have more children, there is not a problem with their fertility rate. Encouraging them to have larger families will act to deepen the socio-economic divide, and continue the oppression of these women. A more integrated policy that provides financial assistance to these women, and assistance in the way of services would be a much more effective policy. The women who are not having children do not need more money to encourage them to have children, generally they have enough already, rather they need the tools to enable them to be fully contributing members of

society, both as mothers and as workers. Such tools are childcare and flexible workplaces. The provision of these essential services will then assist women of lower socio-economic status by enabling them to increase that status through workforce participation. As summed up by Respondent P:

> 'There's no solution because it's not linked to the workplace, or anything like that. It's not paid maternity leave. It's just helping you for a short period of time. It's got nothing to do with work-life balance, it's actually, it can be people who've never worked, or who will never work, or who never find that opportunity to balance everything. I think it's a bad thing. … I think it's not thought through, it's not actually really thinking 'what is the cause of the problem, how are we going to tackle that?' with media, with work, with things like this, with policy change. That's what we need, not just a one off, sort of, 'here you go, take this three grand.' I think it's very short term focus.'

5.7.2 Working on the workplace

In addition to implementing fiscal incentives to assist women in combining work and family, the government needs to be influencing workplace practices to further facilitate this goal. Twenty-seven women felt that the government should be promoting flexible work practices with 19 of them explicitly stating they feel the government isn't currently supporting family-friendly workplaces. As articulated by Respondent DD:

> 'I just don't know that the government have done anything meaningful in that respect. I don't know that it's necessarily about money, but I think it's absolutely about the government not just saying that they're family friendly, but actually being committed to it.'

With new Industrial Relations reforms moving towards bargaining on an individual level, Respondent D saw the worker as losing power; employers can choose who they will give flexible options to, and workplaces will be less flexible as a result. She saw this as working against increasing fertility:

> 'It's counter-productive because at one stage here they are trying to increase the fertility, and then they're doing that, so it's not really, it's not, I don't think they've thought it through. That actually not having flexible work practices is going to affect the fertility rate. I don't think they get it.'

Twenty-six women felt the government should be legislating to entrench and enforce the availability of part-time work and job-sharing options. If the government fully

supports such practices it will benefit employers, employees and society at large, as indicated by Respondent S:

> 'I think that there should be more standardised policies that help both mothers and fathers. I don't think it's a case of just allowing flexibility for mothers, I think it should be for parents as a whole or, you know, any sort of carers that may be there. And I think those policies should be enshrined, and I think that that would make a much better employer. … While my employer has been very supportive to me as an individual, not everybody can see the positives about staying with this organisation as they go through the years of having a family. So, I think that, I'm sure that my colleagues would look at our employer as having more successful management techniques to keeping people employed with this organisation by having policies. And also, of course, it's not just looking in myself, and looking at my employer. But I just think, generally people would have a higher level of commitment to the community as a whole, when you have a sense of a longer term relationship with organisations. So I do think that is something that, legislatively, is missing from the landscape.'

Such legislative initiatives should be promoted for all workers, not merely those with families, as discussed in Section 5.5.4. Thirteen women interviewed felt flexibility and work-life balance policies should be made available to everybody. In this way across the board acceptance of such policies can be achieved to allow parents, both mothers and fathers, time for their families, and to allow work-life balance for other interests. Respondent R echoed the views of Cannold (2005):

> 'Basic things of going back to supporting working from home, working part-time, job-sharing. There were some really good ideas that came out from a certain period, and they haven't gone any further. And they've certainly gone backwards on them… But, we could re-visit that. Talk to women, ask them what they would like, what would work for them. But that's also to get more men thinking about working part-time, and doing those things as well. So they take on closer involvement in either their children, if children's the issue. See, the other thing is people think that it's only for children, but it's not. People have other interests outside that, whether they're male or female. And so, give people opportunity to work at different things, so they can do their whatever, artistic, or whatever else it is, or voluntary work, or whatever they want to do just to have more balance in their life.'

As indicated by Respondent X, the availability of flexible options to all workers is the best way to attain widespread acceptance of such policies and willingness to use them:

> 'Maybe, yes, you're a single male, but you can still work four days a week, and organise your life as you like it, and people don't look at you as being odd. ... I think its flexible workforces generally, is how it's going to become accepted.'

In terms of allowing work-life balance for all, the government needs to address the culture of long hours that has developed in Australian workplaces. As discussed in

5 Findings and Discussion

Section 5.2.1 half of the women interviewed in full-time work had a longer than standard working week. The eight women interviewed who work a capped 35-hour-week felt much greater work-life balance than the women working long corporate hours, as indicated by Respondent CC:

> 'Having a 9-5 job is very different to having an 8-7 job. Working at a university has made me appreciate how much difference there is, because working there for the first time gave me that 35-hour structure, I've never had that before. It was almost luxurious for me. And so, definitely I've realised the significance of, kind of, having a deadline at the end of the day to go home, and even adding an hour on to that does impact on the time you have at home.'

Following the example of the French Government's legislated 35-hour-week would be an effective way for the government to start to establish work-life balance in Australian workplaces. Respondent W saw a governmental approach to these issues would achieve a great deal more than at the level of individual workplaces:

> 'I think it is systemic things that the government is the only place that can have any real impact on it. Because organisations individually, if they've got a great leader, can do it in pockets, but it just doesn't work. If you look at places like France, I think they're a lot more pro-active, and they've got a lot more policies in place to make it very easy for things to happen. And shorter working weeks, 35-hour-weeks, I mean, that's part-time in Australia, that's less than what I work in four days.'

5.7.3 Structural work

The most vital change is needed in the area of altering societal structures to dismantle patriarchal models. Only this can generate true gender equality, where women and men both have dual roles as homemakers and breadwinners; and workplaces and greater society accepts and accommodates this.

Services not bribes

As articulated by Respondent CC, the baby bonus is not enough, money should be put towards providing infrastructure to support women:

> '…I know of people who are not having kids cos it's too expensive. If there were better childcare facilities, if there were a commitment to decent health and public education facilities, then that could well influence people to have kids, and to make it easier to have kids.'

5 Findings and Discussion

These sentiments were echoed by other interviewees, 16 women commented that the government should be investing more money in education, and 15 women felt more money should be put into the health-care system. The women felt these initiatives would provide a structural framework which would facilitate motherhood far better than a three thousand dollar handout.

An essential service many women discussed was childcare. They perceived this to be a crucial aspect facilitating their workforce participation. Echoing arguments of Castles (2002) the women felt more available and affordable childcare would encourage them to have children. Nineteen women discussed how they felt childcare is expensive. Respondent GG saw this as a reason people are having less children:

> 'I think childcare's a huge issue, and I think until they figure out how they're going to make it cheaper, and accessible, and flexible, people are going to decide not to have children, because they can't fit them into their lifestyle.'

To mitigate against the cost of childcare 14 women thought childcare expenses should be tax-deductible. This was articulated by Respondent G who, quite rightly, saw childcare as an essential pre-requisite to her workforce participation:

> 'Childcare being tax-deductible, it is a work-related expense. When Qantas stewards and stewardesses can get pantyhose and supporthose as a tax deduction as well as make-up, I find it offensive that in order, if I actually left my child unattended…I would be charged with neglect, and I would be up before DOCS. I have to make arrangements so that my child can be in care, so that I can work, because we don't have retro-deductibility of childcare. … If you made it tax deductible … it would be an acknowledgment that it can work. Mind you, Jeanette Howard never had problems, so that's probably the paradigm that we're aspiring to. … The fact is, if its tax deductible, you would get more people in the workforce, and you would get, actually, generation of income from other activities, and you'd get much more part-time workers. Because there would be more part-time places in various capacities. … You can drive to work and it's a tax deduction, but you can't get a childcare deduction. And it is illegal to leave a child unattended.'

A lack of available childcare was a problem discussed by 21 women. This seemed to be a particular problem in the inner-city, where the infrastructure has not been designed with families in mind, yet there has been an increasing number of women having children in these areas, as indicated by Respondent E:

> 'There's different pockets of baby booms. And definitely the inner-west has got one, and Sydney city has got one. … There are huge amounts of children in these high density living places. And, they have been building all these high density things, and not enough childcare.'

5 Findings and Discussion

The experience of Respondent S supports this: she had to go to the outer-west to obtain childcare as there were no available places in her inner-west suburb. On top of having more childcare in inner-city suburbs, the utility of work-based childcare was discussed by 14 women. They felt work-based childcare would make it much easier for them to return to the workforce, and indeed to make the decision to have children in the first place. Respondent O saw work-based childcare as the next step in creating family-friendly workplaces:

> 'We're so family-friendly, but there's no crèche, I can't take my child in and pay a certain amount, that could be government subsidised, to know that my child is two floors away from me.'

Changing Cultures

Ultimately, no structural initiatives will be effective unless the social attitudes and perceptions underlying them are also addressed. This is a problem the women's movement faced, and why it has achieved an imperfect result in undoing patriarchal society (Cannold 2005). Structural changes play an important role in altering social perceptions, as they make different arrangements more available and acceptable within society (Leira 1992). However, these must go hand in hand with awareness campaigns to truly attack the root of perception issues. Seventeen women discussed the need to use policies and structural changes to promote culture change and make having families easier in today's society. Respondent EE saw that ultimately culture change will be the most effective way to address patriarchal society, and enable women to have children:

> 'Changing culture's a really hard one, and that's the thing I keep coming back to as being important, changing the culture, that paternal sort of culture.'

To achieve culture change it is first necessary to identify perception issues within society. Firstly, 11 women felt that motherhood is undervalued in society. This is something that needs to be addressed to encourage more women to choose motherhood. In the words of Respondent M:

> 'I don't think there's an acceptance out there, within society. I don't think motherhood is valued in terms of what it's about and, you know, the importance of it. And I think if we don't start placing, you know, we've already got a fractured society now, where you know, the family units are breaking down, and we've become very

> materialistic, and, you know, swamped in consumerism, and things like that. But I think we need to actually go back to the core of what society is about, and it's about, you know, that family unit, and about communities as a whole. And I think governments need to play a much more active role in really promoting that, and, you know, starting to rebuild the community framework that we used to have. And, you know, unless there is that, sort of, um, wider acceptance, and sort of, drive from governments to start to reshape that, and to move away from, you know, feeding big corporations, and removing money from schools and things, that are causing this problem that we're sort of all facing, then we're going to be in for a few problems.'

The government needs to provide more networks to support mothers and foster community. By initiatives that rebuild communities they will generate a more conducive social atmosphere to start a family. Respondent EE felt she lived in an area with a good sense of community, and feeling a part of that community made her want to contribute and give back to the community, an important part of which is building close family networks. Fostering community will also act against the isolation of motherhood articulated by the women interviewed, as discussed in section 5.6.4.

Secondly, a greater sense of community will work to counteract the cult of individualism which appears to have infected Australian society, as articulated by Respondent FF:

> 'It comes down to more than the government, it comes down to social perception of what makes a successful person, and at the moment it comes down to level of wealth and conspicuous consumption, I think, are shown as levels of importance, or levels of significance within our, certainly Australian, society, whereas there are so many ways that we could be significant, or offer a contribution, and I think it sort of moves from the community to the individual idea.'

The idea that society is too individualistic and needs to be more balanced was articulated by 15 women. Respondent K, supported views expressed by Cannold (2005, p.304), that to solve this we need to recognise that economies are created to serve people, not the other way around:

> 'What we need is a society where the economic and the social are aligned. … The answer is…a society that is built on the foundation that the well-being of the people, *all* the people, is the most important thing. Versus corporate profits being the most important thing, which is not, and that screws it up.'

To generate societies where we are all working, contributing to the community, having happy families and gaining satisfaction from our lives, the move away from selfish individualism needs to be started at a governmental level. Ultimately a

booming economy will come crashing down if there are not enough workers to sustain it, as articulated by Respondent H:

> 'I think the whole attitude to work-life balance and actually appreciating that we value children in society, and they're the future, and unless we invest in parents who bring those children up, then, what hope has society got?'

The government needs to recognise that skills-based economies are based upon people and to grow such an economy people need to be supported.

Finally, awareness campaigns are needed to resolve patriarchal gender relations. Family policies need to be focussed on men and women to remove the gender divide. As discussed in section 5.7.1 increased acceptance of men's participation in family life, and policies allowing that, will take the pressure off women, and allow both sexes meaningful participation in the public and private spheres. Respondent P saw the implementation of such policies in Holland as prompting culture shift away from patriarchal relations:

> 'Because the government's made it possible, and it became a more common thing, the government's also made it financially so that any company's able to employ women of any age, and to support them through that. And also because it's started happening more and more, as a result society accepts and appreciates it more. And I think the other thing is, the government has done much more in terms of awareness about the importance of a sustainable society. Women need to make babies, we need babies in society, otherwise we can forget it in 20 years, there'll be nobody here to support us. So the awareness is much higher there, so they won't put up an issue. … And it goes even further, so it's not just maternity leave, it's actually parental leave. So if the dad says, after six months, 'oh, I'll take care of the baby, that's fine, you can go back to full-time work.' That's fine, you know, that happens, and the government supports those sorts of arrangements'

5.7.4 Finishing touches

'When the social conditions under which we 'chose, work and reproduce' are oppressive or unequal or exploitative, women's capacity to control their reproductive fate is compromised. This is the story of women who are childless by circumstance. Such women aren't social losers, they are political losers. That is why political action, not personal change by those who can afford it, is the right way to ensure those who want to mother get the chance.' (Cannold 2005, p.287)

5 Findings and Discussion

'For two election cycles, the Howard Government has been branding the work-family balance as a barbeque stopper but it's done little to deal with the problem.' (Dunlevy 2005, p.36). The government is paying lip-service to the importance of family-friendliness, without actually putting into place any tangible policies to promote it. Twenty women supported the views of Goward et al. (2005) that children and work scenarios are not the result of private choices for which women and families should hold individual responsibility. Rather, the women interviewed expressed that facilitating these choices is the role of government and they should be doing more to enable women to engage in work and family life to a meaningful extent. In the words of Respondent AA:

> 'I think the government has as many roles to play as it feels it should, but it doesn't feel it should so they don't have them. But, yes, if the government is honest about supporting families, then they should provide initiatives that would make it attractive for big companies to provide that kind of support, or even smaller companies.'

The government should be coming to the party and being the driving force behind an integrated society where all citizens feel part of a greater community, and their life choices are supported, as articulated by Respondent CC:

> 'I think one of the things we're good at as humans is being a cohesive society, and actually contributing widely to society and the community, and I think the government of the country has a role to play in that. I do think the government should put into place family-friendly laws around our people employed and things like that, definitely.'

The government needs to determine what it is their citizens want. This was an aim of this thesis, and should be implemented on a larger scale with the support of the government It appears the government is taking steps towards dealing with these matters through the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services' 'Inquiry Into Balancing Work and Family', and HREOC's 'Striking the Balance' project, however only time will tell if the findings of these reports will yield tangible results. The need for public participation in these processes was discussed by the women interviewed. In the words of Respondent R:

> 'Talk to women, ask them what they would like, what would work for them.'

The diversity of opinions expressed by women in this small study gives an example of the diversity of views in the greater populace that would come out in a larger

qualitative study. Enabling policies to facilitate the diversity of women's life choices should be provided through a governmental standpoint of active neutrality. Such a standpoint was supported by the women interviewed. According to Respondent BB:

> 'The notion of everyone being treated with respect for their individual situation, as opposed to just being sort of put into categories, hasn't changed enough.'

The necessity of public participation and active neutrality as a basis for building government policy in this area is summed up by Respondent I:

> 'There needs to be, certainly, a review of the scenarios that can occur and support for that, and incentives for business.'

5.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has considered the views expressed by the respondents in relation to the central themes of the research. Both diversity and commonality was found in the views and experiences of the subjects. The proceeding chapter will draw out the major themes from this consideration of the findings of the research. Conclusions will be drawn as to the significant influences upon women's navigation of work and family life, and the impacts of patriarchal society, feminism, and spatial factors upon this. Final recommendations for policy development will be made, and the research question, will allowing women true equality in the public sphere result in higher fertility in the inner-city? Will be answered.

6 Conclusion: What Women Want

'Creating equality of conditions for reproductive choice means, first, a wide range of social supports that will make having and raising children, or not doing so, a real alternative for all people: high-quality, publicly funded health, maternal, and child care; the elimination of reproductively hazardous environments; and the provision of adequate jobs, incomes, housing, and education. Above all, changes in the social arrangements of child care and reproductive decision making will have to be accompanied by basic changes in the sexual division of labour in the economy and the state. As long as women work in segregated jobs, for low pay and with subordinate status, and must bear primary responsibility for children, there can be no "equality" in reproduction. ...women must be free to have children as well as not to have them, ...' (Petchesky 1990a, p.396)

Petchesky (1990a) summarises the plurality of approaches and policy changes necessary to address women's reproductive equality and hence declining fertility. In accordance with this, it is suggested that actively neutral policies which accommodate a variety of women's life choices and encompass legislative, social, cultural, and attitudinal change should be pursued (HREOC 2005). The research conducted for this thesis has considered issues impacting upon women themselves and determined these women's views and feelings in relation to a range of issues surrounding work, family and city life. From these findings this chapter seeks to make conclusions about the important factors in women's childbearing decisions and to make policy recommendations to best accommodate women's choices in these matters. These will be considered in turn under the four key theoretical concepts developed in Chapter Two: women and patriarchy, women and feminisms, women and work, and women and place. It will seek to argue throughout that the fieldwork, considered with each theoretical concept, substantiates the ultimate conclusion that by fully allowing women participation in the city and public sphere, cities will then also become a place for children.

6 Conclusion

6.1 Women and Patriarchy: shifting the patriarchal culture

Currently, the enduringly patriarchal nature of society is preventing women from equal participation in the public sphere and city life, and is thus preventing women from having children. They are disallowed full access through patriarchal workplaces and they are held back by men in the home. If this is addressed and women are let into city life then the city will become a child-friendly zone also. The fieldwork conducted indicated the foundations of society are still rooted in a patriarchal model. The respondents felt gender disadvantage remains embedded in workplace culture and particular difficulties for mothers to have fulfilling involvement in the workforce were evident. The women interviewed found the high workforce participation required of them in their careers was difficult to combine with the demands of family life. They provide empirical evidence that pushing women into male work moulds is preventing them from having children. Individualistic culture needs to be addressed as it encourages extensive hours devoted to the workforce. Having children in such an environment is very difficult. It is preventing women from becoming mothers and the strong-hold it has upon men is stalling progress towards gender equality.

Gender inequality is also evident in the home; the arduous share of the domestic load borne by women must be shifted. The respondents of this research are evidence of greater equality in the home. These women generally had more progressive home models; they are finding new, more equal ways of organising parenting and work duties with their partners. This is encouraging and indicates social and attitudinal change has begun in this area. However, based upon the socio-economic characteristics of the sample group they are arguably more progressive than those of Australian society at large.[58] The women interviewed were highly educated and have a great deal of economic and social bargaining power. Other women, who are of lower status in society, perhaps due to their disadvantaged position, may not realise the impediments to their equal status in society. Such women need to be given the tools to grant them economic freedom and assist them in rising above disadvantage. Moreover, even some of the women interviewed, despite their greater bargaining

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[58] Supported by arguments in a recent article in *The Australian* 'Our Backyard' which argued that generally Australian women wish to preserve the traditional male breadwinner/female homemaker family structure (Australian 2005a).

6 Conclusion

power, still experience inequality in the share of caring and domestic responsibilities. By providing all women, regardless of socio-economic status, with ostensible equality with men, they will be granted absolute freedom of choice in their lives, and be in a better position to be make and enjoy their choice; whether they choose motherhood, or career, or both.

Clearly, gender inequality needs to be targeted in the workplace and the home. While gender inequality continues in the workplace, women will continue to choose to sacrifice their career for children over their partners' career. And, while inequality in the home continues, gender inequality in the workplace is propagated as women with a greater load of unpaid work are unable to participate fully in the workforce. Both areas need to be addressed in order to engender effective social change. The government should do this through policies which seek to realign the values of society. The individualistic conception of global male citizen needs to be replaced by a global human model with attributes which are both 'male' and 'female'. This model should strive towards a common good (is this too socialist????) rather than individual gain, where children are encouraged for the benefit of society as a whole and women *and* men are valued and supported in their dual roles as workers and parents. Workplace models should be developed at a national level to entrench shorter-houred, family-friendly practices. A scheme of national paid paternal leave should be implanted to allow both men and women time to give birth to and care for young children without financial or career disadvantage. Such policies need to be supported with campaigns to promote awareness and acceptance of accommodating male and female workers with family responsibilities. Equal parenting arrangements, such as those evinced in this research, need to be supported by policy and encouraged as beneficial for society. Attitudinal change will be necessary to effect this with a recognition that it is beneficial for men to be involved in their families lives, and it is acceptable to combine this with their role in the workplace. The granting of universal work-life balance rights and rights to care for children can be seen from both perspectives – women have just as much right as men to an active role in the workforce, unhindered by their status as parent; men have just as much right to an active role in the life of their family, unhindered by their status as worker. In this way women will be allowed greater participation in the public sphere, men will be allowed

greater involvement in the private sphere, and families will be accommodated in society as a whole.

6.2 Women and feminisms: human-ism

Feminism attempted to emancipate women into the traditionally male city to allow women choice in their lives but due to the patriarchal nature of the public sphere the emancipation was inadequate. The women interviewed are evidence both of the influences of feminism upon women's lives but also the loss of currency experienced by the women's movement. They have matured in a post-feminist world where women's equality is assumed yet they recognise the imperfect equality they have attained. The respondents perceived the feminist movement has not achieved its goals and suggested new ways to realise these objectives. The women see changes in the underlying structures and social models as being necessary to further advance the status of women. A means by which feminism is seen to be able to regain currency is through the inclusion of men in the process. While women must continue to work towards inclusion and equality in the public sphere men should do the reverse and lobby for greater inclusion in the private sphere. Further, both must urge government to support them as workers and parents.

> '…no decisive changes can be brought about by measures aimed at women alone, but, rather, the division of functions between the sexes must be changed in such a way that men and women have the same opportunities to be active parents and to be gainfully employed. This makes of women's emancipation not a 'woman question' but a function of the general drive for greater equality which affects everyone… The care of children becomes a fact which society has to take into consideration.' (Scott 1976, p.190)

It is undeniable that feminism has improved the lives of women, and it has also impacted positively on women's ideals of motherhood. It has succeeded[59] in shifting the myth of the good-stay-at-home mum and has given women liberty to choose the means by which they see best to mother. Indeed, the respondents evinced an open-minded attitude towards the combination of work and family, the only issue being the difficulty of undertaking both in the current social and policy framework. Policies need to be developed to assist women be the good-stay-at-work-in-the-city-mum, this

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[59] at least in the majority of respondents

6 Conclusion

being the chosen mothering style of the majority of women interviewed. Yet diversity in opinions and life choices of the women interviewed[60] indicates such a singular policy focus should not be pursued, rather actively neutral enabling policies should be implemented to accommodate and encourage all women's choices. Such policies can promote increased fertility here as they have in France. Feminism needs to lobby for and government needs to facilitate the development of a framework whereby a diverse range of female life choices are acknowledged and enabled thus allowing women full reproductive freedom.

> 'We have to struggle for a society in which responsibility for contraception, procreation, and childrearing is no longer relegated to women primarily; and, at the same time, we have to defend the principle of control over our bodies and our reproductive capacities.' (Petchesky 1990b, p.3).

Reproductive rights have always been identified as a feminist issue. This continues to be the case. However, through the difficulties experienced by the women interviewed in combining private sphere reproduction with public sphere production, women's reproductive choice is compromised. The fieldwork has made feminism's imperfect result evident. Its attempt to provide women with choice has been demonstrably interpreted as resulting in women feeling they have to do everything. This is making women's lives incredibly difficult and has been shown in the respondents to prompt a rejection of motherhood. Again, through feminism's emancipation of women into the patriarchal public sphere women can be seen to be conforming to male moulds and devaluing the choice of motherhood. While the urban, public sphere continues to be a place for men (or women who effectively become men), it will not be a place for children. Feminism needs to be taken to its logical conclusion, prompting a shift in society's values to fully accept women's public role and men's private role and embrace the importance of children to our society instigating policies and practices to assist with their upbringing. This will certainly be easier to achieve with the participation of men and of society as a whole. By realising feminism's goal of allowing women effective equality in the public sphere women will also regain control over their reproductive capabilities, and increased fertility could ensue.

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[60] Despite all women being drawn from a reasonably similar socio-economic background. It can only be assumed that greater diversity in women's life choices would become apparent if a larger, less homogeneous population sample was surveyed.

6 Conclusion

6.3 Women and work: flex-abilities

'The standard assumption is that more work means less fertility. ...the truth is that the greater the availability of women's work..., the easier it is for women to get that work..., and the weaker the voices...telling women that work and family are incompatible..., the more likely it is that the birth-rate will be relatively high. In a world where women's work is an economic necessity and a cultural preference, factors promoting women's work are simultaneously and necessarily factors promoting higher national levels of fertility.' (Castles 2002, p.25)

The difficulty women are experiencing attempting to work and have children within patriarchal society was made clear by the women interviewed. Putting off children to build their career was a normal response and women who did have children often perceived adverse career impacts as a result. They indeed felt torn between their workforce participation and their desires to have children. For professional women, the objects of this study and the social category with the lowest fertility rate, policies which facilitate the combination of work and family are vital to enable their reproductive desires. For these women working is integral to their sense of self and fulfilment in life, but it is not the only thing in their lives. The women interviewed are testament to the fact that career-driven women are not necessarily disinterested in being a mother also. In fact, these women still do think their families are incredibly important, they merely feel mother is not the only thing that they should be defined as. Policies need to allow us to be multi-dimensional beings rather than pigeon-holed stereotypes. The government needs to recognise women need to be granted the same diversity of life as men have been allowed for hundreds of years, being enabled to seek fulfilment through both family and work. These women want to have children and they would be more likely to have them, and to have more of them if the policy environment in which to have them made it easier to combine their dual roles:

> '…the great weight of the available evidence shows that policies that permit and, indeed, encourage women to stay in the labour force when they have children are the policies most conducive to maintaining levels of fertility at or near replacement level.' (Castles 2002, p.26)

Government policy needs to assist women (and encourage men) in taking on this dual role. Allowing women to work means greater fertility, where policies encourage

women to revert to traditional roles rebellion is observed and society is the loser. This was evinced in the women interviewed for this thesis.

While workplaces appear to be increasingly family-friendly there is still not enough being done to accommodate parents in the workplace.

> 'Being family-friendly is more than having a set of practices recorded in the organisation's rules and regulations: a commitment to these practices and a work culture supporting the values of work-life balance and encouraging the use of the practices is critical when successfully putting family-friendly policies into practice.' (Goward et al. 2005, p.97)

Government policies need to address both the development of rules within organisations to entrench work-life balance policies, and their implementation through education and awareness campaigns to make their practical uptake acceptable for all employees. Legislation should entrench the availability of flexible work options such as part-time and job-sharing and encourage employers to make promotion possible on such paths.

In development of a national scheme of work-life balance policy the government need look no further than its own public service sector. Although the system is not perfect it certainly does provide its workers with a great deal more work-life balance. Generally, the respondents who did work in the public sector were very positive about their ability to combine work and family in that environment. The structure and policies in place in public sector workplaces could form the basis of a national workplace framework. This would truly enable work-life balance to be available across the board and the government would be able to supervise family-friendliness in organisations.

Moreover, government need to direct their attention towards the provision of infrastructure to support mothers (and fathers). Of paramount importance in allowing parents' workforce participation is the provision of plenty of high-quality, affordable childcare. Based upon suggestions by the respondents, making childcare tax deductible would go a long way towards facilitating women's involvement in the workforce. This would not be unreasonable as for many women (and some men) childcare is a necessary pre-requisite to workforce participation. This will also help promote attitudinal shift and acceptance of mothers working.

6 Conclusion

Improved work-life balance in Australian workplaces will benefit male and female employees, and organisations through improved staff productivity and ability to attract and retain quality staff. Amenable, affordable, available childcare will make parents better able to participate in the workforce and increase the country's skill-set. Overall this will benefit the country as a whole as it will be a more amenable environment in which to have children and our fertility rate could increase as a result. Where the government focuses upon policies that enable women's participation in the workforce, women will be allowed access to city life, and a place will be made for children in the city.

6.4 Women and place: Children welcome?

Making a place for women in the city means making space for families in the inner-city. It appears more non-traditional, inner-city lifestyles are promoting women to find new ways to combine their work and family lives. What these lifestyles are not doing is preventing women from having children, rather they are providing new ways for women to facilitate both work and children. The inner-city provides a great deal of services and infrastructure which facilitate motherhood. Moreover, the sense of community the inner-city possesses is encouraging women to become mothers. Programs should be developed to foster community throughout the inner-city, Sydney and Australia as a whole. Women in the inner-city want to have children. While they also value other options in life, this does not denigrate their desire to have a family. Rather, the male landscape of the inner-city precludes them from becoming mothers.

> 'The form of urban space…simultaneously reinforces particular gender identities, roles and relationships, and creates obstacles to their change. Despite the fact that economic and socio-demographic conditions indicate we would be better served by more varied and flexible spatial forms which integrate home, work and services, outmoded gender assumptions continue to inform urban land use planning.' (Monk 1992, p.132)

Planning policy needs to be updated to facilitate the development of such spaces to accommodate the diversity of needs members of today's society have. The provision of childcare has not caught up with demand in inner-city areas, which is making it difficult for women who value their inner-city lifestyle, to become mothers. Of even greater impact is the cost of living and real-estate in these areas, and moreover in

Sydney in general. The lifestyle the respondents enjoyed in their chosen areas and the cost of a 'family-home' in such areas is causing women to delay children and have fewer. It is recommended the government introduce incentives to assist families in getting the home that is seen as so integral to our social landscape whilst remaining in an area they draw fulfilment from and which allows them to easily remain in the workforce. As Castles (2002) establishes, allowing women to easily combine work and family leads to higher fertility rates. Therefore, making it easier for women to live in the inner-city, where the combination of work and family is easier, can thereby be linked to promoting increased fertility. Inner-city living is not anti-children, rather it is facilitating women's participation in both private and public spheres, and if women are encouraged to live in the inner-city then the fertility rate will rise. Therefore by making the city a place for women it becomes also a place for children.

6.5 Conclusion: Make the City a Place for Women and Therefore a Place for Children

All the themes and theories analysed culminate in the simple conclusion that women need to be fully let into city life. While this has been achieved to an extent, it needs to be taken further by valuing and accommodating women's needs. This can be achieved through the means suggested. Firstly, the structural barriers to women's public sphere equality must be addressed. Patriarchal society should be demolished at its foundations and society remodelled based upon a 'humanistic' citizen. Secondly, the feminist movement should be allowed to regain currency by re-identifying with women and identifying with men. The movement needs to work towards allowing women's equality in the public sphere, and men's equality in the private sphere. Thirdly, these structural alterations should permeate through workplaces, dislodging patriarchal work models and facilitating work-life balance for all. Fourthly, the male landscape of the inner-city needs to be replaced by a landscape that allows all inhabitants equal access to, and participation in city life and the public sphere. The city, inner-city, and Australia as a whole need to become inclusive of women and therefore places for children. But ultimately all this will only be achieved if women's, and men's, voices are heard, and what they want determined and implemented through enabling policies.

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