

**Low skilled men's access to low skilled female  
dominated jobs: An occupational case-study  
approach.**

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## Abstract

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Labour market restructuring and the emergence of the 'service economy' have had profound impacts on the nature of work and the gender composition of employment in industrialised countries. Stagnating participation rates for low skilled men suggests that this cohort is struggling to adjust to the demands of the new economy. Centred around detailed case studies of four strategically chosen female dominated occupations, this research uses occupational sex segregation - a concept traditionally used to explain women's employment outcomes - to understand low skilled men's employment opportunities.

To select the occupations for case study, an analysis of 1996 and 2006 census data was conducted. This located female dominated occupations where employment had increased for workers with low levels of formal education and ascertained the extent to which men had been successful in securing these jobs. Two occupations were chosen where men had not experienced an increase in their gender share of employment, child care and sales assistants; and two were chosen where men had experienced an increase in their gender share of employment, aged care and commercial cleaning. The case study approach involved 107 interviews with men who might take jobs in these occupations (i.e. unemployed men), employers, male workers and clients or customers.

Consistent with existing understandings, a number of supply side processes operate to reduce men's willingness to gain and maintain employment within traditional female occupations. Some of these processes are clearly related to gender essentialism and the thesis highlights the mechanisms by which this operates to generate occupational sex segregation. Other processes are more about men's negative experiences of a female dominated work environment, and broader labour market conditions that attract or deter people from jobs in general. These types of exclusionary mechanisms are largely ignored in existing research.

Importantly, there is compelling evidence that, contrary to existing theories, there are demand side mechanisms that operate at the lower end of the labour market to limit men's movements into gender atypical occupations. Gender essentialism is again central to most of these. Others are related to labour market processes or mechanisms that produce and reproduce occupation sex segregation.

Despite the power of gender essentialism in limiting men's inroads into gender atypical occupations, processes on both the supply and demand side reduce or moderate its impact. In addition, gender essentialism was found to have an integrative function, with many managers, clients and male workers perceiving certain aspects of employment within the case study occupations to require, or be compatible with, male traits or proclivities. This dispels the common contention that gender essentialism operates solely to segregate on the basis of sex.

Importantly, while facilitating men's integration into gender atypical occupations, even these integrative processes in the main actually reinforce male gender essentialism and result in gender segmentation within female dominated occupations. This helps us understand why gender essentialism is so intractable. Even when it operates in integrative ways, its consequence is actually to reproduce itself. These findings have implications for the ways in which gender segregation is theorised and generated in the workplace.

## Declaration

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I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

.....

Megan Moskos

## Acknowledgement

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## INTRODUCTION

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Australia has enjoyed 17 years of economic growth, and historically strong labour market conditions. Indeed, in October 2010, total employment in Australia reached a record high of 11,360,800 workers in trend terms (ABS 2011b). It is an unfortunate reality however, that some groups of people have not shared in this recent economic prosperity. One group, whose labour market situation continues to deteriorate, is men with low levels of formal education. One index of this deterioration is that men with low levels of formal education have been withdrawing from paid employment at historically unprecedented levels.

In 1981 more than 90 percent of men of all education attainment levels aged between 25 and 60 were employed or seeking work. By 2001, at every age, at least 20 percent of men with no post-school education were not in the labour force (Richardson 2006). These men were not 'unemployed' using conventional definitions; they were not even looking for work. More up-to-date estimates suggest that the 2001-07 economic boom partly reversed the downward trend in low skilled men's labour force participation rates. However, the 2006 participation rate for low skilled men aged 25 to 54 years is still 7.9 percentage points below the rate recorded in 1981 (Kennedy, Stoney, and Vance 2009).

For women, the story is quite different. Women with lower levels of education have always been less likely to participate in the labour force than more educated women. This was the case in 1981 and remained the case in 2001. However, while women of all education levels and ages increased their participation levels over the two decades, women with low levels of education recorded the greatest rise (13 percentage points). More up-to-date figures suggests that female participation continued to rise over the period 2001-2006, and increased particularly for women with no post-school qualifications (Kennedy, Stoney, and Vance 2009). Specifically, women aged 25 to 54 with no post-school qualifications experienced a 6.0 percentage point rise in participation between 2001 and 2006. Those with a non-degree post-school qualification increased their participation rates by 1.8 percentage points, and those with a degree or higher qualification increased their participation by just 0.2 percentage points (Kennedy, Stoney, and Vance 2009).

The withdrawal of low skilled men from the labour market is unwelcome for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is occurring at the exact time Australia and other industrialised countries are facing increased pressure to raise participation rates to offset the economic and fiscal impacts of population ageing. Indeed, projections of changing participation rates for different age groups by gender, generated by the Productivity Commission (2005), suggest that in the absence of policy responses, the general trends towards increased female participation and declining male participation will continue for the next two decades. Unchanged, these trends mean that men's withdrawal from the labour market will exacerbate existing reported difficulties in attracting and retaining staff (DEWR 2005; NATSEM 2005).

Secondly, it appears to be placing a significant burden on the social security system. This is not only through rising dependence on various pensions and job search allowances, but also because men's lack of full-time employment appears to impact on women's and children's welfare reliance (Frijters and Gregory 2006; Lattimore 2007). Men's withdrawal from the labour market reduces their capacity to support or sustain their partners and children, possibly producing a wide range of long-term consequences (Frijters and Gregory 2006; Richardson 2006).

Thirdly, economically inactive men face a more severe range of socio-economic disadvantages compared to their employed counterparts; poverty, poor physical or mental health, lower wellbeing and skill loss are just a few. Combined, the effects of inactivity can escalate, leading to drug and alcohol abuse, crime, and in some cases suicide (ABS 2007; Lattimore 2007; Western 2006).

The reasons for the deterioration in men's labour market prospects, especially amongst those with low formal education, are matters of debate. Nevertheless, several components of a plausible explanation are clear. These include a changing structure of industry, precipitated by increasing exposure to international competition in product and capital markets; skill-biased technological change; and the growth of non-standard forms of employment and decline of full-time permanent employment.

While these are likely to be major factors in any explanation of men's withdrawal from the labour market, they are relevant only because of the gendered shape of the labour market and employment. If men's withdrawal from the labour market was simply the effect of labour market restructuring, then it would be reasonable to expect women's participation to show similar levels of decline. That this is not the case

suggests that the labour market is changing in gendered ways and that sex segregation in occupations continues to impact on labour market opportunities.

Existing explanations for low skilled men's labour market situation rarely consider the way occupational sex segregation and the changing gender composition of employment are impacting on low skilled men's employment opportunities. This research seeks such an understanding.

Centred around detailed case studies of four strategically chosen low skill female dominated occupations, this research uses occupational sex segregation - a concept traditionally used to explain women's employment outcomes - to understand what supports and what deters low skilled men from obtaining employment in female dominated occupations, in Australia.

The thesis is structured as follows:

By way of an analysis of changing trends in participation in the Australian labour market, Chapter 1 identifies the importance of arresting and reversing the decline of low skilled men's labour force participation not only to ensure future economic growth and productivity, but also to serve social inclusion and equity goals, reversing many of the adverse personal and social consequences resulting from non-participation.

Drawing from national and international literature, the chapter also reviews in detail the major explanations for the withdrawal of low skilled men from the labour force. These include a changing industrial structure; skill-biased technological change; and the growth of non-standard forms of employment. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data is used to document these trends in the Australian labour market.

Chapter 2 reviews the major explanations for and recent trends in occupational sex segregation with an eye to how these may help us understand low skilled men's withdrawal from the labour market. These studies suggest that declines in segregation have largely been confined to professional and managerial occupations, mainly because women have entered occupations formerly the confine of men. Men, however, have entered women's jobs very little at any occupational level.



It is argued that men's aversion to undertaking female typed jobs is a necessary component of the explanation for why men are withdrawing from the labour market. Any solution to low skilled men's withdrawal from the labour market involves men taking advantage of generally rising low level service sector employment opportunities and therefore undertaking work that is seen as women's. The question is why are men not moving into female dominated work?

Drawing on two key scholars of gender stratification the chapter reviews explanations for men's resistance to undertaking gender atypical employment. It is argued however that both explanations rest largely on supply side logic. It is suggested that while supply side explanations for men's limited inroads into female occupations hold at the upper end of the occupational spectrum where men (and women) currently have a number of alternative employment choices, they are less plausible at the lower end of the occupational spectrum where traditional employment opportunities for low skilled men have substantially decreased. The chapter notes however, that there is currently limited empirical research available to test these claims.

The chapter concludes by highlighting the need for research to investigate the possible supply and demand side dimensions to men's segregation from, and conversely their integration into, female dominated occupations. This research has undertaken such an investigation.

Chapter 3 details the methodology employed to carry out the research, including the research questions that were addressed, the research design, data collection and analysis method. This involved detailed case studies of four strategically chosen female dominated occupations where opportunities are increasing, and which are open to workers with limited formal education.

To select the occupations for case study, an analysis of 1996 and 2006 census data was conducted. This located female dominated occupations where employment had increased for workers with low levels of formal education and ascertained the extent to which low skilled men had been successful in securing these jobs. Two occupations were chosen where men had not experienced an increase in their share of employment - child care and sale assistants - and two were chosen where men had experienced an increase in their share of employment - aged care and commercial cleaning. The case study approach involved interviews with men who might take

jobs in these occupations (i.e. unemployed men), employers, male workers and clients or customers. In total 105 individual interviews and two group interviews were conducted for this research.

By way of an analysis of 1996 and 2006 census data Chapter 4 demonstrates how occupational sex segregation has shaped low skilled men's employment opportunities in Australia. The chapter begins by reviewing aggregate trends in occupational sex segregation and occupation employment growth and decline. It then shifts to a more disaggregated analysis of trends in occupational sex segregation and occupation employment growth and decline for low skilled workers. The findings of this latter analysis informed the selection of the four case study occupations. These occupations were subsequently used to derive qualitative insights into what facilitates and what deters the employment of lower-skilled men in female-intensive occupations.

Chapters 5 to 8 detail the findings of the case study research.

Drawing on data collected via interviews with male workers and unemployed men, Chapter 5 details a number of supply side processes that operate to reduce men's willingness to gain and maintain employment within traditional female occupations. Some of these processes were related to gender essentialism and the chapter highlights the mechanisms by which this operates to generate occupational sex segregation. Other processes were more about men's negative experiences of a female dominated work environment, and broader labour market conditions that attract or deter people from jobs in general. These types of exclusionary mechanisms are largely ignored in existing research. The chapter provides evidence that both supports and extends existing supply side understandings of why men are so reticent to enter female dominated occupations.

Chapter 6 details a number of processes that operate to entice or positively impact on men's willingness and ability to enter occupations that are normatively regarded as female. Some of these processes were found to moderate and reduce the impact of gender essentialist exclusion. Importantly however, the processes, while facilitating men's integration into gender atypical jobs, were found in the main to actually reinforce male gender essentialism and result in gender segmentation within female dominated occupations.

Other processes were unrelated to gender essentialism and were more about men's minority status and the benefits accrued to them as workers. Again, others were related to standard labour market factors that attract people to occupations and jobs in general. These include such things as availability of jobs, occupations' immunity from economic downturns and positive identification with aspects of the work.

Drawing on interview data, this time with managers and clients within the case study occupations, [Chapter 7](#) details processes that were found to operate on the demand side of the labour market to exclude men from case study employment or at least limit their representation in gender atypical jobs. Similar to supply side processes, many of the demand side processes were related to gender essentialism and its operation.

Others however were more about labour market processes that segregate on the basis of sex. These include recruitment sources, discrimination and managers' employment practices. These processes are likely to be found in any sex segregated labour market and impact on both men and women. The chapter highlights how these segregative labour market processes operate for men to limit their movement into female dominated occupations.

[Chapter 8](#) details a number of processes that operate on the demand side of the labour market that additionally facilitate men's integration, or at least increase their representation, in gender atypical jobs. Many of these processes are related to gender essentialism in some way.

Similar to its operation on the supply side, gender essentialism also has an integrative function on the demand side with many managers and clients perceiving certain aspects of case study employment to require, or at least be compatible with, male essentialist traits and proclivities. The demand for male essentialist traits in turn increased men's representation in the female dominated occupations. Importantly however, it is shown that the demand for male essentialist traits is confined to particular areas within the case study occupations. This has the effect of producing specialist male ghettos within the female dominated case study occupations, which in turn re-establishes male essentialism. The chapter also details other processes that operate to moderate and reduce the impact of gender essentialist exclusion and/or counteract its negative homogenising processes.

Chapter 9 discusses the implications the findings hold for the ways in which occupational sex segregation is theorised and generated in the workplace. In light of the research findings, the chapter also assesses the prospects for increasing low skilled men's representation into female dominated occupations. The chapter also discusses the limitation of the research as well as pointing to areas for future research.

The thesis makes an important contribution to understanding a major social issue that is poorly understood – that of why men with low levels of formal education have been withdrawing from the labour market. This is an issue that is of concern in most OECD countries, as well as Australia (Faggio and Nickell 2003; OECD 1996). In the words of one British group,

*The detachment of large numbers of men from paid employment is one of the most significant social changes of the last twenty years or so. The once near universal expectation that men's working lives would extend from the time of their leaving school through to their state pension age has been shattered. (Alcock, Beatty, Fothergill, Macmillan, and Yeandle 2003: xiii)*

The project is innovative in bringing to bear on this social issue a set of conceptual approaches usually focused on understanding women's experience at work. Moreover, while there is already significant research on work and masculinity (Connell 1995; Connell 2000; Kerfoot and Korczynski 2005), the use of the concept of occupational sex segregation in understanding the general withdrawal of men from the labour market has been limited.

The research is significant in that it generates new insights into the processes that exclude low skilled men from the labour market. Through better understanding of these processes, and through investigating low skilled men who are succeeding in the new economy, it also generates new ideas about how to reengage these men in the labour market.

# CHAPTER ONE: Low Skilled Men and the Changing Labour Market

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## Introduction

Australia has experienced relatively strong labour market conditions in recent years, resulting in increased participation in the workforce of the Australian population. Despite this, there is ample evidence that there is a need to increase the number of people participating in the workforce to offset the future economic and fiscal impacts of population ageing. By way of the analysis of changing trends in participation in the Australian labour market, this chapter assesses the scope for improving workforce participation in the future as a ratio of aged to working age people increases.

It is found that options to increase workforce participation include arresting and reversing the decline of male labour force participation - especially the decline in low skilled, men's labour force participation - and sustaining and increasing female labour force participation; particularly that of women with low levels of education and who have dependent children.

While the latter is important and has prompted much policy, research and media attention in recent years, the withdrawal of low skilled men from the labour market has provoked comparatively little comment or investigation in Australia. It is important not to understate the significance of this social change. Unlike their female counterparts who leave school before completing year 12, early school leaving males face declining prospects in the labour market, which has traditionally offered them life time employment.

Whilst the reasons for the deterioration in men's labour market prospects, especially amongst those with low formal education, are matters of debate, several components of a plausible explanation are clear. These include a changing structure of industry, precipitated by increasing exposure to international competition in product and capital markets; skill-biased technological change; and the growth of non-standard forms of employment and decline of full-time permanent employment. Each of these changes and their implications for low skilled men's employment opportunities are reviewed in this chapter.

However, it is argued that while these changes are likely to be major factors in any explanation of men's withdrawal from the labour market, they are relevant only because of the gendered shape of the labour market and employment.

In conclusion it is argued that occupational sex segregation offers the direction for new understandings for why low skilled men are withdrawing from the labour market instead of taking advantage of the available employment opportunities for workers with low levels of formal education.

### **1.1 The importance of increasing workforce participation**

Factors such as lower fertility rates, the ageing of the 'baby boomer' generation, improvements in health care and increased life expectancy are causing the population to age. That is, the proportion of the Australian population being accounted for by older age groups is increasing relative to younger age groups. In 1901 less than 1 in 25 Australians were aged 65 years or more. In 2003-04 people aged 65 and over comprised 1 in 8 Australians (Productivity Commission 2005). By 2044-45 people aged 65 and over are projected to roughly double in proportion and account for almost 1 in 4 Australians (Productivity Commission 2005). More recent projections presented in the 2010 Intergenerational Report suggests a similar figure with people aged 65 and over accounting for 22.6 percent of the Australian population by 2050 (Commonwealth Treasury 2010).

This shifting age profile of the Australian population will have profound economic and fiscal impacts that pose significant policy challenges. This is because a major feature of labour market participation is that different age groups have different likelihoods of participating, with low participation rates of the young (primarily reflecting their involvement in education) and for older Australians (reflecting retirement preferences and/or poor health). With the increase in the proportion of people in older age cohorts, population ageing will significantly reduce aggregate labour force participation rates. The Productivity Commission (2005) has estimated that aggregate labour force participation rates in Australia will fall by over 7 percentage points in the next 40 years due to population ageing, from around 63.5 in 2003-04 to around 56.3 percent by 2044-45. More recent projections presented in the 2010 Intergenerational Report suggest a similar decline in labour force participation rates over the next 40 years (Commonwealth Treasury 2010).

The shifting demographic profile of the Australian population will also result in a decline in labour force growth, as the supply of young entrants into the workforce will not match the loss of older workers exiting the workforce due to retirement or ill health. As the rate of labour supply declines, Australia's rate of economic growth is also expected to fall. One key implication of slowed economic growth is the reduction in the future ability of Governments to generate sufficient revenue to finance their social security, health and education obligations. Ultimately, this has negative implications for standards of living enjoyed by Australians.

Due to the declining rate of labour supply, there are also increasing concerns that the ageing of the population will result in labour shortages with employers experiencing difficulties in filling vacancies with workers who have the appropriate skills (NATSEM 2005). Indeed, there is already evidence that suggests that the Australian economy has started experiencing labour shortages over recent years (Lewis 2008). For example, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) series for vacancies indicates that vacancies have been trending up since the last recession but the trend has been escalating, particularly since 2003 (ABS 2011a).

The consequences of population ageing on both the future supply of labour and economic growth has lead governments both here and internationally to pursue policies aimed at increasing workforce participation to ensure future economic growth and fiscal sustainability. For example, the OECD (2003) argues that:

*...population ageing requires urgent action to better mobilize under-represented groups. Unless their participation rates are increased, population ageing will lead to a significant slowdown in labour force growth, with adverse consequences for future growth prospects. In sum the economic and social returns to fostering greater participation are very high.* (OECD 2003, 12)

In the Australian context, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG 2006) also recognized the importance of increasing workforce participation, and announced a National Reform Agenda aimed at boosting both workforce participation and productivity. As COAG notes:

*...with an ageing population there will be relatively fewer Australians of workforce age. To avoid putting too great a burden on those already in work, more Australians need to realize their potential by entering or rejoining the workforce.* (COAG: 1)

Increasing workforce participation to improve Australia's productive capacity continues to be a key policy goal of the current Australian government (Australian Labor Party 2007; Department of Treasury 2011a).

One approach to assessing the scope for improving workforce participation is to examine changing trends in participation in the Australian labour market. As the participation rate is the proportion of the population aged 15 years and over that are either employed or actively looking for work, its inverse measures the proportion of the population that are not in the labour force; that is they are neither employed nor unemployed. The consideration of the participation rate from this point of view is important as it indicates the potential supply of labour not reflected in official employment and unemployment statistics.

### **1.1.1 Trends in labour force participation**

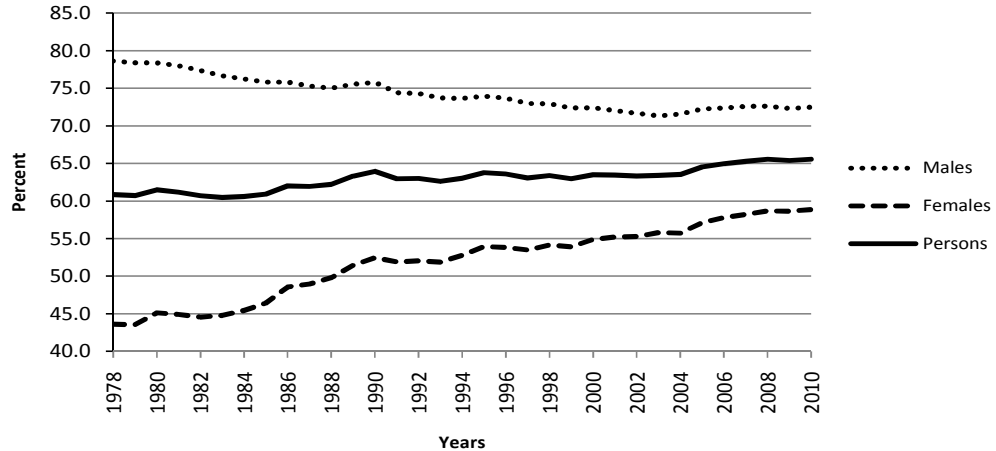
#### *Aggregate Trends*

Australia has enjoyed 17 years of economic growth, and historically strong labour market conditions. Indeed, in October 2010, total employment in Australia reached a record high of 11,360,800 in trend terms (ABS 2011b). While there were some signs of economic slowdown due to the financial volatility brought about by the global financial crisis, Australia escaped relatively unscathed and the economy continues to be projected to grow (Department of Treasury 2008; Department of Treasury 2011b). These generally strong labour market conditions have translated into increased labour force participation. Between August 1978 and August 2010, Australia's labour force participation rate rose by 5 percentage points, from 61 percent to 66 percent (ABS 2011b).

While the change in the aggregate participation rate suggests that workforce participation has risen over this period, its use as a key indicator of labour market performance masks divergent trends in the participation rates of both men and women.



Figure 1.1: Labour force participation rates by sex, Australia 1978-2010 (percent)



Source: (ABS 2011b) 6202.0 Labour Force, Australia, Table 01. Labour force status by Sex - Trend, 2011.

As figure 1.1 indicates, the labour force participation rates of men and women have been moving in opposite directions. Over the period 1978 to 2003 the rate at which men participate in the labour market has declined by 8 percentage points, from 79 percent in 1978 to 71 percent in 2003. Since 2003, participation rates for men have reached a plateau. At the same time the rates at which women participate in the labour force increased by 15 percentage points, from 44 percent in 1978 to 59 percent in 2010.

These disparate trends can also be presented using the inverse measure of the participation rate, the labour force *in*activity rate. Lattimore (2007) finds that, over the period 1910-11 to 2005-06, the likelihood of a woman **not** being in the labour force nearly halved. However, over the same period, there was a four-fold increase in the propensity of males to be outside the labour force (albeit, starting from a much lower base). Indeed, in 2005-06 over 2.2 million or 30 percent of Australian men were outside the labour force (Lattimore 2007).

The withdrawal from the labour market of a group which is traditionally characterized by high participation rates (i.e. adult men aged 25-64), is no achievement; quite the opposite. It represents a great waste of the nation's economic potential (Argy 2005). To be clear these men are not unemployed using conventional definitions, they are not even looking for work.

It has been found that, in the absence of policy response, the ageing of the population is set to increase the proportion of men disengaged with the world of work in Australia (Productivity Commission 2005). Indeed, without policy intervention, it is estimated that Australia will forgo around \$2150 billion in economic output due to male inactivity over the next 45 years (Lattimore 2007).

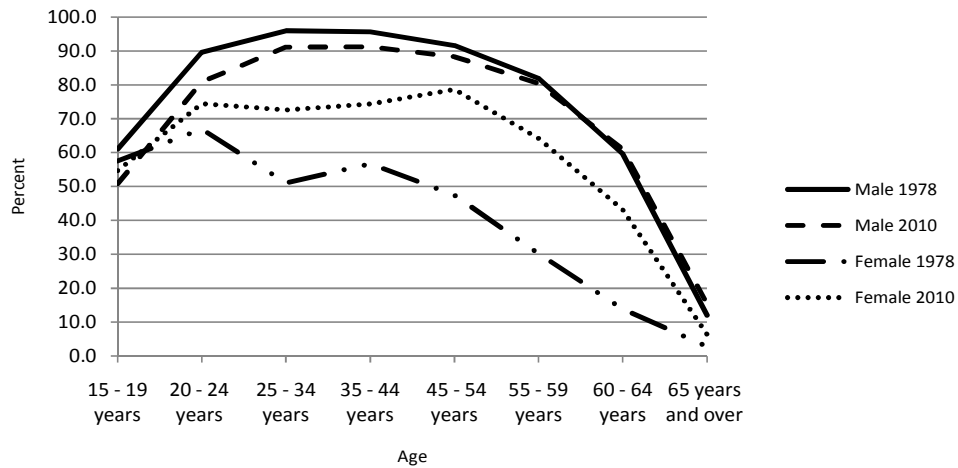
The increased participation in the labour market of women has been one of the most significant economic and social changes of the last century. It has occurred across all OECD countries and has led to general claims about the 'feminisation of the labour market' - where the proportion of women in the labour market is increasing comparatively to that of men - (Bradley, Erickson, Stephenson, and Williams 2000). However, it is important to note that while the Australian labour force participation rate of women is just above the OECD average, it is much lower than female participation rates in some other OECD countries, suggesting that much can be done to further facilitate women's participation (Abhayaratna and Lattimore 2006; OECD 2006).

The reasons for the increase in female labour force participation can be considered in a standard economic 'demand' (employers demand for workers) and 'supply' (workers' requirements and preferences with respect to jobs) framework. Among the factors leading to a greater demand for female employees are: labour shortages where the supply of male labour is inadequate, the growth in industries that have traditionally utilised female labour, and the rise of non-standard forms of employment that are increasingly used by employers to more efficiently meet peak demand periods and which are said to be favoured by women as they allow them to more effectively combine work and family commitments (Bradley 1989; Wooden 2002). Among the factors increasing the supply of female labour are: decline in fertility rates which increase women's opportunity to work, increased educational attainment levels among women, changing social conceptions of women's roles, and increased availability of child care (Evans and Kelley 2004).

#### *Trends in participation by age*

Looking at participation rates by age and gender (figure 1.2) it is found that over the period 1978 to 2010 female labour force participation rates increased for all ages. Yet, with the exception of 15-19 year olds, women's participation rates are still below their male counterparts.

Figure 1.2: Labour force participation rates by age and sex, Australia, 1978 and 2010 (percent)



Source: (ABS 2011c) cat. no. 6291.0.55.001, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Electronic Delivery.

The impact of having dependent children is also clearly apparent in the profile of women in both 1978 and 2010, with their labour force participation rates falling between the ages 25-45, producing the concave shape shown in figure 1.2. What is most interesting about women's employment changes by age is that the 'dip' in female participation during childrearing years is far less pronounced in 2010 than it was in 1978. This reflects a major change in women's labour force participation behaviour from the past, particularly for those women aged 24-54. However, a recent study that compared Australia's workforce participation rates to other OECD countries found that Australia ranked the 8<sup>th</sup> lowest in participation rates for women of childbearing age (25-44 years) (Abhayaratna and Lattimore 2006). Such findings suggest that further increases in the workforce participation of women can be achieved by pursuing policies aimed at providing more adequate and affordable childcare, and thereby freeing up women from their traditional childrearing responsibilities.

For men over the same period, participation rates decreased across all age groups with a large drop being evident for those aged 15-24 (primarily reflecting increased involvement in higher education) and 25-55. The total loss from the labour market of men in this latter age cohort is particularly significant as they are widely considered to be in their most productive years and represent a large proportion of the total male population.

The withdrawal of prime aged men from the labour market is not a phenomenon isolated to Australia. It has been identified as occurring in most OECD countries (OECD 1996) where it has also been the subject of much wider attention<sup>1</sup>. Recent research suggests that in comparison with international trends, Australia is faring particularly badly, currently recording the 6<sup>th</sup> lowest participation rate for men in this age cohort of all OECD countries (Abhayaratna and Lattimore 2006). If Australia were able to close the participation gap with the highest ranking comparable OECD countries, Australia would increase the participation rates of prime age men by 1.4 percent, increasing the workforce by 60,000 (Abhayaratna and Lattimore 2006).

### *The Impact of Education*

It is well established that, in aggregate, higher levels of education lead to better performance in the labour market (Borland, Dawkins, Johnson, and Williams 2000; Leigh 2008; Leigh and Ryan 2005; Lewis 2008). Individuals with marketable skills, acquired through investments in education and training, are generally able to more easily secure employment, and tend to earn more on average once they do.

Figure 1.3, uses 1981 to 2006 census data to calculate the rate of participation in the labour market of men and women aged 25 to 54 years, by their education level. The figure provides additional information about what is driving the changes observed in aggregate labour force participation rates. It tells a disturbing story.

In 1981 more than 90 percent of men aged between 25 and 54 were either employed or seeking work. This varies little by levels of educational attainment. By 2001 we see that while the decline in the participation rates of men is evident across all educational attainment levels, it was most dramatic for men with no post-school qualifications. Indeed, the most striking aspect of the male participation rates as documented in figure 1.3 is the substantially lower participation of males with no post-school qualification in 2001, compared to both their level in 1981 and relative to other male education groups. In 2001 at least *20 percent* of men with no post-school qualifications are *economically inactive*. Recall, this means they are not even looking

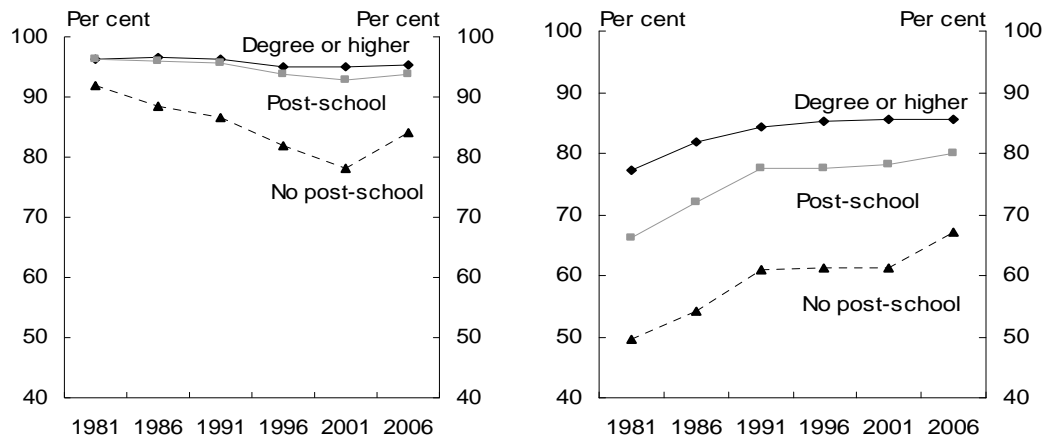
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<sup>1</sup> For example, in the US, the decline in men's labour force participation began to receive attention as early as 1980 (Parsons 1980) and has continually featured on the research agenda since that time (Holzer, Offner, and Sorensen 2005; Juhn 1992; Western 2006). In the UK, the withdrawal of men from the labour force has attracted even greater attention (Alcock et al. 2003; Armstrong 1999; Beatty and Fothergill 1995; Beatty and Fothergill 2002; Faggio and Nickell 2005; Faggio and Nickell 2003; Green 1997; Green and Owen 1998; Gregg and Wadsworth 1998; Gregg and Wadsworth 1999). It has also received attention in New Zealand (Dixon 1996).

for work. The 2001-07 economic boom partly reversed the downward trend in low skilled men's labour force participation rates. However, the 2006 participation rate for low skilled men aged 25 to 54 years is still 7.9 percentage points below the rate recorded in 1981.

Figure 1.3: Labour force participation of men and women aged 25 to 54, by education, Australia 1981-2006 (percent).

Prime age males (25 to 54) participation rates      Prime age females (25 to 54) participation rates



Source : (Kennedy, Stoney, and Vance 2009)

It is estimated that if the labour force participation rates of low skilled males had remained at their 1990 levels, there would be an additional 336,000 males without post-school qualifications currently holding or seeking employment (NATSEM 2005).

For women, the story is quite different. Women with lower levels of education have always been less likely to participate in the labour force than more educated women. This was the case in 1981 and remained the case in 2006. However, while women of all education levels and ages increased their participation levels over the two decades, women with low levels of education recorded the greatest rise. Specifically, women aged 25 to 54 with no post-school qualifications experienced a 17.6 percentage point rise in participation between 1981 and 2006. Those with a non-degree post-school qualification increased their participation rates by 13.8 percentage points, and those with a degree or higher increased their participation by 8.3 percentage points (Kennedy, Stoney, and Vance 2009).

The clear policy message that can be taken from the above analysis is that the key to increasing workforce participation in the future, as the ratio of aged to working age people increases, is arresting and reversing the decline of male labour force participation, especially the decline in low skilled, prime-age men's labour force participation; and sustaining and increasing female labour force participation, particularly that of women with low levels of education and who have dependent children.

In Australia, relevant state and territory government departments have each launched their own inquiries into women's economic status. At the Federal level, various House of Representative Standing Committees have been asked to inquire into numerous issues impacting on women's work and life, the most recent being the inquiry into pay equity and associated issues related to increasing female participation in the workforce (Access Economics 2006; House of Representatives 2006; House of Representatives 2008). While this attention is warranted given the widespread, long standing, and continuing disadvantages women experience in both paid and un-paid work, it is of concern that the withdrawal of men from the labour market, particularly low skilled prime aged men, has provoked comparatively little comment or investigation in Australia.

### **1.1.2 Should we be concerned about the withdrawal of men from the labour market?**

While some economic inactivity is desirable, reflecting people's investments in education when young or leisure and retirement when older, other inactivity is undesirable as it reflects factors which make participation in the labour market difficult or impractical, such as low levels of education/skills, limited work experience and or injury/illness.

In attempts to discern the extent to which the withdrawal from the labour market by low skilled males is 'voluntary', analysts have focused on the extent to which participation levels vary by age and education. It is hypothesised in the literature that if the withdrawal of men from the labour market were largely voluntary, it would be highest among groups in the upper end of the skill spectrum - who, it is suggested, would have sufficient fallback incomes such as savings or private pensions that would financially enable such a withdrawal - or that it would be concentrated among the higher end of the age distribution where men reach state pension age. It is made

clear that voluntary withdrawal would be least likely among the prime age groups and at the lower end of the skill spectrum where work would still largely be considered a necessity and where changes in attitudes relating to education, retirement and working in the home, evident in the broader society, would be exempt (Dickens, Gregg, and Wadsworth 2001).

The analysis presented in the previous section suggests that there does seem to be the existence of some 'voluntary' withdrawal from the labour market, with men at either end of the age spectrum recording lower participation rates compared to men in other age groups. Although these men are recorded as economically inactive, the activities such men would likely undertake while out of the labour force (such as education, volunteer work or caring for others) generally give rise to socially valuable outputs and, in the case of education, contribute to the growth of the economy over the medium to longer term. However, the same 'voluntary' withdrawal cannot be confidently stated as an explanation for the decline in the participation rates of low skilled prime-aged men. These men do not have favorable alternatives that mean they do not have to work. Indeed as it will be shown below, many of these men end up on welfare benefits such as the Disability Support Pension that, until recently, have been immune from the activity requirements associated with other income support payments.

*Involuntary* inactivity imposes many adverse economic and social costs. A closer look at the characteristics of men not in the labour force indicates the possible personal and social costs labour market inactivity has, not only for the economically inactive individual, but also for their family and wider society. While similar costs are also likely to be present for women, there is some evidence to suggest that men more than women, experience involuntary inactivity particularly negatively (Peel 1995; Richardson 2003). This is largely thought to be a result of the central place paid work has occupied in men's lives and in the construction of masculinity (Connell 1995).

### **1.1.3 A closer look at men not working**

#### *Education and Skills*

It has been shown that it is men with low levels of formal education that are driving the overall decline in labour force participation rates among men, particularly men in the prime working ages. Retention rates to the final year of secondary school are also considerably lower for males than they are for females (Webster 1999).

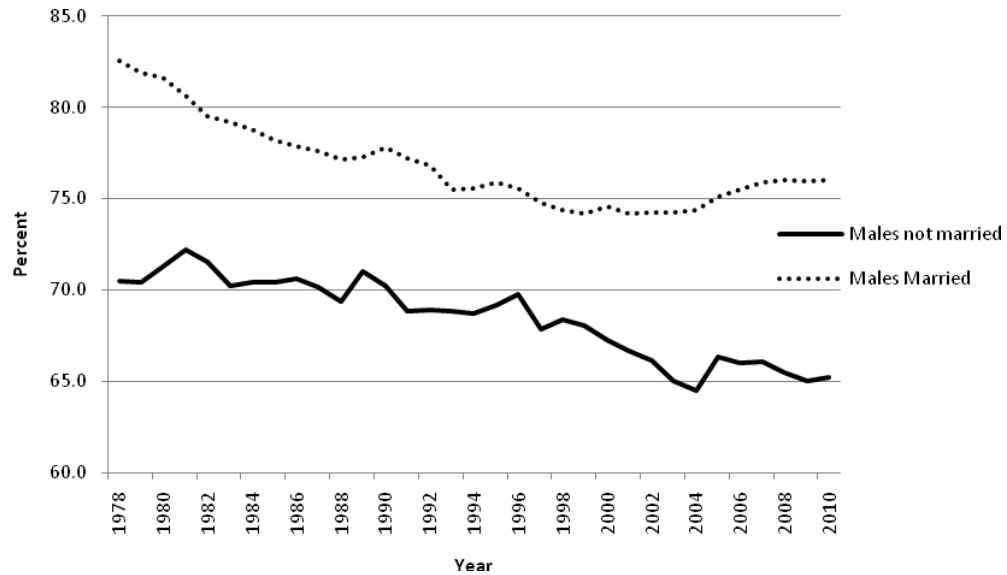
While limited levels of education dispose some men to poor labour market outcomes, time spent out of work can also create barriers to re-employment. This is because the formal education system is not the only avenue through which an individual acquires skills; they are also learned by formal and informal instruction on the job. People learn to be more efficient and more productive in the process of doing their jobs, and also incrementally learn new skills, either informally or formally, thus increasing the productivity of workplaces. The length of time spent out of the workplace therefore may lead to the atrophy of skills the person has acquired either formally or informally on the job. Also, because employers tend to desire employees with up to date skills, a lack of such experience can be a disadvantage when looking to re-enter the labour market.

#### *Marital status*

Single men are much more vulnerable to labour market withdrawal. Figure 1.4 shows the participation rate for married and single men over the period 1978-2010. It makes clear that single men are much less likely than married men to participate in the labour market.



Figure 1.4: Male labour force participation rates by marital status, Australia 1978-2010 (percent)



Source: (ABS 2011c) cat. no. 6291.0.55.001, Labour Force, Australia, Detailed – Electronic Delivery.

Lattimore also identifies a link between economic inactivity and marital status. He finds that since the late 1970s, the inactivity rate of non-partnered males has increased by more than 7 percent, whereas the rate for partnered males changed by only about 2 percent (Lattimore 2007).

The link between unemployment and marital status is complex. On the one hand people who do not have a job are arguably less attractive as marriage prospects and hence more likely to be single. As early as 1984, in a paper less often quoted than his 1977 book, Paul Willis noted that men without a job were becoming less attractive to increasingly independent women (Willis 1984). Bettina Arndt offered a similar conjecture in 1998 when she wrote about the way the decline in employment opportunities had affected men’s relationship with women and their role in families (Arndt 1998). At the same time however, people who are single are not under pressure from family to earn a wage and may be more willing to tolerate periods without work. Alternatively, the withdrawal from waged work can trigger stressors that can cause a marriage to breakdown; and conversely, a marital breakdown can lead someone to withdraw from waged work. Thus the causal link between unemployment and marital status is not clear and may in fact go both ways (Richardson 2006).

### *Spatiality*

Male inactivity also has a significant spatial dimension. Areas of greater disadvantage (indicated by higher unemployment) have significantly higher inactivity - such as the Western Suburbs in South Australia and the Canterbury-Bankstown area in Sydney (Lattimore 2007). When inactivity is entrenched within specific geographical areas - the pooling of the poor - its social consequences are extremely serious, contributing to poor *lifetime* labour market outcomes and increased and multiple disadvantages (Vinson 2007).

### *Ill-Health and Disability*

One of the most socially and economically challenging aspects of male inactivity is the significance of disability and illness among inactive men. In 2010, just under half (41%) of all prime aged males who were inactive in the labour force gave own ill-health or disability as their main activity while inactive (ABS 2011d).

The causal nature of the relationship between health and labour force participation is again not clear and it is likely that they actually reflect and interact with each other. For example, a person may be limited by a pre-existing health condition or disability, and so be unable to physically look for work or find a job that could accommodate their health needs. A previously healthy employee may find that they are unable to continue their work due to a worsening health complaint. However, employment is the means by which financial income is generated, which in turn provides the means to purchase the essential prerequisites for good health, such as adequate housing and nutritional food. Therefore, reduced living standards due to non-employment may also have a negative impact on both a person's mental and physical health.

There is convincing evidence of the adverse effects of non-employment on both mental and physical health (Feather 1990; Jahoda 1982; Marmot 2004; Mathers and Schofield 1998). Being out of work not only leads to anxiety, stress and increasing morbidity, but also results in excess mortality and worsened physical health outcomes through mechanisms such as lowering living standards, increasing stress level and detrimental behaviours.

Employers may also be reluctant to hire people with physical or mental health problems due to the perceived cost associated with such workers. Such cost may be associated with a loss of productivity due to absence from work, a necessity to make physical adjustments to the workplace and the possible higher cost for insurance, workers compensation and OH&S.

### *Disability Support Pension*

The prevalence of poor health among inactive men is also reflected in the large number of such men receiving the disability support pension (DSP). Around half of all inactive men aged 25-64 years receive the DSP. In 2004-05 the budgetary cost for providing DSP to both sexes neared \$8 billion - nearly double the amount spent on the main unemployment income support payment - newstart (Lattimore 2007).

The number of people receiving the DSP has increased more than five-fold between 1972 and 2004, from 138.8 thousand to 696.7 thousand, or by 5.2 percent a year on average - well above the increase in both the disability population and the total working-age population (FaCS 2004). Moreover, the number of men claiming DSP has risen strongly over time, and at a more rapid pace than women (Lattimore 2007).

The reasons for the dramatic growth in the numbers of men receiving DSP is widely seen to be a reflection of changes in the economy that have been particularly unfavourable to low skilled men, accentuated by the incentive posed by this income support payment<sup>2</sup> (Beatty and Fothergill 1995; Beatty and Fothergill 2002; Bound and Waidmann 1992; Cai and Gregory 2003; Cai and Gregory 2004; Frijters and Gregory 2006; Gregory 2005; Lattimore 2007; Parsons 1980). There is strong evidence of a link between downturns in the economy and the incidence of DSP.

For example, Frijters & Gregory (2006) matched male full-time job losses with the number of men in receipt of income support over the period 1970 to 2004. They find that employment losses closely match the increases in the number of men receiving welfare payments. Indeed, of the 1.4 million full-time jobs that men lost over this

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<sup>2</sup> In Australia, whilst having undergone recent reform, the DSP includes a number of elements that are viewed as making it more attractive compared to other income support payments. As at March 2011, the DSP is worth \$157.10 a fortnight more for a single and \$137 each for a couple over the main unemployment allowance (Newstart). Disability pensioners also have access to the pharmaceutical allowance, no job search or other mutual obligation requirements, access to pensioner's concession card and have greater capacity to earn income before government benefits are withdrawn (EMTR).

period, around a million additional men were added to the welfare rolls. Frijters & Gregory concluded that these men are moving from full-time employment to full-time government income support.

From a policy perspective, it matters a great deal whether those who access the welfare system do so for a short or long period of time. Non-employment is not in itself inherently bad if it only lasts a short period; indeed transitions between study, employment, unemployment, and not being in the labour force - as well as moving between jobs - will be experienced by most people over a life time. However, the effects of prolonged periods of inactivity can be devastating, causing social, psychological and economic damage. Lattimore (2007) finds that, of those in receipt of the DSP in 2003, over half had been on the benefit for more than 5 years and more than a quarter had been on it for 10 or more years. They spent an average of 7 years on the income support payment. An alternative way to estimate length of duration on DSP is calculated by Frijters & Gregory (2006). They took the number of people receiving DSP in 1995 and followed them over time. Their findings indicate that 9 years after 1995, 78 percent of men on DSP were still receiving welfare payments. If adjusted for those who died over the period, 90 percent of the initial stock of DSP recipients had spent 9 years on DSP. Indeed it is often remarked that leaving the DSP by coffin is more likely than leaving it by a job (Lattimore 2007). The Disability Support Pension has therefore proved an increasingly major and, from a government point of view, costly destination for low skilled men. The number of people claiming this income support has prompted government to reform this benefit in attempts to tighten and restrict eligibility. To date, there is little research that has assessed whether these reforms have had the desired effect.

#### *Low Income*

A low income associated with being out of work increases the risk of poverty. This is likely to have several adverse effects apart from financial hardship; these include poor physical and mental health, inability to support a family, isolation due to lack of financial resources, and homelessness. A low income associated with being out of work may also increase involvement in illegal or criminal activities.

### *Crime and Incarceration*

The relationship between non-employment and crime has always been controversial. Many scholars have argued that non-employment and crime is not causally related, whereas others argue that a correlation exists (Chapman, Weatherburn, Kapuscinski, Chilvers, and Roussel 2002). The lack of consensus about the relationship between non-employment and criminal activity is also evident in scholars' research on inactive men. While there is some evidence that inactive men involve themselves in criminal activity (Holzer, Offner, and Sorensen 2005) the causality is not unidirectional. For example, on the one hand, the inability to secure employment may lead to the involvement in criminal activities to increase financial resources; on the other, as Western notes (2006) 'the stigma of a criminal conviction, in the eyes of employers, makes ex-offenders undesirable job applicants. The experience of incarceration can reduce human capital, making ex-convicts less productive workers. Incarceration can also reduce social capital, eroding social connections to legal employment' (2006:112).

As indicated above, economically inactive men face a severe range of socio-economic disadvantages. Poverty, poor physical or mental health, lower wellbeing and skill loss are just a few. Combined, the effects of inactivity can escalate, leading to drug and alcohol abuse, crime, and in some cases suicide.

The causal link between economic inactivity and socioeconomic disadvantage is unclear and may actually go each way. For example, it could be that men with more severe socio-economic disadvantage are more likely to be economically inactive. Whichever the case; arresting and reversing the decline of low skilled, prime-age men's labour force participation should be seen as a policy priority not only to ensure future economic growth and productivity, but also to serve social inclusion and equity goals. It will also reduce the current fiscal pressures associated with providing welfare support to those whose potential is not currently being utilized in the labour market. However, to reverse the trends in the labour market activity of low skilled prime aged males necessitates understanding why these males are withdrawing from the labour force in the first place.

## 1.2 Why are men withdrawing from the labour market?

*...the permanent disappearance of men, including prime-aged men, from the labour force is an economic and social phenomenon both crying out for explanation and challenging policy.* (Hancock 2002:16)

Whilst there is little systematic research on the reasons for the rise in economic inactivity of low skilled prime aged men in Australia, the trend has begun to receive attention primarily by labour market economists (Borland 1995; Gregory 1991; Hancock 2002; Lattimore 2007). These studies have largely focused on the changes in the labour market that have occurred over the last 20 years.

For example, Gregory (2005) plotted full-time job loss for males aged 15-64 since 1970 against male full-time unemployment increases (unemployed males looking for full-time work only), and found that after each recession, unemployment falls, but full-time job losses among males continue (Gregory 2005).

A similar finding is presented by Hancock (2002). Hancock analysed the participation rates of men and women over the twenty-year interval of 1980-2000 and found that the decline in male employment fell in two steps correlating to the recessions experienced in the 1980s and 1990s, and unlike female employment, there was no recovery in the male participation rates. He states that 'the clear inference is that jobs destroyed by the recessions were not replaced by others suited to the displaced males' (2002:13). An analogous conjecture is offered by Richardson who states that 'the labour market is not generating job opportunities for these men' (in O'Rourke 2003: 1).

What then has been happening in the Australian labour market that has prompted this large withdrawal from economic activity of low skilled males?

### 1.2.1 Decline of manufacturing and the rise of the feminised service sector

*The shift to a service dominated economy has undoubtedly been the most significant change in the labour market in the final quarter of the twentieth century.*

(McDowell 2003: 27)

Like all developed societies, Australia has seen a shift in the structure of what it produces, which in turn has impacted on the industrial distribution of employment. This has involved a significant decline in manufacturing industry as a source of

employment, which has been offset by an increased growth of service sector employment.

In 1975 service sector employment accounted for just over 50 percent of all jobs, but by 2007 this figure had climbed to over 70 percent. In contrast, manufacturing's share of total employment almost halved over the same period to about 11 percent in 2007 (Lewis 2008). A very similar trend has occurred in other industrialised countries, where the proportion employed in manufacturing has declined to below 25 percent whilst those employed in the service sector has exceeded 70 percent (Callus and Lansbury 2002).

A recent examination<sup>3</sup> of employment growth and decline across Australian industrial sectors showed that, between 1994 and 2005, employment fell in net terms in three industries: manufacturing; electricity, gas and water; and wholesale. The majority of the employment loss in these industries was full-time permanent positions held by men. The biggest loser was the manufacturing industry where there was a 5 percent decline in full-time permanent employment for men, combined with a 1 percent increase in full-time casual employment for men (Richardson and Law 2009). Even though construction was a large source of growth for full-time permanent jobs for men, its impact was more than offset by the loss of such jobs in manufacturing, electricity, gas and water, and wholesale.

The decline of traditional 'male jobs' in manufacturing and agriculture has seen the disappearance of relatively well-paid and stable employment opportunities for men, especially low educated men. It is commonly seen to be the impetus behind the overall decline in participation rates of men (Beatty and Fothergill 1995; Beatty and Fothergill 2002; Borland 1995; Faggio and Nickell 2003; Gregg and Wadsworth 1998; Gregg and Wadsworth 1999; Gregory 2005; Keating 2006; Lattimore 2007).

As employment in manufacturing and other traditional areas of men's employment has declined, service sector employment has increased. Between the period 1994 and 2005, 59 percent of new positions in Australia were in the service industries of

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<sup>3</sup> The author's own calculations using more recent data suggests that while the fruition of the economic boom period has reduced the impact of these trends a little, the overall pattern towards job loss in traditionally 'male' industries and job growth in service industries still holds. Moreover, it seems reasonable to expect that the 2005 figure actually present a more accurate picture about the trends occurring in the labour market than 2009 figures. 2009-2010 represent the peak of the labour market boom. It is expected that in the next year or so, labour market trends will revert back to those evident in 2005.

property and business services, retail trade, and health and community services. Only half of these new positions were permanent full-time and these were shared equally between men and women. Most of the part-time and/or casual jobs in these industries went to women (Richardson and Law 2009). These same industries are projected to continue this employment growth over the next five years (DEEWR 2010)

Service sector employment typically consists of 'two kinds of jobs: large numbers of low skill, low-paid jobs and a small number of high skilled, high-income jobs, with very few jobs that could be classified in the middle' (Macdonald & Sirianni 1996 in McDowell 2003: 31). In this new economic environment, it is the former category - the low-level servicing jobs - that represent the main source of employment opportunities for those with low-level skills and education qualifications - care jobs, hospitality jobs, fitness and beauty jobs, sales jobs, call-centre jobs, clothing-retail jobs, and supermarket jobs. However, these low level servicing jobs require fundamentally different sets of skills and social attributes than those valued in industries that have traditionally dominated in the Australia economy. This is because work undertaken in the service industries depends crucially upon the social relationship between the supplier and consumer of a service, as it is now knowledge and information that dominates the exchange, rather than material objects. In this type of exchange there is great importance placed on an employee's ability to present and interact with customers in a way that facilitates the commercial exchange. This has largely meant that the personal performance of workers has become a part of the service that is sold (Leidner 1991).

Nickson et al. (2003; 2001; 2007; 2009) identifies 'aesthetic labour' as a form of labour in interactive service work. This research has shown that employers in the service sector (particularly the low level services sector) place emphasis on such qualities as personal presentation, personality and behaviour, physical appearance, personal grooming and communication in their selection of appropriate workers (Kerfoot and Korczynski 2005; Nickson, Warhurst, Cullen, and Watt 2003; Nickson, Warhurst, Witz, and Cullen 2001).

Twenty years earlier Hochschild demonstrated how 'emotional labour' was an integral part of the labour process of contemporary capitalism. In her landmark analysis of air flight attendants in USA, Hochschild showed that service industries require their employees to display specific emotions in order to make customers feel



pleased about the service they receive. Emotions such as care, sensitivity, warmth, friendliness, concern and pleasure were to be actively performed and managed by the employee for the betterment of the organization (Hochschild 1983)<sup>4</sup>.

It is said that this interactive, aesthetic and performative nature of service sector employment (particularly that which is located at the lower end of the labour market) favours the skills and qualities that are stereotypically associated with women or more precisely traditional notions of femininity (Bradley, Erickson, Stephenson, and Williams 2000; Gatta, Boushey, and Appelbaum 2009; Kerfoot and Korczynski 2005; McDowell 2003; Nickson and Korczynski 2009). Bradley et al. argue 'women are seen "innately" to possess skills considered valuable in this new service culture; "feminine" qualities of caring, communicating and making people feel good are important employment assets' (2000:78). It has been suggested that men will also have to adopt such feminine traits if they are to adapt and succeed in this service-based economy.

The expansion of service sector employment, particularly that which has occurred at the lower end of the occupational spectrum, has therefore been linked to rising female labour market participation rates (Oppenheimer 1970). It has also been interpreted as significantly disadvantaging the employment opportunities for low skilled men as low skill service sector roles favour women's perceived gender specific skills and characteristics (Tyler and Taylor 1998). On the supply side, it has been pointed out that men have historically been reticent to break into female dominated occupations (Bradley 1989). Recent research suggests that this has not changed.

For example, Nixon (2009; 2006) explored unemployed low skilled men's aspirations regarding future employment. He found that men's previous work experiences, skills and employment preferences strongly orientate them away from growing areas of low skilled services employment and towards types of male-dominated low skilled manual work that are now in decline (Nixon 2006). The idea of working in feminized front-line service work and, in particular, the demands of emotional labour and the requirement to manage emotions in interactions with customers, was anathema to the men (Nixon 2009).

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<sup>4</sup> The manipulation of emotions identified by Hochschild can be seen to be part of a wider claim about an aestheticized performance (Bauman 1998) becoming an important part of social success and a key prerequisite for the successful participation in the production and consumption of postmodern society.

Lindsay & McQuaid present similar findings. Based on a survey of 300 registered unemployed people in Scotland, their research sought to examine whether there is reluctance amongst job seekers to pursue low skilled entry level service sector jobs. They find that a large proportion of respondents ruled out entry level service sector employment in any circumstances. Men aged 25 years or more and those seeking relatively high weekly wages were particularly reluctant to consider these service sector jobs (Lindsay and McQuaid 2004). However, they suggest that the aversion of men to service sector employment will gradually decline as older ex-industrial manual workers leave the labour market and are replaced by younger men with no history of employment in the traditional 'male' industries.

However, this proposition is not supported by McDowell (2000; 2003). Drawing from research that has explored how young working-class men get working class jobs (Willis 1977), McDowell sought to examine how deindustrialisation and the concurrent rise of the service sector has impacted on this process. Based on interviews with young working class men in two locations in London, McDowell finds that working class men still desire 'male manual' jobs. Despite the transformation in labour market opportunities in the economy, all the young men interviewed hoped to achieve employment in occupations that have always been regarded as the male preserve. McDowell found little evidence that men were willing to work in the retail sector, in leisure and tourism or hospitality despite the fact that these sectors have been the fastest growing employment destination for the low skilled. McDowell (2003) suggests that the masculinity of working-class men is fundamentally at odds with the deference and docility required in the low-level service jobs that now dominate employment opportunities for those with few skills. It seems that working class lads still want traditional male working class jobs.

The explanations commonly put forth to account for men's reluctance to pursue female dominated low skilled service sector employment are canvassed in-depth in Chapter Two. They include the low wages and status of this work and the danger that by doing this work, men in some way may compromise their masculinity (Cross and Bagilhole 2002; Lupton 2000).

This segregation of work into female and male types is not new, having been a feature of most societies and one that has contributed to securing male social dominance. That it is now taking new forms, where men (at least low skilled men) are losing out

to women in economic life, has led some to claim that gender equality has been reached (Blau, Brinton, and Grusky 2006; Jackson 2006; Rosin 2010). 'More than that, it is suggested that a female takeover is occurring, with men becoming victims of a feminized work culture and 'reverse discrimination' (Bradley et al. 2000:73). This latter perspective is one that has informed much of the 'discourse of male disadvantage' (Eveline 1998; Wajcman 1999).

Whilst women's employment opportunities have increased significantly, due in part to the rise in service sector employment, it is quite contentious to argue that gender equality has been achieved. Inequalities still exist in the earnings of men and women (England 2006a; van Gellecum, Baxter, and Western 2008); women are still under-represented in top strata of the professions (Padavic and Reskin 2002); and women continue to be the core persons responsible for domestic duties that are now also increasingly being combined with paid employment (England 2006b). Occupational segregation of the sexes is still apparent with men (whilst smaller in numbers) continuing to dominate in traditional male occupations such as construction, transport, and metal work; and females (whilst larger in size) still dominate traditional notions of 'women's work'- caring, servicing and catering for clients (Grusky and Levanon 2008; Preston and Whitehouse 2004; Williams 1993).

Moreover, the nature of work in the new service dominated economy cannot be interpreted as a solely positive experience with new forms of emotional exploitation increasingly coming to define the experience of low skilled work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

#### *Cause of the shift in the industrial structure*

The shifts in the industrial composition of employment, evidenced above, is occurring in most other advanced industrialised economies. It is widely seen to be a result of the opening up of world markets, and the movement of labour intensive (and thus labour expensive) production to developing countries, in attempts by business to cut labour costs. This new international division of labour has had the effect of deteriorating manufacturing industries in developed countries.

### **1.2.2 Loss of full-time employment**

The services sector has always used part-time and casual working arrangements to meet peak demand efficiently. Service sector expansion therefore has corresponded with the growth of non-standard (part-time and casual) forms of employment. The

proportion of Australians in full-time permanent employment declined from 76 percent in 1971 to 53 percent in 2000 with those in part-time casual employment increasing from less than 5 percent to more than 15 percent (Wooden 2002).

Table 1.1 is a key resource for understanding the changing composition of employment arrangements. It reports the increase in the number of jobs over the period 1992 and 2007, according to whether they were full-time or part-time, permanent or casual, and taken by men or by women. The table documents a major change in the ways in which people are being employed. That change is strongly *away from* the standard form of employment (full-time and permanent) and towards all the alternatives.

Of the 2.4 million jobs created during 1992-2007, 56 percent were non-standard employment arrangements, being either part-time or casual or both. Growth has been particularly strong in casual employment, and a new trend has developed – the full-time casual. The trend to casual employment, especially full-time casual, has affected men more than women.

Table 1.1: Forms of employment as percent of total employment by sex, Australia 1992-2007

Sex	Form of employment		1992	2007	Change from 1992-2007	
			('000)	('000)	('000)	% of total change
<b>Male</b>	Full-time	Permanent	2,769.9	3,290.5	520.5	21
		Casual	201.5	461.8	260.3	11
	Part-time	Permanent	68.7	184.3	115.6	5
		Casual	261.3	465.8	204.5	8
<b>Male total</b>		<b>3,301.4</b>	<b>4,402.4</b>	<b>1,100.9</b>	<b>45</b>	
<b>Female</b>	Full-time	Permanent	1,475.6	2,030.0	554.4	23
		Casual	118.2	238.1	119.8	5
	Part-time	Permanent	424.0	856.1	432.1	18
		Casual	713.2	930.4	217.1	9
<b>Female total</b>		<b>2731</b>	<b>4,054.6</b>	<b>1,323.4</b>	<b>55</b>	
<b>Total</b>		<b>6,032.6</b>	<b>8,457.0</b>	<b>2,424.4</b>	<b>100</b>	

Source: (ABS 2008) supplementary data, Table 2, July 2008 Update of table in Richardson and Law 2009  
Note: Excludes the self-employed.

Part of the increase in non-standard employment arrangements is due to the share of employment going to women (who are more likely to work part-time). But part is also due to the increased proportion of men working part-time and the huge decline in male full-time employment. Gregory calculates that since 1970, one full-time male job in four has disappeared (Gregory 2005).

Table 1.1 indicates that in 1992, men in full-time permanent jobs comprised nearly half (46%) of all Australian employees. By 2005, they represented just 39 percent of all employees. There has been a perceptible increase in men working in non-standard forms of employment. Of the 1.1 million jobs that were created for men between 1992 and 2007, more than half (53 %) were non-standard employment arrangements. In 1992 the proportion of all male workers, working in non-standard forms of employment was 16 percent. In 2007 this increased and accounted for 25 percent of the total male workforce. This represents a 56 percent growth in males employed in non-standard forms of employment over the 15 year period.

Gregory, using ABS census data to calculate the full-time employment to population ratios by skill level for both 1982 and 2001, shows that most of the loss of full-time employment has been concentrated upon men with low levels of formal education qualifications (Frijters and Gregory 2006; Gregory 2005).

Women on the other hand, while taking 55 percent of the new jobs generated in the last 15 years, did not increase their share of full-time permanent employment and are still overwhelmingly more likely to be working in non-standard forms of employment than are men. In 2007, 65 percent of workers employed in non-standard working arrangements (casual, part-time or both) were women.

Overall then, this table indicates that the Australian workforce has become much more feminised, more casual and more part-time in the past 15 years. Indeed, the strong growth of non-standard forms of employment resulted in Australia having the highest proportion of workers who are employed part-time of all OECD countries in 2006 (OECD 2006).

Non-standard forms of employment are generally treated as inferior to permanent full-time employment positions. Research has shown that non-standard jobs are usually associated with low levels of training, poor career opportunities, job insecurity and low pay (Burgess and Campbell 1998; Campbell 2001; Richardson and Law 2009; VandenHeuvel and Wooden 1999).

Recent research has also highlighted how the restructuring of employment arrangements over the past decade has had significant impacts on earnings, inequality, poverty and social exclusion in Australia. It has been found that the growth in non-standard forms of employment has been strongest in the semi/unskilled (and low income) occupations as defined by ASCO (Ruyter and Burgess 2000). Borland et al. note that the '...average weekly earnings in a part-time casual job in August 2000 was about 30 percent of that in a full-time permanent job' (2001: 4). Consequently, the rise in non-standard forms of employment has been seen to be the impetus behind the increased rates of recorded underemployment (whereby employees desire more hours), the growing polarization of income levels between workers, the increase in people accessing welfare payments and the advent of the 'working poor' (where, as a result of falling real wages among the low skilled, having a job is not a guarantee against poverty) (Gregory 2000).

The strong growth in non-standard forms of employment has primarily been driven by the growth in industries, particularly service industries, which have utilized these flexible employment arrangements more intensively than traditional manufacturing and primary industries. Growth in non-standard forms of employment is also driven by supply side factors such as the preference of workers for greater flexibility in their working arrangements and the wage premiums paid (at least under the award system) for casual work. For example, many women and young adults seek non-standard forms of employment as it allows them to combine paid work with family responsibilities and/or study pursuits. Also, until recently, the limited provision of maternity leave in Australia meant that women had to work out their own arrangements for combining motherhood with paid work (Jaumotte 2004); a major strategy is to work part-time.

The expansion of non-standard employment, especially in the service sector, is therefore usually seen as compatible with many women's employment aspirations or, at least, with their circumstances (van Gellecum, Baxter, and Western 2008).

Commentators have also suggested that the growth in non-standard forms of employment has contributed to the withdrawal of men from the workforce. It is argued that such employment arrangements are incompatible with traditional notions of masculinity and the prescribed 'breadwinner' role (Bradley, Erickson, Stephenson, and Williams 2000; McDowell 2003). Men opt out of the labour market rather than secure employment in this capacity. Of some concern is the recent finding that men's loss of full-time employment appears to have also impacted on women's and children's welfare reliance (Frijters and Gregory 2006).

### 1.2.3 Skill-biased technological change

Accompanying the changing industrial composition of employment has been a change in the types of skills that are in demand in the Australian labour market.

The skill level of the workforce is not observed directly, but is usually inferred from the number of people who are employed in occupations that are deemed to require those skills (Richardson and Tan 2008). Table 1.2 shows the major occupational groups and their corresponding skills requirements.

Table 1.2: Major occupation groups and qualification requirements<sup>5</sup>

ASCO Code	Major group	AQF level	Commensurate levels of qualifications
1	Managers and Administrators	1	Bachelor degree or higher qualification
2	Professionals		
3	Associate Professionals	2	Diploma/Advanced Diploma
4	Tradespersons and Related Workers	3	Certificate III/IV
5	Advanced Clerical and Service Workers		
6	Intermediate Clerical, Sales and Service Workers	4	Certificate II
7	Intermediate Production and Transport Workers		
8	Elementary Clerical, Sales and Service Workers	5	Certificate I or completion of compulsory secondary education
9	Labourers and Related Workers		

Source: (ABS 2006b)

Over the period 1992–2005<sup>6</sup> job growth has overwhelmingly been concentrated at the higher skilled end of the occupation spectrum (see table 1.3). Indeed nearly 60 percent of the net new jobs created over this period were for professionals and

<sup>5</sup> In 2006, ASCO was superseded by ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations. We use the earlier edition here as we are primarily interested in looking at job growth over time. The ABS time series data continues to use the ASCO coding framework, even for data collected after 2006.

<sup>6</sup> See footnote 3.

associate professionals, with a further 15 percent going to managers and administrators. All of these occupations require a level of skill commensurate with an Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) diploma or higher. The majority of the professional and associate professional jobs created were permanent full-time positions, with women more likely to obtain these new permanent full-time jobs than men.

Eighteen percent of the extra jobs created were in intermediate clerical and service workers category (such as receptionists, keyboard operators, senior sales staff, carers and aides - those requiring an AQF Certificate II or higher). Most of these jobs went to women, but in most cases in part-time and/or casual positions.

For workers with limited education and skill, the only source of job growth was in elementary clerical, sales and service occupations such as cleaners and sales assistants. While this occupational category experienced a 10 percent share of the total increase in employment over the period, most of the jobs went to women and all were non-standard employment contracts. The other low skill occupation category, labourers and related workers, experienced a net loss of 18 800 workers over this period. Nearly all of this loss can be attributed to the loss of jobs occupied by low skilled men, usually on a full-time permanent basis. It is the decline in this 'blue collar' employment that has been the impetus of the overall decline in male employment participation. Indeed, Lattimore has recently found that men who worked as labourers and related workers have higher risks than average of being outside the labour force (Lattimore 2007).

Overall then, table 1.3 indicates that there has been substantial increase in the demand for high skilled workers and a decline in the demand for low skill workers, particularly for men. The low skilled jobs that are experiencing some growth are those that are located in the service sector, and which are largely being taken by women on a part-time and/or casual basis. Such jobs include sales assistant jobs, care jobs, hospitality jobs, cleaning jobs, fitness and beauty jobs, call-centre jobs, clothing-retail jobs, and supermarket jobs.



Table 1.3: Changes in forms of employment as percent of all new employment, by full-time/part-time, sex and occupation, 1996–2005

Occupation		Male						Female					Total
		Permanent		Casual		Total		Permanent		Casual		Total	
<i>Largest number of new jobs</i>	<i>Change in employment</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>PT</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>PT</i>			<i>FT</i>	<i>PT</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>PT</i>		
	('000)	%	%	%	%	%		%	%	%	%	%	%
Professionals	425.8	10	1	0	1	12		12	7	0	1	20	33
Associate professionals	305.8	6	1	1	1	9		10	3	1	2	15	24
Intermediate clerical and service workers	237.6	1	1	1	2	4		-1	9	1	5	14	18
Managers and administrators	196.1	9	0	0	0	9		5	1	0	0	7	15
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	90.8	0	1	0	2	3		-1	3	0	5	7	10
Intermediate production and transport workers	15.6	-1	0	1	1	2		-1	1	0	0	0	1
Tradespersons and related workers	19.0	0	1	-1	1	0		0	0	0	1	1	2
<i>Largest Number of lost jobs</i>													
Advanced clerical and service workers	-24.8	1	0	0	0	1		-2	1	0	-1	-3	-2
Labourers and related workers	-18.8	-2	1	1	1	0		-1	0	0	-1	-1	-2
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,290.0</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>41</b>		<b>21</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: (Richardson and Law 2009) Table Reproduced with the permission of the authors

Note: Excludes the self-employed.

The trend towards increased demand for high skilled workers seems likely to continue in the future, with projections for Australia showing that employment growth over the next 15 years will continue to be strongest for professionals and associate professionals and lowest for labourers and related workers (Molloy and Tan 2008).

While changes in the growth of employment in different occupational categories makes clear that higher skill levels are being, and are projected to continue to be, demanded by employers, the use of a person's occupation as a proxy for skill masks the attributes of the types of skills that are in demand. Recent studies have suggested that it is the interactive and cognitive skills (as distinct from motor skills) of a worker that are receiving increased emphasis as being essential employment attributes (Kelly 2007; Kelly and Lewis 2003; Lowry, Molloy, and McGlennon 2009). Even in the case of low skilled work, such as cleaning and gardening, employers increasingly want potential employees to demonstrate that they can effectively communicate and interact with their customers.

As suggested above, there is a fundamental mismatch then between the types of skills demanded in the low level occupations that are growing today (such as caring and nurturing) with those required in low skilled manual work (manual dexterity and motor coordination) which characterised traditional employment opportunities for low skilled men. The post industrial economy is indifferent to men's size and strength. The attributes most valued today - social intelligence, open communication, 'looking good' and 'sounding right' - are at a minimum, not predominantly male.

#### *Cause of the Changing Demand for Skills*

Most scholars attribute the changing skill mix of the Australian workforce to two main factors: technological change (including the rise in the use of computers and other electronic media on the job) and the expansion of global markets associated with rising levels of international trade.

#### *Trade Hypothesis*

The trade hypothesis predicts that increased trade opportunities with developing countries induced a shift away from labour intensive (and thus labour expensive) production in manufacturing industries in highly industrialised societies to

developing countries in attempts to cut labour cost. This has the consequence of lowering the relative demand for manufacturing-based low skilled workers in developed countries.

#### *Skill Biased Technical Change*

Most scholars also see the changing skill mix of the Australian labour market to be a result of the continuation of long standing trends in the advancement of technological development and their application in the economic sphere (Acemoglu 2002; Lattimore 2007; Saunders 2007). The impact of technological development on the demand for skill has long been a contested issue (Bradley 1996). On the one hand new technologies can have a deskilling effect whereby workers will perform only the physical tasks incapable of being carried out by the new technology. On the other hand new technologies can have an up-skilling effect whereby the skill premiums of workers are raised because they will have some sort of aptitude for new technologies.

#### *Deskilling and labour substitution*

Harry Braverman's seminal work published in 1974 entitled '*Labor and Monopoly*' was one of the first to scrutinise the implication of technological development for the skill level of workers. In its simplest form his 'deskilling' thesis suggests that owners and management (the agents of capital) seek to use technology and management tools to constantly subdivide and routinize the labour process to gain more control over it. This trend in turn decreases the need for skilled labour, and facilitates its substitution with general, unskilled (deskilled) labour.

Building on Braverman's work and Marxist concepts, the proletarianisation thesis provides another perspective through which to understand the deskilling impact of technology. Proletarianisation is a process by which parts of the middle class become effectively absorbed into the working class. In *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1848), Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels argued that capitalism would encourage a polarization in the class structure, between the 'two great hostile camps' of the bourgeoisie (business owners) and proletariat (working class). Intermediate groupings, such as small producers and self-employed artisans, would gradually disappear. The middle class of white-collar workers would also join one or other of the hostile camps.

Authors such as Crompton and Jones (1984) describe in great detail how the introduction of computer technology led to the deskilling of clerical workers creating an office proletariat. They argue that computerisation deskills tasks, enhances the level of functional specialisation and centralises control within an organisation. As a result of this new technology clerical work has become increasingly stratified with low level clerks performing routine data entry and processing to higher level staff who process the information. Importantly, they found that women were more prone to proletarianisation than men, as they experience poorer promotional opportunities due to breaks in employment for child rearing and lacked post-secondary qualifications.

Taken to the extreme, some proponents of the deskilling thesis see work as being on the brink of terminal decline as technology increasingly abolishes jobs at a faster rate than we can replace them. Nowhere is this more evident, it is argued, than in the manufacturing industries:

*In virtually every major manufacturing activity, human labour is being steadily replaced by machines. Today, millions of working men and women around the world find themselves trapped between economic eras and increasingly marginalized by the introduction of new labour-saving technology. By the mid-decades of the coming century, the blue collar worker will have passed from history, a casualty of the Third Industrial Revolution and the relentless march towards even greater technological efficiency.*  
(Rifkin 1995:140)

Rifkin (1995) is one of many writers who have highlighted the departure of the working class in the new economy as a result of technological developments. Whilst all differ in interpretation, there is a broad consensus that technological development and changes in the labour market have shifted the proletariat outside (or have been denied by) the new economic structure. Esping-Aderson (1993) has labelled them the outsider surplus population; Gorz (1982) sees them as the neo-proletariat, whilst Bauman (1998) argues that they are the new poor.

Whilst the end of work thesis is highly contentious and can be seen to be decidedly technologically deterministic, and inconsistent with the evidence of continued jobs growth, the framework provided by these thinkers has great explanatory power for the decline of low skilled male labour market activity. However, the '... scenario is underpinned, by a blinkered vision of what work is, derived from the industrial past'

(Bradley, Erickson, Stephenson, and Williams 2000:147). As shown above, low skilled work is still growing albeit in new service areas that are the strongholds of women. The proletariat still seems to be in existence, but has largely become feminised. What these writers must specify further is that 'the 'worker' who is vanishing is the male factory worker' (Bradley et al 2000:147). It is the low skilled male worker who, it should be highlighted by these writers, is currently dominating the outside surplus class.

### *Up-skilling*

For scholars that adhere to the latter opinion, technological development is linked to the emergence of a new 'knowledge economy' whereby '...knowledge has become the central 'factor of production' in an advanced industrial economy' (Drucker, P in Cully 2002:141). The underlying argument of this body of work is exemplified by the thesis put forth by Daniel Bell (1989). Bell argued that as a result of the impacts of new technology the skill premium of workers would be raised within all industries. Bell, countering the above theorists, saw the proletariat being infused into the middle classes as technological change would lead to the upgrading of the occupational structure and a shift to professional work.

While the early up-skilling and deskilling theses were empirically informed, they lacked the advantage of representative aggregate data. Aided by such data, recent Australian studies have attempted to rectify this deficit.

For example, Cully (2002) reported the growth of occupations by skill level over the period 1986-2001 and found that of the 12 occupations that reported the strongest growth in employment, seven were rated the lowest or second lowest on the ASCO occupational spectrum, while four were rated as the highest. He concluded that the skill structure of the Australian labour market is being hollowed out (support of the polarization thesis presented by Marx in the Communist Manifesto) with evidence of relatively strong job growth in the upper and lower ends of the skill spectrum and stagnation or loss of growth in the middle. The growth experienced in the lower echelons of the skill spectrum, it must be highlighted, occurred in service sector occupations. These include sales assistant, cleaners, checkout operators and cashiers, and kitchen hands.

Wooden (2000) also examined the change in job growth between the periods of 1989-2000, but undertook additional analysis of hours worked. Contrary to Cully, Wooden found that changes in the composition of employment have tended to favour the most skilled types of work. Moreover, over 70 percent of the growth in hours worked occurred in the professional and associate professional occupations. In contrast, at the other end of the skills distribution, while the number of low skilled jobs has continued to rise, especially in low skilled sales and service jobs, there had been virtually no growth in the total volume (hours) of low skilled work.

A more recent analysis by Karmel (2011) suggests that while employment growth over the period 1996-2006 was biased towards the more skilled jobs, the overall growth pattern is a bit patchier than that found by Wooden and Cully. Aided by detailed census occupational data, Karmel ranked occupations from the most skilled to the least skilled (1-10) to look at employment growth over the period 1996-2006. He found that deciles enjoying the fastest growth were deciles one, two and five. Deciles three, four, eight and nine had around average growth while deciles six, seven and ten had well below average growth. He points out that this pattern 'contrasts with the experience in the United Kingdom where an 'hourglass' pattern has been observed with high job growth at both ends of the skills scale at the expense of middle skilled jobs' (2011:79).

The data provided by Richardson and Law (2009) and presented in the beginning of this section provides evidence similar to Cully's. It suggests that both skilling and deskilling trends are evident with job growth occurring at both ends of the occupational spectrum (albeit at different rates) and stagnating in the middle. Again, it must be noted that job growth at the lower end of the occupational spectrum is in service sector employment.

#### *Bifurcation in Male Earnings*

The bifurcation of the labour market that has been found to be occurring in occupational growth trends has also been detected in the trends of average real wage growth among workers. It has been consistently found that there has been substantial widening of earnings differentials between workers at the top and bottom of the earnings distribution over the last 25 years (Borland, Gregory, and Sheehan 2001; Frijters and Gregory 2006; Gregory 2000; Hancock 2002).

Frijters & Gregory (2006) looked at the changes in wages at the bottom 10th, 20th and top 80th percentile of men employed full-time over the period 1976 to 2005 (indexed at 1976 average real wage). They find that the wage dispersion has widened between those at the top and bottom of the distribution, with weekly earnings of those in the lowest of the distribution actually falling. Indeed, Frijters & Gregory note that full-time male workers in the bottom 10 percent of the earnings distribution received much the same level of earnings in 2005 that prevailed in 1975.

The decision to remain in or re-enter the workforce has financial implications. For example, returning to work can mean a loss of government support, as well as work-related costs, such as for childcare or travel. Once trade-off calculations are performed, many may find that there is little net financial reward from taking a low-paying job. The stagnation in male earnings at the lower end of the earnings distribution has therefore been seen to have contributed to the withdrawal of low skilled men from the labour market (Frijters and Gregory 2006).

In addition, some sociologists attribute the decline in men's real wages to be the impetus behind increased female labour force participation. From this standpoint women increased their employment because of the increased need for two pay cheques (England 2005).

#### *A Caveat*

As I have tried to show above, the changes that have occurred in the Australian labour market are not independent of one another, but are overlapping and impact on each other in differing ways. This is also true for the causes of these changes. The distinction between trade and technological change effects is analytically convenient, but may not be wholly accurate since the two explanations could plausibly be causally linked. Increased pressure from international competition could cause some producers to adopt more technology intensive production methods within the same industry or in other sectors of the economy. On the other hand, technology can stimulate trade (De Laine, Laplagne, and Stone 2000).

Also it is important to emphasise that the extent of up-skilling or deskilling that has occurred is complicated by a range of factors and cannot be seen entirely due to either technological developments or opening up of world markets. Increased high school retention rates and increased attendance in tertiary education, without a

corresponding increase in skilled job creation, have been found to have caused large occupational downward mobility, whereby people with given levels of education take increasingly lower skilled and lower paid jobs (Pryor and Schaffer 1999). This has been seen to have negatively affected all low skill workers as employers have an increasing pool of high skill workers from which to choose. Considine's (2002) preliminary analysis of ABS data has shown that in Australia the percentage of those that had a post-school qualification who worked in jobs that required no post-school qualifications had increased by 27 percent between the periods 1989-1993. Indeed it was found that 73 percent of those in low skilled jobs had post-school education levels. She has argued that faced with an increasing proportion of the working aged population who have post-school educational qualifications; employers have upped the ante on job entry requirements.

### **Summary and where to next**

To summarise, there have been significant changes in the Australian labour market over the last 40 years. We have witnessed a shift from labour-intensive Fordist manufacturing to labour-intensive flexible service provisions, a shift from a full-time permanent wage earner model and standard working time model to greater heterogeneity in working arrangements and working time, and from a male dominated sphere to a sphere increasingly entered into by women.

As with all economic changes that have occurred throughout history, some groups have benefited whilst others have not. One group who can be seen to have suffered in the shift to the new economy is that group that has historically occupied a privileged place (both physically and ideologically) in the labour market - working-aged, blue-collar men. Whilst the changes have caused great social and economic disadvantage to a large proportion of the working population, those whose job opportunities have largely diminished have been low skilled males. This is not to understate the realities of the working poor and underemployed workers, but it is to suggest that low skilled males are less likely to be found in this precarious, unstable, below living wage work than low skilled females who are seen innately to possess the skills associated with these jobs. Low skilled males faced with fewer well paid, stable working opportunities that previously characterised the jobs they occupied, are more likely than ever before to drop out of the labour market.



Overall then, the changing shape of Australia's industrial structure, shifting skill demands, and changing employment contracts are likely to be major factors in any explanation of men's withdrawal from the labour market. However, as I have tried to show, these factors are relevant only because of the gendered shape of the labour market and employment. The reason why low skilled men are dropping out of the labour market is not because work for low skilled people is non-existent. Low skilled work is still being generated in the economy; however, it is largely being taken by women. If men and women were equally likely to obtain any available job, men's employment trends would look the same as women's. That this is not the case reflects the continuing gender segregation of the Australian labour market.

To date, most studies of occupational sex segregation have focused on women's experience of work and the labour market. In a sense, they have taken men's work and labour market experience as the norm, and focus on understanding why or how women's experience is different. This has told us a great deal about how women are excluded from some kinds of work, and how they are crowded into other kinds. However, with the withdrawal of men from the labour market, and the growth (at the lower end of the labour market) of sectors and jobs that are often seen as 'women's', occupational sex segregation offers the direction for new understandings of low skilled men's labour market situation. I turn now to consider the major explanations for and recent trends in occupational sex segregation.

## CHAPTER TWO: Occupational Sex Segregation of Labour Markets

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### Introduction

The previous chapter highlighted that current explanations for the deterioration of low skilled men's labour market situation largely focus on structural changes occurring in the economy - including the decline of manufacturing, the rise of non-standard employment, and skill biased technological change. Rarely considered is the way occupational sex segregation shapes low skilled men's employment opportunities. This chapter seeks to fill this gap. The chapter explores how occupational sex segregation - a concept traditionally used to explain female employment outcomes - can provide insight into the deterioration of low skilled men's labour market situation.

This chapter reviews the major explanations for the existence of occupational sex segregation, and moves on to consider recent trends in occupational sex segregation as gleaned from Australian and US research. These studies suggest that declines in segregation have largely been confined to professional and managerial occupations, mainly because women have entered occupations formerly the confine of men. Men, however, have entered women's jobs very little at any occupational level.

Men's aversion to undertaking female typed jobs has been identified as a key barrier to further declines in occupational sex segregation. It is also likely that this is a necessary component of the explanation for why men are withdrawing from the labour market. Any solution to low skill men's withdrawal from the labour market involves men taking advantage of generally rising low level service sector employment opportunities and therefore undertaking work that is seen as women's. The question is why are men not moving into female dominated work?

Drawing on two key scholars of gender stratification, the chapter reviews explanations for men's resistance to undertaking gender atypical employment. It is argued however, that both explanations offered to account for the persistence of occupational sex segregation, particularly that which is caused by men's limited inroads into female occupations, rest largely on supply side logic.

While these supply side explanations for men's limited inroads into female occupations seem to hold at the upper end of the occupational spectrum where men (and women) currently have a number of alternative employment choices, they are less plausible at the lower end of the occupational spectrum where traditional employment opportunities for low skill men have substantially decreased. Therefore, for these explanations to work at the lower end of the labour market, men would have to prefer to have no job than to have 'female' jobs.

The chapter concludes by noting the need for research to discover the possible supply and demand side dimensions to men's segregation from, and conversely their integration into, low level female dominated occupations that are experiencing employment growth.

## **2.1 What is occupational sex segregation?**

Sex differentiated patterns of employment are persistent features of labour markets. They have been described as among the 'most important and enduring aspects of labour markets around the world' (Anker 1998: 3). In labour market analysis, occupational sex segregation is commonly understood as the disproportionate concentration of men and women in particular occupations.

It is conventional to distinguish between two different forms of occupational sex segregation: vertical and horizontal. Vertical sex segregation is the extent to which women and men are unevenly distributed within an occupation; generally women are disproportionately located in lower tiers of occupations and men in higher tiers which is reflected in rates of pay. Horizontal sex segregation refers to the extent to which women and men are unevenly distributed in different types of occupations. The focus of this research is primarily on horizontal sex segregation - that is, when an occupation is disproportionately occupied by one sex or the other (Ridgeway and England 2007).

There are several reasons to be concerned about occupational sex segregation. Firstly, it is a major source of labour market rigidity and economic inefficiency. Excluding workers of a particular sex from particular occupations is a waste of human resources, especially when such occupations are experiencing difficulties in attracting and

retaining employees<sup>7</sup>. Occupational sex segregation also reduces an economy's ability to respond to global economic change (Anker 1998). Furthermore, it is often noted that the occupational structure is the backbone of the gender stratification system, with other gender based inequalities such as the gender pay gap and unequal household division of labour said to be caused, at least in part, by the segregation of men and women into different occupations (Anker 1998; Blau, Brinton, and Grusky 2006; Charles and Grusky 2004; England 2006a; Levanon, England, and Allison 2009; Reskin 1993). As such, gender-based occupational segregation is also commonly seen to be responsible for women's disadvantaged position in the labour market (Anker 1998; Blau, Brinton, and Grusky 2006; England 2006b; Reskin 1993).

However, occupational sex segregation does not invariably advantage men. As shown in the previous chapter, much of the job growth that has occurred over the past two decades has been in economic sectors in which women are disproportionately located (and conversely job losses have occurred in sectors where men dominant). Female predominance in job growth areas can thus hurt men's chances of employment.

Most people work in occupations that are filled with members of their own sex (Charles and Grusky 2004; Wirth 2001). Tables 2.1 and 2.2 document the occupations in the Australian labour market in which men and women predominate (i.e. where they constitute more than 70%<sup>8</sup> of the occupation's workforce).

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<sup>7</sup> Recent research (CSMAC 2006; Richardson and Martin 2004) has shown that industries such as child care and aged care where the current workforce is overwhelmingly female (97 % and 94% respectively) are reporting difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. In the case of aged care this will be exacerbated by the ageing of the population due both to the general greying of its current workforce and the future demand the ageing of the population is likely to generate for this sector. The heavily gendered employment patterns in these industries combined with current recruitment difficulties have lead peak bodies to advocate the targeting of non-traditional labour (such as men) to fill current and future labour shortages (Rolfe 2006).

<sup>8</sup> International researchers tend to use 80% as the cut off when defining occupations as being predominately male or female (Anker 1998; England 2005). To maintain consistency, I have chosen to follow the Australian research tradition and use 70% as the cut off (Pocock 1998; Preston and Whitehouse 2004)

Table 2.1: Female Dominated Occupations (3 digit- minor group) 2006.

	ANZSCO Minor Group Occupation	Number of Females Employed in occupation	Proportion of women employed in occupation
241	School Teachers	213,414	74
249	Miscellaneous Education Professionals	28,885	72
254	Midwifery and Nursing Professionals	182,546	91
391	Hairdressers	40,936	86
400	Community and Personal Service Workers, nfd	601	74
411	Health and Welfare Support Workers	62,846	71
420	Carers and Aides, nfd	3,628	78
421	Child Carers	81,802	96
422	Education Aides	52,032	92
423	Personal Carers and Assistants	130,905	84
431	Hospitality Workers	127,205	70
451	Personal Service and Travel Workers	49,865	74
500	Clerical and Administrative Workers, nfd	2,942	70
512	Office and Practice Managers	90,200	87
521	Personal Assistants and Secretaries	135,905	98
524	Receptionists	124,361	96
530	General Clerical Workers, nfd	576	74
531	General Clerks	175,149	85
532	Keyboard Operators	44,973	85
540	Inquiry Clerks and Receptionists, nfd	262	72
550	Numerical Clerks, nfd	708	70
551	Accounting Clerks and Bookkeepers	162,029	86
552	Financial and Insurance Clerks	72,658	71
630	Sales Support Workers, nfd	81	70
631	Checkout Operators and Office Cashiers	74,483	78
639	Miscellaneous Sales Support Workers	30,507	70
Total number of women employed in female dominated occupations			1,889,499
Number of women employed in female dominated occupations as a percent of total female employment			45%

Source: (ABS 2006a) Table constructed by the author.

Note: Occupation was coded to the 2006 Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). This has replaced the 1996 Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) Second Edition.

Table 2.2: Male Dominated Occupations (3 digit- minor group) 2006.

ANZSCO Minor Group Occupation		Number of males employed	Proportion of men employed in occupation
100	Managers, nfd	34,312	70
111	Chief Executives, General Managers and Legislators	69,222	80
121	Farmers and Farm Managers	124,288	70
130	Specialist Managers, nfd	9,258	72
133	Construction, Distribution and Production Managers	157,243	88
135	ICT Managers	23,500	78
139	Miscellaneous Specialist Managers	31,362	73
230	Design, Engineering, Science and Transport Professionals, nfd	489	82
231	Air and Marine Transport Professionals	16,996	95
233	Engineering Professionals	74,995	92
260	ICT Professionals, nfd	15,815	82
261	Business and Systems Analysts, and Programmers	59,507	80
262	Database and Systems Administrators, and ICT Security Specialists	16,110	76
263	ICT Network and Support Professionals	25,807	85
310	Engineering, ICT and Science Technicians, nfd	3,316	80
312	Building and Engineering Technicians	77,003	89
313	ICT and Telecommunications Technicians	29,813	76
320	Automotive and Engineering Trades Workers, nfd	1,850	98
321	Automotive Electricians and Mechanics	86,352	99
322	Fabrication Engineering Trades Workers	70,297	99
323	Mechanical Engineering Trades Workers	107,331	99
324	Panelbeaters, and Vehicle Body Builders, Trimmers and Painters	28,638	98
330	Construction Trades Workers, nfd	2,469	98
331	Bricklayers, and Carpenters and Joiners	113,429	99
332	Floor Finishers and Painting Trades Workers	44,730	96
333	Glaziers, Plasterers and Tilers	52,999	98
334	Plumbers	56,104	99
340	Electrotechnology and Telecommunications Trades Workers, nfd	2,033	98
341	Electricians	89,170	99
342	Electronics and Telecommunications Trades Workers	69,079	96
362	Horticultural Trades Workers	53,869	81
390	Technicians and Trades Workers, nfd	16,963	95
390	Other Technicians and Trades Workers, nfd	287	72
392	Printing Trades Workers	20,202	80
394	Wood Trades Workers	27,524	95
399	Miscellaneous Technicians and Trades Workers	36,925	71

Table 2.2 (cont.): Male Dominated Occupations (3 digit- minor group) 2006.

440	Protective Service Workers, nfd	62	72
441	Defence Force Members, Fire Fighters and Police	53,610	82
442	Prison and Security Officers	42,427	82
700	Machinery Operators and Drivers, nfd	9,087	88
710	Machine and Stationary Plant Operators, nfd	2,577	84
711	Machine Operators	59,324	70
712	Stationary Plant Operators	73,997	96
721	Mobile Plant Operators	91,165	97
730	Road and Rail Drivers, nfd	9,894	91
731	Automobile, Bus and Rail Drivers	59,453	91
732	Delivery Drivers	27,994	88
733	Truck Drivers	126,776	97
741	Storepersons	81,355	84
821	Construction and Mining Labourers	116,549	98
831	Food Process Workers	40,485	72
839	Miscellaneous Factory Process Workers	41,171	76
841	Farm, Forestry and Garden Workers	71,825	75
890	Other Labourers, nfd	192	89
899	Labourers, nfd	19,403	86
899	Miscellaneous Labourers	91,936	81
Total number of men employed in male dominated occupations			2,668,569
Number of men employed in male dominated occupations as a percent of total male employment			54%

Source: (ABS 2006a) Table constructed by the author.

Note: Occupation was coded to the 2006 Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO). This has replaced the 1996 Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) Second Edition

There are four key messages to take from these tables. The first is that men and women work in very different occupations. Women numerically dominate teaching and nursing professions, clerical work, retail sales work and care work. These jobs involve high levels of customer interaction where workers often need to be highly sensitive to the needs and demands of clients. The ability to 'look good and sound right' and being able to manage one's emotions in ways conducive to the demands of the customer, regardless of the nature of those demands, are critical skills (Hochschild 1983; Nickson and Korczynski 2009; Nickson, Warhurst, Cullen, and Watt 2003; Nickson, Warhurst, Witz, and Cullen 2001; Warhurst and Nickson 2007; Warhurst and Nickson 2009). Men predominate numerically in management, professions (particularly engineering and IT professions), trades and certain kinds of manufacturing work, transportation and construction. These jobs require high levels

of technical and practical skills while interaction with customers is relatively low; workers need not engage in emotional labour, and the personal attributes of workers are of relatively little importance. Although there is some variation, Charles and Grusky (2004) show that the broad contours of which jobs men and women dominate are quite similar across industrialised nations.

The second message is that there are substantially more occupations that are male dominated than are female dominated. Males predominate in 56 of the 136 (3 digit ANZSCO) occupations and women predominate in 26. Put another way, women crowd into a relatively small number of occupations compared to men<sup>9</sup>. The limited number of occupations in which females predominate has major consequences for women workers. Not only is it an indication of the extent of opportunities for women but it also negatively impacts on the financial remuneration afforded to workers in these occupations. Restricting women to a narrow set of 'female typed' occupations can lead to a potential oversupply of women and result in lower wages in female dominated jobs (England 2006a; Jacobs 1999).

Thirdly, the vast majority of occupations in which women predominate are those situated in the middle to the lower end of the ANZSCO occupation categories and thus skill and pay hierarchy<sup>10</sup>. This contrasts to men where the majority of occupations in which they predominate are located at the upper reaches of the occupational and thus skill and pay scale (managers, professionals and high level trades).

Lastly, many of the occupations in which females currently predominate - clerks, office managers, and teacher - started out as the province of men, but there are few that have gone the opposite way. Indeed, maybe with the exception of storeperson, all

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<sup>9</sup> An alternative way to measure 'crowding' is to look at the proportion of females in particular occupations as a percent of total female employment. This shows the occupational concentration of women in the Australian labour market. ABS census data suggests that more than half of Australian working women are employed in just 9 of the 53 (2 digit ANZSCO) occupations. More than three quarters of women are found in just 17 occupations - the majority of which are lower level occupations. For men, to encompass more than half of all male employees takes 12 occupations and to account for just over three quarters of all male employees, 24 occupations.

<sup>10</sup> The ABS uses a classification system called the Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) to code occupations. This is a hierarchical structured classification which codes occupations on the basis of skill level and skill specialisation. At the broadest level, a limited number of categories, which aim to provide an overall picture of an occupation and its corresponding skill level and specialisation, are provided. The following levels or subdivisions provide an increasingly detailed dissection of these broad categories which become more homogeneous as they become more detailed.



the jobs that men currently dominate are those which have been historically and stereotypically viewed as 'male' work.

## **2.2 Theories and explanation for occupational sex segregation**

There is no agreed explanation for why occupational sex segregation exists and persists. Therefore, a necessary first step in understanding occupational sex segregation is to review the principal explanations for its occurrence. Debates about its causes often hinge on how much is explained as occurring on the 'supply side' vs. the 'demand side' of the labour market. Supply side causes of occupational sex segregation typically refer to the characteristics of those supplying their labour. Demand side causes of occupational sex segregation generally focus on employer's behaviour and preferences.

### **2.2.1 Supply**

#### *Human capital theory*

Economists have attempted to explain occupational sex segregation with human capital theory. Human capital theory is a mainstream economic theory that conceptualises occupational outcomes within a utility maximising framework, where individuals seek to maximise income over their lifetime (Becker 1964). According to this theory, occupational outcomes (and thus sex differentiated patterns of employment) reflect the effects of earlier decisions (choices) concerning human capital investment (Becker 1985).

For example, Polachek (1981) argued that because women more than men plan breaks for anticipated household responsibilities (such as childrearing), they choose jobs that have high initial wages and low depreciation of human capital during years away from work and thus lower penalties (in terms of reduced wages) for career interruption. However, contrary to Polachek's thesis, research by England et al. (1996) found that those working in female dominated fields actually earned less at the outset than they would have if they had sought employment in an integrated or male dominated field, net of all other factors.

Moreover, as shown in the previous chapter, women's labour market commitment has increased enormously in recent decades, particularly for women with children (as indicated by the less pronounced dip in age-specific labour force participation curve).

Currently in Australia most women plan on paid employment for most of their lives and their investment in education increasingly resembles and even surpasses men's (Gregory 2002). This implies that women, particularly those with children, are gaining greater labour market experience. According to human capital theory this should lead to major changes to the types of occupations in which women work. Despite this however, as shall be shown below, occupational sex segregation still remains very high in Australia (although it has decreased slightly over the past two decades).

Preference theory, developed by Catherine Hakim (1995; 1998; 2000b) is seen by many as a refinement of human capital theory (Blackburn, Browne, Brooks, and Jarman 2002; Hakim 2000b). Hakim views gender employment patterns as the legitimate by-product of women's choices. Drawing on data collected by the Office of National Statistics in Britain, she identifies three types of women who differ with respect to their attitudes to paid work and family commitments. They are the work centred, the family centred, and the adaptive. Hakim sees these preferences as the primary determinates of women's behaviour with respect to fertility, employment patterns, and job choice.

Hakim's preference theory has been highly controversial (Ginn, Arber, Brannen, Dale, Dex, Elias, Moss, Pahl, Roberts, and Rubery 1996); even Hakim (2007) herself acknowledges this. Criticism of preference theory stems from the classic sociological argument that choices are not made in a vacuum but are socially constructed and are constrained, for example, by societal norms concerning mothering and the differential treatment of men and women in the labour market. These social structures are viewed as central to shaping and constraining choices (and thus demand side factors) and remain the dominant and primary determinant of labour market behaviour and occupational outcomes.

#### *Socialization theory*

An alternative supply side explanation for occupational sex segregation is that women and men choose different occupations due to processes of socialisation that create different preferences, interests and aspirations for males and females (Reskin 1993). According to this theory, individuals internalise expectations about natural male and female traits, attributes, and skills that are disseminated and perpetuated through popular culture and through interactions with significant others (parents,

peers and teachers) (Oakley 1972). These expectations are converted into durable sex-typed aspirations and preferences, some of which operate at the subconscious level, which lead men and women to desire, train for and choose very different jobs. For example, essentialist stereotypes that associate women with caring also lead males to distance themselves from this activity. In the labour market this results in men being less likely to prefer and aspire to care work, invest in training to undertake this work or persist in this work in times of adversity.

These internalised beliefs about gender differences affect how workers come to understand their skills and abilities. As Correll (2004) showed, women tend to regard themselves as less competent than men at male-typed tasks, even when they were found to be just as competent. These beliefs can therefore lead men and women to abstain from certain types of jobs because they think that they are less capable at them than the other sex. Internalisation of these essentialist stereotypes also have self-fulfilling effects on behaviour and actually result in poor performance (Padavic and Reskin 2002; Ridgeway and England 2007). In this way, internalised essentialist beliefs contribute to occupational sex segregation.

In recent years, the socialisation thesis has been criticised, particularly by American sociologists of gender (England 2005). The theory presumes that gender-specific preferences are internalised early in life and affect subsequent investment decisions and aspirations which then form a stable component of adult life. However, there is evidence to suggest that aspirations are not as stable as that assumed by the socialization thesis. For example, Jacobs (1989; 1999; 2003) showed that occupational aspirations are highly unstable, changing throughout the life course, and that young people's aspirations are weakly related to the occupations they hold as adults. In addition the theory is said to place too much emphasis on the power of social structures in determining gender and therefore gender based preferences and aspirations (Holmes 2007). The extent to which individuals are able to exercise some agency in how they determine their occupational aspirations is often under-recognised in the socialisation thesis.

This latter view has led to the emergence of a more popular 'doing gender' perspective (West and Zimmerman 1987). This view suggests that it is only as gendered beings that persons are culturally intelligible and that it is necessary to attribute a gender to someone in order to make sense of them as human beings (Butler

1999). According to this view, men and women choose jobs less because they want to or believe they should, but because if they don't their gender identity will simply not make sense to themselves and others.

Whether it is seen as internalized essentialist stereotypes or doing gender, there is ample evidence that some supply-side mechanisms of men and women choosing gendered fields are at play. Males and females aspire to very different jobs from early ages and choose different courses of study at school (Charles and Bradley 2009; England 2005; Padavic and Reskin 2002). This sex composition of men's and women's early occupational and educational aspirations must then have some effect on the sex composition of the occupations attained, even if it is small. There is some evidence that the difference in the gender gap in educational and occupational aspirations has diminished. However, it seems that this narrowing is asymmetric with more women choosing male spheres of study and jobs than men aspiring to undertake traditionally female fields of study and jobs (England 2006b; England 2010; Jacobs 1993; Ridgeway and England 2007; Rolfe 2006). Moreover, there is also evidence that the occupational and educational aspiration of those from less privileged or working class backgrounds are more stereotyped and fixed than those of their middle and upper-class counterparts (England 2010; Rolfe 2006).

### **2.2.2 Demand**

There are two main demand side explanations for occupational sex segregation and these correspond with the above cultural (socialization) and economic (human capital) supply side explanations.

The first of the demand side explanations is the idea that employers are influenced by socially constructed notions of what sex is appropriate for what job, due to the same socialization processes that lead men and women to prefer and aspire to different occupations. Employers will tend to hire, fire and promote in accord with these widely held essentialist stereotypes, thereby generating occupational sex segregation (Reskin and Roos 1990). These essentialist stereotypes usually assume that women are well suited to service, nurturance and interpersonal interaction and men are well suited to physical labour, technical tasks and abstract calculation and analysis (Charles and Grusky 2004; Charles and Bradley 2009; England 2010; Grusky and Levanon 2008; Ridgeway 2009). There are numerous theoretical models put forth that incorporate similar versions of this core idea.

### *Sex typing of jobs*

At the most fundamental level, essentialist stereotypes along with an occupation's task content play a crucial role in determining at the outset whether a job will be labelled as either men's or women's work (Padavic and Reskin 2002). However, the relationship between an occupation's task content and segregation is not unidirectional and deterministic but rather a two way process. As Cynthia Cockburn (1985), who has undertaken some of the most illuminating work on the process of the gendering of jobs, describes, 'people have a gender and their gender rubs off on the jobs they mainly do. The jobs in turn have a gender character which rubs off on the people who do them' (1985: 169). Charles and Grusky (2004), building on Cockburn's work, argue that occupations also tend to grow and change in ways that bring the task content of the job into better alignment with their initial sex compositions (meaning that male-dominated occupations are more likely to become physically demanding and female dominated jobs are more likely to become nurturing/caring).

Leidner (1991) has argued that, despite the existence of culturally shaped gender designations of work activities, employers and workers retain the flexibility to reinterpret them in ways than support job holders gender identities. She suggests that the actual features of the job do not themselves determine whether the work will be defined as most appropriate for men or women. Rather they act as resources that can be drawn upon by workers, employers and other audience to interpret the work in gender appropriate ways.

### *Expected sanctions*

Essentialist stereotypes and the sex typing of jobs are so powerful that workers who transgress norms about gender appropriate labour are subject to sanctions of various sorts. These sanctions range from the quiet (or sometimes not so quiet) disapproval of parents, to overt discrimination by co-workers or clients who react negatively to gender atypical workers.

In her study of men working in traditionally female professions of nursing, elementary school teaching, librarianship and social work, Williams (1995) found that customers/clients expectations that these workers be female resulted in the male workers facing discrimination and prejudice. Male workers were seen as sexually suspect and viewed as potential sexual predators who might exploit their access to

populations like children or patients. Williams suggests that the negative reactions by clients constituted the most compelling evidence of discrimination against men in these professions and can push men out of specific jobs.

Kerfoot and Korczynski (2005) have also shown how the sex typing of jobs along with essentialist stereotypes held by consumers can compound occupational sex segregation. They point to evidence that indicates that customers' preference for female flight attendants lead a US airline company to refuse to employ males in these roles. So powerful is the role of the consumer in generating and maintaining occupational sex segregation that strategies specifically designed to decrease occupational sex segregation are evidenced to have been thwarted by consumers. For example, Knox (2008) found that a strategy employed by managers in Australian hotels to promote women in hotel porter roles (a role traditionally occupied by men) proved unsuccessful due to customers' refusal to let a woman carry their luggage.

#### *Pollution theory*

Essentialist stereotypes held by workers may also result in workers actively resisting the other sex from entering the occupation for fear that they will 'pollute' the work and reduce the prestige and status of the occupation. A theoretical model with such a theme has been advanced by economist Claudia Goldin (2006).

To develop this model, Goldin built on the Becker-type model of discrimination that suggests that occupational sex segregation is a result of one group's preference not to work with or interact with another group. A model that shares some similarity with this view has been developed by social psychology researchers.

#### *In-group bias*

This body of research indicates that people tend to prefer others from their own group. According to this research, sex segregation of occupations can come about simply by one sex acting preferentially towards people like themselves with no actual intention to treat the other sex discriminatorily. For example, a female employer who desires people who will 'fit in' may express this in-group preference either consciously or unconsciously in hiring. This explanation for occupational sex segregation has been termed in-group bias (Reskin 2000).

In-group biases have been found to occur particularly in workplaces where one sex is numerically a minority (Kanter 1977). Importantly in-group bias effects are found to hold for women in male dominated occupations - but not for men in female dominated occupations. For example, Williams (1992) found that while men in female dominated occupations experienced a workplace culture dominated by the other sex which occasionally isolated them, it did not hold them back. The processes actually had the effect of channelling men into more 'masculine' specialities which also usually afforded better pay and more prestige.

#### *Statistical discrimination*

The second set of demand side explanations for occupational sex segregation is part of the now well accepted economics of information, and called statistical discrimination. When there is considerable uncertainty and limited information about a worker's performance, employers may use group averages, such as the average productivity of all men at a given job, to make decisions about the likely skills and experience of particular workers. Such group averages are relied upon to contain recruitment and screening costs.

Two forms of statistical discrimination are commonly identified in the literature. One can be seen to be a strong form of statistical discrimination in which, on average, there *are* objective gender-based differences in productivity. However, a weaker form (Blau, Brinton, and Grusky 2006) or error form (Ridgeway and England 2007) of statistical discrimination has also been identified. This is where beliefs about objective differences are incorrect, but nonetheless persist, because stereotypes blind employers to disconfirming evidence. The latter is in fact more closely aligned with the first demand side (cultural) cause of occupational sex segregation, but situated in the latter tradition as it is usually advanced by economists.

#### *Other demand side causes*

Other demand side causes of occupational sex segregation are not directly related to discriminatory practices of employers or other workplace actors. For example, the changing industrial structure of the economy has seen the rapid expansion of the services sector and this has important consequences for occupational sex segregation. Because much service sector work is female dominated, its expansion results in the industrial mix of some occupations becoming more service based, thereby also

resulting in increased female representation in such occupations. While these more macro causes of occupational sex segregation usually exert their effects through the more immediate practices of workplace actors (i.e. what determines service sector employment to be women's work), they are nonetheless important causes and perpetuates of occupational sex segregation.

*Proximate and Distal demand side causes of occupational sex segregation.*

It is therefore useful to distinguish between proximate and distal mechanism of occupational sex segregation (Blau, Brinton, and Grusky 2006). Proximate causes of occupational sex segregation generally lie in the widely shared cultural belief that men and women have fundamentally different traits and proclivities and are accordingly best suited to different types of jobs. Distal causes of occupational sex segregation include the more macro level forces such as economic change, and institutional structures or procedures that affect sex segregation through the proximate mechanisms (Blau, Brinton, and Grusky 2006; Ridgeway and England 2007).

*Supply or Demand – which side of the labour process has the most explanatory power?*

As indicated above, researchers usually distinguish between labour supply and labour demand side factors when explaining occupational sex segregation. The obvious question that comes to mind is how much occupational sex segregation is explained by each side of the labour market? Currently however, very little is known about how much occupational sex segregation arises because of demand side factors related to workplace actors behaviour and preferences and how much arises from supply side decisions of employees (England 2005). Conversely we also know little about which side of the labour market is generating change in levels of occupational sex segregation (Krymkowski and Mintz 2008). Before a judgement can be made about this, recent trends in occupational sex segregation must be examined to determine whether any change has actually taken place and the characteristics of the type of changes (if any) we are witnessing.



### 2.3 Recent trends in occupational sex segregation

Australia has historically recorded very high rates of sex segregation of occupations and in the mid 1980s held the title for the most sex segregated labour force in the OECD (Pocock 1998). However, several changes in recent decades have led to expectations of declining occupational sex segregation. These include the convergence of male and female labour market participation rates; reduction and even reversal in gender differences in educational attainment; a decline in the gender wage gap; a small but noticeable reallocation of domestic duties between men and women; and the introduction of legislative provisions to address sex discrimination in employment practices. What do recent studies reveal about the impact the above changes have had on levels of occupational sex segregation in Australia<sup>11</sup>?

#### *Australia*

At the outset it is important to note that there have been surprisingly very few recent comprehensive studies into aggregate trends of occupational sex segregation in the Australia labour market. For example, the most recent comprehensive examination was undertaken by Preston & Whitehouse (2004) 7 years ago. And even here, rather than calculating their own index measures, they took as the starting point index measures of occupational sex segregation presented by Watts (2003). In saying this, one can find more recent industry or workplace specific level studies of occupational sex segregation (Harrison 2002; Harrison 2004; Knox 2008) and small commentary about trends incorporated as sub-sections in more broader analyses of women's economic status in the labour market (Pocock 2008; The Australian Institute for Social Research 2005).

While they are somewhat dated, it is still useful to review what these studies say about occupational sex segregation in Australia. Four key findings emerge from these studies.

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<sup>11</sup> Contention remains about how to best measure occupational sex segregation (Watts 2003). While horizontal occupational sex segregation is typically measured using the index of dissimilarity, a number of different indexes have been utilised in the literature, including the KM index, Atkinson index and marginal matching. As the purpose of this section is to understand any changes that have occurred in patterns of occupational sex segregation we focus on the broad trends in levels of occupational sex segregation rather than reviewing detailed index calculations. I leave judgments about which index offers the most accurate measure to statistical experts.

First, the Australian labour market continues to be highly segregated by sex<sup>12</sup> (Liang Lee and Miller 2004). Second, there have been some small declines in occupational sex segregation over recent decades (Harrison 2004; Norris 1997; Pocock 1998; Pocock 2008; The Australian Institute for Social Research. 2005). Third, integration has been strongest among professional and managerial occupations, with little change in levels of occupational sex segregation at lower points of the occupational scale (Pocock 1998; Pocock 2008; Watts 2003). Fourth and lastly, the declines that have occurred largely reflect women's movement into male dominated occupations, with men not entering into female dominated occupations much at all (Pocock 1998; Pocock 2008; Preston and Whitehouse 2004). This latter finding is supported by the results presented in table 2.1 and 2.2 above.

For example, Norris (1997) found that over the period from 1978 to 1985 occupational sex segregation fell, but since that time has remained more or less unaltered. Updating Norris's calculations, Pocock (1998) found that between 1986 and 1995 the segregation index has indeed remained steady. The index was 25.7 in 1986 and 25.2 in 1995. This means that just over a quarter of those in the labour market would need to change their occupation if overall occupational sex segregation were to reflect men's and women's overall shares of employment. Pocock went further and used Mumford's method to calculate the concentration of women in female dominated occupations, and found that the concentration had fallen over the past decade. Calculating the same ratio for disproportionately male dominated occupations, she found that the concentration actually increased. Pocock concluded that 'this suggests that beneath the steady overall sex-segregation ratio, what we are witnessing is increasing entry of women into men's jobs, while men are generally not shifting, but instead consolidating within masculinised occupations' (1998:591).

Pocock (2008) reviewed these trends again in a more recent analysis. She finds that between 1998 and 2008 there have been some small declines in overall occupational sex segregation. In 1998 the index was 25.5 and in 2008 it was 22.3. However, Pocock again concludes that this is a result of women slowly increasing their entry into male dominated occupations.

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<sup>12</sup> The degree of occupational sex segregation is quite sensitive to the units of analysis. The more detailed the unit or data is the more segregation is revealed (Harrison 2004; Jacobs 1999; Preston and Whitehouse 2004; Watts 2003). Therefore the level of occupation detail researchers use influences the level of occupational sex segregation found.

Using the Karmel and MacLachlan index, Watts (2003) finds that between 1986 and 2002 there had been an overall rate of occupational sex integration equal to 2.73 percent. In other words, occupational sex segregation was found to have declined over this period. Integration was found to be greatest at the upper end of the occupational hierarchy.

Building on Watts' findings, Preston & Whitehouse (2004) suggest that integration is not a totally positive story. Preston & Whitehouse adopt a methodological approach which looks at the concentration of men and women in specific disaggregated occupational groups. They show that rather than reflecting increased female shares of employment, integration in a number of broad occupational groups actually reflects employment effects. That is, integration in these areas derives more from the fact that there has been strong employment (shift-effects) in areas employing women rather than from changes in actual female employment shares.

#### *United States*

As there have been limited recent studies of changes in gender segregation in Australia, recent US research is likely to be useful in providing a guide to broad patterns. There, declines in segregation have largely been confined to professional and managerial occupations, mainly because women have entered occupations formerly the confine of men. However, at lower points in the occupational scale, there has been little change in occupational sex segregation. This is almost certainly the case in Australia too, with the above studies confirming similar trajectories to those evidenced in the US.

Using the index of dissimilarity, Padavic & Reskin (2002) looked at occupational sex segregation over the twentieth-century. They found that between 1900 and 1970, occupational sex segregation was quite stable. During the 1970s and 1980s occupational sex segregation dropped sharply but stalled in the 1990s. At the turn of the 20th century, Padavic & Reskin calculate the sex segregation index to be 52, this compares to 53 in 1990, but 62 in 1980.

Jacobs (2003) presents evidence that confirms Padavic & Reskin's findings. Again using the index of dissimilarity, Jacobs shows that occupational sex segregation fell continuously over the period 1970 to 2000, from 67 percent in 1970 to 52 percent by 2000. He similarly found that the trajectory of the declines slowed during the 1990s.

He states that the modest declines in the 1990s were a result of shifts in the size of occupations, with more integrated occupations growing and the more segregated occupations declining, rather than a greater mixing of females and males within occupations. He also finds that integration occurred largely through women entering formerly male-dominated fields.

Using census data, England (2005; 2006b) looked at occupational sex segregation, as measured by the index of dissimilarity over the period 1950 to 2000. She finds that segregation decreased over this period, but the decades of greatest decline were 1970s and 1980s. Since the 1990s declines have been much less steep. Interestingly England finds that integration has been strongest among those with college degrees. Occupational sex segregation of those with high school degrees declined by about 5 points over the period 1950 to 2000, while the index dropped by over 25 points for those with a college degree. She argues that this class dynamic is due to the fact that professional and managerial occupations have integrated much more than clerical and blue collar occupations. She also finds that it is women who are driving the change in levels of occupational sex segregation, entering male dominated professional and managerial occupations in large numbers. However, men have entered women's occupations very little at any occupational level.

Overall the above Australian and United States studies make clear a number of points about recent trends in occupational sex segregation. First, after some reductions in occupational sex segregation, recent evidence reveals that declines have stalled. The declines in occupational sex segregation that have occurred have largely been in professional and managerial occupations. This is mainly because women have entered these upper end occupations that were formerly the confines of men. Men however, are not entering women's occupations at any occupational level.

Men's resistance to taking on gender atypical employment has been identified as a key barrier to future declines in occupational sex segregation and achieving greater gender equality (Blau, Brinton, and Grusky 2006; England 2006b; Grusky and Levanon 2008). This is because, as Hayes (1986) has pointed out, a significant reduction in the levels of occupational sex segregation requires not only that women move into male-concentrated occupations, but that men move into female-concentrated occupations (without displacing the majority of women there). It is also very likely that men's aversion to female occupations is a necessary component of the

explanation of why men are withdrawing from the labour market. Any solution to men's withdrawal from the labour market involves men taking advantage of the generally rising lower level service sector employment opportunities and therefore undertaking work that is seen as women's. The question that remains then is *why* are men not moving into female dominated work? These index calculations do not reveal the causal mechanisms that operate to generate and/or stall changes in occupational sex segregation. Are men's limited inroads into female typed occupations a reflection of choices made by the men themselves (supply side bottlenecks) or a result of discriminatory tastes of employers (demand side bottlenecks)?

## **2.4 Bottlenecks to progress: explanations**

Recent works undertaken by leading scholars of gender stratification have included explanations for men's resistance to entering female-typed occupations. These explanations provide an interesting account of the cause and continuation of occupational sex segregation, particularly that which is caused by men's limited movement into female dominated occupations. These can be used to better understand the possible reasons why low skilled men are withdrawing from the labour market rather than taking advantage of low level service sector employment opportunities. Two theorists are key here - Paula England and her explanation for asymmetries in gender change; and David Grusky (along with various co-authors) and the decline of female advantaging essentialism.

### **2.4.1 Paula England and asymmetries in gender change**

England (2006b; 2010) considers men's resistance to undertaking work in traditionally female occupations as constituting a bottleneck to progress in gender equality and stalling change in gender system. England argues that while the emerging picture of gender equality is one of convergence - with increases in female labour force participation rates, reduction and even reversal in gender differences in educational attainment, decreases in levels of occupational sex segregation, and small but noticeable reallocations of time spent on household work between the sexes - gender change has actually been unequal and asymmetric. For England gender change is asymmetric in two ways; 'things have changed in paid work more than they have in the household, and women have dramatically increased their participation in formerly 'male' activities, but men's inroads into traditionally female occupations or household tasks is very limited by comparison' (England 2006b: 245). England argues

that these two separate but related asymmetries are serious impediments to gender equality.

England posits that the asymmetries in gender change result from an underlying devaluation of women, and by extension, activities and characteristics associated with women. She argues that there is greater difficulty in challenging men's behaviour so that they embrace traditionally female activities than in challenging women's behaviour to include male activities. This is because cultural norms devalue women and value men. Men face more stigma for undertaking activities deemed to be female than vice versa. 'Men lose money and suffer cultural disapproval when they choose traditionally female dominated fields; they have little incentive to transgress gender boundaries' (England 2010:155). Women are afforded more benefits and status for integrating male professions and trades than men are entering female fields. Women entering into traditional male occupations are entering roles that are socially respected and well rewarded. Men entering traditional female occupations are entering roles that are limited in prestige and in most cases are also poorly remunerated. She therefore suggests that 'both peer pressure and economic incentive mitigate against men taking on traditionally female activities' (England 2006b: 257).

She notes however, that the economic incentives afforded to women by moving into male domains of paid employment vary by class. She argues that economic incentives are much stronger for women who can earn more and this is why declines in occupational sex segregation are confined to the upper end of the occupational spectrum. England attributes this class variation to two co-occurring Western cultural and institutional logics; individualism and gender essentialism. 'A result of these co-occurring logics is that women are most likely to challenge gender boundaries when there is no path of upward mobility without doing so, but otherwise gender blinders guide the paths of both men and women' (2010: 150).

England argues that these contemporary bottlenecks to gender equality will not be eroded by egalitarian policies such as those appropriate to sex discrimination in employment practices for women seeking to enter male occupations. As England herself asks 'How can legislation change men's disinclination to enter predominately female jobs?' (England 2006b:259). For England the remedy to men's resistance to working in fields with women is cultural education that challenges the devaluation of everything associated with women. However, examples she gives largely focus on

overcoming men's resistance to undertaking child rearing responsibilities, rather than reducing men aversion to working in female dominated occupations. On the latter however, she does suggest that comparable worth policies may be of some assistance. She cautions though that while these may remove unfair pay penalties which may result in men being less averse to doing female typed work, they may also entrench gender differential roles and jobs by increasing the incentives for women to remain in traditionally female roles.

#### **2.4.2 David Grusky and the decline of female advantaging essentialism**

David Grusky, along with various distinguished collaborators, has written extensively about occupational sex segregation (Blau, Brinton, and Grusky 2006; Charles and Grusky 2004; Grusky and Levanon 2008). While his earlier work has primarily sought to understand the persistence of occupational sex segregation despite the proliferation of ideals of egalitarianism, Grusky's latest work provide some clues as to why men are so averse to undertaking women's work and the possibility of this changing in the future. However, to fully understand the latter, I must first briefly sketch the contours of the former.

Grusky's early work on occupational sex segregation is best documented in his book *Occupational Ghettos*, co-authored with Maria Charles (2004). In that book Charles and Grusky, (with substantial contributions from Kim Weeden, Mariko Chang, Joon Han, and Jesper Sorensen) examine the extent of sex segregation in 10 countries and in doing so uncover what they see as the underlying patterns of the contemporary occupational sex segregation regime.

Charles and Grusky identify two distinct cultural principals that entwine to generate the contemporary pattern of occupational sex segregation. The first is the logic of 'male primacy' which presumes men are more status worthy than women and more suited to positions of authority. This logic underlies vertical occupational sex segregation. The second is the logic of 'gender essentialism' whereby women and men are presumed to have fundamentally different tastes and abilities and accordingly are best suited to different jobs. These essentialist presumptions usually assume that women are well suited to service, nurturance and interpersonal interaction (non-manual) and men are well suited to physical and strenuous labour, and technical tasks (manual). This gender essentialism generates and maintains horizontal sex segregation.

Charles and Grusky use this two part analytic set up of the contemporary segregation regime as a tool to uncover why occupational sex segregation is so resistant to egalitarian trends, even as other forms of gender inequality have given way.

They argue that the persistence of occupational sex segregation is due to gender essentialism's (horizontal segregation) resistance to egalitarian forces. This is unlike vertical segregation, which Charles and Grusky argue is eroded on both the demand and supply side by the proliferation of liberal egalitarianism. For Charles and Grusky the integrative effects of egalitarianism are muted in two ways. Firstly, the logic of egalitarianism is not inconsistent with the persistence of horizontal forms of segregation. Secondly, the egalitarianism that has emerged has done so in the context of a strong post-industrial economy, that unleashes processes that increase horizontal segregation in the non-manual sector.

The authors suggest that while liberal egalitarianism may delegitimize overt inequalities of opportunity, it does not prevent individuals from understanding their own competencies and those of others in terms of standard essentialist visions of masculinity and femininity. As Charles and Grusky put it 'as liberal egalitarianism spreads, women increasingly enter into higher education and the paid labour market, but they do so in ways that reflect their own female preferences, the social and interpersonal sanctions associated with gender inappropriate work and the essentialist prejudices of employers' (2004: 302). A similar conjecture is offered by England (2006b; England 2010) in her explanation of why the bottlenecks to gender equality will not be eroded by the forces of modernizing bureaucracy and institutional universalism.

Charles and Grusky also point out that post industrialism (what they term to be the structural side of modernisation) undermines many of the integrative effects of egalitarianism and increases horizontal sex segregation. Post industrialism increases the proportion of non-manual occupations that are service based and hence female dominated. As the service sector expands there is also an increase in the demand for routine non-manual labour beyond that which can be met by simply drawing further on the pool of traditional workers - single women. The demand is therefore met by drawing wives and mothers into the routine non-manual services sector. To ensure this source of labour supply, employers have had to introduce family friendly work changes and otherwise craft a workplace that does not preclude a concurrent



commitment to domestic labour. As these employment changes become more prominent (part-time work, tele-working, job sharing etc.) the non-manual sector gradually becomes defined and labelled the default home for women. Men will become even less likely, by virtue of the label, to be drawn into this sector. Therefore the persistence of horizontal segregation is attributed to the compatibility of egalitarian cultural ideas with essentialist distinctions and the segregative effects of post-industrial economic restructuring.

Charles and Grusky's model of occupational sex segregation provides an extremely sophisticated explanation of gender segregation in an environment where much occupational sex segregation is still generated across the manual /non manual divide. However, the explanation does not deal very clearly with the situation where low skilled men's (manual) work opportunities diminish. What happens to these gender essentialist dynamics when traditional employment opportunities for low skilled men decline? Moreover, what happens when employers start having trouble finding women to do the routine service work that has come to dominate the economy? Do they hold onto their essentialist prejudices in the face of labour shortages? Both of these trends are currently evident in Australia. In more recent work, Grusky (2008) does provide some clues as to one possible scenario in relation to the first of these questions. On the latter he remains silent.

Grusky, this time writing with Asaf Levanon (2008), attempts to anticipate any possible futures for occupational sex segregation, taking as the starting point the underlying structure of sex segregation as detected in Charles and Grusky's original work.

Grusky and Levanon summarise the processes that generate the contemporary segregation regime, this time distinguishing between a male advantaging and a female advantaging form of gender essentialism.

*(1) the "vertical" cultural presumption that men are well suited for the substantial human capital investments that underwrite entry into high-wage, high-prestige, and otherwise desirable occupations; (2) the "female advantaging" essentialist presumption that men are well suited for relatively (less desirable) manual occupations requiring strength, robustness, and interaction with things; and (3) the "male advantaging" essentialist presumption that men are well suited for (relatively desirable) occupations requiring analytical and mathematical skills (2008: 814).*

Like Charles and Grusky, Grusky and Levanon suggest that a wholesale decline in essentialism is not in our immediate future. However, they do question whether we can anticipate a decline in at least some forms of essentialism. They present this question for both variants of essentialism identified in their typology of the contemporary segregation regimes - male advantaging and female advantaging.

It is in their discussion of the future of “female advantaging” forms of essentialism that Grusky and Levanon explicitly address the consequences de-industrialisation will have for men, and the form of gender essentialism that continues to assign them to areas of the economy that are in decline. Grusky and Levanon suggest that men will not necessarily ‘...stand idly by as “men’s work” of the conventional manual sort becomes peripheralized. Over the next half-century, the transition to a post-manual system may begin to reduce male commitment to those pieces of the essentialist package, especially an emphasis on male physicality, that assign men to increasingly devalued pursuits’ (2008:824). However, they caution that if men shed aspects of the essentialist package women will become less protected from male competition for non-manual occupations; and one of the few essentialist advantages that women now have will be lost.

### **2.4.3 Implications of these theorists**

It has been shown above that leading scholars of gender stratification consider gender essentialism - the notion that men and women are innately and fundamentally different in interests and skills - to be a primary determinant of (horizontal) occupational sex segregation and its continuation.

Returning to the distinction between demand and supply side causes of occupational sex segregation made at the beginning of the chapter, we also see that both Grusky’s and England’s explanation for the persistence of occupational sex segregation, particularly that which is caused by men’s limited inroads into female occupations, rest largely on supply side logic. Namely, they suggest that men themselves choose not to enter female dominated occupations because they understand their own competencies in terms of the gender essentialist package that associates men with status, prestige, physical strength and technical tasks. Men enter occupations that reflect these preferences and capacities and exclude themselves from those that don’t.

This thesis is explicit in England's work. For England it is men's fear of undertaking devalued female activities and tasks that explains men's limited inroads into female activities and tasks. Indeed, commenting on England's 2010 paper, Bergmann (2010) argues that England provides limited attention to demand side causes of continuing sex segregation in occupations.

However, for Grusky and co-authors, it is only their theorising about the conditions which would see men enter female occupations that one is made aware of the importance placed on supply side logic. Indeed in his earlier work Grusky (Charles and Grusky 2004) makes clear that the 'logic of gender essentialism' is supported by a wide range of proximate processes on both the demand and supply side of the labour market. These include employer discrimination, employee preferences, expected sanctions, self evaluation and institutional discrimination.

However, in his more recent writing Grusky (2008) considers that the conditions that would allow men to undertake female occupations necessitate the shedding of male essentialism. It therefore places the emphasis on men themselves actively resisting essentialist stereotypes which will then enable them to undertake women's work. As they state:

*It must in this context be appreciated that essentialism rests in part on self-assessments of competence and accordingly requires some complicity among those making those judgements. Will men remain complicit even when doing so profoundly disadvantages them?* (2008:821)

Their answer is that men will probably not remain complicit in the longer term. However, their thesis suggests that the reason why men have not yet moved into female typed occupations is because they are yet to shed the essentialist package and instead still ascribe to traditional essentialist occupational preferences.

While these supply side explanations for men's limited inroads into female occupations seem to hold at the upper end of the occupational spectrum where men (and women) currently have a number of alternative employment choices, they seem less plausible at the lower end of the occupational spectrum.

When these theorists make their claim about the causes of men's limited movement into female fields they are doing so with particular examples in mind. In this case it is based on the trends of women moving into male occupations, and men's failure or

unwillingness to move into female occupations. As we have seen, women's movement into male occupations has primarily occurred at the upper end of the occupational spectrum. One thing we know about the occupations into which females have been able to move, is that they have experienced very strong employment growth over recent decades. This increased demand means that employers are likely to resist their tastes for discrimination and be more willing to look at non-traditional sources of labour to ensure that vacancies are filled and productivity is maintained. This implies that declines in sex segregation in these occupations are probably largely a result of declines in demand side causes of occupational sex segregation (i.e. declines in employer discrimination). It is therefore reasonable to argue then, as Grusky and England both have, that any bottlenecks to occupational sex segregation represent supply side ones. For example, men's limited inroads into female occupations located at the upper end of the occupational spectrum (teaching, nursing, social worker etc.) where demand for workers is high, is more likely to be a result of men's aversion to this work (and therefore a supply side cause of occupational sex segregation) rather than a reflection of employer discrimination.

However, unlike the upper end of the occupational spectrum, demand at the lower end of the labour market has been weak, particularly in occupations in which men have traditionally laboured. Indeed occupations traditionally dominated by low skilled men have actually experienced substantial declines, unleashing a large number of men into labour surplus areas of the labour market. The current choices faced by low skilled men is to either undertake the low level service work that is experiencing growth and therefore undertake work that is traditionally seen as women's, or not to have work at all. Do low skilled men prefer to join the ranks of the unemployed rather than obtain employment in female occupations, as is implied in England? Do men continue to pursue education, training and paid work that reflects their own male preferences, even though these preferences are associated with areas of the labour market that are in decline, as implied by Grusky? Or is there a level of demand side discrimination that exists for men at the lower end of the labour market that limits their ability to secure employment in the growing low level services sector? At the lower end of the labour market then, any bottlenecks to declines in occupational sex segregation, whilst suggested by Grusky and England to be supply ones (men's unwillingness to undertake devalued female activities and tasks), may in reality more likely be demand side ones - that there is a level of employer discrimination against men at the lower end of the labour market for jobs that are

available. We also know that, while infrequent, men do obtain employment in gender atypical occupations (Bradley 1993). The interesting question is how they do this. Do they shed the essentialist package as implied by Grusky's work? Do they overcome their fear of the feminine as implied by England's work?

Currently there is limited empirical research available to test the claims made by Grusky and England. The purpose of this research is to provide such an examination. It aims to understand why low skilled men are not entering female dominated occupations that are experiencing growth and which are also open to workers with limited levels of formal educational qualifications. What are the possible supply and demand side dimensions to men's segregation from and conversely their integration into low level occupations that are experiencing employment growth? What are the factors that enabled men to successfully enter occupations characterised by gender bias? What, if anything, helps or hinders men to gain employment in these occupations? This investigation aims to both contribute to an understanding of the processes that generate changes in male representation in female dominated occupations and to explore the usefulness of various supply and demand side explanations as vehicles for theorizing about this type of occupational change. Overall it aims to develop new insights on the processes that affect low skilled men's ability and willingness to take jobs in areas of rising employment so that new ideas can be generated about how to best to reengage men who have been displaced in the new economy.

Before moving on to detail the methodology employed to carry out the research, it is useful to review an existing (albeit small) body of literature looking at men working in gender atypical occupations. This body of research offers insights into both the experience of men working in female dominated occupations and the barriers they face in entering such jobs. The literature sheds some light on the possible demand and supply side dimensions to men's employment in female dominated occupations.

## **2.5 Men working in female dominated occupations**

To date, most studies of occupational sex segregation have focused on women's experience of work and the labour market. Indeed most of what is known about occupational segregation is based on studies of women's experiences in male jobs. This has told us a great deal about how women are excluded from some kinds of work, and how they are crowded into other kinds. However, the finding that men are

even less likely than women to aspire and work in gender atypical occupations has lead gender stratification scholars to bring men into the analysis of occupational sex segregation. Indeed there has been a relatively recent growth in academic interest in men who work in female-concentrated occupations (Applegate and Kaye 1993; Bradley 1989; Bradley 1993; Cross and Bagilhole 2002; England and Herbert 1993; Eveline 1998; Jacobs 1993; Kauppinen-Toropainen and Lammi 1993; Leidner 1991; Lupton 2000; Lupton 2006; Nickson and Korczynski 2009; Pringle 1993; Pullen and Simpson 2009; Simpson 2004; Simpson 2005; Simpson 2009; Williams 1992; Williams 1995; Williams and Villemez 1993). These studies have provided a good understanding of men's experience in such occupations. Researchers have also shown that there are distinct patterns of movement by men into female-concentrated occupations.

### **2.5.1 Entry into and out of female dominated occupations**

For example, reviewing research into past cases in the UK and USA, Bradley (1993) identifies three circumstances in which men may move into women's jobs. Men may move into women's jobs at times of general social, economic and political upheaval. At these times social rules are called into question and new gender norms can emerge. Another precipitating factor is technological change. Invention of a new machine or technique can provide a rationale for men to redefine an old female occupation as male. And finally, Bradley finds that in periods of recession, unemployment and lack of job opportunities men may be driven to consider taking jobs previously despised as female. However, for Bradley, the conditions which precipitate male movement into female jobs are largely dependent on supply side decision by men themselves. As Bradley herself states 'I am therefore laying stress on the active role of men themselves in making choices and changing the patterns of segregation' (1993:25). Bradley goes on to present a typology of three characteristic entry patterns of men into women's work. These are as 'tokens', as part of an 'infiltration' or in 'invasions'.

Jacobs (1993) analyses the mobility patterns of men into and out of female dominated occupations. He finds that while very few men aspire to or do work in female jobs, the few that express an interest or actually enter, do not stay very long. He suggests a system of lifelong social control produces a revolving door for those men who try to enter. These men are typically channelled and rechanneled out of these jobs and into jobs that are more male dominated.

Williams and Villemez (1993) identify a 'trap door' rather than a 'revolving' one. They profile men in female dominated occupations and trace the dynamics of their entry into and exit from these jobs. They differentiate between three broad groups of men: seekers, who actively sought female dominated jobs; finders, who were looking for other types of work but who ended up in a female dominated occupation; and leavers, who were in 'female' jobs and left them. They found that the majority of men who entered female concentrated occupations were not there by choice (finders) and that, of those men who had sought a female-concentrated job (seekers), many were not successful in securing one. They suggest that the occupational structure operates in a gendered way to restrict individual choices either by blocking men from female dominated jobs, despite the men's aspirations, or by escalating men to better jobs after only a brief tenure of employment in female concentrated areas of work.

Using a similar analytic distinction Simpson (2004; 2009) interviewed men in four occupation groups (primary school teacher, flight attendants, librarian and nurses) about the experience of work in a female dominated occupations. The interviewees are categorized as either 'seekers' (men who actively choose the 'female occupation in which they worked), 'finders' (men who found the occupation in the process of making general career decisions) and 'settlers' (men who tried a variety of different jobs with limited levels of job satisfaction). Most of Simpson's interviewees are characterised as finders or settlers.

Cross and Bagihole (2002) interviewed ten men working in a number of jobs that historically and culturally have been defined as women's work. These jobs included cleaning, nursery nursing, school teaching, and registered general nursing. Cross and Bagihole note how, for the working class men in their study, the choice to work in these areas was largely pragmatic, with redundancy often being a catalyst for moving into a women's job. By contrast, their middle-class interviewees had always worked in female dominated occupations.

The finding by Cross and Bagihole highlights an interesting issue about class and how this may impact on the views of men towards female typed employment (Bonney 2007). Although Cross and Bagihole provide some evidence to suggest that middle class men are seemingly more comfortable working in female typed occupations, they do not provide an explanation for this. Warhurst and Nickson (2007) however have identified a displacement effect occurring in much service work whereby students

with middle class backgrounds are taking jobs that would otherwise be undertaken by working class people. This may account for some of the difference between working and middle-class men in terms of working in female dominated jobs.

The findings presented above provide some explanations for why men *may* move into female dominated jobs; however they do not enable us to clearly identify the primary determinants of men's entry into and out of gender atypical employment. They also suggest that explanations (such as Bradley 1989) that assume that men in female typed occupations are there because they want to be or conversely are not there because they don't want to be, lead us astray. As the findings above indicate, some men may be in female dominated jobs simply because of availability or convenience, while others may want to be in these jobs but are unable to secure employment in them.

However, these studies at best enable the reader to know that a particular number of men, who either sought or did not seek employment in female dominated jobs, actually ended up in such jobs. With the exception of Bradley (1989) these studies tell us little about why it is that some men enter female dominated jobs while the majority do not. They provide no understanding of the circumstances under which men are able to take jobs that are normatively regarded as women's. Such understandings are crucial. It is only by understanding the processes that affect men's willingness and ability to undertake female dominated jobs that new ideas about how to better reengage economically displaced men with jobs in areas of rising employment are able to be generated.

### **2.5.2 Experience of men working in female dominated occupations**

There is a comparatively larger body of literature within this research tradition that has sought to explore the experience of men working in female dominated jobs. Two main themes can be detected in this literature (Lupton 2006; Nickson and Korczynski 2009). One is that men take their gender privilege with them into women's work (Williams 1995) and the second is that masculinity is challenged when men cross gendered work boundaries (Lupton 2000). Both of these themes are likely to be useful in understanding why men might enter or avoid female-concentrated occupations.

*Advantages for men working in female dominated occupations*



There is much evidence to suggest that men who enter female concentrated occupations benefit from their minority status. Three main benefits have been identified.

Firstly, it has been found that men's minority status affords them a number of career benefits within female dominated occupations. These include being looked at as favourable jobs applicants (Simpson 2004; Williams 1992), being fast tracked to more senior positions (Williams 1992; Williams 1995) and being given more opportunities for skill acquisition and increased responsibility (Simpson 2004). The outplaying of these processes result in men monopolizing positions of power (vertical segregation) in female dominated occupations.

Secondly, men may be channelled into more 'masculine' specialities which are also usually afforded better pay and more prestige. For example, Williams (1995) found that while there were some subtle pressures operating to keep men out of working in traditionally female professions of nursing, elementary school teaching, librarianship and social work, the processes actually had the effect of channelling them into more masculine specialities that often carried greater rewards and prestige. In fact men, despite their intentions, faced numerous pressures to move up in their profession. They actually had to work hard to stay in their original and desired occupation. As Williams (1995) puts it 'like being on a moving escalator, they have to work hard to stay in place' (1995:87). This is what Williams termed the 'glass escalator' effect.

Simpson (2004) found that men working as librarians, primary school teachers, nurses and cabin crew, themselves choose to specialise in areas of the occupation that were less gender typed. This decision was made in an attempt to overcome the discomfort associated with the female image of the job. However, these areas also were paid at higher rates and carried more prestige due to the specialist nature of the work.

Thirdly, it has been shown that men earn more than women in female concentrated occupations (England and Herbert 1993; Williams 1995). However, while men in female concentrated occupations may maintain their advantage over women, they remain at a disadvantage compared to men working in comparable jobs. Indeed, men actually suffer a greater wage loss than women compared to what they would be making in a comparable job which was male concentrated (England and Herbert 1993).

The implication of men's minority status then seems to be largely positive. The benefits accrued to men in terms of faster career progression, increased opportunity for specialisation and comparatively higher wages suggest a number of advantages that may entice men to enter a female dominated occupation. Indeed similar benefits are often mentioned in summaries of the factors that might influence men positively in considering entry into gender atypical employment (Hayes 1986). The largely positive experiences of men's minority status lead Williams (1992) to conclude that 'for men, the major barriers to integration have little to do with their treatment once they decide to enter these fields. Rather, we need to address the social and cultural sanctions applied to men who do "women's work" which keep men from even considering these occupations' (1992: 305). The positive implication of men's minority status suggests that men do not face as many disadvantages for doing work that is normatively designated as women's, as that suggested by England (England 2006b; England 2010).

#### *Disadvantages for men working in female dominated occupations*

One key social and cultural sanction that creates a barrier for men obtaining employment in female dominated occupation is the threat to masculinity faced by men when entering a women's area of employment. There is considerable evidence that men who work in female dominated occupations experience a challenge to their masculinity, both through working alongside women and from performing a role that has been sex-typed as female (Bradley 1993; Cameron 2001; Cross and Bagilhole 2002; Lupton 2000; Lupton 2006; Rolfe 2006; Simpson 2004; Simpson 2005; Williams 1992; Williams 1993; Williams 1995). These challenges can be located internally, in men's own sense of self and self worth or they can be located externally, in that they emanate from the stigma of others (Simpson 2005).

This may be a more fundamental challenge than the one women face when moving into male dominated occupations. As Williams observes (1995) 'while many women may enjoy the "feminine" aspects of their work, their femininity is not contingent on proving themselves competent in "gender-appropriate" work, which is often how masculinity is experienced by men' (1995: 20).

Men who cross over into a female dominated occupation upset traditional ideas of appropriate gender behaviour. This can result in men being subjected to prejudice and suspicion by others. This can range from them being viewed as not being a 'real

man' to suspicion regarding their sexuality and their sexual motivation for undertaking the work (Cameron 2001; Lupton 2000; Lupton 2006; Rolfe 2006; Williams 1992; Williams 1995).

Donnison presents evidence which indicates that men working in female typed jobs have long been subjected to such stigmatisation. As early as 1830 men who were working as midwives were portrayed as homosexuals in a series of populist pamphlets aimed at denouncing them (in Bradley, 1993).

The perceived risk to male (heterosexual) masculinity may be so great as to stop men from even contemplating work in a predominately female occupation (Bradley 1993). Indeed, Williams (1992) considers the negative stereotypes about men who do 'women's work' as the most significant barrier to men entering female dominated occupations.

Despite the power of these threats to masculinity, the barriers are not impermeable. As masculinity confers many advantages, men may face a particular imperative to preserve it when threatened. Researchers have uncovered numerous strategies deployed by men to overcome the discomfort associated with the female image of the job and to bring the job in line with dominant notions of masculinity. One such strategy is to emphasize traditional masculine traits such as 'pride in one's work', 'doing a proper job', to allow men to maintain a sense of masculinity even while undertaking female typed work (Cross and Bagilhole 2002; Simpson 2009). A second is to seek out and identify with more powerful groups within the occupation: for example, male nurses seeking out and associating with male surgeons (Lupton 2000; Lupton 2006). A third is to distance themselves from the work (and their colleagues) (Leidner 1991), even to the extent of keeping the job a secret from friends and or not fully disclosing the type of work they do (Cross and Bagilhole 2002; Simpson 2005; Simpson 2009). For example, a man who works in a library at a university may just report that he works at a university to friends, so as not to disclose the fact that he is a librarian. A fourth strategy is to represent the work as more masculine (Lupton 2000; Lupton 2006; Pullen and Simpson 2009; Simpson 2004; Simpson 2005; Simpson 2009), even to the extent of relabeling the job to avoid feminine connotation (Pringle 1993). A further extension of this involves actually doing the job differently, giving priority to the more masculine elements. Kauppinen-Toropainen & Lammi (1993) give the example of male nurses specialising in work tasks in which they minimize the need

for direct interaction with patients and instead work as experts on technical machinery, not as primary carers. Finally, there is evidence that some men actively renegotiate their masculinity so that it is not compromised by working with women or by doing work that is traditionally associated with women (Cross and Bagilhole 2002; Pullen and Simpson 2009; Simpson 2009). This was evidenced as being achieved either by downplaying overtly masculine behaviour or by incorporating aspects of female behaviour into their identities (Lupton 2000).

The literature on men working in female dominated occupations offers several clues as to what men might find attractive or otherwise about female jobs. These clues suggest, contrary to Grusky and England, that there are a variety of factors operating on both the demand and supply side that both negate and facilitate men's employment in gender atypical jobs.

The benefits accrued to men in terms of faster career progression, increased opportunity for specialisation and comparatively higher wages suggest a number of advantages that may entice men to enter a female dominated occupation. Men, if aware of these benefits when forming their occupational preferences, may be more willing to supply their labour to a female dominated occupation than is suggested by Grusky and England's thesis. However, men working in female jobs are still disadvantaged in relation to other men working in other comparable occupations, in terms of financial rewards and status (England and Herbert 1993). Indeed the devaluation of female jobs in terms of pay and status is one of the most frequently cited reasons for why men are unlikely to undertake female concentrated forms of employment. This evidence does support Grusky and England's thesis that men are unwilling to undertake devalued female activities.

However, in the contemporary labour market that has seen the disappearance of many traditionally male jobs, men who have been displaced by economic restructuring would presumably be better off financially if they were employed in a female dominated occupation. Also, given the devalued social status commonly attributed to those in receipt of welfare benefits, one would also question the assumption that men faced with the very likely possibility of unemployment would not take these jobs due to their relative status positioning.

The challenge to masculinity faced by men when entering a women's area of employment may keep men from entering these occupations (supply side bottlenecks)

or keep others from considering them for these occupations in the first place (demand side discrimination). The strategies that men deploy to overcome the discomfort associated with the female image of the job and to bring the job in line with dominant notions of masculinity suggest ways in which both the above supply and demand side bottlenecks can be overcome. It is interesting that while some of these strategies, such as the way men renegotiate their masculinity, appear to represent the shedding of the essentialist package as posited by Grusky (i.e. when men incorporate female traits into their identities), other strategies, such as emphasising masculine aspects of their work and seeking out and identifying with more powerful groups seems to actually re-establish male essentialism.

It must also be pointed out here that the literature on men working in female dominated occupations reviewed above overwhelmingly focuses on men working in female dominated professions or semi professions (i.e. nursing, teaching, social work, librarians etc). This is despite the fact that one of the central ways in which the labour market is sex segregated is by women predominating in low pay and low skilled occupations and men predominating in relatively high pay and high skilled occupations (see table 2.1 and 2.2). The experience of men working in, and the barriers they face entering, higher level female dominated occupations will not necessarily be the same as men working in female dominated occupations at the bottom end of the occupational spectrum. For example, Williams' finding that men face invisible pressures to move up in their profession - 'the glass escalator' - is intriguing, and has been substantiated by subsequent research into men working in similar female dominated professions. However, would this same glass escalator be experienced by men working in female dominated occupations at the lower end of the labour market?

This research seeks to contribute to the above body of research by understanding the experiences of men working in female dominated occupation with an eye to understanding how this relates to why low skilled men are not entering female dominated occupations that are experiencing growth and which are also open to workers with limited educational attainment. Importantly, this research seeks to move beyond understanding the experiences of men working in female dominated jobs and look at the extent to which supply and/or demand side processes are affecting men's willingness and ability to take jobs in rising areas of employment and which are usually considered to be the confines of females.

## Summary

After some dramatic reductions in the 1970s and 1980s, declines in occupational sex segregation have stalled. The declines in occupational sex segregation that have occurred have largely been confined to professional and managerial occupations, mainly because women have entered occupations formally the confines of men. Men however, have entered women's jobs very little at any occupational level. Men's resistance to taking on gender atypical employment has been identified as a key barrier to future declines in occupational sex segregation and achieving greater gender equality (Blau, Brinton, and Grusky 2006; England 2006b; Grusky and Levanon 2008). It is also very likely that men's aversion to female jobs is a component of the explanation for why men are withdrawing from the labour market. Any solution to men's withdrawal from the labour market involves men taking advantage of the generally rising lower level service sector employment opportunities and therefore undertaking work that is seen as women's. The question is why are men not moving into female dominated work?

There is no agreed explanation for why occupational sex segregation exists and persists. Debates about its causes often hinge on how much is explained as occurring on the supply side vs. the demand side of the labour market. Supply side causes of occupational sex segregation typically refer to the characteristics of those supplying their labour. Demand side causes generally focus on employer's behaviour and preferences. There are numerous demand and supply side theoretical models put forth. However, despite this theorising, we currently know very little about how much occupational sex segregation arises because of demand side factors related to workplace actors behaviour and preferences, and how much arises from supply side decisions of employees. At the same time we also know very little about which side of the labour market is generating or stalling the changes in levels of occupational sex segregation. In this way it is unknown if men's limited inroads into female typed occupations is a reflection of choices made by the men themselves (supply side bottlenecks) or a result of discriminatory tastes of employers (demand side bottlenecks)?

Two leading scholars of gender stratification, David Grusky (along with various distinguished collaborators) and Paula England, have recently put forth explanations to account for men's resistance in taking on female-typed occupations. While

differing in their interpretation of the causes of the contemporary pattern of occupational sex segregation, both share the view that men's limited inroads into female dominated occupations is a result of men themselves choosing not to enter these jobs. Both explanations therefore, rest largely on supply side logic.

While these supply side explanations for men's limited inroads into female occupations seem to hold at the upper end of the occupational spectrum where men (and women) currently have a number of alternative employment choices, they do not seem to work at the lower end of the labour market where traditional employment opportunities for low skill men have decreased. The current choice faced by many low skilled men is to either undertake the low level service work that is experiencing growth and therefore undertake work that is traditionally seen as women's, or not to have work at all. Do low skilled men prefer to join the ranks of the unemployed rather than obtain employment in female jobs? Do they continue to pursue education, training and paid work that reflects their own male preferences, even though these preferences are associated with areas of the labour market that are in decline? Or is there a level of demand side discrimination that exists for men at the lower end of the labour market that limits their ability to secure employment in the growing low level services sector? Currently there is limited empirical research available to test the claims made by Grusky and England. It is such an examination that this research sought. I move now to detail the methodology employed to carry out the research.

## CHAPTER THREE: Methodology

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### Introduction

This chapter details the methodology employed to carry out research that aims to understand the why men are not entering female dominated occupations that are experiencing growth, and which are also open to workers with limited levels of formal education.

The research is centered around detailed case studies of four strategically chosen female dominated occupations where opportunities are increasing, and which are open to workers with limited formal education. To select the occupations for case study, an analysis of the 1996 and 2006 census data was conducted. This located female dominated occupations where employment had increased for workers with low levels of formal education and determined the extent to which men had been successful in securing these jobs.

The occupations selected for case study varied in the extent to which men experienced an increase in their gender shares of employment. Two occupations were chosen where men had not experienced an increase in their gender share of employment, and two were chosen where men had experienced an increase in their gender share of employment. Selecting the case study occupations according to this logic ensures that different scenarios in men's entry into, or exclusion from, female dominated occupations are included.

The case study approach involved interviews with men who might take these jobs (i.e. unemployed men), employers, male workers and clients or customers. In total 105 individual interviews and two group interviews were conducted for this research.

### 3.1 Research questions and objectives

The research aimed to better understand the reasons why low skilled men are withdrawing from the labour market, rather than undertake work in low level jobs that are experiencing growth in the economy but which are normatively regarded as female. Within the broader research topic, the following questions were posed:

- What are the factors that enabled men to successfully enter occupations that are normatively regarded as female?



- What are the factors that prevent men from gaining employment in these occupations?
- What is the role of different actors in determining men's integration in or segregation from these jobs?
- How do they determine this?
- Under what conditions (if any) does this vary?

The research objectives are decidedly explanatory. However, I follow the distinction made by Blaikie (2000) between explanation and understanding in the way intelligibility is achieved in the social sciences.

*Explanations identify causes of events or regularities, the factors or mechanisms that produce them, and **understanding** is provided by the **reasons** or accounts social actors give for their actions. The latter is also associated with the **meaning** of an event of activity in a particular social context, either that given by the social actor or the meaning that researchers derive from social actors' accounts. (Blaikie 2000: 75)*

The research aimed to achieve an understanding of the social processes that generate and/or stall changes in male representation in female dominated occupations and to explore the usefulness of various supply and demand side explanations as vehicles for theorizing about this type of occupational change. Overall the research aimed to develop new insights about the processes that affect men's ability and willingness to take jobs in areas of rising employment so that new ideas can be generated about how to best to reengage men who have been displaced in the new economy.

### **3.2 Research design**

The research is centrally concerned with occupations as the unit of analysis. It aims to understand all the possible causes, pathways, processes and experiences that may contribute, either directly or indirectly, to men's representation in low skilled female dominated occupations that are experiencing growth. An occupational case study approach was therefore adopted.

The case study research design allows for a focus on analytic social units and/or complex social processes and is concerned with obtaining a rounded picture of a phenomenon from the perspective of all those involved (de Vaus 2001; de Vaus 2002;

Denzin and Lincoln 2003; Hakim 2000a; Hammersley and Gomm 2000; Stake 2000; Stake 2005; Yin 2003). As Hammersley et al. (2000) note '...case study gives access to the inner lives of people, to emergent properties of social interaction, and/or to the underlying causal mechanisms which generate human behavior' (2000: 235). Case study designs are said to be especially effective in research that seeks explanation (Eckstein 2000; Yin 2003) and when the objective is to test an existing theory, or a set of rival theories, in a real life situation (de Vaus 2001).

The case study research was undertaken in two steps. The first step involved the strategic selection of the case study occupations; the second, interviews with key actors within each of the case study occupations. I turn now to detail each of these steps in turn.

### **3.3 Strategically selecting the case study occupations.**

One of the most important aspects of case study research is the appropriate and careful selection of the case(s) that are to be the focus of the investigation (Stake 2005; Yin 2003). As de Vaus (2001) states;

*Case study designs involve selecting cases for theoretical and targeted purpose. We select a case because it tests whether a theory works in particular, real world situations. Alternatively, we select a case because we think it might disprove a proposition, or because we want to see if the theoretical proposition works under particular conditions.* (2001: 239)

Because cases are selected for the reason that they meet particular requirements, strategic selection of the case requires us to know something about the characteristics of the case prior to the commencement of the study. For the purposes of this research, it requires us to know as much detail as possible about which occupations have been expanding and how successful low skilled men have been in entering these jobs.

While we know from existing literature, and have seen in the initial chapters, the general trends in occupational sex segregation, and occupational and industry employment growth and decline, we need to be more precise. We need to look in much greater detail at trends in occupational employment growth for low skilled male and female workers and any changes in the levels of sex segregation within them. Therefore considerable ground work was needed to identify the changing sex

segregation of the labour force (by occupation and educational attainment levels) in order to identify which occupations satisfied the criteria for case study selection<sup>13</sup>.

To do this, 1996-2006 census data was used to produce a detailed picture of employment growth by occupation with a sex, employment status and highest level of educational attainment breakdown. The analysis sought to provide an examination of the changing sex segregation of the labour force (by occupation) with an eye to how this might be linked to changes in employment opportunities for men with low levels of formal education. In addition, the analysis sought to locate female dominated occupations where employment had increased for workers with low levels of formal education and to ascertain how successful men had been in securing these jobs. The findings, presented in Chapter 4, informed the selection of the case study occupations. These occupations were subsequently used to derive qualitative insights into what facilitates and what deters employment of lower-skilled men in female-intensive occupations.

To increase comparison and allow contrasts between cases (occupations) multiple (4) female dominated occupations were selected for study. Because I also aimed to understand the context in which men might more readily take up female dominated jobs in employment growth areas (i.e. what is it about those jobs men do take, compared to those that they do not), chosen case studies varied according to the extent to which men with low levels of formal education had experienced a change in their share of employment growth. Two female dominated occupations were chosen where there was strong growth in employment, but in which men did not experience a change in their share of employment. These occupations were child care and sale assistants. Two cases were also chosen where employment growth for persons with low formal education levels had occurred, but in which men were found to be maintaining or increasing their share of employment. These occupations were aged care and commercial cleaning.

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<sup>13</sup> See chapter 4 and accompanying appendices for a full discussion of the conceptual frameworks used to select the four case study occupations.

Designing the case study research in this way and selecting the case study occupations according to this logic ensures that different scenarios in men’s entry into, or exclusion from, female dominated occupations are included. This maximises the possibility of finding fundamental differences between the occupations where men are entering and where men are not, that will help us understand how occupational sex segregation works.

Table 3.1 provides a visual presentation of the cross classification used to select the case study occupations.

Table 3.1: Cross classification of criteria used to select case study occupations.

	Proportion of men in occupation rose	Proportion of men in occupation did not rise
Female dominated low skilled occupations that experienced employment growth for low skilled male and female workers	2 x occupation selected	2 x occupation selected

Before moving on to discuss how the information about the determinants of men’s representation in female dominated occupations was collected within each of the case study occupations, it is important to highlight that a large debate exists within methodological literature as to the capacity of case study research to produce general conclusions (Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster 2000).

I adhere to Yin (2003), Eckstein (2000), Stake (2000; 2005), Mitchell (2000), and other writers (de Vaus 2001; Miles and Huberman 1994) who argue that the aim of case study research (particularly that which is qualitative in style) is to produce analytic and not empirical generalizations. Therefore I view the findings of this research to be appropriately generalizable to theories about the causes and continuation of occupational sex segregation, particularly that which results from men’s limited entry into female dominated occupations. The adoption of a multiple case study design will increase the power of the analytic conclusion that can be drawn.

### **3.4 Interviews with key actors within each of the case study occupations.**

The case study is one of the most flexible research designs in social sciences (Hakim 2000a; Yin 2003). It can incorporate either quantitative or qualitative data collection techniques and commonly incorporates both. Indeed 'any method of data collection can be used within case study design so long as it is practical and ethical' (de Vaus 2001: 231).

Understanding the various components of men's representation in female dominated occupations (i.e. what facilitates it, what inhibits it, under what conditions do they vary and who is involved) necessitates understanding the perceptions, attitudes, behaviour and actions of a broad range of people. Qualitative research is well suited to eliciting the tacit knowledge and subjective understandings of the various events, processes and structures that determine men's representation in female dominated jobs (Marshall and Rossman 2006; Miles and Huberman 1994). As Hakim (2000a) states:

*...if one is looking at the way in which people respond to...external social realities at the micro-level, accommodating themselves to the inevitable, redefining the situation until it is acceptable or comfortable, kicking against constraints, or fighting to breakout of them, or even to change them, then qualitative research is necessary (2000:36).*

Interviews were used as the primary means of collecting data about the meaning, reaction and significance various social actors attributed to men's employment (or lack of employment) in the case study occupations. Interviews are an especially effective method of data collection when research is concerned with understanding the perception of people and the way in which people attach certain meanings to events or phenomenon (Berg 1998; Fontana and Frey 2003; Minichiello, Aroni, and Hays 2008; Seal and Filmer 1998; Silverman 2005). In addition, speaking directly with various actors allowed access to activities, social processes and events (such as gender essentialist views of male employment, client preferences, discriminatory practices/tastes) that could not be easily observed directly.

### 3.4.1 Which actors?

Yin (2003) points out that in case study research, the original case may have various sub-cases embedded within it. For example, occupations encompass workers, managers, clients etc. Just as the strategic selection of cases is theoretical, the selection of the key actors (embedded cases) to be interviewed within each occupation was also theoretically informed.

Minichiello et al (2008) states that ‘...the fundamental process of theoretical sampling requires the selection of informants on the basis of relevant issues, categories and themes which emerge in the course of conducting the study’ (2008: 173).

Existing research has shown that occupational sex segregation is generated by a variety of actors operating on both the supply and demand side, at both the proximate and distal levels (see chapter 2). From this literature it was also easy enough to identify a number of sampling categories that warranted being included in the theoretical sampling model. These included: male workers, potential male workers (i.e. unemployed men potentially available to supply their labour to these jobs), managers and clients of the services the worker provides. However, there are two notable exclusions in this sampling model. One group is female co-workers and the other, men who had previously worked in the case study occupations, but who had left for one reason or another. The initial sample model did include both categories of respondents. However, cost and time constraints warranted the exclusion of one or more category of respondents. Men who had previously worked in the case study occupation, but who had left, were excluded due to pragmatic issues associated with access and recruitment. Pilot interviews indicated that of all sampling categories, female co-workers were the least likely to prove theoretically relevant and as such this sample category was also excluded.

One of the main weaknesses evident in the existing (albeit small) body of research looking at men working in female dominated occupations is that data is collected from only one group of respondents - usually the men working in the female dominated occupation. It is hoped that taken together, the insights gained from workers, potential workers, managers and clients will provide a much fuller, more complex understanding of the determinants of men’s representation in expanding female dominated occupations than would the perspective provided by any one of these groups on their own.

### 3.4.2 Recruitment

Recruitment of participants began in May 2009. Given the multiplicity of respondent groups, a variety of recruitment methods were employed.

The research was funded by an ARC linkage grant in which AnglicareSA was the industry partner. AnglicareSA is a major provider of both aged and child care services, and also provides various programs aimed at getting disadvantaged people back into employment. The industry partner provided financial support to assist with research expenses as well as in-kind support. The partner organisation in-kind contribution to this project was directed at facilitating site access and participant recruitment for some aged and child care respondents and all unemployed male respondents. These sites were located across metropolitan South Australia.

In the second instance, a comprehensive list of relevant case study organisations was compiled and a targeted email providing information about the research and request for assistance was sent. This was usually followed up by a telephone call a week later. This proved the most successful method of recruitment, particularly for case study occupations outside the industry partner remit. Even if organisations were unwilling to participate by way of interview, they usually facilitated recruitment by allowing distribution of flyers to staff and/or providing contacts for other organisations.

In addition to these recruitment strategies, industry peak bodies as well as relevant unions were requested to promote the research among their members. In another effort to recruit respondents, a short media article appeared in a major South Australian newspaper which (very briefly) described the research and invited readers to contact the researcher (The Advertiser 2009).

Variation in respondents was sought on key demographic characteristics as well as organisational characteristics (such as size, location, and sector of the employer) that were thought to likely impact on the men's representation in the case study occupations.

In all cases, potential participants were requested to contact the researcher, at which point they were provided with additional information. Once they agreed to participate, interview arrangements were made.

Participants were also offered a small financial payment (\$20) to compensate them for the time spent participating in the research and any incidental costs they may have incurred as a result of participating - such as travel costs, phone cost of ringing to organise a interview time, etc.

The recruitment of respondents for this research took substantial research energy and time. In each case study occupation, more than 50 organisations were contacted before appropriate numbers of participants were recruited. Strategies needed to be devised (and constantly revised) to access appropriate people within organisations who had the authority to support and approve the research. Such strategies included identifying myself as a researcher from a particular university rather than a PhD candidate and/or student<sup>14</sup>, making follow up calls on a Friday rather than a Monday (people tended to be more agreeable and willing to participate on a Friday rather than at the beginning of the week) and contextualising the significance of the research in light of industry specific concerns about skill shortages.

### **3.4.3 Interviews**

Interviews with low skilled men were the centrepiece of the research. This component of the research attempted to tap into the supply side of the labour market story as it affects low skilled men's employment in female dominated occupations. Two groups of men were targeted.

The first group of men were those working in the case study occupations. Ten or more male workers from each case study occupations were interviewed. Interviews were largely based around their previous labour market experiences, including employment preferences, periods of unemployment, pathway into their current position, views about their current and past employment (and unemployment), and how they impacted on their sense of self (see Appendix A3.1). It was envisaged that there would be variance in the men's experience of pathways into their current work. Particular focus was therefore placed on differentiating those that had relatively easy pathways and those that had difficult pathways. Interviews tried to uncover the factors that contributed to a smooth transition into these female dominated employment arenas for these men. Conversely, interviews also tried to elucidate the

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<sup>14</sup> This was not a complete untruth as I was currently employed at the university on a fractional appointment whilst undertaking the PhD



obstacles the men experienced in securing employment in the case study occupations, and the ways in which these men overcome these barriers.

Because the research also sought to understand the employment preferences of men who are potentially available to supply their labour to these jobs, a second group of low skilled men who were currently unemployed but actively seeking work were also interviewed. In total 25 unemployed men were interviewed. These interviews largely covered the same broad subject matters as those that were discussed with men who had secured employment in the case study occupations (see Appendix A3.2).

To facilitate discussions about employment preferences, both groups of men were presented with a form that listed 10 occupations. Five of these occupations were traditional male occupations and 5 were traditionally female dominated occupations and included the 4 case study occupations. Men were asked to rank the occupations from 1 to 10 in order of preference of the type of occupation they would most like to work in, 1 being most preferable and 10 being least preferable. Respondents were then asked to briefly reflect on how they ranked the occupations. This initiated discussion about the various merits and drawbacks of each of the occupations listed.

To understand the possible demand side determinants of men's employment in the case study occupations interviews were conducted with employers of each of the case study occupations and clients/customers of the case study areas.

Interviews were undertaken with 5 or more employers in each case study occupation. These interviews focused on managers' perceptions of the requirements of the work, the characteristics of the employees they seek, perceptions about the type of person able to undertake the work, and perceptions about the types of people unable to carry out the work (see Appendix A3.3).

Interviews were also conducted with 5 or more clients/customers of the case study occupations. These interviews covered such issues as expectation about service delivery, the type of person (including behaviour, gender, age, appearance, manner) they expect/prefer to be receiving a service from, and the type of person from whom they would not like to receive a service (see Appendix A3.4). Who constituted a client was relatively straightforward for two of the case study occupations - within aged care it was those that were direct recipients of the personal care services; within sales, it was those who purchased goods and services. However, for child care, both

children who directly received the care or their parents who enlisted the service to provide the care could potentially be considered to be clients. For the purposes of this research, parents constituted the client group as they are the group that make the decision about which child care service to use (which may or may not be influenced by the presence or absence of male workers). Similarly, for commercial cleaning, anyone that accesses a common space that is serviced by cleaners could be a potential client (i.e. an academic who works in an office, a customer shopping in a particular mall, a patron of a particular hospitality establishment etc.). However, this research was centrally concerned to hear from those who have direct control over which cleaning company/organisation is used and what factors influenced this decision. Therefore, commercial cleaning clients were those people who made decisions about which company was awarded a cleaning contract - i.e. those that deal with the procurement of cleaning services. Commercial cleaning client participants in this research included those in charge of procurement in one major shopping centre, one large not for profit welfare group, one university, one small shopping centre and one real estate group.

The desire for cross case comparison warranted the use of a more structured interview technique. Therefore a semi structure interview schedule was devised for each respondent group (see appendix A3.1 -A3.5). The interview schedules were piloted and refined prior to being taken into the field. These schedules were used as baseline questioning only. Detailed probing to further pursue all avenues of inquiry formed a major aspect of all interviews. All questions that were asked of participants were aimed at eliciting an understanding of the processes that affect men's willingness and ability to secure employment in current job growth areas. They also aimed to uncover the circumstances under which men can and do overcome any barriers to take these jobs.

Qualitative interviewing requires high level skills in listening, developing rapport and empathy (Berg 1998; Fontana and Frey 2003; Hakim 2000a; Minichiello, Aroni, and Hays 2008; Seal and Filmer 1998; Silverman 2005). To enhance the quality of the interview process careful attention was paid to (occupational) specific terms and phrases used by respondents. In addition, adjustments to interview technique and style were made according to the particular respondent group that was being interviewed. For example, interviews with managers were very formal and required the demonstration of prior knowledge and professionalism. Interviews with

unemployed men were much less formal, but required extensive probing to get participants to elaborate, while also keeping the interview 'on track' and digressions to a minimum. The diversity of participant groups meant that data collection for this research was particularly challenging, and required the deployment of different interview styles according to respondent group to encourage respondents to be reflexive about their experiences and expectations.

The interviews also required extensive travel. Interviews with managers, workers and clients were usually conducted at the participant's workplace or at a mutually convenient location near to their place of employment. In a few instances the interviews were conducted in the participant's home. Interviews with unemployed men were conducted at four sites of the industry partner organisation.

In total, 105 individual interviews and two group interviews<sup>15</sup> were conducted for this research. A summary of the number of interviews conducted for each respondent group within each occupation is presented in table 3.2. On average, interviews lasted around 45 minutes and with the consent of the participant, were digitally recorded. The interview recordings were transcribed verbatim using a professional transcription service. NVivo8 was used to assist with the management, organisation, retrieval and analysis of the qualitative data. To protect the identity of participants their names are not used in this thesis. Instead an identifier is used that is based on their: Case study occupation (Aged Care, Child Care, Sales, Cleaner, Unemployed), Position (Manager, Male Worker, Client) and participant number (1-25).

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<sup>15</sup> In the case of clients of aged or disable care services it was necessary to conduct group interviews rather than individual interviews. It was suggested by those that assisted with the recruitment of participants that legislative requirements prohibited (or made extremely difficult) the conduct of research with individual elderly people in either institutional or community care settings. It was suggested that an easier alternative would be conducting group interviews with members of already established activity and reference groups which meet on a frequent basis, and from whom informed consent could be easily gained. See Appendix A3.5 for the focus groups interview schedule.

Table 3.2: Interviews completed

	Aged Care	Child Care	Commercial Cleaning	Sales Assistants	Unemployed Men	Total
Managers	7	6	5	5	n/a	23
Male Workers	10	10	11	11	n/a	42
Customers/Clients	2 group interviews	5	5	5	n/a	15
Unemployed Men					25	25
Total	17 + 2 group interviews	21	20	21	25	105 + 2 group interviews

### 3.4.4 Participants characteristics

In order to explore the association of the patterns emerging in the data with particular characteristics of participants, key demographic information (such as a person's age, sex, level of highest educational attainment, employment status and, for unemployed men only, duration of unemployment) was collected from each participant, except the participants of the group interview<sup>16</sup>. Table 3.3 – 3.7 provides a summary of this information broken down by case study occupation and participant group.

The first of these tables, table 3.3, documents participants' highest level of educational attainment by case study occupational and participant groups. The table indicates that there are quite substantial differences in levels of educational attainment both between case study occupations and between participant groups.

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<sup>16</sup> The group interviews were conducted in one of the prescheduled activity and reference group meetings. This meant that the interview needed to be conducted and completed in the normal period of time allocated to these meetings. To ensure that key areas relating to the central research questions were adequately discussed by all members of the group, collection of individual demographic information was not attempted in any systematic way.

Table 3.3: Participant highest level of educational attainment by case study occupation and participant group

Highest level of educational attainment		Aged Care	Sales	Child Care	Commercial Cleaners	Total
<b>Male Workers</b>						
	No Post-School	1	7	2	8	18
	Cert. I and II	0	0	1	0	1
	Cert. III and above	8	2	6	1	17
	Bachelor level and above	1	2	1	2	6
	Total	10	11	10	11	42
<b>Managers</b>						
	No Post-School	0	3	0	3	6
	Cert. I and II	0	0	0	0	0
	Cert. III and above	1	0	4	1	6
	Bachelor level and above	6	2	2	1	11
	Total	7	5	6	5	23
<b>Clients</b>						
	No Post-School	n/a	0	0	0	0
	Cert. I and II	n/a	0	0	0	0
	Cert. III and above	n/a	1	0	4	5
	Bachelor level and above	n/a	4	5	1	10
	Total	n/a	5	5	5	15
<b>Total Participants</b>						
	No Post-School	1	10	2	11	24
	Cert. I and II	0	0	1	0	1
	Cert. III and above	9	3	10	6	28
	Bachelor level and above	7	8	8	4	27
	Total	17	21	21	21	80

For example, looking at the bottom 5 rows of this table, we see that sales assistant and commercial cleaning case studies have a relatively high number of participants with low levels of educational attainment comparative to the other two occupation groups. The breakdown by participant group indicates that low levels of educational attainment in these two occupations are common for both male workers and managers but not the clients. Indeed in all 4 case study occupations, client participants have high levels of educational attainment. Aged and child care occupation participants have relatively high levels of educational attainment and we see that this is also the case for both managers and male workers in these two case study occupations.

The higher educational attainment levels of participants in aged and child care is not all that surprising. In both these occupations there has been a push to make Certificate III level qualifications a mandatory base level qualification for employees. This push is largely an attempt to increase the professionalism of the occupations and in doing so, improve the pay and conditions on offer and the social status of the work. It was made clear in the interviews that these occupations are still open to workers with no formal qualifications, but workers would be encouraged to undertake training once they obtained a job. The push towards skilling workers with Cert. III level qualifications is clearly evident, with a high number of male workers in both aged care and child care occupations having Cert. III level as their highest level of educational attainment.

Overall male worker participants were quite evenly distributed between those with low levels and those with medium to high levels of qualifications. On the other hand manager and client participants generally had high levels of educational attainment.

As with educational attainment levels, table 3.4 indicates that the age of participants' varied quite a bit between case study occupations, and between participant groups within case study occupations.

Again, taking the last 4 rows we see (unsurprisingly) that the majority of participants are of prime working age (aged 26-55 years). However, there are outliers toward both younger and older ages for particular occupations. In aged care and commercial cleaning there is a skew towards the older age group, and in child care and sales the younger age group.

Looking at the breakdown for participant groups we see that these overall trends are largely a reflection of the ages of the male workers and not the managers and clients. Whilst the majority of male workers are of prime working age, aged care and commercial cleaning have a number of male workers that are located in the older aged group bracket, and sales and child care have a number of male workers located in the younger aged group bracket. The trends detected in the age of male workers across case study occupations are not inconsequential. It was found that the age of men has some impact on men's ability to access these case study occupations.

Table 3.4: Participant age by case study occupation and participant group

Age		Aged Care	Sales	Child Care	Commercial Cleaners	Total
Male Workers						
	15-25	0	9	1	1	11
	26-55	6	2	9	5	22
	56-60+	4	0	0	5	9
	Total	10	11	10	11	42
Managers						
	15-25	0	0	0	0	0
	26-55	6	5	6	5	22
	56-60+	1	0	0	0	1
	Total	7	5	6	5	23
Clients						
	15-25	n/a	0	1	0	1
	26-55	n/a	5	3	4	12
	56-60+	n/a	0	1	1	2
	Total	14	5	5	5	15
Total Participants						
	15-25	0	9	2	1	12
	26-55	12	12	18	14	56
	56-60+	5	0	1	6	12
	Total	17	21	21	21	80

Table 3.5 shows that participants sex by case study occupation and participant group. Total numbers are skewed towards men as a result of the male worker participant group being larger than other participant groups.

Table 3.5: Participant sex by case study occupation and participant group

Sex		Aged Care	Sales	Child Care	Commercial Cleaners	Total
Male workers						
	Male	10	11	10	11	42
	Female	0	0	0	0	1
Managers						
	Male	0	3	1	3	7
	Female	7	2	5	2	16
Clients						
	Male	n/a	2	1	4	7
	Female	n/a	3	4	1	8
Total Participants						
	Male	10	16	12	18	56
	Female	7	5	9	3	24

Overall there were more female manager participants than male manager participants. However, this masks trends between case study occupations. Managers in aged care and child care were overwhelmingly female. Sales and commercial cleaning managers however, had a relatively even balance between male and female participants.

There was also an even balance of male and female client participants overall, but again this masks the difference between case study occupations. Commercial cleaning clients were mainly male, and child care clients mainly female. While systematic demographic information was not collected from the group interviews conducted with aged care clients, the participants of these group interviews were mainly female, with only 3 males.



Again there were marked differences between case study occupation and participant group in terms of how participants tended to be employed (table 3.6). Overall managers and clients tended to be employed full-time. This did not vary by case study occupation. Overall more male participants were employed in non-standard forms of employment (i.e. casual or part-time). Male workers in aged care and sales tended to be employed on a casual basis. Males working in child care tended to be employed full-time, and male workers working in commercial cleaning tended to be employed on a part-time or casual basis.

Table 3.6: Participant employment status by case study occupation and participant group

Employment Status		Aged Care	Sales	Child Care	Commercial Cleaners	Total
Male Workers						
	Full-time	0	4	9	2	15
	Part-time	2	0	0	5	7
	Casual	8	7	1	4	20
Managers						
	Full-time	7	4	5	5	21
	Part-time	0	1	1	0	2
	Casual	0	0	0	0	0
Clients						
	Full-time	n/a	5	1	5	11
	Part-time	n/a	0	2	0	2
	Casual	n/a	0	0	0	0
	Not working	0	0	2	0	2
Total Participants						
	Full-time	7	13	15	12	47
	Part-time	2	1	3	5	11
	Casual	8	7	1	4	20
	Not applicable	0	0	2	0	2

Characteristics of the unemployed male participant group are documented separately in table 3.7. Unemployed men had quite low levels of educational attainment with the majority having no formal post-school qualifications. Surprisingly quite a number had certificate level qualification (either Cert. I and II or Cert. III and above). Discussion about the motivation for obtaining these qualifications indicated that they were undertaken largely to satisfy the obligations posed by government in order to receive income support payments.

Table 3.7 Unemployed participant characteristics.

Highest level of educational attainment		
	No Post-School	13
	Cert. I and II	6
	Cert. III and above	6
	Bachelor level and above	0
Age	15-25	6
	26-55	13
	56-60+	6
Duration of Unemployment	Less than 6 months	7
	6 Months to 1 year	2
	More than 1 year less than 2 years	2
	More than 2 years	14

Half of the unemployed male participants were of prime working age (26-55) with the other half located evenly in both the young and older age groups. Most unemployed male participants had been out of work for a relatively long period of time. The ABS classifies those whom experience durations of unemployment lasting 12 months or more as long term unemployed (ABS 2010). Compared to those who are unemployed for shorter periods of time, the long-term unemployed may experience additional difficulties in obtaining a job. This is due to a number of factors including a loss of confidence and motivation, a lack of recent work experience, difficulties in overcoming the negative perceptions of some employers and limited social or work connections that people need to secure employment. Over half of the male respondents in this participant group would be classified as long term unemployed.

### 3.4.5 Data analysis

The analysis of the qualitative data was informed by both deductive and inductive strategies (Ezzy 2002; Seal and Kelly 1998). An initial coding scheme was developed that reflected both the initial aims of the research and the theoretical propositions that were being tested. This was subsequently amended and elaborated to reflect the evolving themes and subthemes that emerged in a careful reading and rereading of the interview transcripts.

The coding scheme was iteratively revised and refined throughout the analysis process. Each category was carefully examined and re-examined and compared across the 4 case study occupations and the sub-groups within them. Relationships between themes were devised and subjected to disconfirming tests. This process was repeated until saturation; that is, until the analysis produced no new codes and when all themes were integrated into the conceptual model that explains the complex social processes that generate and/or stall changes in male representation in female dominated occupations.

Memos were created that included a detailed description of each theme and sub-theme, inclusion and exclusion criteria, analytic interpretations and links (utilising NVivo8 capabilities) to exemplars of real text. This assisted the systematic coding of the interview data.

The analysis of interview data produced information around five critical themes. These were;

- Patterns of men's entry into case study occupations.
- Supply side determinants of men's entry into case study occupations
- Demand side determinants of men's entry into case study occupations
- Supply side determinants of men's exclusion from case study occupations
- Demand side determinants of men's exclusion from case study occupations

Each of the five themes contained a number of sub-categories or sub-themes. In order to gain further insight into the determinants of men's representation in the case study occupations, the data was quantified and further analysed using cross tabulations.

It was originally conceived that the presentation of the qualitative data would follow the case study design logic - i.e. data would be presented separately for the two female dominated occupations which men were entering and the two female dominated occupations which men were not entering. This was because it was expected that there would be some differences in the patterns detected in the qualitative data between occupations, according to whether or not men had been successful in entering. However, the qualitative analysis found similar patterns of the above five main themes and corresponding sub-themes across occupations. Therefore the reporting of the qualitative data corresponds to the five main themes rather than case study occupations. Where appropriate any variance in the prevalence of the above five themes according to occupation and participant group will be highlighted.

## **Summary**

This chapter detailed the methodology employed to carry out research that aimed to understand the social processes that generate and/or stall changes in men's representation in female dominated occupations. The research adopted a case study approach and was undertaken in two main steps.

The first step involved the strategic selection of the case study occupations. 1996 and 2006 Australian Bureau of statistics (ABS) census data were used to examine changing employment areas and gender share in employment for low skilled workers. The findings of this analysis informed the strategic selection of the four occupations that were subsequently taken for close case study.

The case study approach involved semi-structured interviews with men who might take these jobs (i.e. unemployed men), employers, male workers and clients or customers. In total, 105 individual interviews and two group interviews were conducted, each lasting around 45 minutes. The analysis of the qualitative data was informed by both deductive and inductive strategies. The analysis of interview data produced information around five critical themes, each containing a number of sub-categories or sub-themes. Before detailing the results arising from the qualitative case study research, the results of the analysis of ABS census data that were used to guide the selection of the case study occupations must be reviewed.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: How does Occupational Sex Segregation Shape Low Skilled Men's Labour Market Situation? Evidence from the ABS census**

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### **Introduction**

Existing examinations of low skilled men's labour market situation rarely consider the way occupational sex segregation and the changing gender composition of employment shapes low skilled men's employment opportunities. This chapter seeks such an understanding.

Using Census data for 1996 and 2006, the chapter explores how occupational sex segregation – a concept traditionally used to explain female employment outcomes – can be used to explain low skilled men's employment outcomes. The analysis involved an examination of trends in employment growth and decline and the changing sex segregation of the labour force (by occupation), with an eye to how this might be linked to changes in employment opportunities for men with low levels of formal education.

The chapter begins by briefly outlining the methodology employed to undertake the analysis. It then moves on to review aggregate trends in occupational sex segregation and occupation employment growth and decline. The chapter then shifts to a more disaggregate analysis of trends in occupational sex segregation and occupation employment growth and decline for workers with no post-school qualifications. The findings of this latter analysis inform the selection of the four case study occupations. These occupations are subsequently used to derive qualitative insights into what facilitates and what deters the employment of lower-skilled men in female-intensive occupations.

### **4.1 Methodology<sup>17</sup>**

Existing studies of occupational sex segregation are usually concerned with understanding and explaining the occupational sex segregation that is caused by women's exclusion from male dominated jobs (see Chapter 2). As a result, these studies tend to focus on the occupational sex segregation that is generated at the

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<sup>17</sup> See appendix A4.1 for a full discussion of the conceptual frameworks that guided the methodology employed in the analysis.

upper end of the occupational spectrum (recall, men tend to dominate top end occupations such as managers, professionals and associate professionals).

The analysis presented in this chapter departs from these existing studies in two ways. Firstly, the analysis focuses on the occupational sex segregation that is generated as a result of men not moving into female dominated occupations (i.e. females comprise 70 % or more of the total occupation's workforce). Secondly, the analysis is primarily interested in the occupational sex segregation that is occurring at the lower end of the occupational spectrum.

Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) census data was used to produce a detailed picture of employment growth by occupation with a sex, age, employment status and highest level of educational attainment breakdown. Such detailed examination of employment growth by gender and skill are not common in existing analysis but they are essential in assisting us to understand the current employment opportunities for low skilled men in a sex segregated Australian labour market.

The Census is the largest data collection undertaken by the ABS. As it is administered to the whole Australian population rather than just a sample of it, it can be used to analyse small or highly specific groups in ways that are prohibited by the sampling constraints of other surveys. Indeed, the great advantage of using census data is that analysts can explore occupational change at fine levels of detail - specifically for this research, at the occupation 6 digit ASCO level<sup>18</sup>. It is also large enough to allow for cross-classification by other variables such as educational attainment, age, and gender.

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<sup>18</sup> In 2006, the ABS uses the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) to code occupation data. ASCO is a hierarchical classification system with different levels of progressively greater detail. At the broadest level, a limited number of categories, which aim to provide an overall picture of an occupation, are provided. The following levels or subdivisions provide an increasingly detailed dissection of these broad categories. The levels in the ASCO, in order of increasing detail, are: "major group", "sub-major group", "minor group", "unit group", and "occupation". The occupation level is the most detailed in the ASCO, and includes 986 specific occupations (such as "Fast food cooks", "hairdresser", and "garden labourer"). Because we wanted to be as precise as possible in locating the 4 female dominated occupations where employment has increased for workers with low levels of formal education, we use occupational data coded at the occupation or 6 digit level of ASCO. The different levels of the ASCO are also intended to be broadly representative of the level of skill required to do each occupation. Thus, occupations in the professional major group require higher or more extensive training and qualification than jobs in the labourer major group. To isolate occupations that are open to workers with limited levels of formal education I exclude from the analysis of occupational change those working in the major ASCO occupation groups of managers, professional and associate professionals.

The reference period used is 1996 to 2006, the boundaries of which are determined by the practicalities of data availability – a Census was conducted in both years – and the need for consistency in how occupations are classified. 1996 is the furthest one can go back without compromising data quality as a result of changes to the way occupation data is classified<sup>19</sup>.

The decade 1996 and 2006 is an interesting period to explore occupational change. This period was one of relative economic stability, following the recovery from the two earlier recessions. The period is also largely immune from the extremes of the economic boom and the economic volatility brought about by the global financial crisis.

For the purposes of this research, low skilled workers are defined to be those workers who have year 12 or below as their highest level of educational attainment.

The analysis is also isolated to those persons aged between 25-54 years. This is due to the fact that the withdrawal from the labour force among men has been particularly significant for those aged between 25 and 54 (see chapter 1). The research considers men's limited inroads in female dominated occupations as a necessary component of the explanation of why men are withdrawing from the labour market. It seeks overall to understand the possible supply and demand side dimensions to low skilled men's segregation from, and conversely their integration into, low level occupations that have traditionally been dominated by women. The analysis therefore needed to isolate those occupations that are growing for this age cohort of men and women.

A key limitation with index approaches (such as the index of dissimilarity and the Karmel and MacLachlan (KM) index) to the study of segregation is that the data used are necessarily presented in an aggregate form and, therefore, provide little information about underlying patterns of gender segregation (Preston and Whitehouse 2004; Watts 2003). Given the explicit interest in uncovering the occupational sex segregation that is being produced at a highly disaggregated level, I

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<sup>19</sup> Prior to 1996, occupation was coded to the first edition of the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ABS 1986). This edition was subsequently revised in 1996 and occupations were coded to the second edition of ASCO (ABS 1997). In 2006, ASCO was superseded by ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ABS 2006b). However, the ABS made available occupation data for the 2006 census classified to both ASCO second edition and ANZSCO first edition.

do not use index measures of occupational sex segregation but instead focus on changing gender shares of employment within each occupation.

The analysis sought to provide an examination of the changing sex segregation of the labour force (by occupation) with an eye to how this might be linked to changes in employment opportunities for men with low levels of formal education. The analysis identified:

- 1) Which occupations experienced employment growth for workers with no post-school qualifications;
- 2) Which of these occupations experienced a change in the gender share of employment (distribution of men and women);
- 3) Whether there is evidence that occupational sex segregation is impacting on low skilled men's participation in occupations that experience growth.

The information subsequently informed the selection of the case study occupations.

## **4.2 Aggregate trends in occupational sex segregation**

Before the results based on the analysis of detailed occupational data are presented, it is useful to briefly review what the census data indicates about broad trends (1 digit ASCO) in occupational sex segregation and occupation employment growth and decline and how these relate to those trends identified in the initial chapters of the thesis. I begin by considering aggregate trends for all Australian workers aged 25-54 years and then move on to look at aggregate trends for workers with no post-school qualifications aged 25-54 years.

### **4.2.1 All Australian workers**

Table 4.1 documents changes in employment for workers aged 25-54 years over the period 1996 and 2006, and changes in men's share of this employment for each of the 1 digit ASCO occupational categories. We see that over the period 1996-2006 total employment increased by 14 percent, or 683,697 workers. However, it was women more than men that drove this overall employment growth, with double the number of women (459,654) joining the labour force over this period than men (224,043).



Employment growth was strongest at the upper end of the occupational spectrum with managers, professionals and associate professional occupational categories accounting for 66 percent of the net new jobs generated over this period. All of these occupations require a level of skill commensurate with an AQF diploma or higher. However, women were more likely to obtain these jobs than men.

Employment fell in net terms in the advanced clerical & service workers occupation (-14%), while tradesperson and other related workers recorded a small increase (7%).

For workers with limited education and skill, the largest source of job growth was in the occupation categories of intermediate clerical sales and service workers (20%) and elementary clerical, sales & service workers (15%). However, most of these jobs again went to women.

Overall, the table indicates that there has been substantial increase in the demand for workers in occupations that require a high level of educational attainment, and a decline in the demand for middle-skill workers, particularly middle skilled men. The low skilled occupations that are experiencing growth are those that are located in the services sector, and are largely being taken by women. The census data therefore supports the general trends in occupational growth and decline identified in Chapter 1 of the thesis.

The data also supports the general trends in occupational sex segregation identified in previous chapters. The data indicates that women are increasing their share of employment in male dominated occupations (i.e. in jobs where in 2006 men comprised 70 % or more of the total occupation's workforce) but men are not increasing their share of employment in female dominated occupations (i.e. in jobs where in 2006 females comprised 70 % or more of the total occupation's workforce). The male dominated occupations in which women are entering are those located at the upper end of the occupational spectrum. Women are not making inroads into male dominated occupations at the lower end of the occupational scale. Indeed, at the lower end of the occupational spectrum there has been little change in occupational sex segregation, with men and women instead increasing their employment in occupations in which they have traditionally predominated.

Table 4.1: Changing employment and gender share of employment by occupation for all workers aged 25-54, Australia 1996-2006.

Occupation 1 digit ASCO	Total Employed 1996*	Total Employed 2006*	Change in employment 1996-2006		Men's employment change 1996-2006	Male Share of Employment 1996	Male Share of Employment 2006	Change in Male share of employment 1996-2006
	'000	'000	'000	%	'000	%	%	%
<b>1 Managers &amp; Administrators</b>	516,099	568,884	52,785	10%	19,264	73%	69%	-3%
<b>2 Professionals</b>	1,020,039	1,286,841	266,802	26%	79,332	49%	45%	-4%
<b>3 Associate Professionals</b>	631,352	760,047	128,695	20%	31,867	60%	54%	-6%
<b>4 Tradespersons &amp; Related Workers</b>	636,223	678,228	42,005	7%	36,547	90%	89%	-0.2%
<b>5 Advanced Clerical &amp; Service Workers</b>	223,100	192,380	-30,720	-14%	-2,978	12%	12%	0%
<b>6 Intermediate Cleric, Sales &amp; Service Workers</b>	788,207	942,144	153,937	20%	5,763	31%	27%	-4%
<b>7 Intermediate Production &amp; Transport Workers</b>	452,679	457,601	4,922	1%	14,063	84%	86%	2%
<b>8 Elementary Cleric, Sales &amp; Service Workers</b>	318,895	366,245	47,350	15%	7,794	36%	33%	-2%
<b>9 Labourers &amp; Related Workers</b>	398,930	416,851	17,921	4%	3,2391	56%	61%	5%
<b>Total</b>	4,985,524	5,669,221	683,697	14%	224,043	56%	54%	-3%

Source: Authors Calculations based on 1996 and 2006 ABS Census Data. Excludes not stated or not applicable for those aged 25-54 years

#### **4.2.2 Workers with no post-school qualifications**

Table 4.2 presents the same information as that above, but this time only for workers with year 12 or below as their highest level of educational attainment. The table indicates that over the period 1996 – 2006, total employment for workers with no post-school qualifications, aged between 25-54 years, has declined by 7 percent or 180,643 workers. The decrease in employment affected men more than women. Employment for men with no post-school qualifications declined by 118,461 workers, whereas employment for women declined by only 62,182 workers.

Labourers & related workers, intermediate production & transport workers and intermediate clerical, sales & service workers occupational categories, while accounting for half (49.8%) of the total employment of workers with no post-school qualifications in 2006, all experienced a decline in employment over the period 1996-2006. Indeed, of the 9 major ASCO occupation categories, all but one experienced a decline in employment of workers with with no post-school qualifications over the period 1996-2006. With the exception of labourers & related workers category, these declines in employment were experienced more by men than women.

Over this period, the only source of job growth for people with no post-school qualifications was in the elementary clerical, sales and service worker occupational category. However, all of these jobs went to women. Indeed men in this occupation recorded a net decline of 7,180 workers. The employment growth recorded thus represents the increased feminisation of the occupation.

If we look at changes in the gender shares of employment within each of the occupations it is found that women with no post-school qualifications are increasing their movement into occupations at the upper end of the occupational spectrum. Women with no post-school qualifications are also increasing their share of employment in occupations in which they have traditionally predominated (intermediate and elementary clerical, sales and service workers). Women with no post-school qualifications are not moving into mid and lower level male dominated occupations (labourers and related workers, and intermediate production and transport workers).

Men with no post-school qualifications on the other hand, are not increasing their share of employment in any of the occupational categories except the mid and low level ones in which they have traditionally predominated (labourers and related workers, and intermediate production and transport workers). However, these recorded net declines in employment over the period 1996-2006.

Overall, the aggregate data shows that employment for workers with no post-school qualifications has expanded most in occupations that are female dominated. Men are not increasing their share of employment within these occupations. Indeed, men's share of employment has fallen in the only occupation that experienced growth over this period (elementary clerical, sales and service worker) and in the two occupations that recorded relatively small declines (professionals and associate professionals). The evidence therefore supports the argument that sex segregation in employment has contributed to the decline in low skilled men's employment opportunities.

Table 4.2: Changing employment and gender share in employment for workers with no post-school qualifications, aged 25-54, Australia 1996-2006.

Occupation 1 digit ASCO	Total Employed 1996*	Total Employed 2006*	Change in employment 1996-2006		Men's employment change 1996-2006	Male Share of Employment 1996	Male Share of Employment 2006	Change in Male share of employment 1996-2006
	'000	'000	'000	%	'000	'000	%	%
<b>1 Managers &amp; Administrators</b>	226,735	185,833	-40,902	-18%	-29,284	69%	68%	-1%
<b>2 Professionals</b>	142,835	133,180	-9,655	-7%	-6,993	53%	51%	-1%
<b>3 Associate Professionals</b>	311,759	303,029	-8,730	-3%	-24,076	53%	47%	-6%
<b>4 Tradespersons &amp; Related Workers</b>	188,441	173,588	-14,853	-8%	-9,434	82%	83%	2%
<b>5 Advanced Clerical &amp; Service Workers</b>	154,197	114,740	-39,457	-26%	-4,728	10%	9%	-1%
<b>6 Intermediate Cleric, Sales &amp; Service Workers</b>	555,159	531,037	-24,122	-4%	-27,762	28%	24%	-4%
<b>7 Intermediate Production &amp; Transport Workers</b>	345,060	317,815	-27,245	-8%	-14,162	82%	84%	3%
<b>8 Elementary Cleric, Sales &amp; Service Workers</b>	246,839	250,176	3,337	1%	-7,180	32%	28%	-3%
<b>9 Labourers &amp; Related Workers</b>	326,000	306,984	-19,016	-6%	5,158	52%	57%	5%
<b>Total</b>	2,497,025	2,316,382	-180,643	-7%	-118,461	50%	49%	-1%

Source: Authors Calculations based on 1996 and 2006 ABS Census Data. Excludes not stated or not applicable for those aged 25-54 years.

### **4.3 Disaggregated trends in occupational growth and decline and occupational sex segregation**

The aggregate data supports the idea that occupational sex segregation has contributed to the decline in low skill men's employment opportunities. However, a more nuanced understanding would require identifying which of the occupations that make up the broad ASCO occupation groups experienced growth and which workers with no post-school qualifications experienced a share in this growth (i.e. was it only women or did men have a share). To facilitate such an understanding I look at the trends in occupational sex segregation and occupation employment growth and decline at the 6 digit ASCO level for workers who have year 12 or below as their highest levels of educational attainment.

Given the large number of occupations this covers (i.e. 986), I exclude from the analysis those working in the major occupation groups of managers, professional and associate professionals. This results in reducing the number of occupations that form the basis of the analysis from 986 to 792. To further reduce the number of occupations, the analysis only considers the occupations that together represent 75 percent of the workforce with no post-school qualifications. This means that the analysis is focused only on the largest employing occupations of workers with no post-school qualifications.

Out of the 792 six digit ASCO occupational categories, 93 occupations accounted for 75 percent of employment for all workers aged 25-54 with year 12 or below as their highest level of educational attainment. These 93 occupations are documented in appendix table A4.2. The table documents employment growth and decline and changes in men's share of employment over the period 1996-2006 at the 6 digit ASCO level for all workers with no post-school qualifications aged 25-54 years working in large employing occupations (i.e. occupations that together represent 75% of the workforce with no post-school qualifications). The occupations are listed in descending order of employment growth experienced, with occupations that experienced the greatest employment growth (measured in absolute numbers) over the period 1996-2006 listed first, and the occupations that recorded the greatest declines listed last.

Looking at the table as a whole, we see that over the period 1996-2006, total employment declined in these 93 occupations by 6 percent or 76,236 workers. However, in contrast to the above aggregate data, it was women (-45,200) who experienced more of this employment decline than men (-31,036). This is not entirely unexpected given that women constituted more of the workers in these 93 occupations than men, both in 1996 and 2006 (59% compared to 41%). There are two possible explanations for the total decline in employment for people with no post-school qualifications. One is that there is a shrinking proportion of the workforce aged 25-54 years that have no post-school qualifications as their highest level of educational attainment - i.e. there is a reduced supply of people with no post-school qualifications. The other is that there is a changing structure of occupations and there is a reduced demand for workers with no post-school qualifications. While both explanations are important to keep in mind when looking at the data, the analysis is not concerned with ascertaining which of these trends are at play. The focus is instead on understanding what the available jobs are for people with no post-school qualifications and how men and women have been faring in securing these jobs.

There are various ways to look at this data. I begin by considering the employment trends in the top 25 occupations that are large employers (measured in absolute numbers) of all workers with no post-school qualifications in 2006. These are presented in table 4.3

#### **4.3.1 Top 25 large employing occupations of all persons with no post-school qualifications aged 25-54**

Of the top 25 occupations that are large employers of workers with low levels of educational attainment, 14 occupations grew while 11 recorded employment declines. Only three of the top 25 occupations are male dominated; seventeen are female dominated, while 5 are gender integrated.

Over half (14) of the top 25 occupations come from the 1 digit ASCO occupational categories of intermediate clerical, sales & service workers (9 occupations) and elementary clerical, sales & service workers (5 occupations). Of these, 11 were dominated by women (i.e. women accounted for at least 70% of the occupation's workforce) with the remaining 3 being fairly gender integrated.

Nine of the 14 elementary and intermediate clerical, sales & service workers occupations experienced employment growth over the period 1996-2006, while 5 recorded declines in employment for people with low levels of formal educational attainment.

Of the remaining eleven occupations that make up the top 25, eight come from the 1 digit ASCO occupational categories of intermediate production & transport workers (4) and labourers & related workers (4). Of these, 3 were male dominated, 3 female dominated and 2 gender integrated. Of those that were male dominated, all experienced employment growth over the period 1996-2006. This contrast with those that were female dominated which all recorded declines in employment.

Overall the data indicates that large employing occupations of workers with no post-school qualifications are more likely to be female dominated. The majority of these female dominated occupations (9) also experienced employment growth over the period 1996-2006.

While men only predominated in 3 of the top 25 occupations that are large employers of workers with no post-school qualifications, these occupations all experienced employment growth over the period 1996-2006. However, this growth was not as large as that recorded for the large employing female dominated occupations.

What about changing gender shares of employment? The data indicates that women have increased their share of employment in two of the three male dominated occupations (heavy truck driver and forklift driver). Women are also increasing their share of employment within occupations that are already female dominated.

Men are also found to be increasing their share of employment in some female dominated occupations (commercial cleaner; hand packer; kitchen hand; aged or disabled person carer). However, only 1 of these occupations recorded employment growth over the period 1996-2006 (aged or disabled person carer). Men's increased representation in the other three of these occupations is actually a result of declines in female employment rather than increased entry of male workers in female dominated occupations.



Table 4.3: Changes in employment and gender share of employment in the top 25 occupations that are large employers of workers with no post-school qualifications, aged 25-54, Australia 1996-2000

ASCO Code	Occupation Title	Number employed 1996	Number employed 2006	Change 1996-2006 (%)	Raw number change 1996-2006	Total men employed 1996	Total men employed 2006	Change in men's employment 1996-2006	Male Share of employment 1996	Male Share of employment 2006	Change Male Share of employment 1996-2006.
611111	General Clerk	94,629	83,255	-12%	-11,374	19,147	9,335	-9,812	20%	11%	-9%
731111	Heavy Truck Driver	59,652	60,691	2%	1,039	58,637	59,032	395	98%	97%	-1%
799311	Storeperson	43,390	53,765	24%	10,375	29,177	35,090	5,913	67%	65%	-2%
911111	Commercial Cleaner	56,092	50,696	-10%	-5,396	13,610	14,232	622	24%	28%	4%
821115	Sales Ass't (Oth Pers & H/hold Gds)	26,706	46,781	75%	20,075	7,420	11,214	3,794	28%	24%	-4%
613111	Receptionist	44,373	46,497	5%	2,124	888	1,106	218	2%	2%	0%
821111	Sales Assist (Food & Drink Prods)	32,600	44,647	37%	12,047	5,222	7,374	2,152	16%	17%	0%
511111	Secretary	83,063	38,846	-53%	-44,217	631	296	-335	1%	1%	0%
614111	Accounts Clerk	22,164	31,904	44%	9,740	3,442	2,867	-575	16%	9%	-7%
591111	Bookkeeper	35,636	31,840	-11%	-3,796	2,104	1,174	-930	6%	4%	-2%
619111	Inquiry Clerk	15,645	25,561	63%	9,916	3,921	6,179	2,258	25%	24%	-1%

Table 4.3: Continued

993111	<b>Kitchen hand</b>	29,180	24,887	-15%	-4,293	4,867	4,746	-121	17%	19%	2%
614311	<b>Bank Worker</b>	45,946	24,692	-46%	-21,254	7,805	3,745	-4,060	17%	15%	-2%
821179	<b>Sales Assistants nec</b>	25,232	23,138	-8%	-2,094	9,068	9,512	444	36%	41%	5%
731411	<b>Delivery Driver</b>	20,644	22,467	9%	1,823	16,494	18,667	2,173	80%	83%	3%
922111	<b>Hand Packer</b>	23,611	21,937	-7%	-1,674	5,100	5,787	687	22%	26%	5%
711211	<b>Forklift Driver</b>	16,741	21,499	28%	4,758	16,292	20,723	4,431	97%	96%	-1%
631317	<b>Aged or Disabled Person Carer</b>	16,912	21,117	25%	4,205	1,753	2,732	979	10%	13%	3%
821113	<b>Sales Ass't (Fabric, Cloth &amp; F/wear)</b>	16,133	19,762	22%	3,629	1,562	1,648	86	10%	8%	-1%
511113	<b>Personal Assistant</b>	6,791	18,134	167%	11,343	120	245	125	2%	1%	0%
829111	<b>Checkout Operator</b>	12,911	17,126	33%	4,215	2,143	2,220	77	17%	13%	-4%
621179	<b>Sales Representatives nec</b>	14,624	16,448	12%	1,824	10,838	10,332	-506	74%	63%	-11%
612113	<b>Data Entry Operator</b>	17,342	15,717	-9%	-1,625	1,975	1,728	-247	11%	11%	0%
921211	<b>Product Assembler</b>	16,072	15,542	-3%	-530	9,092	10,271	1,179	57%	66%	10%
621111	<b>Sales Rep (Pers &amp; H/hold Goods)</b>	17,054	15,462	-9%	-1,592	10,382	8,246	-2,136	61%	53%	-8%

Source: Authors Calculations based on 1996 and 2006 ABS Census Data. Excludes not stated or not applicable for those aged 25-54 years.

#### **4.3.2 Occupations that experienced growth over the period 1996-2006 for all persons with no post-school qualifications aged 25-54**

Another way to understand changes in the employment opportunities for workers with no post-school qualifications is to focus on those occupations that experienced employment growth over the period 1996-2006.

Of the 93 occupations that make up 75 percent of employment for all workers with no post-school qualifications, 52 recorded employment growth. These occupations are documented in table 4.4. The table indicates that these 52 occupations generated 167,881 net new jobs over the period 1996-2006 for workers with no post-school qualifications aged 25-54 years.

The occupations that experienced the largest share of these new jobs were those that are a subset of the 1 digit ASCO occupational category of elementary clerical, sales & service workers. This includes occupations such as - sales assistant (other personal and household goods); sales assistant (food and drink products); security officer; elementary service workers nec; check out operator; and sales assistant (fabric, clothes and footwear). Taken together these occupations accounted for 31 percent of the net new employment generated by the 52 growth occupations. With the exception of security officer, these occupations are all female dominated.

The occupations that together experienced the second largest growth are those that are a subset of the 1 digit ASCO occupational category intermediate clerical, sales & service workers. These occupations included - dental assistant; aged or disabled person carer; child care worker; integration aide; social security inspector; inquiry clerk; accounts clerk; and receptionist. Taken together, these 18 intermediate clerical, sales & service occupations accounted for 29 percent of the net new jobs created by the 52 growth occupations. Again, the large majority of these jobs (12) are female dominated.

Overall then, 60 percent of the total employment created over the period 1996-2006 for workers with no post-school qualification aged between 25 and 54 years were in intermediate and elementary clerical, sales & service occupations. The overwhelming majority of these occupations (18) are dominated by women. Women also experienced a greater share of the employment growth recorded in these occupations than men. Indeed, women recorded higher employment growth than men in 24 out of the 25 elementary and intermediate clerical, sales & service occupations that

recorded employment growth over the period 1996-2006. The disaggregate data therefore supports the trends in occupational growth for workers with no post-school qualifications identified above and in Chapter 1 of the thesis.

Thirty percent of the employment growth created over the period 1996-2006 was in occupations that are a subset of the 1 digit ASCO occupational category intermediate production & transport workers and labourers & related workers. Of these occupations, 16 were male dominated and 6 gender integrated in 2006. Men experienced a greater share of the employment growth recorded in 17 of the 20 intermediate production & transport workers and labourers & related workers occupations that experienced employment growth.

Women were found to be increasing their share of employment in 10 of the 24 male dominated occupations that experienced growth. These included occupations such as - supervisor; store persons; security officer; miner; forklift driver; and mobile construction plant operators not further defined.

Men, however, increased their share of employment in only three of the 20 female dominated occupations that experienced employment growth. These occupations include - aged or disabled person carer; child care worker; and integration aide. Moreover, men's increase in their share of employment within these occupations was lower than that recorded for female workers entering male dominated occupations.

Combined then, the data suggest that there is some change in occupational sex segregation for workers with no post-school qualifications; however, its pace is slow. Women are moving into male dominated occupations more than men are moving into female dominated occupations. Both men and women are also found to be increasing their share of employment in occupations in which they have traditionally predominated.

Table 4.4: Changes in employment and gender share of employment in occupations that experienced growth over the period 1996-2006 for all persons with no post-school qualifications, aged 25-54, Australia.

ASCO Code	Occupation Title	Number employed 1996	Number employed 2006	Percent of Change 1996-2006 (%)	Raw number change 1996-2006	Total men employed 1996	Total men employed 2006	Change in men's employment 1996-2006	Male Share of employment 1996	Male Share of employment 2006	Change Male Share of employment 1996-2006.
821115	Sales Ass't (Oth Pers & H/hold Gds)	26,706	46,781	12%	20,075	7,420	11,214	3,794	28%	24%	-4%
821111	Sales Assist (Food & Drink Prods)	32,600	44,647	7%	12,047	5,222	7,374	2,152	16%	17%	0%
511113	Personal Assistant	6,791	18,134	7%	11,343	120	245	125	2%	1%	0%
799311	Storeperson	43,390	53,765	6%	10,375	29,177	35,090	5,913	67%	65%	-2%
831979	Elementary Service Workers nec	552	10,712	6%	10,160	314	1,621	1,307	57%	15%	-42%
619111	Inquiry Clerk	15,645	25,561	6%	9,916	3,921	6,179	2,258	25%	24%	-1%
614111	Accounts Clerk	22,164	31,904	6%	9,740	3,442	2,867	-575	16%	9%	-7%
991611	Construction Assistant	8,583	13,416	3%	4,833	8,262	12,968	4,706	96%	97%	0%
711211	Forklift Driver	16,741	21,499	3%	4,758	16,292	20,723	4,431	97%	96%	-1%
631113	Integration Aide	1,524	6,171	3%	4,647	28	262	234	2%	4%	2%
829111	Checkout Operator	12,911	17,126	3%	4,215	2,143	2,220	77	17%	13%	-4%
631317	Aged or Disabled	16,912	21,117	3%	4,205	1,753	2,732	979	10%	13%	3%

Table 4.4: Continued

	<b>Person Carer</b>										
920000	<b>Factory Labourers nfd</b>	471	4,296	2%	3,825	190	2,547	2,357	40%	59%	19%
631211	<b>Child Care Worker</b>	9,382	13,188	2%	3,806	239	408	169	3%	3%	1%
821113	<b>Sales Ass't (Fabric, Cloth &amp; F/wear)</b>	16,133	19,762	2%	3,629	1,562	1,648	86	10%	8%	-1%
791111	<b>Miner</b>	7,758	11,250	2%	3,492	7,592	10,720	3,128	98%	95%	-3%
619415	<b>Social Security Inspector</b>	1,189	4,335	2%	3,146	459	1,103	644	39%	25%	-13%
921411	<b>Food &amp; Drink Proc Mach Attend't</b>	2,804	5,928	2%	3,124	2,231	3,925	1,694	80%	66%	-13%
993211	<b>Fast Food Cook</b>	2,495	4,899	1%	2,404	1,237	1,962	725	50%	40%	-10%
613111	<b>Receptionist</b>	44,373	46,497	1%	2,124	888	1,106	218	2%	2%	0%
992113	<b>Fruit, Veg or Nut Farm Hand</b>	6,710	8,816	1%	2,106	3,692	5,375	1,683	55%	61%	6%
999979	<b>Labourers &amp; Related Wkrs nec</b>	4,692	6,787	1%	2,095	3,975	5,882	1,907	85%	87%	2%
639111	<b>Dental Assistant</b>	2,114	4,165	1%	2,051	18	30	12	1%	1%	0%
711100	<b>Mobile Const'n Plant Ops nfd</b>	4,655	6,705	1%	2,050	4,586	6,535	1,949	99%	97%	-1%
799301	<b>Supervisor, Storepersons</b>	2,905	4,951	1%	2,046	2,509	4,079	1,570	86%	82%	-4%
621179	<b>Sales Representatives</b>	14,624	16,448	1%	1,824	10,838	10,332	-506	74%	63%	-11%

Table 4.4: Continued

	nec										
731411	<b>Delivery Driver</b>	20,644	22,467	1%	1,823	16,494	18,667	2,173	80%	83%	3%
999311	<b>Handyperson</b>	6,944	8,674	1%	1,730	6,524	7,884	1,360	94%	91%	-3%
991711	<b>Concreter</b>	9,271	10,856	1%	1,585	9,100	10,696	1,596	98%	99%	0%
441211	<b>Fibrous Plasterer</b>	4,619	6,182	1%	1,563	4,456	5,969	1,513	96%	97%	0%
992213	<b>Garden Labourer</b>	6,232	7,700	1%	1,468	5,514	6,817	1,303	88%	89%	0%
811111	<b>Registry or Filing Clerk</b>	3,331	4,778	1%	1,447	784	899	115	24%	19%	-5%
599113	<b>Law Clerk</b>	3,322	4,606	1%	1,284	681	640	-41	20%	14%	-7%
791413	<b>Home Improvements Installer</b>	2,801	4,053	1%	1,252	2,660	3,910	1,250	95%	96%	2%
911117	<b>Vehicle Cleaner</b>	4,730	5,912	1%	1,182	3,406	4,475	1,069	72%	76%	4%
614411	<b>Insurance Clerk</b>	5,703	6,751	1%	1,048	1,287	1,406	119	23%	21%	-2%
731111	<b>Heavy Truck Driver</b>	59,652	60,691	1%	1,039	58,637	59,032	395	98%	97%	-1%
619913	<b>Debt Collector</b>	3,164	4,183	1%	1,019	1,103	1,276	173	35%	31%	-4%
431511	<b>Electron Equipment Tradesperson</b>	3,237	4,236	1%	999	2,922	3,965	1,043	90%	94%	3%
614211	<b>Payroll Clerk</b>	9,232	10,108	1%	876	2,321	1,524	-797	25%	15%	-10%
639711	<b>Travel Agent</b>	4,345	5,136	0%	791	1,100	1,095	-5	25%	21%	-4%

Table 4.4: Continued

621213	Motor Vehicle Parts Interpreter	4,503	5,261	0%	758	3,955	4,504	549	88%	86%	-2%
621211	Motor Veh & Caravan Salesperson	4,938	5,615	0%	677	4,475	4,693	218	91%	84%	-7%
615301	Sup, Stock & Purchasing Clerks	7,676	8,325	0%	649	5,804	6,492	688	76%	78%	2%
462311	General Gardener	6,712	7,328	0%	616	5,593	5,895	302	83%	80%	-3%
621311	Retail Supervisor	7,330	7,879	0%	549	3,961	3,232	-729	54%	41%	-13%
831111	Security Officer	12,705	13,067	0%	362	10,693	10,711	18	84%	82%	-2%
631411	Personal Care Assistant	8,686	9,026	0%	340	3,107	2,560	-547	36%	28%	-7%
712311	Eng Production Systems Wkr	8,638	8,967	0%	329	7,921	8,404	483	92%	94%	2%
799111	Motor Veh Parts & Accessor Fitter	3,682	3,964	0%	282	3,622	3,895	273	98%	98%	0%
412215	Welder (First Class)	5,761	5,891	0%	130	5,669	5,821	152	98%	99%	0%
442111	Painter & Decorator	8,034	8,081	0%	47	7,553	7,583	30	94%	94%	0%
<b>Total 52 growth occupations</b>		550,716	718,597	100%	167,881	297,452	351,192	53,740	54%	49%	-5%

Source: Authors Calculations based on 1996 and 2006 ABS Census Data. Excludes not stated or not applicable for those aged 25-54 years.



### **4.3.3 Occupations that experienced employment declines over the period 1996-2006 for all persons with no post-school qualifications aged 25-54**

The final way to consider changes to low skilled workers' employment opportunities is to look at those occupations that experienced declines in employment over the period 1996-2006. Of the 93 occupations that make up 75 percent of employment for all workers with no post-school qualifications, 41 recorded declines in employment for workers with limited levels of educational attainment. Table 4.5 lists these occupations and the changes in men's share of employment within them.

The table indicates that nearly half of the occupations (19) that recorded declines in employment were a subset of the 1 digit ASCO occupational categories of intermediate clerical, sales & service and elementary clerical, sales & service occupations. These occupations included jobs such as - family day care worker; data entry operator; general waiter; stock clerk; and postal delivery officer. However, unlike those intermediate and elementary clerical, sales & service occupations that experienced employment growth, those that experienced employment declines were a lot more gender integrated. Of the 19, 8 were gender integrated occupations, 1 was male dominated and 10 were female dominated occupations in 2006. Male workers with no post-school qualifications experienced a larger share of the overall employment decline recorded in 8 of the 19 intermediate and elementary clerical, sales & service occupations.

Fifteen of the 41 occupations that recorded employment declines over the period 1996-2006 were a subset of the 1 digit ASCO occupational categories of intermediate production & transport workers and labourers & related workers. These occupations included jobs such as - road & rail transport drivers not further defined; bus driver; hand packer; kitchen hand. Eight of these occupations were male dominated, 5 female dominated and 2 gender integrated. The loss of jobs in these occupations was fairly evenly distributed between low skilled men and women (-47,194 compared to -48,917).

Overall the data suggests that women with no post-school qualifications have fared more poorly in terms of employment declines than men. However, this is a reflection of the predominance of women in the 93 occupations that make up 75 percent of all workers with no post-school qualifications, and on which this analysis is based.

Table 4.5: Changes in employment and gender share of employment in occupations that recorded employment declines over the period 1996-2006 for all persons with no post-school qualifications, aged 25-54, Australia.

ASCO Code	Occupation Title	Number employed 1996	Number employed 2006	Change 1996-2006%	Raw number change 1996-2006	Total men employed 1996	Total men employed 2006	Change in men's employment 1996-2006	Male Share of employment 1996	Male Share of employment 2006	Change Male Share of employment 1996-2006.
511111	Secretary	83,063	38,846	-53%	-44,217	631	296	-335	1%	1%	0%
821100	Sales Assistants nfd	28,510	6,016	-79%	-22,494	7,193	1,796	-5,397	25%	30%	5%
720000	Intermediate Machine Operators nfd	34,922	12,811	-63%	-22,111	26,864	10,466	-16,398	77%	82%	5%
614311	Bank Worker	45,946	24,692	-46%	-21,254	7,805	3,745	-4,060	17%	15%	-2%
900000	Labourers & Related Workers nfd	25,123	8,062	-68%	-17,061	16,676	6,807	-9,869	66%	84%	18%
611111	General Clerk	94,629	83,255	-12%	-11,374	19,147	9,335	-9,812	20%	11%	-9%
911100	Cleaners nfd	20,141	9,563	-53%	-10,578	7,016	3,157	-3,859	35%	33%	-2%
992111	General Farm Hand	17,299	8,956	-48%	-8,343	12,933	7,178	-5,755	75%	80%	5%
721111	Sewing Machinist	15,182	7,071	-53%	-8,111	1,639	990	-649	11%	14%	3%

Table 4.5: Continued

731000	Road & Rail T'port Drivers nfd	11,563	4,366	-62%	-7,197	10,557	3,874	-6,683	91%	89%	-3%
631413	Nursing Assistant	12,890	5,739	-55%	-7,151	1,442	932	-510	11%	16%	5%
612111	Typist & Word Processing Operat	10,531	4,690	-55%	-5,841	255	122	-133	2%	3%	0%
911111	Commercial Cleaner	56,092	50,696	-10%	-5,396	13,610	14,232	622	24%	28%	4%
615311	Stock Clerk	8,820	4,134	-53%	-4,686	6,536	2,001	-4,535	74%	48%	-26%
993111	Kitchenhand	29,180	24,887	-15%	-4,293	4,867	4,746	-121	17%	19%	2%
632211	Bar Attendant	15,921	11,664	-27%	-4,257	4,967	3,626	-1,341	31%	31%	0%
700000	Int Prod'n & Transport Wkrs nfd	8,096	4,299	-47%	-3,797	4,880	3,489	-1,391	60%	81%	21%
591111	Bookkeeper	35,636	31,840	-11%	-3,796	2,104	1,174	-930	6%	4%	-2%
631213	Family Day Care Worker	7,294	4,056	-44%	-3,238	76	35	-41	1%	1%	0%
731211	Bus Driver	11,659	8,773	-25%	-2,886	9,671	6,917	-2,754	83%	79%	-4%
731311	Automobile Driver	11,052	8,667	-22%	-2,385	10,000	7,813	-2,187	90%	90%	0%

Table 4.5: Continued

631115	Teacher's Aide	15,159	12,833	-15%	-2,326	619	728	109	4%	6%	2%
421111	Motor Mechanic	6,444	4,279	-34%	-2,165	6,292	4,148	-2,144	98%	97%	-1%
831511	Laundry Worker	9,403	7,244	-23%	-2,159	2,082	1,697	-385	22%	23%	1%
811213	Postal Sorting Officer	6,369	4,219	-34%	-2,150	3,821	1,925	-1,896	60%	46%	-14%
821179	Sales Assistants nec	25,232	23,138	-8%	-2,094	9,068	9,512	444	36%	41%	5%
922111	Hand Packer	23,611	21,937	-7%	-1,674	5,100	5,787	687	22%	26%	5%
612113	Data Entry Operator	17,342	15,717	-9%	-1,625	1,975	1,728	-247	11%	11%	0%
621111	Sales Rep (Pers & H/hold Goods)	17,054	15,462	-9%	-1,592	10,382	8,246	-2,136	61%	53%	-8%
911113	Domestic Cleaner	9,259	7,699	-17%	-1,560	670	912	242	7%	12%	5%
451311	Cook	14,998	13,612	-9%	-1,386	4,132	4,443	311	28%	33%	5%
591211	Credit & Loans Office	10,890	9,975	-8%	-915	4,946	3,672	-1,274	45%	37%	-9%
441113	Carpenter	6,893	6,167	-11%	-726	6,737	6,031	-706	98%	98%	0%
441411	Bricklayer	4,585	3,953	-14%	-632	4,448	3,861	-587	97%	98%	1%
811413	Postal Delivery Officer	7,009	6,404	-9%	-605	5,233	4,544	-689	75%	71%	-4%

Table 4.5: Continued

921211	<b>Product Assembler</b>	16,072	15,542	-3%	-530	9,092	10,271	1,179	57%	66%	10%
829211	<b>Ticket Seller</b>	4,712	4,214	-11%	-498	1,918	1,392	-526	41%	33%	-8%
615313	<b>Purchasing Officer</b>	5,811	5,365	-8%	-446	3,641	2,963	-678	63%	55%	-7%
632311	<b>General Waiter</b>	14,983	14,626	-2%	-357	2,522	2,570	48	17%	18%	1%
921111	<b>Eng Production Process Worker</b>	6,510	6,321	-3%	-189	5,947	5,689	-258	91%	90%	-1%
615211	<b>Receiving &amp; Dispatching Clerk</b>	5,092	5,070	0%	-22	3,004	2,872	-132	59%	57%	-2%
Total 41 occupations		810,977	566,860	-30%	-244,117	260498	175722	-84776	32	31	-1

Source: Authors Calculations based on 1996 and 2006 ABS Census Data. Excludes not stated or not applicable for those aged 25-54 years.

#### **4.3.4 Reflections on the 6 digit data**

Overall, the disaggregate data indicates that large employing occupations of workers with no post-school qualifications are more likely to be female dominated. The occupations that are experiencing growth for workers with no post-school qualifications are those that are located in the services sector, and are largely being taken by women. Indeed, more than half (60%) of the total employment created over the period 1996-2006 for workers with no post-school qualifications aged between 25 and 54 years were in intermediate and elementary clerical, sales & service occupations, which also tend to be female dominated. Women with no post-school qualifications also experienced a greater share of the total employment growth recorded in these occupations than did men. Moreover, women are taking more than two-thirds (68%) of the total net new jobs generated for person with no post-school qualifications in over the period 1996-2006.

While there is some change in occupational sex segregation for workers with no post-school qualifications, its pace is slow. Women with no post-school qualifications are moving into male dominated occupations much more than men with no post-school qualifications are moving into female dominated occupations. Both low skilled men and women are also found to be increasing their gender share of employment in occupations in which they have traditionally predominated.

The evidence therefore supports the idea that occupational sex segregation has contributed to the decline in low skilled men's employment opportunities. Any solution to men's withdrawal from the labour market involves men taking advantage of the service sector employment that are experiencing growth for workers with no post-school qualifications and therefore undertaking work that is female dominated. However, men are not found to be entering these occupations very much at all.

The analysis presented here however, does not allow us to understand the processes that are operating to generate and or stall these changes in men's representation in female dominated jobs. Such an understanding requires the conduct of qualitative case study research (see Chapter 3). To facilitate the conduct of such research, the results of the analysis of the census data are further used to strategically select four occupations for close case study. These occupations are subsequently used to derive qualitative insights into what facilitates and what deters employment of lower-skilled

men in female-intensive occupations. The remainder of this chapter details the results of the analysis of the census data which were used to guide the selection of the case study occupations.

#### **4.4 Occupations selected for case study**

To select the case study occupations I use male and female occupation data instead of total workforce data, as it allowed a more accurate detection of the trends in occupational growth and decline and changing gender shares of employment. This is somewhat masked when using total workforce data. There are two reasons for this. Firstly, if the gender distribution is disproportionate in the total low skilled workforce, then the occupations that account for 75 percent of total low skilled employment would also be skewed towards the gender that accounted for the larger proportion of the total workforce. However, it was shown above (both in the aggregate data and in the disaggregate persons data) that this is not the case. Secondly, if the diversity of occupations is less for one gender relative to another, then the top employing occupation for all low skilled workers would be skewed towards the gender with the least occupational diversity. We have seen in Chapter Two that females tend to crowd into relatively fewer occupations than males. This is also somewhat reflected in the disaggregate data above.

The four case study occupations that are selected are large employing occupations for low skilled male and female workers that have experienced growth over the decade 1996-2006 and that have been, and continue to be, dominated by women. The occupations vary according to whether or not men experienced a change in their share of employment. Two female dominated occupations are chosen where there is strong growth in employment for workers with no post-school qualifications, but in which men did not experience a change in their share of employment. Two female dominated occupations are also chosen where employment growth for persons with no post-school qualifications had occurred, but in which men were found to be maintaining or increasing their share of employment. Selecting the case study occupation according to this logic ensures that different scenarios in men's entry into or exclusion from female dominated occupations are included. This maximises the possibility of finding fundamental differences between the occupations where men are entering and where men are not, that will help us understand how occupational sex segregation works.



When selecting the two female dominated occupations which men are found to be entering I used the top employing occupation (i.e. occupations that together represent 75 percent of the total low skilled male workforce) data for males with no post-school qualifications. This is because I want to know what occupations had experienced growth for low skilled men, whether any of these occupations were female dominated and, if they were, whether the employment growth experienced resulted in an increase in men's share of employment within the occupation.

There are some limitations to using the male top employing data to select the female dominated occupations that men are entering. While I can be sure that these occupations were both large employers of men with no post-school qualifications and represent a source of employment growth for low skilled male workers, I cannot (without referring back to persons or female data) ascertain whether these occupations were also a source of growth for all workers with no post-school qualifications. In this way I cannot confidently state that any increase in men's gender share of employment within these occupations represents men entering at a faster pace than females or represent a stagnation or decline in female employment. However, for the purpose of this study what I am interested in locating are female dominated occupations that were a source of growth for workers with no post-school qualification, and in which men increased their gender share of employment irrespective of whether this increase represented a stagnation or decline in female employment or represented men surpassing female in their rate of entry. The point is that men are making some inroads into female dominated occupations.

When selecting the two female dominated occupations in which men have not entered I use the top employing occupation (i.e. occupations that together represent 75 percent of the total low skilled female workforce) data for females. This is because I wanted to look at the other extreme - those female dominated occupations that had experienced growth for women with no post-school qualifications (but not necessarily men) and in which men had been unsuccessful in entering or experiencing a share in this employment growth.

#### **4.4.1 Large employing occupations of men with no post-school qualifications that have experienced growth**

Out of the 792 six digit ASCO occupational categories, 109 occupations accounted for 75 percent of employment for male workers aged 25-54 with no post-school qualifications (see Appendix table A4.3). 72 of these occupations were male dominated, 16 were female dominated and 20 were gender integrated. Within these 109 occupations, there were a total of 101,953 job losses and 66,893 new jobs, resulting in men with no post-school qualifications recording an overall decline in employment of 35,060 workers over the period 1996-2006. Of the 109 occupations, 52 recorded employment growth over the period 1996-2006, while 57 recorded declines in employment over the period 1996-2006.

To select the occupations for case study I focus only on those occupations that are experiencing employment growth for male workers with no post-school qualifications. These are documented in table 4.6. Thirty three of the 52 occupations also appeared in the top growth occupations for all workers with no post-school qualifications aged 25-54. These 33 are marked with an asterisk in table 4.6.

Table 4.6 also documents men's share of employment within each occupation in 1996 and 2006 and the change in their share between 1996 and 2006. It shows that of the 52 occupations for men that experienced growth over the period 1996-2006, nearly two thirds (34) were male dominated occupations in 2006 (i.e. in 2006 males constituted 70 percent or more of the total occupational workforce). Eight occupations were female dominated in 2006 (i.e. in 2006 females comprised 70 percent or more of the occupation's workforce). Ten occupations were therefore gender integrated.

Men recorded declines in their share of employment in a little under half (25) of the 52 growth occupations, 17 of which continued to be male dominated. This indicates that women have made some inroads into male dominated occupations.

Table 4.6: Men with no post-school qualifications aged 25-54, growth occupations over the period 1996-2006.

ASCO Code	Occupation Title	Number employed 1996	Number employed 2006	Change 1996-2006 %	Raw number change 1996-2006	Proportion of total low skilled male employment <sup>20</sup> 2006 (%)	Male Share of employment as a percent of total employment within each occupation 1996	Male Share of employment as a percent of total employment within each occupation 2006	Change Male Share 1996-2006.
631317	Aged or Disabled Person Carer*	1,753	2,732	55.8%	979	0.3%	10.4%	12.9%	2.6%
829111	Checkout Operator*	2,143	2,220	3.6%	77	0.3%	16.6%	13.0%	-3.6%
821111	Sales Assist (Food & Drink Prods)*	5,222	7,374	41.2%	2,152	0.9%	16.0%	16.5%	0.5%
632311	General Waiter	2,522	2,570	1.9%	48	0.3%	16.8%	17.6%	0.7%
821115	Sales Ass't (Oth Pers & H/hold Gds)*	7,420	11,214	51.1%	3,794	1.4%	27.8%	24.0%	-3.8%
619111	Inquiry Clerk*	3,921	6,179	57.6%	2,258	0.8%	25.1%	24.2%	-0.9%
922111	Hand Packer	5,100	5,787	13.5%	687	0.7%	21.6%	26.4%	4.8%
911111	Commercial Cleaner	13,610	14,232	4.6%	622	1.8%	24.3%	28.1%	3.8%
451311	Cook	4,132	4,443	7.5%	311	0.6%	27.6%	32.6%	5.1%
993211	Fast Food Cook*	1,237	1,962	58.6%	725	0.2%	49.6%	40.0%	-9.5%

<sup>20</sup> Proportion is of the total of all men with no post-school qualification working in the last 6 major (ASCO) occupation groups 4 Tradespersons & Related Workers, 5 Adv Clerical & Service Workers, 6 Intermediate Cleric, Sales & Service Workers, 7 Intermediate Production & Transport Workers, 8 Elementary Cleric, Sales & Service Workers, 9 Labourers & Related Workers.

Table 4.6: Continued

821179	Sales Assistants nec	9,068	9,512	4.9%	444	1.2%	35.9%	41.1%	5.2%
920000	Factory Labourers nfd*	190	2,547	1240.5%	2,357	0.3%	40.3%	59.3%	18.9%
992113	Fruit, Veg or Nut Farm Hand*	3,692	5,375	45.6%	1,683	0.7%	55.0%	61.0%	5.9%
921979	Process Workers nec	1,096	1,709	55.9%	613	0.2%	61.6%	64.5%	2.9%
799311	Store person*	29,177	35,090	20.3%	5,913	4.4%	67.2%	65.3%	-2.0%
921211	Product Assembler	9,092	10,271	13.0%	1,179	1.3%	56.6%	66.1%	9.5%
921411	Food & Drink Proc Mach Attend't*	2,231	3,925	75.9%	1,694	0.5%	79.6%	66.2%	-13.4%
619479	Inter Inspectors & Examiners nec	1,312	1,757	33.9%	445	0.2%	72.4%	67.6%	-4.8%
911117	Vehicle Cleaner*	3,406	4,475	31.4%	1,069	0.6%	72.0%	75.7%	3.7%
451211	Baker	1,902	2,402	26.3%	500	0.3%	83.8%	77.6%	-6.2%
615301	Sup, Stock & Purchasing Clerks*	5,804	6,492	11.9%	688	0.8%	75.6%	78.0%	2.4%
462311	General Gardener*	5,593	5,895	5.4%	302	0.7%	83.3%	80.4%	-2.9%
621115	Sales Rep (Blders & Plumbers Supp)	2,380	2,820	18.5%	440	0.4%	87.6%	81.3%	-6.3%
831111	Security Officer*	10,693	10,711	0.2%	18	1.3%	84.2%	82.0%	-2.2%
799301	Supervisor, Store persons*	2,509	4,079	62.6%	1,570	0.5%	86.4%	82.4%	-4.0%

Table 4.6: Continued

731411	Delivery Driver*	16,494	18,667	13.2%	2,173	2.3%	79.9%	83.1%	3.2%
621211	Motor Veh & Caravan Salesperson*	4,475	4,693	4.9%	218	0.6%	90.6%	83.6%	-7.0%
621213	Motor Vehicle Parts Interpreter*	3,955	4,504	13.9%	549	0.6%	87.8%	85.6%	-2.2%
999979	Labourers & Related Wkrs nec*	3,975	5,882	48.0%	1,907	0.7%	84.7%	86.7%	1.9%
992213	Garden Labourer*	5,514	6,817	23.6%	1,303	0.9%	88.5%	88.5%	0.1%
711979	Mobile Plant Operators nec	1,285	2,356	83.3%	1,071	0.3%	92.4%	90.5%	-1.9%
999311	Handyperson*	6,524	7,884	20.8%	1,360	1.0%	94.0%	90.9%	-3.1%
431511	Electron Equipment Tradesperson*	2,922	3,965	35.7%	1,043	0.5%	90.3%	93.6%	3.3%
712311	Eng Production Systems Wkr*	7,921	8,404	6.1%	483	1.1%	91.7%	93.7%	2.0%
442111	Painter & Decorator*	7,553	7,583	0.4%	30	1.0%	94.0%	93.8%	-0.2%
999211	Freight Handler (Road & Rail)	1,924	2,513	30.6%	589	0.3%	93.8%	94.0%	0.2%
441611	Wall & Floor Tiler	2,368	3,027	27.8%	659	0.4%	94.7%	94.7%	0.0%
442311	Floor Finisher	2,296	2,541	10.7%	245	0.3%	94.9%	94.8%	-0.1%
991915	Fence Erector	2,447	3,295	34.7%	848	0.4%	94.0%	95.1%	1.1%
791111	Miner*	7,592	10,720	41.2%	3,128	1.3%	97.9%	95.3%	-2.6%

Table 4.6: Continued

729911	Industrial Spray Painter	1,642	2,171	32.2%	529	0.3%	93.1%	95.4%	2.2%
711211	Forklift Driver*	16,292	20,723	27.2%	4,431	2.6%	97.3%	96.4%	-0.9%
791413	Home Improvements Installer*	2,660	3,910	47.0%	1,250	0.5%	95.0%	96.5%	1.5%
441211	Fibrous Plasterer*	4,456	5,969	34.0%	1,513	0.8%	96.5%	96.6%	0.1%
991611	Construction Assistant*	8,262	12,968	57.0%	4,706	1.6%	96.3%	96.7%	0.4%
731111	Heavy Truck Driver*	58,637	59,032	0.7%	395	7.4%	98.3%	97.3%	-1.0%
711100	Mobile Const'n Plant Ops nfd*	4,586	6,535	42.5%	1,949	0.8%	98.5%	97.5%	-1.1%
412211	Metal Fabricator	1,964	2,269	15.5%	305	0.3%	96.5%	97.7%	1.2%
991311	Paving & Surfacing Labourer	2,814	3,053	8.5%	239	0.4%	98.9%	98.2%	-0.7%
799111	Motor Veh Parts & Accessor Fitter	3,622	3,895	7.5%	273	0.5%	98.4%	98.3%	-0.1%
991711	Concreter*	9,100	10,696	17.5%	1,596	1.3%	98.2%	98.5%	0.4%
441511	Solid Plasterer	584	1,665	185.1%	1,081	0.2%	98.5%	98.5%	0.0%
412215	Welder (First Class)*	5,669	5,821	2.7%	152	0.7%	98.4%	98.8%	0.4%
711121	Excavator Operator	1,035	3,383	226.9%	2,348	0.4%	99.0%	99.3%	0.3%

Source: Authors Calculations based on 1996 and 2006 ABS Census Data. Excludes not stated or not applicable for those aged 25-54 years.

The 8 occupations that experienced growth over the period 1996-2006 for males with limited levels of formal education aged between 25-54 years and which were female dominated in 2006 were:

1. 631317 Aged or Disabled Person Carer
2. 829111 Checkout Operator
3. 821111 Sales Assistant (Food& Drink Products)
4. 632311 General Waiter
5. 821115 Sales Assistant (other personal and household goods)
6. 619111 Inquiry Clerk
7. 922111 Hand Packer
8. 911111 Commercial Cleaner

Males increased their share of employment in 5 of these female dominated occupations, while in the other 3, men actually recorded a decline in their share of employment. This means that while these occupations grew for men, they also grew for women and at a higher rate. This represents the increased feminisation of already female dominated occupations.

The 5 female dominated occupations in which men increased their share of employment were:

1. 631317 Aged or Disabled Person Care worker
2. 821111 Sales Assist (Food& Drink Products)
3. 632311 General Waiter
4. 922111 Hand Packer
5. 911111 Commercial Cleaner

For two of these occupations the increase was minimal, being less than 1 percent point change. However, men increased their gender share of employment by 3 or more percent in three of these occupations.

1. 631317 Aged or Disabled Person Carer (3% increase)
2. 922111 Hand Packer (5% increase)
3. 911111 Commercial Cleaner (4% increase)

This indicates that men have made some inroads into these three female dominated occupations. Only two female dominated occupations that experienced growth and in which men are maintaining or increasing their employment were needed for the qualitative case studies. Out of the above three occupations one occupation therefore needed to be excluded. Hand packers were chosen to be excluded from the selection of case study occupations for three reasons.

Firstly, while hand packers are statistically indicated to be dominated by women, intuitively it is more often thought of as 'male' work. Secondly, hand packers are excluded on the basis that the occupation does not stereotypically fit with the new service sector employment that has come to dominate the new economy and which is said to have displaced blue collar male employment opportunities. Thirdly, because I want to capture those occupations that are most likely to still be offering employment opportunities to low skilled male workers, I excluded hand packer as the growth recorded for this occupation largely occurred in the first half of the decade. Between 1996 and 2001 this occupation grew by 594 male workers. However, between 2001 and 2006 the occupation grew by only 93 male workers. Opportunities for low skilled male workers to obtain employment as a hand packer have therefore weakened in the latter half of the decade.

Therefore, the two female dominated occupations that are experiencing employment growth for male workers with no post-school qualifications and in which males are found to be increasing their gender share of employment that are selected for case study are aged or disabled person carer and commercial cleaners.

Nine hundred and seventy nine new positions for male aged or disabled person care workers with no post-school qualifications were created over the period 1996-2006. This occupation also grew for women with 3,226 new positions created for females with no post-school qualifications. For all workers with no post-school qualifications the occupation grew faster in the second half of the decade (by 2,560 workers over the period 2001-2006) than in the first half (1,645 workers over the period 1996-2001). About the same number of the new jobs that were created over the period 1996-2006 were full-time positions (2,095) as part-time positions (2,110).

For male workers with no post-school qualifications the occupation grew at a slightly faster rate in the first half of the decade (by 521 male workers 1996-2001) than in the second half (458 male workers 2001-2006). A little more of the new jobs created for



male workers over the period 1996-2006 were full-time positions (527) than part-time (452). Men increased their share of employment in this female dominated occupation by nearly 3 percentage points over the period 1996-2006. Men constituted 10 percent of all aged or disabled care workers with limited levels of formation education aged between 24-54 in 1996 and 13 percent in 2006.

Overall, aged care is quite a small employer of low skilled men, with only 2,732 male workers with no post-school qualifications aged 25-54 employed in this occupation in 2006. In 2006, just as many men were employed on a part-time basis (1,333) as those on a full-time (1,399) basis. For low skilled women on the other hand, this occupation is quite a large employer, accounting for 2 percent of total employment of females with no post-school qualifications aged 25-54 years working in the lower 6 major (ASCO) occupation groups in 2006. 18,385 women with no post-school qualifications were employed in this occupation in 2006. Many more women were employed on a part-time basis (13,677) than on a full-time basis (4,708).

For commercial cleaners, 622 new positions for male workers with no post-school qualifications aged 24-54 were created over the period 1996-2006. However, this was not a source of job growth for low skilled women. Indeed, low skilled women recorded a very large decrease in their employment in this occupation (by 6,018). In 2006, commercial cleaners accounted for 2.8 percent of all low skilled male workers aged 25-54 years working in the last 6 major (ASCO) occupation groups in 2006.

The employment growth for men recorded for this occupation occurred solely in the second half of the past decade. Over the period 2001-2006, males working as commercial cleaners increased by 3,397. Over the first half of the decade (1996-2001) this occupation actually experienced a net decline of 2,775 male workers. Growth for men has been strongest in part-time employment (853 jobs), with full-time employment for male commercial cleaners actually declining by 2.8 percent or 231 workers over the period 1996-2006. A consequence is that the total hours worked by men in commercial cleaning has not gone up commensurately with the growth in the numbers employed. Women's employment loss was largely in part-time employment (-5,640 female jobs). Men with no post-school qualifications increased their share of employment in this female dominated occupation by nearly 4 percentage points over the period 1996-2006. Men constituted 24 percent of all commercial cleaners with limited levels of formation education aged between 24-54 in 1996 and 28 percent in

2006. The ASCO definitions for these case study occupations are included in Appendix 4.5.

The selection of female dominated occupations which men are moving into, as detected from the analysis of changing gender shares in top employing occupations for low skilled, prime aged males, was relatively straightforward. However, the selection of female dominated occupations which men are not moving into, as determined from the analysis of the changing gender shares in large employing occupations for low skilled women, is a little more complicated. As shown below, the majority of large employing occupations for low skilled women that are experiencing growth are also female dominated. Moreover, men are not found to be moving into these occupations very much at all. This supports the findings of the broader trends in occupations' sex segregation presented in Chapter 2 and above. What this means is that a different logic (other than statistical deduction) was needed to be deployed to select the 2 female dominated occupations that are growing and are open to workers with no post-school qualifications, but which men are not entering.

#### **4.4.2 Large employing occupations of women with no post-school qualifications that have experienced growth**

Out of the 792 six digit ASCO occupational categories, 42 occupations accounted for 75 percent of employment for female workers aged 25-54 with no post-school qualifications (see Appendix table A4.4). Within these 42 occupations, slightly more recorded declines in employment (-138,336) than employment growth (109,836), resulting in low skilled women recording an overall decline in employment of -27,531 workers in these occupations over the period 1996-2006. However, it is important to point out that this overall decline in employment is less than that recorded for low skilled men.

Of the 42 occupations that make up 75 percent of employment for all female workers with no post-school qualifications, half recorded employment growth and half recorded declines in employment over the period 1996-2006. To select the occupations for case study I again focus only on those occupations that are experiencing employment growth for low skilled female workers. These are documented in table 4.7. Eighteen of these occupations also appeared in the occupations that experienced employment growth for all workers with no post-school qualifications; these are marked with an asterisk in table 4.6. In addition, 6

occupations also appear of the list of top growth occupations for men; these occupations are marked with an M in table 4.7.

Women increased their share of employment in 16 of the 21 growth occupations. None of the 21 growth occupations for women were male dominated (i.e. none had men constituting more than 70 % of the employment share). Five growth occupations for women were gender integrated. Three quarters (16) were therefore female dominated occupations in 2006. These were:

1. 631411 Personal Care Assistant
2. 619111 Inquiry Clerk
3. 821115 Sales Assistants (Other Personal & household goods)
4. 614411 Insurance Clerk
5. 821111 Sales Assist (Food & Drink Products)
6. 831979 Elementary Service Workers not elsewhere classified
7. 614211 Payroll Clerk
8. 829111 Checkout Operator
9. 631317 Aged or Disabled Person Carer
10. 614111 Accounts Clerk
11. 821113 Sales Assistants (Fabric, Clothing & Footwear)
12. 631113 Integration Aide
13. 631211 Child Care Worker
14. 613111 Receptionist
15. 511113 Personal Assistant
16. 639111 Dental Assistant

Table 4.7: Women with no post-school qualifications aged 25-54, growth occupations over the period 1996-2006.

ASCO Code	Occupation Title	Number employed 1996	Number employed 2006	Change 1996-2006 %	Raw number change 1996-2006	Proportion of total low skilled female employment <sup>21</sup> 2006 (%)	Female Share of employment as a percent of total employment within each occupation 1996	Female Share of employment as a percent of total employment within each occupation 2006	Change Female Share 1996-2006.
799311	Store person*M	14,213	18,675	31.4%	4,462	2.1%	32.8%	34.7%	2.0%
621179	Sales Representatives nec*	3,786	6,116	61.5%	2,330	0.7%	25.9%	37.2%	11.3%
621111	Sales Rep (Pers & H/hold Goods)	6,672	7,216	8.2%	544	0.8%	39.1%	46.7%	7.5%
621311	Retail Supervisor*	3,369	4,647	37.9%	1,278	0.5%	46.0%	59.0%	13.0%
591211	Credit & Loans Officer	5,944	6,303	6.0%	359	0.7%	54.6%	63.2%	8.6%
631411	Personal Care Assistant*	5,579	6,466	15.9%	887	0.7%	64.2%	71.6%	7.4%
619111	Inquiry Clerk*M	11,724	19,382	65.3%	7,658	2.2%	74.9%	75.8%	0.9%
821115	Sales Ass't (Oth Pers & H/hold Gds)*M	19,286	35,567	84.4%	16,281	4.0%	72.2%	76.0%	3.8%
614411	Insurance Clerk*	4,416	5,345	21.0%	929	0.6%	77.4%	79.2%	1.7%
821111	Sales Assist (Food & Drink Prods)*M	27,378	37,273	36.1%	9,895	4.1%	84.0%	83.5%	-0.5%
831979	Elementary Service Workers nec*	238	9,091	3719.7%	8,853	1.0%	43.1%	84.9%	41.8%

<sup>21</sup> The total is of all people with no post-school qualification working in the last 6 major (ASCO) occupation groups 4 Tradespersons & Related Workers , 5 Adv Clerical & Service Workers, 6 Intermediate Cleric, Sales & Service Workers, 7 Intermediate Production & Transport Workers, 8 Elementary Cleric, Sales & Service Workers, 9 Labourers & Related Workers.

Table 4.7: Continued

614211	Payroll Clerk	6,911	8,584	24.2%	1,673	1.0%	74.9%	84.9%	10.1%
829111	Checkout Operator*M	10,768	14,906	38.4%	4,138	1.7%	83.4%	87.0%	3.6%
631317	Aged or Disabled Person Carer*M	15,159	18,385	21.3%	3,226	2.0%	89.6%	87.1%	-2.6%
614111	Accounts Clerk*	18,722	29,037	55.1%	10,315	3.2%	84.5%	91.0%	6.5%
821113	Sales Ass't (Fabric, Cloth & F/wear)*	14,571	18,114	24.3%	3,543	2.0%	90.3%	91.7%	1.3%
631113	Integration Aide*	1,496	5,909	295.0%	4,413	0.7%	98.2%	95.8%	-2.4%
631211	Child Care Worker*	9,143	12,780	39.8%	3,637	1.4%	97.5%	96.9%	-0.5%
613111	Receptionist*	43,485	45,391	4.4%	1,906	5.0%	98.0%	97.6%	-0.4%
511113	Personal Assistant*	6,671	17,889	168.2%	11,218	2.0%	98.2%	98.6%	0.4%
639111	Dental Assistant*	2,096	4,135	97.3%	2,039	0.5%	99.1%	99.3%	0.1%
8211**	<b>Sales Assistants Grouped</b>	101,121	111,373	10%	10,252	12.3%	76%	78%	1.3%

Source: Authors Calculations based on 1996 and 2006 ABS Census Data

Excludes not stated or not applicable for those aged 25-54 years

\*\* For the purposes of this research, I use the ASCO unit or 4 digit level coding of Sales Assistants. This includes the following 6 digit ASCO occupations

- 821100 Sales Assistants nfd
- 821111 Sales Assist (Food & Drink Prods)
- 821113 Sales Ass't (Fabric, Cloth & F/wear)
- 821115 Sales Ass't (Oth Pers & H/hold Gds)
- 821117 Sales Assist (Postal Services)

Of the 16 female dominated occupations, 5 documented a decline in the female share of employment over the period 1996-2006. This indicates that men have made some inroads into these female concentrated occupations. These occupations were:

1. 821111 Sales Assistant (Food & Drink Products)
2. 631317 Aged or Disabled Person Carer
3. 631113 Integration Aide
4. 631211 Child Care Workers
5. 613111 Receptionists

The extent of the change in gender shares of employment was very small, being less than 0.5 percent, for 3 of these occupations. These occupations were sales assistant (food & drink products), child care workers and receptionists. Due to the small amount of change in gender shares of employment, I have included these three occupations among the female dominated occupations that men are not entering.

Therefore 14 of the 21 large employing growth occupations for low skilled women are ones in which women dominate and men are not entering. Given the large number of occupations from which two can be selected for case study, some practical considerations had to be made as to which constituted the most useful occupations for case study.

One consideration was to ascertain whether there were female dominated occupations that men are not entering that were similar to the ones that they are entering. Focusing on occupations that have similar demands in terms of workers' skills and attributes but which differ in the extent to which men are employed, allows us to understand if there are any fundamental differences about jobs in female dominated occupations men do take compared to those that they do not. It also allows us to identify the context in which men might more readily take up jobs in female dominated occupations. In looking at the trends documented in table 4.7 one obvious pattern that stands out, is that men are not making much ground in securing employment in the occupations of personal care assistant and childcare, but are making inroads into the female dominated and care occupations of aged or disabled personal carer. Indeed, as personal care assistants women are rapidly increasing their share of employment. In childcare, while men have made very small gains they are still documented to be relatively unsuccessful in entering this highly female dominated occupation.

It is interesting that men are entering aged or disabled care work but are relatively unsuccessful in entering child care; these occupations are very similar. Child care then seems to be an interesting female dominated occupation to select for close case study. It is an occupation in which there has been large growth for workers with no post-school qualifications but men have not taken a share (or taken only a small share) of this employment.

Over the period 1996-2006, 3,637 new positions were created in child care for female workers with no post-school qualifications. This compares to only 169 positions for low skilled men. The occupation grew a little faster in the second half of the decade (by 2,102 workers over the period 2001-2006) than in the first half (1,704 workers over the period 1996-2001). Over the period 1996-2006 more part-time positions were created (2,806) than full-time positions (1,000). Women decreased their share of employment in this female dominated occupation slightly, by half a percentage point. Despite this, child care is still a highly sex segregated occupation. Women constituted 97.5 percent of all child care workers with limited levels of formation education aged between 24-54 in 1996 and 96.9 percent in 2006. Indeed, there were only 239 low skilled men aged 25-54 employed in this occupation in 1996 and 408 in 2006. Overall, child care is quite a large employer of women with no post-school qualifications aged 25-54. In 2006, child care accounted for 1.4 percent of all female workers, working in the 6 major ASCO occupations that form the basis of this analysis.

Another practical consideration that needed to be made when selecting the most useful occupations for case study was to ascertain whether there were any significant areas of overlap in the female dominated occupations that experienced growth. The point of looking at the data in this way was to see whether I could detect occupations that can be grouped as operating in similar labour markets, which also have similar types of entry pathways. By doing this it was hoped that I would be able to condense the data a little.

Looking at the data this way it is found that there are some female dominated occupations which men were not entering that are very similar. The most obvious are the various types of sale assistant occupations (i.e. 821115 sales assistant (other personal and household goods; 821113 sales assistant (fabric, clothing and footwear); 821111 sales assistants (food & drink products). All three of these are individually very large employing occupations for workers with no post-school qualifications; they

are all also very female dominated. While men have made some inroads into these sale assistant occupations (particularly that of food and drink product sale assistants), on the whole they are not found to have entered these occupations very much at all. This is of great concern given the size of the occupation and its importance to low skilled employment. Therefore sales assistant is the second female dominated occupation that is selected for close case study.

For the purpose of the case study research, I do not differentiate between the specific types of sales assistants. This is because the research is trying to understand the type of pathways that are possible to obtain this work and what determines whether men are successful or not in navigating this pathway. If one thinks about sales assistants, the process of shifting from being a food and drink sales assistant to a personal and other household goods sales assistant is not altogether straightforward, but nevertheless it is not a hard thing to do. Therefore it does not make a great deal of sense to look only at food and beverage sales assistant over personal and other household goods sales assistant. For the purpose of this analysis I therefore use the definition of sales assistants at the broader 4 digit or unit level of ASCO. This unit group level of ASCO has within it the following individual sale assistant occupations:

1. 8211-00 Sales Assistants not further defined
2. 8211-11 Sales Assistant (Food and Drink Products)
3. 8211-13 Sales Assistant (Fabric, Clothing and Footwear)
4. 8211-15 Sales Assistant (Other Personal and Household Goods)
5. 8211-17 Sales Assistant (Postal Services)
6. 8211-79 Sales Assistants not elsewhere classified

For all people with no post-school qualifications, these occupations together grew by 10,934 workers over the period 1996-2006. Women took 10,252 of these new positions with men taking only 682. In 2006 sales assistant occupation accounted for 12.3 percent of female workers with no post-school qualifications working in the 6 major ASCO occupations that form the basis of the analysis. Over the period 1996-2006 all positions that were created were part-time (11,862). Full-time jobs actually declined in this occupation by 928. Women increased their share of employment in this female dominated occupation slightly, by 1.3 percentage points. Women constituted 76 percent of all sales assistants with limited levels of formal education aged between 24-54 in 1996, and 78 percent in 2006.



#### **4.5 How do the selected case study occupations compare with employment patterns for other workers with higher levels of educational attainment?**

The focus of the analysis employed above has some important consequences which may inadvertently disguise the detection of growing job opportunities for low skilled workers. The focus is on people who have as their highest level of education attainment year 12 or below and who are employed in one of the 6 major ASCO occupational categories of tradesperson and related workers; advanced clerical, sales and service workers; intermediate clerical, sales and service workers; intermediate production and transport workers; elementary clerical, sales and service workers; and labourers and related workers. In reality many people may, after entry into a job, acquire formal qualifications. The analysis will not allow the detection of those people who entered a job when they had with no post-school qualifications, but then obtained higher level qualifications once in that job. For example, take a person who has no post-school qualifications who applies and succeeds in obtaining a job as a personal carer in the aged care sector, but who after working in the industry for a year undertakes some formal study in addition to their work and acquires a Certificate III level qualification in aged care. Information about the pattern of skill acquisition is not able to be obtained from the census, or any other ABS data for that matter. Longitudinal data may be able to reveal some of these trends but the only longitudinal dataset in Australia that could reveal these patterns is the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) data set which suffers from similar (actually, more severe) sample size restriction posed by the ABS labour force survey (see appendix 4.1).

The final analysis then attempts, very crudely, to detect any clear patterns of up skilling that may be occurring in the case study occupations which in turn may disguise the employment options available to low skilled workers. I expect that even if there is a high prevalence of people obtaining qualification once in the occupation, I should still see unqualified people in that occupation. As the results indicate below, this is certainly the case for two of the selected case study occupations.

Table 4.8 compares patterns of occupational employment growth by different levels of educational attainment for the selected case study occupations. We see that for two of the four case study occupations, commercial cleaners and sales assistants, employment is quite clearly skewed towards those with no post-school qualifications.

However, in the other two case study occupations, aged or disabled personal carers and child care workers, employment is spread quite evenly between those with no post-school and those who hold non-degree post-school qualifications. This is the case for both men and women. It is likely that these non-degree post-school qualifications are mainly Certificate level III and IV qualifications and reflect Government initiatives aimed at increasing the proportion of workers with qualifications in these industries. However, as suspected, we also still see large and similar numbers of people with no post-school qualifications working in these occupations, giving us confidence that these occupations are ones which are open to low skilled workers.

Of additional interest, the table highlights the rise in the level of qualification held by workers in these occupations over the period 1996-2006 (especially in the number of people who have degree level qualifications). This is largely a reflection of the increased educational attainment of the working age population. However, the prevalence of people with high level qualification in occupations such as these, that do not require such qualification, is of concern for job opportunities for all low skilled workers, not just men. Having people with these high level qualifications in the same applicant pool is stiff competition for those with year 12 and below level qualifications.

Another interesting trend evident in table 4.8 is the impact of educational attainment on the levels of sex segregation evident within the occupations. In general we see that the level of sex segregation within each of the occupations declines as educational attainment increases. This raises the interesting issue of class (using educational attainment as a proxy) and the impact this has on occupational sex segregation. This will be further explored in the case study research.

Table 4.8: Case study occupations, comparison with other highest educational attainment groups, 1996 and 2006

	No Post-School Qualifications	Certificate I and II	Non degree post-school qualifications	Degree plus qualifications	Total labour force
<b>Aged or Disable Personal Carer</b>					
Number of Men aged 25-54 Employed 1996	1,753	178	1,252	375	3,558
Number of Men aged 25-54 Employed 2006	2,732	82	3,262	1,200	7,276
Change (n) 1996-2006	979	-96	2,010	825	3,718
Number of Women aged 25-54 Employed 1996	15,159	1,925	2,869	1,276	21,229
Number of Women aged 25-54 Employed 2006	18,385	718	18,048	3,555	40,706
Change (n) 1996-2006	3,226	-1,207	15,179	2279	19,477
Total Number aged 25-54 Employed 1996	16,912	2,103	4,121	1651	24,787
Total Number aged 25-54 Employed 2006	21,117	800	21,310	4755	47,982
Change (n) 1996-2006	4,205	-1,303	17,189	3104	23,195
Men aged 25-54 Gender Share of Employment 1996	10.4%	8.5%	30.4%	22.7%	14.4
Men aged 25-54 Gender Share of Employment 2006	12.9%	10.3%	15.3%	25.2%	15.2
Change in gender share of employment 1996-2006	2.6%	1.8%	-15.1%	2.5%	0.8

Table 4.8: Continued

	No Post-School Qualifications	Certificate I and II	Non degree post-school qualifications	Degree plus qualifications	Total labour force
<b>Commercial Cleaner</b>					
Number of Men aged 25-54 Employed 1996	13,610	332	3,523	878	18,343
Number of Men aged 25-54 Employed 2006	14,232	151	4,732	1,978	21,093
Change (n) 1996-2006	622	-181	1209	1100	2,750
Number of Women aged 25-54 Employed 1996	42,482	1,110	2,279	957	46,828
Number of Women aged 25-54 Employed 2006	36,464	563	5,079	1,487	43,593
Change (n) 1996-2006	-6,018	-547	2,800	530	-3235
Total Number aged 25-54 Employed 1996	56,092	1,442	5,802	1835	65,171
Total Number aged 25-54 Employed 2006	50,696	714	9,811	3465	64,686
Change (n) 1996-2006	-5,396	-728	4,009	1630	-485
Men aged 25-54 Gender Share of Employment 1996	24.3%	23.0%	60.7%	47.8%	28.1%
Men aged 25-54 Gender Share of Employment 2006	28.1%	21.1%	48.2%	57.1%	32.6%
Change in gender share of employment 1996-2006	3.8%	-1.9%	-12.5%	9.2%	4.5%

Table 4.8: Continued

	No Post-School Qualifications	Certificate I and II	Non degree post-school qualifications	Degree plus qualifications	Total labour force
<b>Child Care Worker</b>					
Number of Men aged 25-54 Employed 1996	239	19	144	91	493
Number of Men aged 25-54 Employed 2006	408	3	411	171	993
Change (n) 1996-2006	169	-16	267	80	500
Number of Women aged 25-54 Employed 1996	9,143	796	4,624	1,211	15,774
Number of Women aged 25-54 Employed 2006	12,780	354	16,559	3,311	33,004
Change (n) 1996-2006	3,637	-442	11,935	2,100	17,230
Total Number aged 25-54 Employed 1996	9,382	815	4,768	1,302	16,267
Total Number aged 25-54 Employed 2006	13,188	357	16,970	3,482	33,997
Change (n) 1996-2006	3,806	-458	12,202	2,180	17,730
Men aged 25-54 Gender Share of Employment 1996	2.5%	2.3%	3.0%	7.0%	3.0%
Mens aged 25-54 Gender Share of Employment 2006	3.1%	0.8%	2.4%	4.9%	2.9%
Change in gender share of employment 1996-2006	0.5%	-1.5%	-0.6%	-2.1%	-0.1%

Table 4.8: Continued

	No Post-School Qualifications	Certificate I and II	Non degree post-school qualifications	Degree plus qualifications	Total labour force
<b>Sales Assistants* (grouped)</b>					
Number of Men aged 25-54 Employed 1996	31,409	1,202	10,258	3,597	46,466
Number of Men aged 25-54 Employed 2006	32,091	181	14,391	8,098	54,761
Change (n) 1996-2006	682	-1,021	4,133	4,501	8,295
Number of Women aged 25-54 Employed 1996	101,121	4,562	10,451	5,339	121,473
Number of Women aged 25-54 Employed 2006	111,373	1,480	24,507	11,676	149,036
Change (n) 1996-2006	10,252	-3,082	14,056	6,337	27,563
Total Number aged 25-54 Employed 1996	132,530	5,764	20,709	8,936	167,939
Total Number aged 25-54 Employed 2006	143,464	1,661	38,898	19,774	203,797
Change (n) 1996-2006	10,934	-4,103	18,189	10,838	35,858
Men aged 25-54 Gender Share of Employment 1996	23.7%	20.9%	49.5%	40.3%	27.7%
Men aged 25-54 Gender Share of Employment 2006	22.4%	10.9%	37.0%	41.0%	26.9%
Change in gender share of employment 1996-2006	-1.3%	-10.0%	-12.5%	0.7%	-0.8%

Source: Authors Calculations based on 1996 and 2006 ABS Census Data. Excludes not stated or not applicable for those aged 25-54 years

## Summary

Using Census data for 1996 and 2006, this chapter has explored how occupational sex segregation – a concept traditionally used to explain female employment outcomes – has shaped low skilled men’s employment opportunities in Australia. The empirical evidence indicated that employment for workers with no post-school qualifications has expanded most rapidly in occupations that are female dominated. Men with no post-school qualifications are not increasing their share of employment in these occupations. Employment has declined most rapidly in occupations that are male dominated. This evidence supports the argument that sex segregation in employment has contributed to the decline in low skilled men’s employment opportunities.

However, it was noted that the analysis of trends in occupational sex segregation and occupation employment growth and decline, does not allow one to understand the processes that operate to generate and or stall these changes in men’s representation in female dominated occupations. Such an understanding requires the conduct of qualitative case study research.

To facilitate the conduct of such research, the chapter used the results of the analysis of the census data to strategically select four occupations for case study. Two female dominated occupations were chosen where there was strong growth in employment for low skilled workers, but in which men did not change their gender share of employment. These occupations were child care and sale assistants.

Two female dominated occupations were also chosen where employment growth for persons no post-school qualifications had occurred, but in which men were found to be increasing their share of employment. These occupations were aged care and commercial cleaning.

These occupations were used to derive qualitative insights into what facilitates and what deters employment of lower-skilled men in female-intensive occupations. I move now to consider the results of the case study research.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: Determinants of Low Skilled Men's Exclusion from Female Dominated Jobs: Supply Side Mechanisms**

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### **Introduction**

The previous chapters have shown that leading scholars of gender stratification consider gender essentialism – the notion that men and women are innately and fundamentally different in interests and skills – to be a primary determinant of (horizontal) occupational sex segregation and its continuation. Moreover, they view the occupational sex segregation that results from men's limited inroads into female dominated jobs to be largely caused by the gender essentialism that operates on the supply side of the labour market. Namely, they suggest that men themselves choose not to enter female dominated jobs because they understand their own competencies in terms of the gender essentialist package that associates men with status, prestige, physical strength and technical tasks. Men enter jobs that reflect these preferences and capacities and exclude themselves from those that don't.

Existing sociological literature similarly posits gender essentialism and its various operations as being central to the cause and continuation of occupational sex segregation and provides data and analysis to support this position. Currently, however, there is limited empirical research that examines whether or not gender essentialism actually operates in the ways conceptualised by Grusky (and various co-authors) and England to reduce men's movement into female dominated occupations. This chapter provides such an examination. Drawing on data collected through interviews with male workers and unemployed men, it is focused on providing a understanding the complete range of supply side mechanisms that operate to produce and maintain the occupational sex segregation that is caused by men's limited movement into female dominated jobs.

The chapter details a number of supply side processes that operate to reduce men's willingness to undertake work in female dominated occupations, or contribute to male workers' intentions to leave the jobs, once there.



Some of these processes are clearly related to gender essentialism and the chapter highlights the mechanisms by which this operates to generate occupational sex segregation. In many instances the operation of gender essentialism is consistent with existing understanding; however, in a few cases, gender essentialism operates in a weaker form to that which is suggested by the conceptual schema of Grusky and co-authors.

Most importantly, this chapter also details other processes operating to limit the supply of males in female dominated jobs. These processes are unrelated to gender essentialism and are more about men's negative experiences in a female dominated work environment, and broader labour market conditions that attract or deter people from jobs in general.

The chapter provides evidence that both supports and extends existing supply side understandings of why men are so reticent to enter female dominated occupations. The chapter starts by presenting evidence that largely confirms the above understandings of how gender essentialism operates on the supply side to generate and maintain occupational sex segregation, particularly that which is caused by men's limited inroads into female dominated jobs. It then moves on to consider what has been largely ignored in previous research, and that is the non-gender essentialist exclusionary mechanisms.

## **5.1 Mechanisms operating to deter men from considering gender atypical employment**

Within the research findings, one could distinguish between mechanisms that operate to deter men from contemplating employment in gender atypical jobs, and those that make it hard once men are employed within female dominated occupations. The chapter begins by detailing the mechanisms that were evidenced to reduce men's willingness to consider employment within female dominated occupations, as arguably these constitute the most immediate barriers to men's integration within gender atypical jobs.

### 5.1.1 Gender essentialism and men's aversion to employment within female dominated jobs

One way gender essentialism could be expected to operate on the supply side of the labour market to produce occupational sex segregation would be by people constructing jobs and specific traits relevant to those jobs in gendered ways. For the purposes of this research it would mean that men would associate the case study occupations, and the disposition, skills and ways of being required within them, with women. More than this, one would expect the men to position themselves in opposition to these dispositions, skills and ways of being, because they are male.

*Men's aversion to particular traits required in the case study occupations.*

The interviews with male workers and unemployed men indicated that many perceived the dispositions, skills and ways of being required in the case study occupations as being averse to them, or at least very challenging to perform. However, there were two main ways in which this operated.

At one level it was found that a person identified a trait as being relevant to one of the case study occupations, but perceived it as something that they did not have or could not do *because they were male*. For example, most men thought that the case study occupations, particularly aged and child care, required undertaking personal care or intimate care tasks. However, in a few instances men were found to perceive these tasks (care) as being something that women perform, and viewed the fact that they were men to mean that they were unable to, or would be at a disadvantage in, undertaking that work.

*I suppose being a male that would be a disadvantage because ... women are tailored for it, it's a nurturing thing, the bond that they've got with children.*

*Aged Care Worker 8*

Others did not directly associate the job task with women, but simply justified their inability to undertake the task with the fact that they were a male.

*It's not that I don't like helping people it's just – it's a bit awkward for me. I'm not into helping – it's not that I don't like to, it's just a bit uncomfortable helping people out in that way. Yeah that's not me. Maybe it might be a male thing, it's not me.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 10*

*It's the social things that men get very frustrated with. I get very frustrated with having to be so sociable, so does my manager, so does the rest of the guys that work there pretty much. It's very tiring for us to do. I don't think it's in most men's mindset to be cheery 100 percent of the time, we like to get angry a bit.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 7*

This is exactly how one would expect gender essentialism to operate to produce occupational sex segregation on the basis of Grusky and co-authors' conceptual schema. Men would understand their own competencies and those required in the case study occupations in terms of standard essentialist visions of masculinity and femininity which position women to be more suited than men to jobs that require service, nurturance and interpersonal interaction. This is a very strong form of gender essentialism. However, only three men said that they could not undertake work within the case study occupations because the work required female traits and as such were averse to them as men.

It was more common to find men viewing a trait as being relevant to one of the case study occupations but perceiving it as something that they did not have or could not do *without explicitly identifying this to be due to their maleness*. Rather, the aversion was simply due to perceptions of self and their preference not to undertake work that required particular traits that they did not perceive themselves as having.

#### *Communication*

Six men (both workers and unemployed men) viewed the customer handling and communication skills required in the case study occupations negatively. For some this was because they preferred practical hands on work. Communication and interaction with customers for these men were equated to passivity.

*Sales assistant would be down there at the bottom. I'm not a salesman. I do things, I don't talk about them.*

*Aged Care Worker 3*

For others, their ability to do high level interactive work was complicated by practical limitations with the English language.

*The things that I would try to avoid, is when I have to communicate with people because sometimes I don't understand what they talk about, because of the slang and because of the dialect.*

*Child Care Worker 9*

*Doing care work or intimate care tasks*

Sixteen men regarded 'care' work involving personal care or intimate care tasks unfavourably. However, this was not a result of their association of such tasks with women; it was simply due to their perception of self and their consideration that undertaking such tasks would make them feel embarrassed and uncomfortable.

*I do get on very, very well with older people but – socially, talking to people. I do family history so I do have an interest and do talk to a lot of elderly people but I don't feel as though I'm a carer if you know what I mean, take care of people. Same with the child care, same sort of situation. I get on with kids, I do little athletics. I'm a coach and an official so I talk to kids and deal with kids all weekends, most weekends, but can't see myself as a carer for them.*

*I: So like the personal care, showering, toileting and stuff like that.*

*Yeah all that sort of stuff. But yeah socially, getting on with them, fine.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 7*

*Yeah and also things like showering with people. I'm not the most out-going person; I'm a bit of a shy person. Showering someone, I didn't really want to do that.*

*Unemployed 25*

*I couldn't wipe their arses, I couldn't shower them, I couldn't do anything like that. I don't feel comfortable showering a man, that's his privacy, let him shower himself. This is why you invented chairs in showers, so he could sit there and have a shower, if not there's a bath, let him soak in the tub. I'll wash their hair and stuff like that for them, no worries, but I'm not cleaning their areas, that's their problem and they can do that for themselves.*

*Unemployed 5*

Unsurprisingly, males working in sales or commercial cleaning and unemployed men were more likely than men in aged and child care to mention being averse to work that involved undertaking personal care and intimate care tasks.

### *Customer Contact/People Work*

Sixteen men were averse to the high level of customer contact required in some of the case study occupations. In the majority of cases this was simply because the men did not like working with a lot of people or did not consider themselves to be 'people persons'.

*I don't particularly like working with the general public en masse, you know? I just think they're really rude.* Commercial Cleaning Worker 10

*No I can't do it. I just - nah. I'm not - nah. I just feel a bit funny being surrounded by a heap of people indoors; that's just not me.* Unemployed 10

However, in some cases men lacked the confidence and self-esteem for work that involved a high level of customer contact.

*At the moment I've got a few issues with my teeth, I need to have the rest of them pulled and get falsies. I guess having that confidence in my smile doesn't - like not having any confidence in my smile, I guess, but - so yeah that's probably another reason why I wouldn't want to do that work.* Unemployed 4

Of those that disliked work involving high levels of customer contact, 9 were unemployed and the male workers (n=7) were equally distributed across case study groups.

The rejection of work involving high levels of customer contact was mentioned more frequently by men with year 12 or below as their highest level of education. Nine men with no post-school qualification rejected this work compared to 5 with certificate level qualifications and 2 with bachelor level or above qualifications. While this may be a reflection of the high ratio of low skilled men in the interview sample, it does raise the issue of class and how this is likely to impact on men's view of female dominated customer focused service work.

Lupton (2006) notes how his research indicates that 'social class may be one of the keys to explaining the "gender typing" of men's occupational outcomes' (2006:104). Based on 27 interviews with men in seven university graduate entry occupations, including feminised and non-feminised occupations, he finds that 'notions of gender-appropriate work for a man were deeply ingrained in the thinking of many of the

working class respondents' (2006:115). In particular, working class men tended to articulate 'real' work as that associated with physical labour.

Although it is recognised that some essentialist notions of gender-appropriate work could vary by class, this research does not have sufficient data to accurately determine whether and why this is the case. One could hypothesise that low level service sector work with high levels of customer contact values middle class 'styles' in their employees (such as being polite, attractive, clean and personable). This disadvantages people (both men and women) who have strong working class cultures -including the use of bad language and the right to stick up for yourself (Nixon 2009).

#### *Inability to be patient or manage emotions*

The most common trait that was viewed negatively by male workers and unemployed men was the requirement within the case study occupations to manage emotions. The demands of emotional labour and the requirement to manage emotions in interactions with customers were viewed unfavourably by 31 men. This was mentioned by men in all the occupation groups and the unemployed group.

*You've got to have a hell of a lot of patience, a hell of a lot of tolerance. I'd say the first or second time they wet the bed that'd be it 'see you later; bye'.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 7*

*Nah, my tolerance isn't that good in that area. There's too much nagging and kids carrying on. I couldn't handle it every day. I would be a bit like Arnold Schwarzenegger in Kindergarten Cop.*

*Unemployed 3*

The demands of emotional labour were also found to contribute to male workers' intentions to leave case study employment.

*Being abused. Okay you can get abused by a customer and that affects you, it affects your work performance. You can go out the back and have a bit of a cry because some staff do and - guys do cry as well -it just gets you down. The customer's walked off, she feels good. She had a little spit on Sunday, didn't affect her. Because you get down about it you feel like going [gesture], you know?*

*Sales Assistant Worker 6*

*I mean the customers can be crap but that's just the way they're going to be. I didn't deal very well with that. I actually like told a few to F off. Yeah. That's only because they first told me to F off so, yeah....Because you can't do anything, I mean what are*

*you going to do? Cry. You can't yell at them back – although I did but that was when I was starting out - because the guy told me to – like I said Merry Christmas to him and he was like 'kiss my arse' and I'm like 'well fuck you'. Now I just sort of stare blankly at them and let them do their thing. I really don't want to do retail for the rest of my life, serving customers. Really they can get to you, it's pretty hurtful sometimes.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 8*

Existing research has similarly found that men (particularly low skilled men) are averse to work that requires emotional labour and the ability to manage emotions in interactions with customers. For example, drawing on interviews with 35 unemployed men, Nixon (2009) assessed the attitude of these men towards entry-level front-line service work, and found that the idea of working in feminised front-line service work was anathema to the men. In particular, the demands of emotional labour were seen to connote subservience and servility. Similar to the men in this research, Nixon notes the men in his study expressed a need to 'front up' (be aggressive) to difficult customers - the very antithesis of what service organisations seek in their front-line staff.

Combined, the above evidence suggests that male workers and unemployed men certainly perceive many of the dispositions, skills and ways of being required in the case study occupations as being averse to them or at least very challenging to perform. However, only in a very few instances did men link this to their maleness. More often than not, men perceived case study employment as something they could not do simply due to perceptions of self and their preference not to undertake work that is misaligned with these perceptions. While in these instances men did not directly link their maleness to account for their aversion to case study employment, it is highly likely that this aversion is gender dependent, as standard essentialist visions of masculinity do not readily encompass 'care' 'emotional management', and 'service and interaction'.

Much occupational sex segregation could be produced by this weaker form of gender essentialism if men were consistently more likely than women to be averse to these aspects of case study jobs. However, the data does not allow us to be certain that this is the case. Arguably, many people (both male and female) would display an aversion to at least some of the job traits required in the case study occupations. Without interviewing female workers, I cannot be confident that the findings reflect gender differences.

However, what is interesting is that in many instances the attributes of case study jobs to which men are averse (high levels of customer contact, emotional labour, communication) are those that are antithetical to the kinds of job attributes (independence, physical labour, technical skill) that are aligned with standard essentialist visions of masculinity and appropriate male jobs. This aversion is consistent with Grusky (and various co-authors) theorising about the operation of gender essentialism in generating occupational (horizontal) sex segregation. Namely, men would look unfavourably upon job attributes that negate those that reflect their own male preferences.

Moreover, the male participants did not find all types of service work equally unattractive. Commercial cleaning was often viewed positively by males (particularly unemployed men) as it was considered to allow the autonomy and independence that they so favoured in their past male dominated work and prioritised in future employment opportunities (see below). This occupation was much more aligned with standard essentialist notions of what (low skill) male jobs entail. There is also far less need to engage in emotional labour in this work as workers would be dealing with clients less than in customer-oriented sales or care work jobs.

*I just wouldn't be like a sales assistant or nothing. Standing around talking to people, nah. Like I said if it's anything like hands on or cleaning and shit like that I'd do it yeah.*  
Unemployed 10

Thus, the nature of the female dominated occupations that the men preferred suggests that the issue of retaining sources of satisfaction similar to those found in the previous male dominated employment (independence, autonomy, working with hands, working outdoors) and its alignment with gender essentialist notions of masculinity, underpinned the men's construction of appropriate potential gender atypical employment. Contrary to Grusky and co-authors (2008; 2000) this suggests that men are able to find certain aspects of gender atypical employment to be compatible with male gender essentialism. I will explore this further and at greater length in the following chapters.



### *Men's preference for male typed job attributes*

We would expect gender essentialism to operate on the supply side of the labour market to produce occupational sex segregation not only by men being averse to job attributes that they associate with women, but also by men displaying a preference for job attributes that they associate with men and masculinity. The interviews with male workers and unemployed men suggest that many men do display such a preference.

Many men narrated a preference for job attributes that are aligned with standard essentialist notions of what (low skill) male jobs entail. These attributes included working with their hands, working outside, working independently, seeing something completed, full-time work and work that paid well. Furthermore, many men did not perceive the case study jobs as incorporating such attributes. Indeed, in most instances, the attributes that men desired in potential jobs were quite the obverse to those that they thought the case study jobs required.

### *Working with hands*

Twelve men (mainly men working as commercial cleaners and unemployed men) articulated a desire for jobs that allowed them to work with their hands. The men felt competent with undertaking work of this type as a result of their past gendered experiences and their (essentialist) occupational preferences.

*I want to work at the moment but it's just finding the right job that I want to do.*

*I: And do you have an idea what that might be?*

*Anything in the automotive industry. That's pretty much it. It's just something that comes to me. I'm really good with my hands. So I know how it all works, and it just comes to me really easily.* Unemployed 6

*I always thought I might progress onto doing something like that, hands-on, you know, possibly do an apprenticeship or something like that because I'm not the greatest with numbers and stuff but more hands-on work and stuff I'm good with.*

*Aged Care Worker 4*

### *Working outside*

Thirteen men (mainly men working in child care (n=3), commercial cleaning (n=4) and men who were unemployed (n=5)) expressed a preference for working outdoors.

*I've always liked the outdoors. It's hard, like as I say – yeah all right it gets hot and it gets cold and it gets rainy but I'd still sooner be outside in it than stuck somewhere indoors.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 3*

This preference negatively impacted on their willingness to work in the case study jobs, as these were usually located indoors.

*I won't go and work in Hungry Jack's or whatever. I can't work indoors; I just feel a bit funny being surrounded by a heap of people indoors; that's just not me. I'd rather be out doing – like mowing lawns or stuff like that, whipper snipping, cutting trees down or whatever. It's just outdoors, yeah.*

*Unemployed 10*

### *Working Independently*

Seven men (mainly unemployed men and commercial cleaners) expressed a desire for work that allowed them a certain amount of autonomy and independence as workers.

*Because of all the years of working – especially like with the rubbish truck where you're basically on the road from midnight until sort of midday on your own, I've always liked that sort of working on my own and you know what's got to be done and you just get in and do it rather than working alongside someone.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 3*

*That sort of independence, I don't like to be working with the boss sitting on my right shoulder looking at everything I'm doing, I like to be able to get out there and do it myself, so any job with a boss there I tend not to go for.*

*Unemployed 14*

### *Full-time work*

Nine men stated that they had a preference for work that was full-time or permanent and had stable hours. These men were evenly distributed across the case study group (i.e. occupations and unemployed men).

*It's a drawback – like in a lot of places there's no permanency as such and that's what I was always used to in all of my work, a permanent position.*

*Aged Care Worker 2*

*I mean if there was full employment and full-time jobs on offer in a lot of industries I probably wouldn't be going for cleaning jobs.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 4*

### *Seeing Something Completed*

Another attribute some men sought out in potential employment was work that enabled them to see the results of their labour. Seeing something completed was mentioned by three men.

*Yeah I wouldn't mind being outside and doing that sort of stuff and standing back and looking at your produce afterwards, I find that to be quite good, having a look and seeing what you've done.*

*Child Care Worker 7*

*I think the personal satisfaction of seeing something completed, whether it be completing your job, completing a project, completing whatever, but if you see a car roll off the end of this line you can say 'well I was involved in building that'. It gives you a personal little bit of something that – you know?*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 7*

The importance of working in a job that allowed a person to see the outcome of their labour resulted in a rejection of possible employment within the case study occupations, as a lot of this work was perceived to negate the ability to see the outcome of one's work effort.

*I like to see the job sorted and done. And when you're working in machining you do it and you finish it and that's the part done. Whereas you're dealing with all these people, you know, come on Mrs Jones, let's put you in the wheel chair, take you into the room and have some lunch, and then the next day, come on Mrs Jones let's take you in your wheel chair and take you to lunch. You did that yesterday. It's never done. Where as you make something in engineering, and you go right, what's the next job, it's a different job. It might take you a day or two but you put it one side and it's done.*

*Unemployed 1*

### *Money*

The most frequently mentioned factor that men gained satisfaction from in their previous (male dominated) employment, and something which they desired in their future employment, was being paid well for the work that they undertook. Twenty one men stated that they were satisfied with the money they received in their past male typed employment and that this influenced their potential employment choices.

*My trade was my main employment and at that time I really enjoyed doing that. It was good to me, good to us, as far as money goes. Like I could be earning probably three times what I'm earning now.*

*Aged Care Worker 2*

*Yeah basically anything that's got a decent amount of money for the hours.*

*Unemployed 22*

The importance of pay in past and future employment was mentioned by 9 unemployed men and 12 workers. These workers were evenly distributed across the case study occupations.

Combined, the above findings make clear that many of the male participants in this study continue to understand their own competencies in terms of standard essentialist visions of masculinity, and pursue and preference work that requires physicality, practicality, is located outdoors and is full-time and well paid. Many men associated the case study occupations and the disposition, skills and ways of being required within them with women. For many men, this operation of gender essentialism resulted in them being unwilling to consider employment in the case study occupations. The preference for work that incorporates the kinds of job attributes (working with hands, working outdoors, physical) that are aligned with standard essentialist visions of masculinity and appropriate male jobs is consistent with Grusky (and various co-authors) theorising about the operation of gender essentialism in generating occupational (horizontal) sex segregation. Namely, men would preference and look favourably upon job attributes that reflect their own male preferences and capacities. The findings thus provide concrete examples of the mechanisms by which gender essentialism operates to produce occupational sex segregation, which are consistent with existing explanations for men's reluctance to enter female dominated occupations.

#### *Sex typing the case study jobs as female*

The preceding section highlighted the fact that most of the male participants recognised that the case study jobs required particular attributes and skills. These included high levels of customer contact and intimate care tasks that demanded emotional labour. The recognition that the jobs incorporated these attributes was additionally found to result in the interview participant's viewing the case study jobs as female appropriate work. Indeed, as occupational sex segregation scholars have

highlighted, it is precisely because these jobs do involve a lot of emotional labour and intimate care tasks, and because women have been constructed as being more caring and having better emotional skills, that they are female dominated in the first place.

*I think essentially it'll always be seen as a bit of a – you know, women's work.*

*Child Care Worker 7*

However, the sex typing of the jobs as female was not mobilised by the men to account for their own aversion to the work (except that which has been identified above in regards to specific job traits). Male workers, and a small number of unemployed men, suggested that the reason 'other' men were reluctant to enter the case study occupations was due to the sex typing of the jobs as female. Thirteen participants (mainly male workers across all occupation groups) considered the construction of the work as 'women's' as reducing 'other' men's willingness to undertake work in the case study occupations.

*It's seen as historically a female profession and I think just in general men would just associate making beds, helping people with their what we call 'activities and daily rhythm, so showering and dressing, hygiene, all that sort of stuff with women.*

*Aged Care Worker 10*

*Well I think most of the men in my era years ago probably just thought it was just a woman's job and that was it.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 5*

Consistent with Grusky and co-authors' conceptualisation of the role of gender essentialism in producing occupational sex segregation, it was thought (mainly by managers) that the occupation's task content was central to why the jobs were sex typed as female in the first place.

*I think it's more what the job requires. Attending to someone's hygiene, toileting someone, all that sort of stuff, I think that's where men traditionally haven't gotten involved, that's been considered in some ways "woman's work".*

*Aged Care Manager 3*

*I suppose that in a sense, the fact that this role involves shopping, cleaning, cooking, things that were traditionally women's roles. I think it's probably more acceptable for them [men] to do the personal care stuff, compared to the cleaning and the cooking. That might be seen as less skilled compared to the personal care. You're closer to being a nurse.* Aged Care Manager 6

Male workers themselves said that the task content of the jobs influenced their willingness to enter these gender atypical occupations. Where the task content was more aligned with domesticity, men were less willing to undertake the work.

*Like I couldn't see myself making beds, like the housekeepers and that here do, but in saying that I haven't done it so – but just from my own mental point of view I couldn't see myself as a housekeeper but like on the commercial side of it, like doing the strip and seals and doing the windows.* Commercial Cleaning Worker 3

This will be discussed at greater length in the following chapter.

#### *Contributing to perception of limited demand for men*

The sex typing of this work as women's was also invoked by some men (n=6) to account for why they were reluctant to pursue employment within the case study occupations. They believed that the sex typing of the work as 'women's' would result in there being a limited demand for male workers.

*Well they want pretty little girls with big smiles and everything else that looks good and I really don't qualify for that one.* Aged Care Worker 1

### **5.1.2 The importance of gender in shaping employment preferences**

Another way in which occupational sex segregation was found to be produced and maintained (and reproduced) was by men constructing their current employment preferences by reference to their past gendered experiences. The most common, was to construct current employment preferences by reference to their past (gendered) employment experiences.

### *Men's employment history*

Forty two out of the 67 male participants (workers and unemployed men) recounted a work history dominated by employment in traditional male jobs. These included skilled, semi-skilled or unskilled manual occupations in factories and warehouses or outdoors in labouring jobs.

*I started working in a foundry because my brother-in-law works in there so he get me a job. I work there for about four or five years and that's when I get to Mitsubishi and I work there for 14 years. I've been the one who gets the redundancy and gets the money and gets out and get another job.*

*Aged Care Worker 5*

*I finished high school about the end of '92. I finished year 12. I was unemployed only for a short period and then got a job in a factory making plastic bottles. I worked there for about a year and a half. Then I started doing some labouring jobs, cash in hand sort of stuff and that led into landscaping and stuff like that. Then a job came up at [Name] School in 1998/1999 for a groundsman, and that's what my dad did so I just went to the interview and got it....*

*Child Care Worker 3*

*The storeman's on the dock, unloading trucks, filling in receipts, production line, manifests on the computer so I know what's involved with that sort of thing.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 6*

*I worked in a wood yard... I done a lot of that. Just did different kinds of work, different jobs and all that and yeah from wood yards to labouring work and worked in brick yards, then from brick yards I worked in foundries.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 11*

*A lot of the work I've ever done is just common labouring type of work.*

*Unemployed 24*

### *Current preferences for male typed jobs*

These past male dominated work histories were found to act as a major reference point for men (particularly unemployed men) when constructing their current employment preferences. These preferences were away from employment within low level service sector jobs that are experiencing growth, and towards employment in male dominated jobs that are now in decline but in which they had previously laboured.

*Mainly labouring because that's what I know but if factory work comes up I'll go for that. Yeah just stick to what I know. I do look at pretty well all the jobs it's just the labouring ones I tend to go for a bit more cos I done that work.'* Unemployed 14

*Like just a labourer job or something like that, that would suit me fine, or driving a forklift because I know how to drive a forklift.* Commercial Cleaning Worker 11

Men's male dominated work histories were also found to negatively impact on men's view of possible employment within the case study occupations.

*No I don't think I could do it [work in the case study occupations]; no. Probably because of my past experience with work and stuff like that, I don't think - yeah, I don't think that that would fit.* Unemployed 12

Twenty four men expressed a current preference for male typed employment; half of these men were currently unemployed. Of the male workers, 9 were employed in sales and 3 in commercial cleaning.

The large number of male sales assistants displaying a preference for male typed employment suggests that age is likely to be important in shaping men's view of employment in the case study occupations and feminised work more generally. Recall that the majority (n=9) of the male sales assistants interviewed were aged 25 years or less (see Chapter 3). The predominance of young men in this female dominated occupation lends some support for Lindsay & McQuaid's (2004) contention that younger men may be more amenable to growing service sector employment because they have little experience of the male-dominated heavy industries that are now in decline (see Chapter 1). However, the above findings suggest that while young men may be starting to look at female dominated occupations as legitimate employment options, they continue to maintain a preference for male typed employment. Moreover, we will see later that many of these men viewed sales assistant employment as transitional (see Chapter 6). Their preference for, and pursuit of, male typed jobs suggests that their current involvement in female typed work will have little impact on their future likelihood of continued work in a female dominated occupation.



*Complicating employment within the case study occupations*

Having a work history dominated by employment in traditional male typed occupations and industries was also suggested by a few men (n=3) to complicate employment in the case study occupations, by restricting their skills and experiences to male typed work. This created barriers to both obtaining work within gender atypical occupations, and/or undertaking particular work activities required in the case study jobs.

*Because now is not a piece of metal but is people and you have to touch that, you know? Big difference. For me it was a little bit hard, especially to touch someone else. At the beginning I was like that because work with a piece of steel, now you touch someone else, you know, give them a shower – shower a woman or – you just have to go like that.*

*Aged Care Worker 5*

*I've got one resume now and it's a – it's my trade resume which, sending off for a sales job doesn't really correspond with that.*

*Unemployed 5*

The role of men's gendered work history in producing and maintaining occupational sex segregation - by shaping current employment preference and complicating case study employment - is supported by existing research that has explored low skilled men's, particularly low skilled unemployed men's, aspirations regarding future employment. This research has found that men's previous work experiences and skills strongly orientates them away from growing areas of low skilled service sector employment, and towards low skilled manual occupations - despite the significant symbolic and numerical decline of this form of labour in the new economy (Nixon 2006).

The above evidence highlights how men's past gendered work experiences shape their current work skills and preferences. This helps explain why some men have a lot of difficulty in moving into female jobs; they take their past male typed employment as a primary reference point to construct future employment preferences, which results in female dominated jobs being sidelined in men's consideration of potential future employment options. It also results in men obtaining skills and experiences that are not easily transferable or appropriate to employment within gender atypical jobs.

However, this is not necessarily evidence of the operation of gender essentialism in producing occupational sex segregation. It is more of an outcome of the (earlier) internalisation of essentialist expectations and beliefs, which operate nonetheless to generate and maintain occupational sex segregation. It appears that the way in which these original employment preferences were constructed was directly a result of the operation of gender essentialism, but the continuity of such employment preferences results more from failure to adjust to changing employment options than to the operation of gender essentialism.

*Gender essentialism and the shaping of original male typed employment preferences*

Men's discussions about their work history yielded additional information about the particular cultural and social resources that helped shaped their initial (male typed) occupational aspirations. It is here that we see the importance of the essentialist assumption about appropriate male and female jobs and men's subsequent internalisations of them, in the production of occupational sex segregation.

Four men said that their friends or schooling were major influences on their subsequent occupational aspirations.

*My mates were into it and I just thought it was good and I was interested in cars and they were truck drivers so I got into the truck driving.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 5*

*From my school days mainly. I went to technical school in England. We had the secondary schools which taught you enough to get you through school, if that. Then you had your grammar schools which tended to go through your classical Maths, English, History, Geography and really get in depth into those subjects. Then you get your technical classes, technical college schools which tended to lean towards the physics and chemistry side and the mechanical side, you would venture into doing woodwork, metalwork and in physics you might do some physics stuff, chemistry or biology whichever course you took and I got into making stuff and I started enjoying it so I applied to British Aero Space and got an apprenticeship there.*

*Unemployed 1*

*It never entered my mind that I would go into retail, it was one of those things that I was going to be practical, that sort of thing. I think – and it goes back to my experience at school – is when you're at school and all your mates are talking about*

*getting apprenticeships here and doing this and doing that, that's generally the way the guys tend to go, yeah never looked at it as one of those things where – yeah I would probably end up in the building trade along with a lot of other guys now, so yeah.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 5*

The importance of friends and educational institutions in the construction of occupational (and class based) distinctions is consistent with much of Fiona Devine's (2004) work. For example, her work on social resources speaks to "the class character of social networks". In particular she gives a number of concrete examples of how one's friends and one's school influence one's perceptions of future possibilities. What this research additionally finds is that social networks affect one's perceptions of future possibilities in gendered ways.

### *Family*

A more common way in which men formed their male typed employment preferences was by reference to their parents', usually father's, occupation and their view of appropriate male and female work.

*When I left school I took on a trade, or an apprenticeship, that was kind of what my dad and grandfather and people in my family – and on my mum's side – that's kind of what the men did.*

*Aged Care Worker 10*

*Myself, growing up with my father and a family very dominated around men go out to work, the woman stays at home and everything like that and overcoming that over the years has been very difficult for me, yeah it's been an ongoing thing so that's probably part of it.*

*Aged Care Worker 4*

*I think it's basically been because my father and my uncles have all been – my grandfather as well – have all been technical orientated so that sort of came naturally.*

*Unemployed 13*

Ten men acknowledged the role of their family, particularly their dad, in influencing their initial male typed occupational aspirations. Two were aged care workers, 1 a sales assistant, 1 a child care worker and 6 were unemployed.

The role of family in shaping occupational preferences is not a new finding. Class and stratification analysts have long recognized the central role of the family to the production and reproduction of class and class based distinctions (Crompton 2006; Devine 2004), of which occupations usually acts as a proxy. As Erikson and Goldthorpe (1992) put it: 'The family is . . . the unit of class 'fate' . . . the economic decision-making in which family members engage . . . is typically of a joint or interdependent kind. The family is, at the 'micro' level, a key unit of strategic action pursued within the class structure' (1992: 233).

What this research has additionally highlighted is how the family is central to the production and reproduction of essentialist notions of masculinity and femininity, and the corresponding construction of appropriate jobs for men and women that subsequently generates occupational sex segregation. However, class and stratification analysts have also shown that the nature of class reproduction may be substantially modified. This research similarly finds (Chapter 6) that processes also operate to modify and in some cases destabilise gender essentialist notions of appropriate jobs for men -although it is important to point out that this does not necessarily destabilise class based reproduction.

Existing explanations of occupational sex segregation largely focus on various attributes of rational actors (workers and employers). However, the above findings suggest that the social milieus in which a person's labour market decisions are embedded are also important to the production and reproduction of essentialist notions of masculinity and femininity, and the corresponding construction of appropriate jobs for men and women, which subsequently generates occupational sex segregation.

The preceding section has documented various mechanisms that operate on the supply side of the labour market to generate occupational sex segregation. It found that gender essentialism and its operation was central to many, but not all, of them. However, the occupational sex segregation that was generated was that which results from men not being willing to contemplate employment in female dominated occupations in the first place. The various mechanisms by which this occurred were, in general, more frequently stated by unemployed men. This is not surprising given their position in the labour market. Unemployed men would arguably be the group most likely (out of this research respondent groups) to understand their own

competencies and preferences and those of others in terms of standard essentialist visions of masculinity and femininity. Male workers working in the case study occupations have already transgressed the boundaries of gender appropriate work and therefore may subscribe less to the gender essentialism that operates to reduce men's willingness to contemplate gender atypical work. That being said, male workers still reported many of the above mechanisms being operational for them either in the past or at present.

## **5.2 Factors that operate to negatively impact on men's experience of employment in gender atypical jobs**

In addition to those mechanisms that operate to deter men from contemplating employment in gender atypical jobs, it was also found (primarily for male workers) that various factors operated to make employment within female dominated occupations hard for men once they are there.

### **5.2.1 Men's negative experience of a female dominated work environment**

Once employed in the case study jobs, many men experienced the female dominated work environment negatively. There were various ways in which a female dominated work environment was experienced negatively by the male workers.

#### *Difficulties adapting to a female dominated work environment due to past male work*

Seven men experienced difficulties adapting to the female dominated work environment as a result of their past work experiences in male dominated jobs. These difficulties were related to interactions with (female) work colleagues, co-worker dynamics and learning what is and is not acceptable workplace behaviour. Such difficulties posed challenges to the transition into gender atypical employment for low skilled men.

*Well in the beginning you start to get a little bit confused because it's all ladies around you, cannot talk – and to come from an industry that is almost all men, not too many women. Sometimes in the beginning I have to think about what I'm saying because I could say something wrong and they could get offended. That was a little bit – was a little bit difficult'*

*Aged Care Worker 5*

*I wasn't in my comfort zone was why I disliked it and being a man in a female orientated workplace was actually quite different, not something I was used to because labouring there was only blokes on site and that's all you ever did.*

*Child Care Worker 8*

It wasn't just having previously worked in male type jobs that complicated men's transitions, it was also suggested that they experienced difficulties transitioning into female dominated jobs where there were a higher proportion of female workers than in their previous gender atypical work environment.

*I came from [name] where we had probably 12 staff and in that staff probably nine were male, to coming here where there was 25 staff and two males, was a little bit of a hard adjustment initially. Yeah just going from that highly male field – which was still a female field, like in the child care sort of area – coming into here where it was the complete opposite was a bit interesting.*

*Child Care Worker 3*

#### *Feeling ignored or isolated*

Six men said that the female dominated work environment contributed to them feeling ignored and or isolated at work. Such alienation from the work environment would likely contribute to male workers' intention to leave a gender atypical job.

*At times you feel like you can't speak freely about certain things. It takes a long time for one male in a room to break into conversation with a whole female class where other females are talking openly about whatever and it takes a good week to break into it. So it's sort of every time you know that there's going to be a struggle but it's very much out of your control.*

*Aged Care Worker 4*

*Women, I think, generally relate easily to women so it's not easy to get into – what shall I say, social networking with women. It's like birds of the same feather, you know? Initially I had problems. They would not easily talk to me. For example, a group of women sitting – especially for tea break or lunch break. I would go and sit with them and have my lunch, though they may be talking their own topics of interest but I would just listen and smile; it's like that.*

*Aged Care Worker 7*

For some men, the lack of acknowledgement by co-workers was interpreted to be intentional.

*I don't know whether she's a male hater, I don't know whether she's a – she's certainly a feminist, you might call it, and she does make sometimes sly comments like – oh she'll walk in the staff room and go 'hi girls' but I'm sitting there. Like 'hello'. Even one of the other girls said 'oh I think Sam's sitting over there' but she doesn't care. At conferences I've been to in the past they've said 'oh, I'd just like to say ladies' and I'm sitting there. So it does happen but except for this one particular person there are times when people genuinely don't actually mean it, it's just a slip up, because the majority of the people in the field are female.* Child Care Worker 5

It was found that men deployed strategies to deal with their feeling of alienation within female dominated spaces. One clear strategy was to use humour to make themselves visible.

*I was the first male at northern care. I was the first male and like 63 women sitting in the meeting, and me. The manager would say 'now girls' and I'd go 'hmm' – 'oh and Chris, sorry' and I'd just say 'well I'm getting out of here' when they'd bring something up – they'd say something about 'don't leave your handbags on top of your car' and I said 'I'm not doing that any more, there's no way I'm leaving my bloody handbag there'. And they'd talk about husbands and I'd say 'yeah I'll have to point that out to my husband' [laughs].* Aged Care Worker 8

#### *Preference for more male workers*

The alienation experienced as a result of working in a female dominated environment also initiated a preference for more male workers.

*It would be nice to have another couple of males, not that I'm sexist, I got nothing against women or got anything against them, they're a great thing to have around. Sometimes it just gets a bit lonely.* Aged Care Worker 1

In other instances, men simply preferred to work with men and thus desired more males.

*I've enjoyed working with some of the agency guys that come in, especially when they know what to do, and then we just sort of get on with the job and it's easier; it's easier working with a guy at times. Just that more laid back and the things that worry women don't worry guys.'* Aged Care Worker 2

Five men stated that they had a preference for more male workers. These men were located in the more highly sex segregated occupations of aged and child care.

*Questioning competency*

The female dominated nature of case study employment combined with the sex typing of the jobs as female was found to lead men to question their competency in undertaking the work or particular work tasks.

*It was almost like I had to kind of prove myself in a female dominated environment.*

*Aged Care Worker 10*

*It's scary for a male going into that environment. You really doubt yourself, you know, and what you're doing.*

*Aged Care Worker 4*

*I wasn't very sure of myself, I was a bit unsure but at the same time you don't want to step on people's toes because you're in a female dominated field, you want to do the right thing.*

*Child Care Worker 5*

Managers also reported men being more insecure in undertaking work tasks in female dominated environments.

*Society has made it that they themselves feel quite – can feel quite insecure within their role and 'what do people perceive me doing?' They may come and ask questions 'is it right that I go and do this?' and it's like 'well everybody else is allowed to do it, why can't you do it?' So yeah they do ask questions.*

*Child Care Manager 3*

Seven respondents reported that they questioned their ability as workers due to the feminine association of the job and work environment; again, these men were located in the more highly sex segregated occupations of aged and child care.

The finding that men questioned their competency to undertake work within the case study occupations due to the female dominated work environment, combined with the sex typing of the work as women's, is consistent with previous research that has demonstrated how the internalisation of essentialist beliefs leads workers to regard themselves as less competent than women (men) at female-typed (male-typed) tasks (Correll 2004; Padavic and Reskin 2002; Reskin 1993; Ridgeway and England 2007).



### *Men's dislike of perceived bitchiness and gossip*

The most common factor about working in a female dominated work environment that men experienced negatively was the perceived bitchiness and gossip. Thirteen men (from all case study occupations) perceived the female dominated work environment in standard (negative) essentialist ways that associate women with being more bitchy, cliquy and tending to gossip. More than that, they considered themselves to be removed from this behaviour because they were male.

*I can't help but make the observation that there can be a bit of moodiness and bitchiness and stuff like that, that mostly the guys that I work with don't get involved in.*

*Aged Care Worker 10*

*I think a lot of bitchiness goes on, a hell of a lot of bitchiness goes on, and the guys are just – it just goes off our backs basically, we think 'why make a big deal about that?'. The women in the job tend to talk behind peoples' backs and things like that where I'm more an upfront person. If I don't like something that somebody's doing I like to get it out, air it and say 'look this is how I feel. I might be wrong but' – whereas the women won't do that, they'll go behind your back and they'll start to talk to other staff.*

*Aged Care Worker 2*

*Look I mean it was difficult because I guess women can be a bit cliquy, and they were, they were cliquy.*

*Child Care Worker 8*

Managers also suggested that this resulted in male workers experiencing the work negatively and contributing to their intentions to leave.

*One of the facilities I worked at, the couple of male workers that we had there actually found it very hard to fit in and I'll be quite honest with you, their words were that the females were "a mob of bitches" and they actually got together in a group and that type of thing.*

*Aged Care Manager 2*

### *Inability to take direction from women*

While not mobilised to account for their own negative experiences of a female dominated work environment, four interview respondents (one from each case study occupation) said that the requirement to take direction from women would likely contribute to men being unwilling to enter gender atypical work or a tendency to experience gender atypical work negatively.

*'Yeah female bosses. Some guys find that really hard. I mean I grew up in a house - I grew up with my mother and my grandmother so I've been told what to do by women all my life. No, but it's true. Look I take instruction easy, I guess. But I think some men would have an issue with taking instructions from women.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 10*

*I mean for me I never really had any issue with him because I could calm him down and that but the other female manager sort of did. I could just sort of go 'no, mate, chill' and he'd be like 'yeah all right' but that's probably just another guy talking to another guy, that I could do that with him. But with the female managers they just used to - they couldn't handle it.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 2*

Combined, the above findings suggest that men do not always experience female dominated work as positively, or benefit from their minority status as much, as is often suggested by existing research looking at men working in female dominated jobs (Williams 1992; Williams 1995). Similar to women's experiences in male dominated occupations, men experience alienation and isolation in a female dominated work environment. They also report questioning their competency due to gender based stereotypes, which subsequently undermines their work performance. These negative experiences would likely contribute to men's intention to leave gender atypical employment once there, or at least to making employment within gender atypical work very difficult. Not all of these findings are necessarily related to gender essentialism; indeed quite a lot are associated with men being a minority, and the discomfort associated with women's workplace cultures.

### **5.2.2 Social and interpersonal sanctions associated with gender inappropriate work**

Yet another way gender essentialism would be expected to operate to produce occupational sex segregation would be by people internalising significant others' gender essentialist assumptions about gender appropriate jobs. In the previous examination about how men initially constructed their (male typed) occupational preferences, we saw that gender essentialism indeed operated in this way.

However, male workers also said that their employment in gender atypical work initiated various negative reaction from significant others, including family and friends. These reactions ranged from having their work seriousness questioned, to suspicions regarding their sexuality and/or their sexual motivations for undertaking

the work. The social and interpersonal sanctions associated with gender inappropriate work would likely reduce men's willingness to supply their labour to female dominated occupations, and/or influence their decision to leave gender atypical employment. The interviews, largely with male workers, suggest that it does.

*Being viewed as homosexual or paedophile*

Men who transgress norms about gender appropriate labour by working in the case study occupations commonly reported having their sexuality, and/or sexual motivations for undertaking the work questioned by others. In some instances this was by family or friends.

*They always class males in child care, homosexuals, paedophiles and a danger to society and that is not the case. I know - even family, friends, like ask me what I do and I tell them 'I'm a child care worker' and their reactions are 'oh' and then they stand back and then you can tell that they're putting that barrier up to say 'okay something's not right with him' and that annoys and frustrates me, because as I said a female can do the same as a male can do and vice versa, so until they're actually put into that position they can't judge. I've had a lot of 'oh, you're a fag, you do this, you do that with children' and that annoys and frustrates me too, because that's just because I am in a female dominated industry.*

*Child Care Worker 2*

*When I started child care, friends looked at you funny because back then - even back then it was still like a man in child care, well he was either gay or there was something wrong with him. I mean people talked about that.*

*Child Care Worker 8*

However, in the majority of cases it was the clients of the case study occupations that questioned the men's sexuality and sexual motivations.

*Well I mean there's always that sort of - always that aspect of being a male in child care where you could get that paedophile sort of scene, and that's happened. I've had my fair share of trouble with parents and stuff like that. I think everyone has. I've talked to [name] about it and he's had trouble in that sort of respect. It's just sort of people's attitudes. I even had a grandma say to me - say to her daughter, who is the mother of one of our kids here, 'oh he doesn't change his nappies does he?'*

*Child Care Worker 7*

The perceived risk of accusations about sexual deviancy that resulted from undertaking gender atypical work also contributed to men's family and friends discouraging their gender atypical employment choice.

*Even my own mum said maybe it might not be the best job because anything can be said if you're left alone with a child.*  
Child Care Worker 1

Having one's sexuality and sexual motivation questioned as a result of working in a gender atypical occupation posed a risk to male (heterosexual) masculinity that was perceived to be so powerful, that it was often suggested by those interviewed that it would significantly reduce men's willingness to undertake gender atypical work.

*I think the male perspective is that they wouldn't like to be seen to be gay and there may be a fear of that.*  
Aged Care Worker 1

*I guess the other thing – when it comes to care work or nursing, of course that's always had the stigma that it's a woman's thing and if there's male nurses they're usually gay. So there's a lot of blokes that don't want to be associated with that – you know “you must be gay because you're doing this”.*  
Aged Care Worker 9

Nine men experienced having their sexuality and or sexual motivations questioned as a result of undertaking gender atypical jobs. These concerns were most evident for men working in aged care and child care.

*Having career seriousness questioned by others*

Three men said that when reporting their gender atypical employment, people would question their honesty and career seriousness.

*'No way' that's what they say. 'You're not really in child care – what do you really do?' I say 'no, I'm a child care worker.' It might take a few times to convince them.*  
Child Care Worker 8

*The tutors, sometimes you feel like they're questioning why you're there, whether you're there just to pick up. So it's taken a while for people to actually realize that I want to be a teacher.*  
Child Care Worker 1

### *Low status work*

Three men stated that people perceived the gender atypical work that they undertook to be of very low social status.

*I think in the industry even a personal care worker these days, let alone a domestic, you're very much thought of 'oh well you're just the hired help.' That varies from – yeah like if you're introduced to people and that's how they do look at you, as 'what you mop floors or you clean toilets' and stuff like that.* Aged Care Worker 4

The low social status afforded to case study jobs was also thought to contribute to men's unwillingness to enter case study employment.

*The cliché of it maybe, like it's a cleaner or – I suppose it's like someone picks up your garbage really, it's that same status. Someone cleans your toilet. It may come across as like not being educated. Like there's a lot of cliché of that I've found. You'll be talking to people and they'll go 'how do you know that, you're just a cleaner?' I suppose looking at it from the cliché point that men may not want to do it, yeah.*

Commercial Cleaning Worker 9

This supports England's (2006b; 2010) thesis that men are reluctant to enter female type jobs due to the low status afforded to this work.

### *Compromised masculinity*

Eleven men said that their decision to work in a gender atypical occupation resulted in people questioning the gender appropriateness of the work and perceiving them as not doing a 'real man's' job or as doing 'women's' work.

*I guess maybe from some of the extended family, they had thought that's really not a role that a guy should take on. I guess at times it sort of might – you doubt what you're doing. You might think about it twice or 'am I really doing the right thing?*

Aged Care Worker 4

*Basically most of my family and most of my friends all said 'you've got to wipe bums for a living, you've got to clean boogers' and then they'd laugh, and some of them even still do. They think it's not a manly job, they think men have no business being around children. I understand where they come from, that sort of prejudice side, but they said 'it's a girl's job'. They still call it a girl's job. You know, you get taunts like*

*'maybe I should get you a dress and then you can actually be a girl and work in a girl's job' and I still get that now.*

*Child Care Worker 6*

This was often accompanied by derogatory comments about men's inadequate masculinity and the labelling of the men as 'soft'.

*One thing that was hard, with my friends, with the early childhood, I was kind of looked down on because it's not a typical guy thing to do. I guess they are doing typical stereotype blokey sort of jobs, and then I'm here doing pretty much a stereotyped female job. So I guess they didn't understand, and they ripped into me about being soft and all that sort of stuff.*

*Child Care Worker 1*

Others were encouraged to look for alternative male typed work or at least work that incorporated traditional male employment attributes such as being permanent, full-time and well paid.

*Most of my family members, being of Italian descent, they didn't quite get it but that was okay, they didn't have to get it because I was the one doing the job. For years and years I did get a bit of ribbing and 'get a real job' would be a comment.*

*Child Care Worker 8*

*Initially they were pushing for going into a trade, they wanted something that would be more set, more money. I think it was they wanted me to get something that was permanent.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 2*

*Yeah dad didn't really quite appreciate where I was heading in life; he would have preferred that I went into the building industry somewhere along the line.*

*Child Care Worker 4*

Again, men who had their masculinity questioned as a result of undertaking female typed work were much more evident in aged and child care case study occupations.

It is important to point out here that for a man to have his masculinity questioned is of a very different character than being viewed as a sexual predator and having his sexual motivation for undertaking the work questioned. The former seems very relevant to other people's subscription to standard essentialist visions of masculinity, and viewing those who deviate from them through undertaking gender atypical work as being unmanly. The latter however, is much more powerful. It takes as its starting point, essentialist notions of masculinity, but seems to move on and embrace populist

prejudice assumptions that equate men who do women's work with sexual predators and the sexually suspect. This is additionally fuelled by continued media coverage of issues such as child and elderly abuse, which often includes the assertion that abusers target these settings. This seems then to be much more about sex and sexual deviance than it has to do with gender and gender essentialist traits, and it is unclear whether the gender essentialist model deals well with this. Arguably, the damage that being viewed as a sexual predator or sexual deviant would do to perceptions of self would be much more significant than simply being viewed as unmanly. Strategies to avoid being viewed as a sexual predator would arguably be much more dramatic and could include not undertaking work which would instigate these negative sanctions, and/or leaving the work if unfavourable responses from family, friends, clients or colleagues are perceived.

Existing research has similarly found that men working in female dominated jobs experience similar types of prejudice and suspicions (Cross and Bagilhole 2002; Lupton 2000; Lupton 2006; Simpson 2004; Simpson 2005; Simpson 2009; Williams 1995).

In general, while male workers in each of the case study occupations reported experiencing the various negative reactions from significant others as a result of their employment in gender atypical jobs, it was reported more by men working in aged care and child care. One possible explanation for this is that the risk posed by any deviation to the male heterosexual norm in these occupations is greater, due to both the relative vulnerability of the clients, and the intimate personal care tasks the jobs involve. The other possible reason is the sheer novelty of men in these occupations (recall these occupations are much more female dominated than the others).

#### *Recognition of sanctions associated with gender inappropriate work*

In addition to the negative reactions emanating from external others (family, friends, clients and co-workers) which by themselves significantly reduce men's willingness to undertake gender atypical work, there was also substantial evidence that men recognised the negative stereotypes, and changed their behaviour (i.e. by increased self surveillance) to protect themselves from accusations and negative suspicion. Fifteen men recognised the negative stereotypes associated with undertaking gender atypical work and responded to them accordingly.

*I know sometimes, personally I feel awkward and that I need to protect myself. Like if I get left alone with a group of children and there's not another adult or carer there, I sometimes feel like, if I'm going to get accused this is the time.... Although everyone knows I'm not like that, everyone including myself always knows people may perceive me like that, so I have to protect myself. Yeah it's pretty rough. I mean it kind of sucks that I'll always have to worry about this sort of thing, where as females might not need to as much. And a big thing about the younger years, if children are sad, they'll come running up and give you a big hug so it's always big thing in the back of my mind, for everyone to understand that this child's come up to me. I haven't just gone up to them and hugged a kid. I see females go up and they lift up the kids and kiss them on the cheek and hug them and I couldn't do anything like that I don't think.*

*Child Care Worker 1*

The recognition of negative stereotypes and or suspicions of men working in gender atypical jobs resulted in men being unwilling to work in these jobs and contemplating leaving these jobs once there.

*I: Has the negativity – the suspicion waged against you, being a male in this industry, has that ever made you think about leaving the job?*

*Oh yeah I reckon it has but the more I think about it – and as soon as you are having a problem you go 'I've got to get out of here, I'm not going to take this' but the more you think about it, the more you think well if I do, then that's just giving up on everyone. It's giving up on the kids, it's giving up on every other male that's ever had a bit of a caring side to their body. The more I think about it the more I realise that you can't, you've got to keep on going.*

*Child Care Worker 7*

*I guess I would never want any of the drama that goes – that you do see with male child care workers. There's a lot of paedophilia type of stuff that I see on the news and things like that and I guess – and I'm not saying that I am by any means, though I would just want to keep as far away from anyone ever saying anything like that.*

*Aged Care Worker 9*

There was also evidence to suggest that the recognition of negative stereotypes contributed to men's unwillingness to undertake *non-paid* gender atypical work outside the labour market.



*I mean we go to church and it's the Lutheran church and they've been fairly proactive in implementing a program called 'Child Safe' requiring everyone to do lots of stuff, but part of that is that we have to have gender balance in all the programs that we run and it's really hard to get guys that want to stick their hand up and teach Sunday school or work on youth groups and stuff because, as they say, people are going to think - unless they've got children at that age they're going to think - they say 'people will think I'm a pervert', so the older guys. So a lot of them have said 'I'm not going to get a police check. I don't have anything to hide but I don't want to have to get a police check.*

*Child Care Client 3*

As with the experience of negative reactions from significant others, the recognition of the power of negative stereotypes, while not absent for men in other occupations, was most prevalent in the age care and child care occupations.

The above discussion highlights the importance of people that are outside the traditional labour supply and demand chain (i.e. workers and employers) in producing and maintaining occupational sex segregation; these include family, friends and clients of the worker. These social actors are often negated or at least sidelined in existing explanations for the causes and continuation of occupational sex segregation. However, the above makes clear that the essentialist stereotypes held by 'others' results in them reacting negatively to men who transgress norms about gender appropriate labour. These sanctions by themselves significantly reduced men's willingness to undertake gender atypical work, but they also resulted in men changing their behaviour to protect themselves from accusations and negative suspicion - which in turn resulted in men experiencing gender atypical employment negatively and contributed to their intentions to leave.

### **5.3 Unfavourable labour market characteristics deterring men**

There are a number of factors that deter men from entering female dominated occupations, or contribute to their intention to leave case study employment that are not, in the first instance, clearly related to gender essentialism and its operation. These factors included things such as the short hours and low wages that are characteristic of employment in the case study occupations. These labour market characteristics would likely be viewed unfavourably by people in general, not just men.

### 5.3.1 Short Hours

Twenty two men, mainly male workers, expressed dissatisfaction with the short hours often characteristic of jobs within the case study occupations. This was viewed and experienced as both reducing men's willingness to look at these jobs as potential employment opportunities, and contributing to male workers intention to leave the jobs once there.

*Yeah I mean that's one thing I find with retail is sometimes the kids don't seem to get enough hours to want to keep going ahead with it and they kind of look outside the industry and that's probably where it's lacking a bit.* Sales Assistant Worker 9

*A friend managed to get me a job at a department store and that lasted seven years but in the end I just wasn't getting the hours I wanted because I wanted to actually go into full-time work and this job was casual. Because I wasn't getting any full-time work from it I was looking at other options.* Unemployed 13

*One of the ladies I was talking to was excellent and said I really wanted to think about it and it comes down to practicalities. The jobs tend not to be full-time and at best they pay \$16 an hour; even at my much reduced lifestyle I figure I can do better than that. And that would be after studying for three months and forking out a lot of money for a qualification.* Unemployed 20

The short hours of work on offer in the case study jobs would likely be viewed unfavourably by many workers, not just men. As one manager stated, they had lost many workers due to the short hours on offer.

*That's where we've lost our staff too. It's not the work; it's been the hours and the pay that we've had as an issue.* Aged Care Manager 5

However, there were gender specific ways in which the short hours of work characteristic of case study employment were thought to contribute to occupational sex segregation.

### *Short hours and women's attraction to the work*

The first way in which short hours was said to contribute to occupational sex segregation was through increasing the representation of women in the case study occupations. The short hours of work was said (mainly by managers) to be more attractive to female workers seeking to supplement the family income. This had the effect of increasing female representation in the case study occupations as it increased the supply of women.

*I think one of the other difficulties in this type of work, a lot of it is casual and a lot of it is very few hours. You probably know what I'm going to say, in that we get a lot of mothers, who just want a little bit of extra work and they are not the main bread winners and so when you're trying to provide enough hours for someone who is the main bread winner and is wanting full-time hours to support a family, that is a difficulty. And I think that's a big problem in this industry in attracting and keeping men in it. Most of the men that we saw needed to have near full-time hours to continue working in the industry. And there were a lot of women, but most of the women had a partner who worked full-time and they were just supplementing the family income.*

*Aged Care Manager 6*

*It's just how the industry generally is. It attracts more women as a second job if they can't do office work, because it's full-time work and if they've got kids. Cleaning's good if the husband's home, because generally a lot of cleaning jobs are after 5, so they might start at 6 or 7 o'clock. Get the tea ready for the family, then move on to cleaning for a few hours. It works very well for house wives. If they've got a house to run, it's easier to work at night when the husband's home.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 1*

This is consistent with Charles and Grusky's (2004) view that employers in non-manual occupations, to ensure a continued labour supply, introduce work changes (such as short hours) that craft the workplace so it includes a commitment to domestic labour. This results in the sector becoming labelled and defined the default home for women.

### *Men's breadwinner role*

The other main way in which the short hours characteristics of employment within the case study occupations was linked to gender to explain men's limited representation in the case study jobs, was by reference to men's breadwinning role.

Male workers often viewed the short hours of employment as restricting the ability to generate adequate income to support a family.

*If I was in the case of having a mortgage and having a wife and kids at home and all the rest of it I wouldn't be able to survive with only working those hours where a lot of women would see it just like to top up the husband's income but the husband's still got the main job working all day.*

Commercial Cleaning Worker 3

Men's breadwinning role was also frequently mobilised to account for why men were not commonly found in the case study occupations.

*Usually men are the main bread winner. All our staff are casual and we do not offer 40 hours a week. It's quite flexible, if you have two or three clients going to hospital you suddenly drop in hours. If you need a stable minimum wage, it's not ideal.*

Aged Care Manager 7

Short hours were more frequently stated by workers and managers in aged care, sales and cleaning. Unemployed men also identified the short hours characteristic of employment in the case study occupations as being a major detraction of the work.

### **5.3.2 Low wages**

Twenty participants expressed dissatisfaction with the wages on offer in the case study occupations.

*If you're in it for the money don't. You're in the wrong industry to be honest.*

Aged Care Worker 1

*In my opinion – my personal opinion – I think this job is very bad paid for what we done. I think the conditions must improve, they should put more money in this business; it's not too much compared with what we have to do, cleaning up someone else's mess, you know, not everybody can do that.*

Aged Care Worker 5

Many men suggested that the money that they were paid resulted in them compromising their living standards.

*But the worst thing I find myself, at the moment is I'm still living at home - even though I have lived out of home before - but I'm living at home again now and I'm nearly 46 and that's not very good and that's – to me it's frustrating.*

Commercial Cleaning Worker 6

*But if you're entering it for the first time you certainly couldn't live on your own and rent and afford to – like you couldn't have child care as your only source of income.*

*Child Care Worker 5*

The pay of workers in the case study occupations was suggested to both reduce men's willingness to undertake employment within them and/or contribute to male workers intention to leave once there.

*Well if you know what we get paid, it's a motivating factor to look elsewhere. The money is crap in this industry.*

*Aged Care Worker 1*

*Aged care, I mean if I thought I could - I mean I think it worked out to be just over \$30,000 a year; well, I couldn't live off that with my current mortgage, it would mean selling my house or whatever else.*

*Unemployed 20*

Again managers also said that they had lost male workers due to the pay on offer.

*I've only been successful in employing 2 males in the last 12 months and one of them has since resigned because he could get better pay. Unfortunately the male care worker that resigned because he had a better job, he was a team leader at Holden, they were going to retrench him so he chose to do his Cert III in aged care, because that's what they recommend everyone to do by the sounds of it. Because it's such a growth area, and that's what he did. He was fantastic, even though he'd never had any experience previously, but unfortunately we just don't pay enough.*

*Aged Care Manager 4*

The low wages on offer in female dominated occupations has often been used as an explanation in and of itself to account for why men are so reticent to take up these jobs (England 2005; 2006a; 2006b; 2010; England and Herbert 1993; England, Reid, and Kilbourne 1996). The above evidence certainly suggests that low wages negatively impact men's representation in the case study occupations. However, the wages on offer would likely be viewed unfavourably and deter many people from pursuing employment within the case study occupations, not just men. Without including female workers in the sample I cannot detect gender difference (except as observed in the fact that most of the workers are women).

However, there were again, gender specific ways in which the low pay characteristic of case study employment was thought to contribute to occupational sex segregation.

Pay was thought to negatively impact on men's representation in the case study occupations in two main ways. The first was that men would be more likely to seek employment in comparatively skilled jobs that afforded workers higher rates of pay; the second was the belief that the pay on offer in the case study jobs compromised men's breadwinner role.

#### *Comparable worth*

Six men (from all occupation groups) said that their frustration with the money on offer in the case study occupation was mainly due to the higher rates of pay afforded to workers in comparably skilled jobs. This pay inequity contributed to male workers' intention to leave the case study jobs, and was also viewed as reducing other men's willingness to enter the case study jobs.

*You get more hours at McDonald's than what you can work here, plus you get weekend work and night work and stuff like that. I could probably earn a lot more at McDonald's.*

*Child Care Worker 6*

*I mean I used to say when I did bar work that I can turn somebody into an alcoholic for \$25 an hour and yet I'm making a difference to somebody else - I'm making an impact on a child's life for the rest of their lives, bearing in mind between birth and three or five years of age that is the most important years of their lives, for less than \$20 an hour; pretty sad really.*

*Child Care Worker 5*

*One reason I think is the pay, when they can get a manual labour job and an extra \$20,000 a year more - like I said I've often thought about it myself. Even for the sanity as well, like something simple, nine to five. And that's another thing with retail, retail is not nine to five Monday to Friday; it's not.*

*Sales Assistant worker 3*

Managers also said that the higher pay rates in comparably skilled jobs reduced the quality of the labour pool from which they were able to recruit.

*If they earned a much better salary you'd get a better range of people applying for these positions, because they would know that they would be compensated quite well for doing that kind of work. Even some of the factory work around, it is not always great but they get well paid for it. My son, he works in a factory and he gets really good money.*

*Aged Care Manager 3*

*Men as breadwinners*

Similar to the evidence presented in the discussion about short hours, a common way in which the pay on offer in the case study occupations was linked to gender to explain men's limited representation in the case study occupations was by men's breadwinning role.

*And there's the financial rewards, which you cannot support a family. I live by myself and I pay my wife a little bit of money, not that I have to, but I do, my son's 18 and now I can't afford to look for another lady, because I can't afford it, simple as that. I had a house but I signed that over so she could keep the house and have a home for her and my son. But I can't afford another one. I can't afford to have another lady, so that's money, it's a huge thing.*

*Aged Care Worker 1*

*'Yes, but if I've had a family I'd have to leave, I couldn't afford to support a family on this wage....Well men are supposed to be known as the breadwinner and I'm sorry but when I get married I want to be the breadwinner, it's a macho thing, a male thing, and I think we're brought up with it from kids. It's something that's going to take generations to get rid of but I would actually have to, only because the money is so bad. I can live myself and I can take a girl out to dates and things like that but I couldn't actually support anyone on my wage. So, I'd be gone; I'd have to. I know that most males do that because they have to support their families.*

*Child Care Worker 6*

Managers also thought they had lost male workers as a result of men's need to provide for their family.

*Basically. He loved it. It was purely that. There was no way that we could match what he was going to make in this franchise. And he had a family so he needed to support them.*

*Aged Care Manager 4*

*If you're the sole breadwinner or the biggest earner in the family this really isn't the industry for you. We just don't get paid enough to interest men to stay in the industry. I guess the men that do work in the industry, they all have wives that earn a lot more money than them so they're not the major breadwinner within the family so that allows them to pursue a career that they're interested in.... The guys that I studied with, neither of them are in child care anymore just because they couldn't afford to support their families. If your partner is on maternity leave how do you*

*support a family on this wage? Men probably drop out far earlier than women do. Through my experience they either don't complete their studies because they realise that the industry is so underpaid or they get to a point where financially they have to start being the major breadwinner and then they have to move on.*

*Child Care Manager 3*

Twenty nine participants stated that the pay on offer negated men's ability to provide for their family and compromising the male breadwinner model. These participants were evenly distributed across occupations.

The above finding provides some support for research that claims that the pay penalty associated with undertaking female typed jobs accounts for men's limited inroads into gender atypical employment (England 2005; 2006a; 2006b; 2010; England and Herbert 1993). However, we have seen that it does this through reference to broader notions of men and masculinity and the male breadwinner role. It is important to note that not all men left case study employment as a result of the low pay. Some men were able to reconstruct their masculinities and life so that they were not the sole or main breadwinner, or they did not have partners. This provides some evidence that men are reducing their commitment to male essentialism.

In addition, other employment conditions, such as short hours of employment, can be just as important as pay in shaping men's willingness or not to enter gender atypical employment.

### **5.3.3 Upward mobility and industry and occupation change**

The poor pay and employment conditions characteristic of employment in the case study occupations resulted in male workers pursuing career mobility within the case study jobs. However, the flat organisational structure characteristic of the case study occupations often meant that for those men who wished to move up in the occupation, they were often moved out of the occupation and into semi related professions. Similar to the findings of Williams' (1992; 1995) research, these occupations also carried greater rewards and prestige. However, in contrast to Williams who found that it was the discriminatory practices of others that channelled men into higher paid and more prestigious positions, for the men in this research it was the higher wages and better employment conditions (full-time, permanent, full entitlements etc.) on offer in these professions that lead them to pursue occupational change.



*Just getting up higher in the field. Like you go to work and you see the RNs and they're doing a different – they're getting a good pay. Yeah it'd be about money more than anything. I'd probably go to a hospital setting for a while and get the real ins and outs of what's going on because it's a lot different.* Aged Care Worker 6

*I want to get into admin – for ulterior motives I want to get into this so I can take these skills and maybe get a job that paid a lot more using the same sort of skills here. Retail being retail doesn't pay the best. It pays all right but it doesn't pay fantastic. The skills that I have learnt here, the skills that I have been trained on and so forth, can transfer over and that's a goal in the next five years, like let's transfer these skills over to a job that just pays a lot better.* Sales Assistant Manager 3

Managers also experienced losing male workers to their desire to pursue occupation upward mobility.

*I've only been able to recruit 1 younger male care worker and not been able to keep him in the long run because he's doing his study, so he's studying to be an RN so I've only got him for a few years.* Aged Care Manager 4

Seventeen respondents thought that men's desire for career mobility resulted in men leaving case study employment. These participants were evenly distributed across occupations.

The above again provides evidence of existing claims that poor pay and employment conditions characteristic of female dominated occupations reduces men's willingness to enter and/or representation within gender atypical jobs. However, not all men leave gender atypical employment because of these conditions; many may move into semi-related and still female dominated professions that also incorporate higher wages and better employment conditions.

## Conclusion

This chapter has detailed a number of supply side processes that operate to negatively impact on men's willingness to undertake work in female dominated occupations, or contribute to male workers' intentions to leave the jobs once there. In line with existing understandings it was found that gender essentialism is central to many of these processes.

It was found that many men viewed the dispositions, skills and ways of being required in the case study jobs as being aversive to them or at least very challenging to perform. However, only in a very few instances did men link this to their maleness. More often than not, men perceived case study employment as something they could not do simply due to perceptions of self, and their preference not to undertake work that is misaligned with these perceptions. This much weaker operation of gender essentialism could still produce much occupational sex segregation if men were consistently more likely than women to be aversive to these aspects of case study jobs. However, the data does not allow us to be certain that this is the case.

In addition, many of the male participants in the study continued to pursue and maintain a commitment towards male typed employment, even though these areas of the labour market are in decline. The preference for this type of employment was constructed by reference to their past gendered work experiences and standard gender essentialist notions of what (low skill) male jobs entail. Many men continue to understand their own competencies in terms of standard essentialist visions of masculinity, and pursue and preference work that requires physicality, practicality, is located outdoors and is full-time and well paid. Men's family and broader social networks were central to the production and maintenance of essentialist notions of appropriate jobs for men.

The occupational sex segregation that was generated as a result of these mechanisms of gender essentialism was that which results from men not being willing to contemplate employment in female dominated occupations in the first place. While not completely absent from male workers' accounts, the operation of gender essentialism in these ways was more frequently stated by unemployed men.

Male workers also reported mechanisms in operation which resulted in their employment within the female dominated jobs being experienced negatively. Some

of these mechanisms were again clearly related to gender essentialism and contributed to male workers' intention to leave gender atypical employment. While not absent for men in other occupations, the various processes by which gender essentialism operated to negatively impact on men's experience of gender atypical employment was most prevalent in the aged care and child care occupations.

The various ways in which gender essentialism was found to operate to produce occupational sex segregation is largely consistent with existing understandings about why men are so reticent to enter gender atypical employment.

However, it was also found that processes unrelated to gender essentialism operate to produce and maintain occupational sex segregation. Being a minority worker, unfamiliarity with workplace cultures, and standard labour market characteristics such as short hours of employment and low pay, can be just as important as gender essentialism in shaping men's willingness or not to enter gender atypical employment. These labour market characteristics are not, in the first instance, clearly related to gender essentialism and would likely be viewed unfavourably by people in general, not just men. However, in some cases these were linked to standard essentialist visions of masculinity (such as men's prescribed breadwinning role) to further account for why they deter men from employment in gender atypical jobs.

## **CHAPTER SIX: Determinants of Low Skilled Men's Integration into Female Dominated Jobs: Supply Side Factors**

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### **Introduction**

The previous chapter outlined a number of mechanisms that operate on the supply side of the labour market to produce and maintain the occupational sex segregation that is caused by men's limited movement into female dominated jobs. We know however, that while infrequent, men do obtain employment in gender atypical jobs. Indeed the male workers in this study are examples of such men. When considering low skilled men's access to female dominated occupations, it is important therefore, to look at the processes that contribute to men's willingness to enter jobs that are female dominated and feminised. The identification of possible supply side determinants of men's entry into female dominated occupations can be used to generate ideas about how to reengage men who have been displaced in the new economy, with jobs in areas of rising employment but which are traditionally regarded as female. More broadly it allows us to assess existing claims about the conditions that would need to transpire to increase men's movement into female dominated occupations.

Despite the importance of understanding how men become integrated into female dominated occupations, existing research rarely provides such an examination, and instead prioritises understanding men's experiences (both positive and negative) of working within gender atypical jobs. This chapter aims to remedy this gap. Drawing on the interviews, particularly those conducted with male workers, processes that operate to entice or positively impact on men's willingness and ability to enter occupations that are normatively regarded as female are identified.

It is found that a number of processes operate on the supply side of the labour market to facilitate men's integration into female dominated occupations. Some of these processes moderate and reduce the impact of gender essentialist exclusion, suggesting its operation in reducing men's willingness to enter gender atypical jobs (outlined in Chapter 5) is not insurmountable. Importantly however, the processes, while facilitating men's integration into gender atypical jobs, in the main actually reinforce male gender essentialism and result in gender segmentation within female dominated occupations.

Other processes were unrelated to gender essentialism and were more about men's minority status and the benefits accrued to them as workers; and others were related to standard labour market factors that attract people to occupations and jobs in general. These include such things as skills shortages, occupations' immunity from economic downturns, and positive identification with aspects of the jobs.

Finally, consistent with existing research looking at men's integration into female dominated jobs, the interview data revealed evidence of distinct patterns of entry into the case study occupations. The chapter concludes by providing a brief analysis of these entry patterns, but questions the relative importance of these entry patterns in providing an explanation about men's integration into gender atypical employment.

## **6.1 Factors and processes that moderate the impact of gender essentialist exclusion**

It was shown in the previous chapter that gender essentialism was central to many of the processes that operate to reduce men's willingness to undertake work in female dominated occupations, or contribute to male workers' intentions to leave gender atypical jobs once there. In many instances the operation of gender essentialism was consistent with existing understandings. Despite the power of gender essentialism in reducing men's willingness to enter female dominated occupations, it is found that its operation is not insurmountable. Indeed there are a number of processes and factors that moderate and/or reduce the impact of gender essentialist exclusion, and facilitate men's integration into gender atypical work. I begin by reviewing each of these processes below.

### **6.1.1 Strategies deployed to moderate the negative social and interpersonal sanctions associated with gender inappropriate work**

The previous chapter demonstrated that men's employment in gender atypical work often initiated various negative reactions from significant others, including family and friends. These reactions ranged from having their work seriousness questioned, to suspicions regarding their sexuality and/or their sexual motivations for undertaking the work. Despite the power of these negative reactions in reducing men's willingness to undertake work in gender atypical occupations, it is found that men use a variety of strategies to moderate these negative reactions and overcome the associated discomfort with the female image of the job.

### *Emphasising masculine aspects of job*

One strategy a few men used to moderate the negative reactions of others and bring the job into line with dominant notions of masculinity was to re-cast the job content to emphasise its masculine components. Two men responded to the negative reactions of others by emphasising the masculine aspects of the job.

*It's okay because I can justify it anyway. To me cleaning someone's house is no different to cleaning their garden. At the end of the day I'm tidying up; whether it's inside or outside it's the same thing.*

*Aged Care Worker 9*

*As I said I talk to my mates who work in a factory and it's 'oh, I had to wrap 50 pallets today.' I tell them 'I played cricket then I'd have a go with the footy and then I sat down and played Play Doh with the kids' and they're like 'what!'.*

*Child Care Worker 3*

### *Bragging*

Another strategy mentioned by four workers was to reverse the questioning of their (heterosexual) sexuality by 'bragging' about the sexual opportunities afforded to them by working predominantly with women. They also challenged their friends' (heterosexual) sexuality by questioning their motivations for working predominantly with men in traditional male typed jobs.

*Nah, I used to just joke along with it and let them know how easy I meet girls. The guys say "you're doing a female job" and just as a comeback I tell them they are around men all day.*

*Child Care Worker 1*

*But yeah I just like working with women, it's good fun. Yeah I flirt with all of them and - well that's what I tell my friends, that they flirt with me also.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 10*

### *Renegotiating identity to incorporate female traits*

Six men responded to the discomfort associated with the female image of the jobs by renegotiating their identity, so that it was not compromised by doing work that is traditionally associated with women. This was achieved by identifying their work as being a better indicator of their true self, even if it did contain traditional female traits.

*Well I believe in equality of the sexes. They should have people who are able to do the work regardless of sex. Some men find this hard to cope with and I don't because of my background, it doesn't make any difference to me. I prefer female company. I never go to the pub with the boys.*

*Aged Care Worker 3*

*I approached him straight away. As soon as I heard him question that I said 'well, you're a father mate, so what are you saying?' I'm pretty pro sort of in that respect but I've had - yeah. I'm pretty open minded. I'm pretty in touch with my feminine side I think.*

*Child Care Worker 7*

Managers also commented that this was something distinctive about the male workers that they had worked with throughout their careers. This suggests that renegotiating one's identity may be a wider strategy deployed by men working in female dominated occupations than is indicated here.

*The men that I have worked with within that role, are all of a similar nature and they are very comfortable with who they are. They're very comfortable with their feminine side, with their nurturing side. They don't have issues. I have not experienced someone other than that type of personality being interested in this role, so I can't really make more comment than that. But it just seems that they are all of a similar ilk.*

*Aged Care Manager 5*

*I think some of them might have similar attributes in that they - not are more effeminate but maybe they are a bit nurturing.*

*Child Care Manager 4*

The above findings suggest that it is possible for men, including working class men, to develop an expression of themselves that allows them to operate comfortably in a gender atypical arena. The coexistence of male identities with female typed work is one of the social changes that will be needed to reduce occupational sex segregation. The fact that men are renegotiating their masculinity in these ways can be interpreted to be evidence of the men 'shedding the essentialist package', which was identified by Grusky and Levanon (2008) as a condition that would need to transpire to allow men to work in female occupations.

### *Retitling job or non full disclosure*

Eight men responded to the discomfort associated with the female image of the job by distancing themselves from the work, by not fully disclosing the type of work they do when speaking with family or friends, or by retitling the job to avoid or minimise its feminine association.

*Yeah, I don't talk about myself a great deal. People ask what I do, I just say I work for [organisation name] but I don't say "I'm a carer for [organisation name] and I do this I do that", I just say I work for [organisation name].* Aged Care Worker 1

*Not really. I don't say, "I'm into childcare, I work with 3 year olds." Because that might be a bit of a "Whoa, why are you doing that?" kind of thing. So I just say I'm studying education, I want to be a teacher.* Child Care Worker 1

*I don't actually tell them I'm a child care worker unless they seem like decent people. Usually I call myself an educator of young children.* Child Care Worker 6

In general, whilst male workers in each of the case study occupations reported deploying strategies to moderate negative reactions and to overcome the associated discomfort with the female image of the occupations, they were more often deployed by men working in aged care and child care. This is unsurprising, considering that men in these occupations were also more likely to report experiencing negative reactions from significant others in the first place.

The strategies that men deployed to moderate negative reactions and to overcome the associated discomfort with the female image of the job, suggest ways in which men can moderate the operation of gender essentialist exclusion and be successful in moving into gender atypical work. However, with the exception of 'renegotiating masculinity' these strategies usually had the effect of reinforcing, rather than challenging, male essentialism. For example, men who emphasised the masculine aspects of the job (e.g. being similar to gardening work, playing sport) perpetuated notions of what is, and what is not, acceptable and appropriate work for men. This does not support Grusky's and Levanon (2008) theorising about the conditions which would see men enter female occupations. For Grusky and Levanon this necessitated men shedding the male essentialist package; however, for the men in this research it was usually by re-establishing male essentialism, while working in gender atypical employment that enabled them to work in the case study occupations.



The strategies that men deployed to overcome the associated discomfort with the female image of the job are similar to those that have emerged from other studies. These studies have shown that men reconstruct gender atypical work to enhance its masculine components so as to distance the job from its feminine association (Cross and Bagilhole 2002; Hayes 1986; Lupton 2000; Lupton 2006; Simpson 2004; Simpson 2005; Simpson 2009). However, the findings here differ in regards to the prevalence with which the various strategies were mobilised. Existing research finds that men are more likely to re-cast the job content to emphasise its masculine components, and to retitle the job or not fully disclose the type of work they did, rather than renegotiate their masculinity to incorporate female traits. In this research however, there was an equal balance between the various types of strategies that the men deployed.

### **6.1.2 Occupations presented as legitimate career options by 'significant others'**

The previous chapter made clear that the social milieu (family, friends, etc.) in which a person's labour market decisions is embedded, is important to the production and reproduction of essentialist notions of masculinity and femininity, and the corresponding construction of appropriate jobs for men and women. This subsequently generates occupational sex segregation.

However, a person's social milieu is also central to processes that destabilise gender essentialist notions of appropriate jobs for men (and women), which in turn facilitates men's integration into female dominated occupations. Indeed, a frequently mentioned factor influencing men's decision to enter female dominated occupations was having these jobs presented as legitimate by 'significant others'.

#### *Education and training institutions*

For a small number (4) of male workers, 'significant others' included people within further education and or training institutions.

*I think when people start talking about it and there was a childcare centre right next to the TAFE that I walked past every day. And then the TAFE reception had that information about childcare and getting into that course. I remember looking through all the different sheets and seeing that one. I think that was the point where it sort of became more of a reality, like "Oh yeah this could be something to try and do". As I said, before that I just didn't have much information about it. Child Care Worker 10*

### *Family and or Friends*

More often however, it was reported that men's decision to enter case study jobs was significantly shaped by their friends and/or family members. Twenty two men stated that their family and/or friends influenced their decisions to pursue gender atypical employment. These male workers were evenly distributed between the case study occupations.

For example, some men indicated that their decision to pursue employment within a female dominated occupation was shaped by discussions they had with family members or friends about future employment possibilities. An aged care worker who had previously been employed by a large car manufacturer for 30 years and was then made redundant stated that:

*It was just from friends, they started talking about aged care and work with the old people and that's why I started the course.* Aged Care Worker 5

A child care worker highlighted that discussions could be as informal as comments made at social gatherings:

*It's nothing that I've thought about growing up or anything. But when you're sort of out there at a barbeque or something, people make the comment "Oh you're pretty good with the children," it sort of gets you thinking. I sort of thought, well I know they're looking for workers and people have said that, it's not like they go screaming for the hills when I walk in, so I thought that maybe I would give it a go. I think it was as well, do I want to go into that or teaching or something. So I thought if I just did a bit of volunteer around children, just to get that feel for it. So yes, that's kind of how it came about.* Child Care Worker 10

Other male workers were exposed to the type of work undertaken within the case study jobs by family or friends who had previously, or were currently, working within the occupations. This exposure subsequently influenced men's decision to consider entry.

*One of my closest friends at the moment looks after disabled people with [organisation name] as well and he has raved about them and has worked for them for about 12 years I think, so I was forever going back to their website.* Aged Care Worker 9

*I don't know. I suppose I was probably maybe influenced by what my friends were kind of doing as jobs. I know I dropped my resume into a lot of video stores. My best friend was working at Blockbuster so I thought I'd give it crack. I dropped my resume into a lot of those sorts of places and yeah I didn't really hear back from them. They weren't looking at the time and stuff like that. So I was mainly influenced by my friends, the kind of work they were doing.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 4*

Being exposed, by family or friends, to jobs that were previously foreign to them was also reported by two unemployed men as influencing their decision to consider case study employment as a potential route back into the labour market.

*Well now my dear old mum is nearly 80 and I'm basically her care giver but we've got her into a village and she loves it. I go and visit her regularly, the ladies all love me and are like 'would you do this?' and I just really enjoy it and I made some enquiries and I thought 'this could be all right'.*

*Unemployed 20*

Seven respondents mentioned that friends or family members were much more directive in getting the men to consider the possibility of employment within the case study occupations.

*Some years later, after I'd been through all the different processes of working, labouring and what not, and I was unemployed and my sister in law said to me 'hey you know Sonja, she works down at the child care centre, why don't you go down there and do some voluntary work?' and I said 'all right'.*

*Child Care Worker 8*

*When I finally lost my last job doing carpentry I was at a loss what to do. My mother was working in retail at the time and said 'well, why don't you come and put your name down in the shop?' They were looking for people; it was September, there was Christmas people being taken on. At that stage there was very little in the way of casual work, it was nearly all full-time, so I started off at King William Street and worked my way along North Terrace. I put my name down at Myers and David Jones and got to John Martin's and they said 'yeah, okay, can you start Saturday?'.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 5*

Something that is important to note in the above findings is that the role of family and friends in influencing men's decisions to consider gender atypical employment was usually precipitated by men experiencing difficulties obtaining employment in areas in which they traditionally laboured. Entering gender atypical employment as a

result of difficulties experienced obtaining work in traditional areas formed a separate analytic category and is discussed below. It is mentioned here, however, to highlight the fact that various supply side processes do not operate independently from one another, but interact with each other in ways that compound their effect in mediating gender essentialist exclusion and/or facilitating men's integration into gender atypical jobs. For example, having one's friends or family identify gender atypical jobs as potential employment options may not be very influential in shaping a person's decision to enter or not, if the person is already employed in a stable (gender appropriate) job. However, the influence on a person's decision to enter gender atypical employment may be more powerful if that person is experiencing difficulties in obtaining and maintaining gender appropriate work, and receives encouragement and support from family and friends to pursue employment in gender atypical jobs.

#### *Social and family networks*

Not only did friends and family influence men's decision to enter case study occupations, it was also found that friends and family were often directly responsible for men being successful in obtaining employment within the case study occupations. Ten male workers, particularly those working in commercial cleaning and sales, indicated that they had obtained their employment as a result of having friends or family attached to the industry.

*I just knew people that worked in there and I just got a foot in the door and started doing it that way.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 11*

*Yeah my wife had already worked seven years in the cleaning industry. She spoke to her area manager and her area manager said 'yes, I'm looking for somebody to work at Munno Para' so I sent her my resume and they said 'you're very over qualified but if you're eager and happy to do it'. So I walked out of Holden's on the Friday and the following Monday - I had a week off and the following Monday I started in the cleaning industry.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 7*

*My sister actually is the assistant director or my second boss. She's been trying to get me into child care for five years. She's always said 'leave that job, come and work with me, come and work for these people' and I said 'nah, I don't want to change nappies. I don't want to wipe up boogers, I don't want to do none of that' and it wasn't until I had to find another job basically, because I left the [company name] on the Monday morning and by Monday afternoon I'd already come here and they'd already offered*

*me some hours and then I think on the Tuesday I started so I had not much time.*

*Child Care Worker 6*

It was the social scientist Mark Granovetter, who first acknowledged the importance of social networks to the employment outcomes of individuals. In his article 'The Strength of Weak Ties' (1973) and subsequent book 'Getting a Job' (1974), Granovetter showed the ability of social networks to transmit labour market information and ultimately, employment itself. Subsequent research has found that social networks tend to perpetuate occupational sex segregation, because social networks themselves tend to be segregated by sex (Braddock and McPartland 1987; Reskin 1993; Straits 1998). However, the above findings suggest that social networks can actually *destabilise* occupational sex segregation, transmitting gender atypical labour market information and ultimately gender atypical employment.

However, the above examples highlight that in many instances, the ties responsible for men being successful in obtaining employment within the case study occupations are not necessarily 'weak'. In many instances they were very close family ties, usually with female family members who were employed in the case study occupations. This suggests that men who are single, or in a male only family, may not be as likely as married men or men with female family members to be presented with gender atypical labour market information and ultimately gender atypical employment. This is interesting and may be important in understanding why low skilled blue collar men who are withdrawing from the labour market are not entering growing low level service work (which is also female dominated). Recall, these men are often single (see chapter 1).

#### *Employment consultants and welfare to work*

Other important social actors that were found to moderate the impact of gender essentialism by presenting the case study occupations as legitimate and realistic employment possibilities were employment consultants that men came into contact with while they were unemployed. Fourteen respondents, eight male workers and six unemployed men, mentioned the role of employment consultants in influencing their decision to enter, or at least consider, employment within the case study occupations.

*The employment consultant I was working with suggested it, because I don't think it was any secret that the government was trying to channel unemployed people towards aged care because of it being a growth industry. It just so happened that it was suggested to me.* Aged Care Worker 10

*Yeah. I mean [employment consultants' name] was saying something like – even McDonald's or something, I should just go there because they'll pay for all my courses and stuff that I want to do. I was just thinking I might as well just apply for Coles and Woolworths and stuff like that, I mean there are worse jobs.* Unemployed 23

The role of employment consultants in shaping men's decision to enter jobs normatively regarded as female was aided by their ability to provide the men with additional practical opportunities that assisted them along a pathway to securing employment within the case study occupations. These included providing men with information about relevant training, providing them with a place in a training course, assisting with the financial cost of training or a combination of the above.

*He was the one who gave me the gentle shove and said 'there's a course starting in July' and it wasn't going to cost me anything, which helped as well. So he was the one who got that process going, so if it wasn't for that maybe I wouldn't have done it when I did, but I still think I would have eventually done it.* Aged Care Worker 10

*Yeah, I've just finished a Cert II cleaning course. I was just like it's offered, it's one of the only jobs that isn't laying off hundreds of people, and I was like 'oh yeah, it's a course, I might get a job out of it'.* Unemployed 22

#### *Welfare to work programs*

Another process operating in the welfare sector that moderated the impact of gender essentialist exclusion, and facilitated men's integration into gender atypical work, was undertaking work experience in one of the case study occupations as part of labour market activation programs. In some instances, undertaking this work experience was a direct requirement in order for the men to continue to receive income support payments; in others, it was a result of WorkCover<sup>22</sup> reengagement efforts. However,

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<sup>22</sup> WorkCoverSA is a rehabilitation and compensation scheme in South Australia, which provides protection to workers and employers in the event of workplace injury. It aims to rehabilitate and compensate injured workers following a workplace injury.

this (somewhat forced) involvement in gender atypical work subsequently influenced men's decisions to enter these female dominated occupations.

*No, I had no interest in actually having that as a career. The thing that put me into childcare was I did a course for unemployed men, for people who had epilepsy and I did 6 months' work experience in the [child care centres name] and that really got me into it.*

*Unemployed 25*

*Yep I think it's – what was it called? I can't remember but some scheme where you have to do either job training or volunteer work.*

*I: So what did you do?*

*Volunteer work first. I did six months work with the Red Cross family store. It's not too bad. Real comfortable workplace. Dealing with predominantly clothes and knick knacks, all second hand stuff that was just left in the donation bin out front of the shop. It was good and now I'm in retail.*

*Sales Assistant 7*

A child care worker, who had previously worked as a school groundsman until he sustained an injury that prevented him from continuing to do this work, articulated the importance of being given the opportunity to undertake work experience in female dominated employment areas, and how this subsequently influenced his decision to enter a job characterised by gender bias.

*Basically I couldn't do manual labour any more so through Work Cover the school put me in various positions, in offices, working in the library, stuff like that, and then it came up that there was extra staff needed at the after school care program. Through the after school program, they also had a kindy care program within that where they'd take care of all the kindy children. That's when it really started my interest in the sort of three to 12 year old age bracket. Then Work Cover offered to pay for my Certificate III in Child Services so I did that.*

*I: So if you weren't given that opportunity do you think you would have gone into it?*

*No way, I probably would have – well to be honest I think if the school – which they could have done – sort of dodgily given up on me and 'oh, no, we can't find him a job, we don't want to deal with him anymore, he's a liability' – I don't know where I would be now, probably playing that disability thing.*

*Child Care Worker 3*

The above findings highlight the role 'significant others' play in moderating the impact of gender essentialist exclusion, and/or facilitating men's integration into female dominated work, through presenting gender atypical occupations as legitimate employment options. These 'significant others' can be as proximate as immediate family and friends, and as distant as broader social structures, such as the welfare and education systems, and the social actors operating within them.

The findings also indicate that occupational aspirations are neither fixed nor unchanging. Interactions with others shape and reshape occupational aspirations throughout the life course and these can be in opposition to gender essentialist stereotypes - particularly if the interactions are with people who do not subscribe to standard essentialist visions of appropriate jobs for men and women. In this way the findings lend support to the main criticism of the simple socialisation thesis that assumes that occupational aspirations are stable across the life course.

The simple socialisation thesis has also been criticised for underestimating the extent to which individuals are able to exercise some control in how they determine gender and therefore gender based preferences. The findings above indicate that men are able to exercise control in forming their occupational aspiration and in their decision to enter jobs normatively regarded as female. The ex-Mitsubishi (car manufacturer) worker who was made redundant and then, guided by the advice of friends, entered aged care is a clear example of such agency. The ex-school grounds person who was placed in various gender atypical jobs in work reengagement efforts, and as a result pursued a career in child care is another example of individual agency determining occupational choice. The decisions however, come about as a result of interactions with broader social structures, such as the welfare to work system and educational institutions, and social networks that depart from standard essentialist visions of appropriate jobs for men and women.

### **6.1.3 Past work experiences in female dominated jobs**

Discussion about past work experiences indicated that a factor common to around half (22) of the male workers was that they had previously worked in occupations that were similarly characterised by gender bias, although not always as heavily female dominated, prior to their entry into the case study occupation.



*When I was a tradesman I was doing some part-time work down at Minda, with disabilities, because my wife at the time was, and still is, in the game, but I was always asked to work overtime and things like that with my main [trade] job so I had to stop doing the disability work. It's something that I always wanted but my trade was my main employment and at that time I really enjoyed doing that.* Aged Care Worker 2

*I didn't know what I wanted to do for many years and I just sort of jumped around in jobs really. I ended up in hospitality. I was a waiter for a while, so looking after people, serving food.... Yeah, I guess people work—at the end of the day I've been kind of serving people throughout my life regardless of the industry I've been in.*

*Aged care worker 9*

Similarly to having undertaken work experience in the case study occupations as part of labour market activation programs, having previously worked gender atypical occupations moderated gender essentialist exclusion, and influenced men to look at the case study occupations as legitimate employment opportunities. For example, an aged care worker stated that previous employment as a hospital linen attendant was what influenced his decision to subsequently enter aged care work.

*When I worked in the hospital in Mt Gambier I really liked the interaction with patients and clients and stuff like that and I'd sort of thrown around the idea in the past that maybe aged care work or nursing might be something that I'd really like to pursue in more seriousness.*

*Aged Care Worker 4*

A male child care worker said that his previous employment as a cleaner in a child care centre led to a chance opportunity to work as a child carer. This subsequently influenced his decision to pursue a career in child care.

*I started off cleaning at the child care centre with one of my girlfriends at the time, it was her job and I got into that and then from cleaning the centre the director asked me if I wanted to come and do some [child care] work during the day and I went 'yeah sure' and then I stayed there for five years.... I think he was quite desperate for workers at that stage and I was someone who was around the place a fair bit, so that was just sort of by chance I think. I don't think he really knew too much about my working thoughts. Once I started I was having a – I became permanent part-time over the five years and went on to making it my career.*

*Child Care Worker 7*

Having prior paid work experiences in a female dominated occupation was equally common for men working in child care, aged and disabled care and sales. It was a little less frequent amongst men working in commercial cleaning. Interestingly, more educated men (men with Cert. III and above as their highest level of educational attainment) were more likely to have previously worked in a female dominated job than less educated men.

Whilst having previously worked in a gender atypical job, or at least in an industry that is characteristically female dominated, was found to influence men to view the case study occupations as legitimate employment options, it is unclear as to what processes operated to originally lead them to gender atypical work. The previous discussions suggest however, that it may have been a result of their social milieu or having previously undertaken non-paid work experience within gender atypical jobs.

#### **6.1.4 Presence of other males in case study occupations**

Another factor influencing men's decision to enter the case study occupations was the presence of other male workers.

*Back when I worked with a few other blokes it was good to see men in the field. Where I started there were two other guys in the centre.* Child Care Worker 8

*As I say, I knew a couple of guys that I'd gone to school with that worked in retail so I knew that there was a reasonable percentage of guys in retail. It wasn't sort of like 99 percent women and you're the only guy.* Sales Assistant 5

It seemed that having other males within the case study occupations contributed to a reduction in the feminine association of the job and legitimised men's decision to enter the occupation. Other men considered the presence of other male workers as beneficial as it allowed them to have contact with other 'blokes' and reduced feelings of isolation.

*Maybe that helps me out but if I was the only bloke it would – yeah sometimes maybe you need someone on a male sort of wavelength, maybe just one other person which would help. Even the assistant manager is female.* Sales Assistant Worker 10

Conversely, not having other males around was thought to be problematic.

*Most of my educators and teachers are females. Every time I've had a male teacher, I've actually done really well in the subject. I don't know if that's because I feel more comfortable or I can understand a little bit better, or maybe they emphasise different parts of the subject. So it would be nice to have more males there. Especially on prac, it's tough to always go out and see females working. If I could see a good male working, maybe I'd see that I don't have to always be that affectionate. It would be nice to see some good role models in that area.* Child Care Worker 1

The impact of having other males working in the case study occupation on men's decision to enter and remain in the occupation was mentioned by 11 men working in child care and sales.

Combined, the above findings point to various processes that operate to moderate, reduce or even destabilise gender essentialist notions of appropriate jobs for men, and subsequently increased men's willingness to enter jobs normatively regarded as female.

While the above processes operated to destabilise gender essentialism, it was also found that gender essentialism – the notion that men and women are innately and fundamentally different in interests and skills – itself has an integrative function and facilitates, or at least makes possible, men's employment in female dominated occupations. I turn now to consider gender essentialism's integrative operation.

#### **6.1.5 Male essentialist traits orientating them towards particular areas of case study employment**

The previous chapter found that many men displayed a preference for job attributes that they associate with men and masculinity. These attributes included working with their hands, working outside, working independently, seeing something completed, full-time work and work that paid well. These job attributes are much more aligned with standard essentialist notions of what (low skill) male jobs entail. Existing understandings suggest that such preferences would produce occupational sex segregation as men would enter occupations that reflect these preferences and capacities and exclude themselves from those that don't. More than that, men would associate the case study occupations - and the disposition, skills and ways of being required within them - with women, and position themselves in opposition to these because they are male. The previous chapter found that, in the main, much occupational sex segregation is indeed produced in this way. However, it is also

found that male essentialism (male essentialist interests and proclivities) is congruent with certain aspects or areas of case study employment. For example, a male aged care worker spoke about his intention to specialise in diversion therapy as he saw this as compatible to his (essentialist) interests and active personality.

*I guess I know what I ultimately want to pursue and I'm looking at maybe diversional therapy or something like that, that's kind of what I'm attracted to. I'm a very active man, I like kayaking and motorbike riding and bush walking and I do all those sorts of things, so I guess that's where I'm heading.*

*Aged Care Worker 9*

A child care worker disliked personal and emotional care tasks; he related this dislike to the fact that he was a man. Even though this worker displayed such a strong aversion to tasks required in the case study occupation, in a way that is consistent with existing understanding of how gender essentialism operates to produce occupational sex segregation, he also thought that there were certain aspects of child care work that were compatible to his own interests and personality.

*Patting children to sleep, I don't sit there cradling them, I just want them to get to sleep so I can move on to something else. I'm not sure if it's biologically that guys don't like doing that sort of thing or if it's the way they've been brought up, that guys shouldn't do that sort of thing and it kind of gets pressed into your head. And as I said, I don't enjoy it. Also if the children are crying and stuff, I don't love having to pick them up and carry them around.... I do like playing a game or something like that. Something that the older years might be a little bit better suited. I guess because I've always loved sport and that sort of thing, so I'm always outside throwing balls and running and stuff, so I guess they enjoy that side of things.*

*Child Care Worker 1*

The 'play activities' aspect of child care was often thought by male child care workers as being compatible to their own interests in sport. It was also identified as being crucial not only to why men are needed in child care, but also as a component part of child care that is important to male workers.

*We kick the ball, soccer and some females mightn't enjoy doing that outdoor sports whereas a male tends to like the outdoors and enjoys the sports with the kids and the kids can really relate to it. If they want to go outside, they go straight to the male to go 'come on, let's go kick the soccer ball'.*

*Child Care Worker 2*

*Kindy is fun, you can have a lot of fun with kindy. You can play rough play, all that sort of thing, which is very essential to a male in child care.* Child Care Worker 6

We saw in the previous chapter that male commercial cleaners found aspects of cleaning such as its physical nature, (sometimes) being located outside, and allowing independence and autonomy, to be congruent with their own preferences and capacities.

Nearly all male sales assistants displayed a preference for working 'out the back' on the dock, as this required limited customer contact.

*I would say receiving, which is at the dock, it's a job you can get into without distractions and you're on the dock, you don't have anyone to serve or pester you, you just – I had my own music blaring the whole time I was doing that. It was a lot more enjoyable for me.* Sales Assistant Worker 7

Even managers said that male sales assistants had a preference for dock work.

*Most of the guys that came in for that interview were – well half of the guys that came in for the interviews were talking about working on the dock so not all of those guys were talking about working as customer service.* Sales Assistant Manager 2

Many male sales assistants also preferred to gain employment in electrical stores, or at least in electrical departments of a store, as they considered this more congruent with their own personal interests.

*I suppose electrical is just – because I've done it for so long and because I'm so used to it and it's so easy for me and it interests me I think that's – I couldn't imagine not doing anything else. Like if they wanted to move me to menswear I reckon I'd have enough. But I think the guy that works in menswear, he enjoys it because he looks at stuff that he could wear and I think he's just into sort of clothing and that sort of stuff so it's more up his alley.* Sales Assistant Worker 11

Again, managers were very aware of men's preference for work in this area.

*So electrical for men, they love the TV's and the cameras and all of the computers and those sorts of things.* Sales Assistant Manager 4

Even when asked to comment hypothetically about employment in the case study occupations, men displayed a preference for particular areas that they thought were more in line with their interests and personalities.

*I wouldn't want to clean out K-Mart or anything like that but I wouldn't mind working around stations and in factories cleaning- you know.* Unemployed 19

*Oh yeah. Well I could sell DVDs, games, cabling products, and stuff like that. I could sell all that sort of stuff no worries because I know about it, I've used it; I know about it.* Unemployed 5

Men's pursuit of areas within the case study occupations that were more in line with their own (gender essentialist) interests and proclivities had the effect of concentrating males in certain areas of the occupation and/or the industries in which the case study occupations are found.

*I think you'll find that the departments, depending on what they sell is depending on what gender - what sex you'll find in there. So you'll - because we used to have a lot of camping and home entertainment and that sort of thing. They used to sell the TVs and that was very - mainly men and then the camping, tents and all that, men. Automotive section - years ago - it was all males. Now they've got rid of all that stuff.* Sales Assistant Worker 4

*I think you'd find that at after school care there's a lot more males within the - if you contacted five then you'd get a lot more males working for them than you would if you contacted five child care centres. I just think from that age group point of view, especially your five to 12 year olds, it's a bit more male dominated, a little bit more than say in child care and that's why there's a lot more males doing it.*

Child Care Worker 3

*If you take cleaning and if you think that males don't do cleaning, it is not correct. Males they want to have their own thing. They will not go and work these 2-3 hour shifts, they will not be satisfied. Once they get the hang of it, they go and buy some equipment and become subcontractors, that's what happens. If you take the subcontracting field, 99 and maybe 100% of them will be male.*

Commercial Cleaning Manager 3

Indeed a male commercial cleaner said that his desire for more money was the main motivation for buying a cleaning franchise rather than working for a cleaning company.

*You know before I became a franchisee I called somebody 'I want to do a cleaner, how much do you pay?' Start \$12 an hour yeah, sometimes 15. The most pay is \$20 but I went to [franchise company name], they said 'we made a minimum charge is \$35 per hour, minimum charge' so I think maybe I want to be a franchisee, it's better it's good.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 2*

Thirty four respondents, both male workers (n=26) and unemployed men (n=8), thought that particular areas within the case study occupations were congruent with their own (gendered) interests and proclivities. Of the male workers, many more were located in commercial cleaning and sales assistant occupations. This is interesting considering that these occupations were also less female dominated (more integrated) than the other two case study occupations. One reason for the higher ratio of men in these occupations may be due to these occupations having more aspects to them (such as 'dock work' or factory cleaning) that are congruent to gender essentialist notions of masculinity and men's own interests and proclivities.

The men's pursuit of areas within the case study occupations that were more in line with their own interests and proclivities in part corresponds to Williams' (1992; 1995) research. Williams found that men working in female dominated jobs were channelled by others into more 'masculine' specialisations that often carried greater rewards and prestige. However, in this research, male workers themselves often pursued more 'masculine areas' or areas that were considered more compatible with their interests and personalities. These areas subsequently became strongholds of male employment.

The findings also suggest that contrary to Grusky et al. (2008; 2000) and England (England 2006b; 2010), male essentialism is compatible with gender atypical employment. Men do find areas within gender atypical occupations that are adequately aligned with their interest and proclivities. However, one consequence is that these areas then become the stronghold of male employment and are considered by men themselves, and by others (as we shall see in later chapters), as the appropriate areas in which men should work in gender atypical occupations. This has the effect of both producing gender segmentation within female dominated

occupations, and re-establishing male essentialism - this time within gender atypical occupations - by defining what is, and what is not, appropriate work for men in female dominated occupations. However, this is not to say that men may not move into 'less male' areas of the case study occupations over time. Indeed this may be a longer term pathway to reducing gender divisions within female dominated occupations.

The preceding section has documented various processes that operate on the supply side of the labour market to facilitate men's integration into female dominated occupations. Many of these processes were found to moderate and reduce the impact of gender essentialist exclusion, suggesting its operation in reducing men's willingness to enter gender atypical jobs (identified in chapter 5) is not insurmountable. However, it was also found that gender essentialism itself had an integrative function, with many aspects of case study employment being compatible with male essentialism. This suggests that gender essentialism does not always operate in segregative ways, as is usually claimed by scholars of gender stratification. Importantly however, the processes, whilst facilitating men's integration into gender atypical jobs, were found in the main to actually reinforce male gender essentialism and result in gender segmentation within female dominated occupations. The various processes by which this integration occurred were, in general, more frequently stated by male workers.

However, it was also found that a number of processes operate on the supply side of the labour market to facilitate men's integration into female dominated occupations that are unrelated to gender essentialism or processes that moderated its impact. These processes relate to advantages that arise from men's minority status and the benefits accrued to them as workers. Others were related to standard labour market factors that attract people to occupations and jobs in general including such things as skills shortages, occupations' immunity from economic downturns and positive identification with aspects of the work. I turn now to consider these processes.

## **6.2 Benefits that arise from men's minority status**

The interviews indicated that male workers receive a number of benefits as a result of their minority status. These benefits suggest a number of advantages that may facilitate men's employment within, or entice them to consider, gender atypical jobs.



### 6.2.1 Career effect – being looked at as favourable job applicants

Many male workers recognised that their minority status as men in the case study occupations gave them a number of career advantages. The most frequently mentioned advantage was being looked at as preferred employees; sixteen respondents, mainly male workers, experienced being a man positively in terms of obtaining employment in female dominated occupations.

*I guess one of the reasons why is because there's not many men in aged care...I'm not sure, I maybe putting myself down by saying I only got it because I was a male because I think I'm good at my job and I'd had a lot of experience in the other sector. It's probably easier to say that if I was the boss or if I was the person hiring, I'd hire a guy before a woman.*

*Aged Care Worker 2*

*Yeah, I think being male, and it's very rare, they looked at that as a good advantage to their company and I haven't been knocked back on a child care position yet.*

*Child Care Worker 2*

The fact that men were looked at as favourable employees in the case study occupations was found to directly impact on men's decisions to pursue employment in these female dominated arenas in the first place.

*I know a lot of people were talking about it around that time. I think that's when childcare were trying to get out a bit more that they needed more workers, so I think it might have been in the media. But I think it was just word of mouth from a few other people who had done it saying "Yes, I do childcare and we are always desperate for people." And they were especially saying male workers, so I thought I might give it a go and see if I like it or not.*

*Child Care Worker 10*

Indeed, in discussions about future employment, a number of male workers and unemployed men mentioned female dominated occupations. A major factor for why they considered these as an employment option was the perception that men were looked at as favourable employment candidates within the occupation, and that this would increase the men's employment chances.

*There's actually a lack of male teachers so that's sort of why I'm getting into it. If they do want male teachers it'll be easier for me to get a job that way, I won't have to go out into the middle of nowhere and teach country kids, which is not really what I want to do.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 8*

*Two positives, even in the middle of a recession there's always a need for care givers and there's a shortage of men in the industry and I thought 'right, this is the way to go'. I think that was one of the reasons I was attracted to aged care, because I knew there was a shortage of males.*

*Unemployed 25*

Being looked at as favourable employees was mentioned more by male workers working in child care (n=8). This is interesting considering that child care was one of the occupations that men were not found to be entering (chapter 4). Compared to the other case study occupations, it is also the one that is overwhelmingly female dominated<sup>23</sup>. The finding supports previous research that has found that the greater the female-domination of the occupation, the greater the apparent preference for male employees (Williams 1992).

### **6.2.2 Career effect – receiving additional support**

Other career advantages included receiving additional support from managers and or co-workers. Some of this support related to undertaking particular work tasks, especially those that men are stereotypically regarded (and also regarded themselves) as being less capable of performing.

*I got a bit of help because I was horrible with changing nappies at the start, so I got a fair bit of help with that sort of thing and I wasn't very good at rocking children to sleep and patting and some of those things. You know, girls and women are brought up to be soft and nice and good with children and that sort of thing. So it's kind of a transition to jump from nothing into that.*

*Child Care Worker 1*

More commonly however, male workers received additional support with further education and training pursuits that they undertook in an effort to move from unqualified to qualified workers.

*I reckon I got – like I did all my study but in the last part of it I was working so hard that I sort of stopped studying and to get me through the study at the end the TAFE lecturers were pretty keen on coming out and helping me out a fair bit more than I think they did for anyone else. They said 'come on, we've got to get you qualified. You're qualified already basically but you need the paperwork. I'll come out and tick this stuff off for you' and so I think that helped a fair bit. They were trying to get more*

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<sup>23</sup> In 2006 men represented just 3.1 percent of the 13,188 low skilled workers aged 25-54 who were employed in this occupation.

*males into the industry and I'd been in there for so long that they wanted to filter me through and that was good for me.* *Child Care Worker 7*

*Well he's been here for about 12 years and he became qualified at the end of last year, so the previous director had got him involved in a traineeship so he's been working through – he had a lot of support and I think had he not had that support it would never have happened. I guess – this is all very confidential – he wouldn't have got through had he not had all that support as a traineeship. If he was just doing study on his own I don't believe that he would actually have achieved that and that was about just his writing skills. He can talk the leg off a chair but his ability to actually put it onto paper is quite limited.*

I: *Was it because he was a man that he got all this help?*

*I think so, yep.* *Child Care Manager 4*

Five workers and one manager said that men received additional support with education and/or training; all of these participants worked in child care. It is important to mention here that obtaining further education and training would not solely benefit workers - having more qualified workers would also benefit the organisation. As a result, it could be possible that the organisation would provide assistance with education and training pursuits to all unqualified workers, not just male workers. However, the point here is that participants said that male workers received *additional* support (to that which is offered to women) with education and/or training pursuits, as a result of them being a minority.

### **6.2.3 Career effect – opportunity for promotion**

Receiving additional support with education and/or training pursuits often resulted in the male workers progressing from being an unqualified worker to being a qualified one. In this way, the additional support male workers received contributed to career advancement within the female dominated case study occupations<sup>24</sup>. However, there were instances of male workers having more opportunities for career advancement that were unrelated to the additional support male workers received with education and/or training. It was suggested that male workers were simply more likely than women to desire and seek out opportunities for career advancement.

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<sup>24</sup> This career advancement was not necessarily accompanied by significant pay increase in the case study occupations.

*I think coming through management it's easier being a guy as opposed to a girl. We don't tend to have too many ladies leading the stores, I don't know why. I think they can do just as good a job but it just seems to be like more of a traditional sort of thing I find. Yeah they [women] tend to be more – keep to themselves, they don't really want to approach management for that sort of thing where we'll find the guys will ask – like [name] 'can I have more hours?' that sort of thing and that's – normally we're more than happy to do that for either the girls or the guys but you find the guys will approach more, yep.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 9*

Male workers themselves said that they sought out opportunities for career advancement. The desire for this advancement was often driven by men's own preference (for more hours, for more pay etc).

*Yeah I was opting out because I've always wanted to get a house but I just didn't find that there was – getting the hours behind it and then if I hadn't asked I probably wouldn't be where I am so I asked, yeah, if I was able to go permanent part-time and the manager at the time said 'look if you can wait a little longer we can organise to move you up into the ASM [Assistant Store Manager] training role' so I was lucky with that.*

*Sale Assistant Worker 5*

The identification of men's progress to more senior positions corresponds somewhat to Williams' (1992) original formulations of a 'glass escalator' operating for men working in female dominated occupations. However, unlike Williams' theory that suggested that men working in female dominated occupations face continued pressure by other occupational actors to move up in the jobs, a small number of men in this research highlighted that they themselves desired and sought out this career advancement. Indeed, the narratives above indicate that it was not the gender essentialist views held by others that resulted in male career progression, but men's own preferences (desire for career advancement, desire for increased hours and/or full-time employment, desire for more pay) that were the underlying drivers of men's desire for career progression.

#### **6.2.4 Being more accommodated in workplace practices**

Men's minority status afforded them a number of other benefits that were unrelated to employment or promotion prospects. Interviews suggested that men's minority status meant that they were more accommodated in the workplace than their female co-workers in-terms of rostering and/or receiving additional work shifts.

*The one that's just had a baby, he's come to me and said "I'm really struggling, I'm exhausted. Is there any way for me to do 4 long days and 1 day off a week" so I said yes. And a couple of them [other workers] said that they wanted to do 4 days a week, but I said no. And they might think that that's discrimination.*

*Child Care Manager 1*

*Because there aren't as many men working in this field I think that's another reason why I probably get more shifts offered to me. I know there's some women that work here that would like to get more shifts, so I think that is, once again, probably because of the lower ratio of men to women.*

*Aged Care Worker 10*

### **6.2.5 Being subjected to more relaxed rules and regulations**

Men's minority status and the desire of managers to hold onto male workers, meant that men were also subject to more relaxed rules and regulations and were said to be 'babied' by other staff.

*I think sometimes we let them get away with things that we wouldn't let other women get away with though. They get away with things, yeah, and that puts more load on the staff that are already busy and stressed, and that's probably the point I'd make.*

*Child Care Manager 4*

*Yeah I don't know, maybe we baby them a bit. They probably get away with a little bit more; we're probably a little bit softer. I guess one in particular here, if he's sick it's like 'oh God, he's got man flu, don't' – that kind of stuff, so in that way he probably gets away with a little bit more with the complaint, like 'oh I'm really sick' and it's like 'oh whatever, okay you can go home; we've had enough of listening to it'.*

*Child Care Manager 3*

The positive implications of men's minority status outlined above, largely corresponds to previous studies that point to the benefits accrued by men working in female dominated occupations in terms of receiving special treatment, career progress and greater employment prospects (Hayes 1986; Lupton 2006; Nickson and Korczynski 2009; Simpson 2004; Simpson 2005; Simpson 2009; Williams 1992; Williams 1995). However, there was an additional positive implication of men's minority status that was evident in the interview narratives that is not found in existing research in this area to date – the experience of feeling more valued.

### 6.2.6 Being more valued

Seven male workers, most of who worked in child care, reported that they experienced feeling more valued as workers as a result of being a man and their corresponding minority status.

*I'm one of 2 guys there and parents and other workers always think how great it is to have a guy there. It's nice to be told that you're doing a good job. Parents do come in and say "Oh it's great to have a young man around here" so I definitely see that side of thing. I benefit from the male side of things more than I'm disadvantaged, with all the assault and abuse and stuff.*

*Child Care Worker 1*

*For the most part it's been pretty positive. You get that compliment, "It's great to have a guy in the childcare centre, and it's great to have that other gender".*

*Child Care Worker 10*

Being more valued as a worker simply as a result of your minority status in an occupation is an interesting finding. In their discussion about past work experiences, mainly in traditional male typed employment, many of the male workers and unemployed male participants said that having their labour or work effort valued and respected was a major source of job satisfaction. The fact that some men working in female dominated jobs experience a heightened valuing of their labour, simply by virtue of being male in a mainly female area, points to a possible benefit that may increase men's willingness to enter occupations characterised by gender bias. It would be interesting to contrast this positive valuing of the minority sex with women's experience of working in a male dominated job.

Overall, both the career advancing and non-career orientated benefits accrued to men as a result of their minority status were more frequently stated by male workers (and some managers) working in child care. Child care accounted for 24 of 39 respondents who mentioned one or more benefits resulting from men's minority status. As previously indicated, child care is the most sex segregated of the case study occupations and also one in which men are making limited inroads. Eight of the 39 sources that mentioned this were participants working in sales. Sales assistants, whilst not as sex segregated as child care, is also an occupation where men were not experiencing an increasing share in employment growth. Men were less likely to report benefiting from their minority status in those occupations in which they were found to be integrating - aged care and commercial cleaning. Aged care workers

account for 4 of the 39 sources; and males working in commercial cleaning did not once identify as benefiting from their minority status.

Combined, the variation in the above findings by case study groups suggests that the less integrating the occupation - measured by men not experiencing an increase in their share of employment - the more likely male workers will benefit from their minority status. Conversely, as the occupation becomes more integrated - measured by men experiencing an increase in their share of employment - these benefits diminish, and may be non-existent in occupations where men are winning out to women.

### **6.3 Standard Labour Market Attractors**

The final set of processes that were found to contribute to men's willingness to enter occupations that are female dominated and feminised were related to standard labour market factors that attract people to occupations and jobs in general. These include such things as skills shortages, an occupation's immunity from economic downturns and positive identification with aspects of the work.

#### **6.3.1 Ease of obtaining employment**

The interviews with male workers found that a factor positively influencing men's representation in female dominated occupations was the relative ease with which men were able to secure employment within these jobs. Obtaining employment in these instances was not directly associated with being a man and their minority status, although this may have been one underlying reason for easily obtaining employment. Twenty nine male workers recounted their ease of obtaining employment in the case study occupations. For some, this meant obtaining jobs easily without relevant qualification and/or prior experience.

*So I just thought I'd volunteer at the centre, just to get the feel of it. I really enjoyed it and like I said after about 2 weeks of just a few hours each day, they offered me relief work. It was something I didn't even have to try and go for. Child Care Worker 10*

*I ended up doing 80 hours of voluntary work, sort of a few hours here and a few hours there until I sort of got the hang of it and then I started to pick up a few short shifts and then more shifts. Child Care Worker 8*

*It's just like really easy to get into really. It's not like they're never not hiring, you can always find a job somewhere. I mean you don't really – when you're young you don't really know where else to go other than retail I reckon.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 8*

For others it was the relative ease of obtaining employment after they gained relevant qualifications.

*I did two months of intensive course, which is five hours per day into two months. I did my placement here in Somerton Park. As soon as my placement was over the manager called me and told me 'you should apply here'.*

*Aged Care Worker 7*

The ease with which workers experienced obtaining employment would likely influence men positively to enter jobs characterised by gender bias; however, this would likely be viewed favourably by people in general, not just men.

The ease of obtaining employment was experienced quite evenly amongst male workers in child care, aged and disabled care and sales assistants, but was mentioned a little less by male workers in commercial cleaning.

### **6.3.2 Occupation staff shortages and immunity from economic down-turns**

Closely related to ease of obtaining employment was men's attraction to case study employment because of current staff shortages. Nine male workers (from all case study occupations) said that the occupation's need for more workers was a major factor influencing their decision to enter.

*Yeah I did come and see on the – on media they tell all the time there's jobs available in aged care and that's why I started the course.*

*Aged Care Worker 5*

*Then I just noticed one day that each Wednesday and Saturday there were like 18 jobs for cleaners, every week, so I applied to [organisation's name] and that was the first one and they got me a start. Yeah. They said in the ad 'no training necessary' so I thought, oh well, I can do that.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 4*

Some of the men additionally thought that the security these jobs afforded in terms of being rather immune from economic downturns, and offering employment opportunities now and into the future, were additional benefits of the case study occupations, and factors that influenced their decision to enter.



*Aged care, people are always going to need care so it's not like an industry that's just going to collapse and struggle; there's always demand. I think that's the other thing, it's kind of the smart people that are getting into it because it's not volatile, it's always going to be needed and as long as you're – I mean to be a domestic is pretty simple, pretty easy, anyone can do it. You don't need any qualifications and there are jobs out there now for it.*

*Aged Care Worker 9*

*When I look at it, I think I better stick to it, because that kind of place, a nursing home, they never close. 24 hours, 24/7 all year round, there's always a job. So I just hang on to it, even though to begin with they give me 1 day a week, I keep hanging on to it.*

*Child Care Worker 9<sup>25</sup>*

### **6.3.3 Difficulties obtaining employment in traditional areas**

A factor common to men (n=11) in each case study occupation was that they experienced some difficulty obtaining employment in areas in which they had traditionally worked (usually male dominated jobs). This subsequently influenced their decision to pursue alternate sources of employment in female concentrated areas.

*It got to the point where after about 18 months of not working and finding it difficult to get the kind of work I wanted I had to re-think it and that's when I thought about aged care. Someone suggested it to me and I thought – you know, it appealed to me. Working with older people had always appealed to me anyway.*

*Aged Care Worker 10*

*Yeah I never looked at it as an opportunity. I thought yeah retail's there, I'll keep that to one side and if I need it I can go there. It wasn't until there was no more avenues open in the building side of it that I thought retail is a – always unskilled; you can go in there and learn what you need to know fairly quickly.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 5*

The decision to pursue female dominated employment opportunities, as a result of difficulties in obtaining employment in traditional male areas, provides some evidence to suggest that men are willing to reduce their commitment to pieces of the essentialist package.

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<sup>25</sup> This male worked primarily as a child care worker but also undertook limited shifts in an aged care facility.

### 6.3.4 Positive Identification with Aspects of Work

The interviews, again mainly with male workers, made clear that once in female dominated jobs, men were able to positively identify with aspects of the work. Being able to derive satisfaction from intrinsic aspects of female dominated employment would likely influence men's decisions to remain in this type of employment once there<sup>26</sup>.

#### *Short hours*

Twenty one men expressed satisfaction with the short hours offered in the case study occupations for the flexibility it afforded them. Of these, 6 related their satisfaction with the short hours characteristics of employment in the case study jobs to the ability to combine work with study pursuits

*You can change shifts, you can swap them you can do – it's not so regimented and that's heaps good, yeah, especially if you want to learn something else. You've always got options and you don't feel so tied down.*

*Aged Care Worker 6*

Four males mentioned that short hours allowed them to continue to work, despite an injury or illness that precluded them from undertaking full-time work. The short hours of the work also allowed them to generate an income to supplement income support payments they received as a result of having a disability and/or illness.

*It just wasn't healing and they said 'no, you've got to get off it completely' so as I say I had three years off. I'd sort of go back just periodically but as soon as I'd go back to work it would start to break down again. So I thought well, I've got to look at doing something else, because it's just – like I want to keep working and then, as I say, this came up here so I thought I'd come and give this a try and I could sort of manage it okay and because I only do like four to five hours a day it was okay.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 3*

*Well, I did a deal with Centrelink and I had a medical certificate, and the doctor said well, I can't be on my legs all that time, so they let me work 16 hours a fortnight. It just happened my wife had been working in the cleaning business and they needed*

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<sup>26</sup> It should be noted however that the research only interviewed male workers who were currently employed in gender atypical work. There would be other workers who had tried this employment and left and who would probably respond differently.

*someone to push this scrub around so I got into that and I do 8 hours a week or 16 hours a fortnight.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 4*

For older male workers (n=5), short hours were commonly sought out and used as a way to transition into retirement.

*Another thing is retirement is a difficult thing. See I'm fairly fit and healthy and I'm not sure what I'd do in retirement. This is not something I thought up myself but during my periods of unemployment after my retrenchment, I realised 'gee, this is a tough issue, keeping yourself occupied when you're not working' because working is such a central part of your life, especially people like me who have been in the workforce for half a century. How do you get out of that rut? That's the reason I like this industry, that I can gradually slow down with less and less hours each week - I'm down to 25 - and getting used to the idea of having a lot of free time. So I'm using this as part of my plan.*

*Aged Care Worker 3*

Six male workers also stated that short hours allowed them to more effectively negotiate their work/life balance.

*You have flexibility in your work. My wife has very set working hours. As a radio stenographer she has very set office hours, so to juggle kids and do all the rest I sort of do more flexible sort of stuff, so I take more of the homebody side of it.*

*Aged Care Worker 4*

#### *Socially important work*

Another common source of job satisfaction amongst male workers was the social value of the work. Knowing they were making a difference to people was a frequent response to questions about what they liked about their job. Eighteen men mentioned that they derived satisfaction from doing socially important work; most of these workers worked in child care (n=7) and aged care (n=8).

*There must be something about me that gets satisfaction from working with people in this kind of capacity and knowing that you're making some kind of difference.*

*Aged Care Worker 10*

*Yeah it is for me. If I can give something back to this world that makes a difference, you know, I get up every day feeling good.*

*Child Care Worker 5*

### *Feeling valued as a worker*

Feeling valued as a worker and having their work effort valued was also said to be an important source of job satisfaction. This however, was not necessarily tied to them being a man, or their minority status. Sixteen men (n=2 aged care workers, n=7 child care workers, n=3 sales workers and, n=4 cleaners) identified the importance of having their work effort valued and respected.

*I'm not doing it for the money, I'm doing it because I feel I'm good at it and I feel I'm wanted and I'm an asset.*

*Child Care Worker 3*

*All my employers only had good things to say about me. I was fairly dedicated in the job I did, even to the extent now that my supervisor – area manager got me in last week, sat me down and said 'thank you, we won the top award nationally for the best shopping centre in Australia' and she said 'a lot of that was to do with your work and what you've put in and how you manage to motivate people and get them to work with you.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 7*

### *Customer contact and people work*

The most commonly reported source of job satisfaction was that derived from working with people and interacting with others.

*Dealing with people. You've got to be able to like people. You've got to be able to like yourself. If you don't like yourself, you can't like anyone else - that's my view, anyway. Yeah, the people. I enjoy the people I work with and getting out in the community.*

*Aged Care Worker 1*

*I like to work with a lot of people and all the years working here doing this, talking to new people and talking to parents and students and things like that, I like to have that social interaction.*

*Child Care Worker 10*

*I just like being around people, talking to people, stuff like that.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 1*

Twenty seven male workers mentioned interacting with people as the aspect of the job that they liked; only a few of these were male commercial cleaners. Interestingly, this same aspect of case study work was identified in the previous chapter to be something men were adverse to, and influencing their preference not to undertake the

work. However, many more men (n=27) positively identified with the customer contact and people work required in the case study jobs than were averse to it (n=16).

### *Building relationships*

For 11 male workers, the satisfaction they derived from working with people went further than simply interacting with people socially on a day to day basis; it was the ability to build relationships with customers and clients from which they derived satisfaction. Building relationships was mentioned only by males working in child care and aged care.

*I think at childcare you can form a relationship with someone. You see the same person every day, you start getting a friendship. I feel when I worked at other places, you see someone and it's all very fake and polite and the customer's always right, so it's not real. So when it becomes real and you see the same people, you can actually form a relationship.*

*Child Care Worker 1*

*It's just the relationships you build I think and the community sort of relationship that you build with these families and you become part of their family and they become part of yours, so that sort of satisfaction is more than anything you get just doing a show for some kids that you've never met or for a family that you've never met.*

*Child Care Worker 7*

### *Independence and autonomy*

For men working in commercial cleaning, it was the opposite of working with people which they desired. Working independently and autonomously was mentioned by 11 male workers, 7 of whom were commercial cleaners.

*I tend to like to work on my own.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 1*

*See I love working on my own, not with someone. I don't like anybody hanging around me or anything like that, I just like working on my own.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 11*

*One of the things I like about cleaning here is that I have a certain amount of autonomy. I'm just left alone to do my job, I'm not constantly supervised.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 10*

Having a certain amount of independence and autonomy in their work was also stated by unemployed males to be a favourable aspect of past jobs. It is interesting that of the case study occupations, the one that afforded this the most - commercial cleaning - was also an occupation that low skilled men were surpassing women in entering.

The remaining sources of job satisfaction related to the work environment; these included working as a team, the colleagues they worked with and the variety in job tasks the occupation afforded.

The above sources of job satisfaction would not be unique to males working in the case study occupations; arguably these would also be experienced positively by women. Indeed existing research generally fails to support the hypothesis that the sexes differ in terms of the job characteristics from which they derive satisfaction (Reskin 1993). However, what is important here is that, contrary to England's thesis, the evidence above suggests that men are able to overcome their fear of the feminine and identify positively with aspects of female dominated jobs. In some instances, the sources of satisfaction derived from these gender atypical jobs outweighed the low pay and low status usually afforded to workers in the case study occupations. It also points to sources of satisfaction available within these jobs that may increase men's willingness to supply their labour to jobs normatively regarded as female.

The above discussion of the labour market factors that commonly influenced men's decision to look at jobs normatively regarded as female as legitimate career options, suggests that occupational sex segregation and conversely integration can be shaped by factors that are largely unrelated to gender essentialist traits and proclivities. These include rational decisions about likelihood of employment given the current skills shortages and future labour demand in an occupation; difficulties in obtaining employment in traditional male areas; and identifying positively with aspects of the work. Such standard labour market factors are largely ignored in existing research looking at how men become integrated into female dominated occupations. This research suggests that they are likely to have an important effect. However, the fact that men do not commonly take up jobs in the expanding areas of employment (which are also female dominated) suggests that the effect of these standard labour market factors in attracting men to these jobs are muted by other processes operating to keep men out of the jobs.

## 6.4 Patterns of Men's Entry into Case Study Occupations

Discussions with male workers about how they came to obtain employment in the case study occupations yielded information which indicated there were distinct patterns of men's entry into female dominated occupations. Two different groups of men were identified, differentiated according to how they entered the case study occupation. The first group - 'seekers' - were those men who made an active choice to enter the case study occupation. The second group - 'finders' - were those men who sought out different jobs, but ended up in the case study occupation. These categories correspond to those identified by existing research on men's entry patterns into female-concentrated occupations (Simpson 2005; Williams and Villemez 1993). In addition to the two main categories, a third group emerged. Men in this group were identified as 'transients'. These men largely sought out the case study occupations with the intention that it would be temporary employment along the way to something else. The overwhelming majority of men (30) in this research were identified as finders; ten men were identified as seekers, and 6 as transients.

### 6.4.1 Seekers

Seekers were those men who had actively sought out jobs in a female dominated occupation.

*I got into the field of child care through work experience at school, in year 11, and towards the end of year 12 I considered what I was going to do for the rest of my life and I had done some voluntary work that had continued on after the work experience so I decided to keep on going working with young children. Child Care Worker 4*

It was common for these men to form their occupational preferences in opposition to traditional male typed employment to which they had been exposed.

*There wasn't anything else really unless one I wanted to go and work for One Steel. Yeah I was determined from a young kid, it was like 'I don't want to do that'. It's not that I had no respect for it, I certainly respect my dad for the work that he did there and the danger and so forth involved and the pride that he took in his work, I certainly respect all of that, but it just wasn't for me. Sale Assistant Manager 3*

Childcare, aged care and sales all had male workers who were classified as seekers; commercial cleaners did not have any. Seekers were more likely to mention that their minority status as men was beneficial to them in terms of obtaining employment, and were also more likely to have previously worked in female dominated occupation.

#### **6.4.2 Finders**

The majority (30) of male workers in the research indicated that their entry into the case study occupation was fortuitous, and largely a result of an opportunity for work that presented itself unexpectedly. Among men classified as finders, 'I fell in to it' was a very common response to questions about how they came to be in the case study occupation.

*I fell into this job basically. I started off cleaning at the child care centre with one of my girlfriends at the time, it was her job and I got into that and then from cleaning the centre the director asked me if I wanted to come and do some work during the day and I went 'yeah sure' and then I stayed there for five years. It's just one of those jobs that you fall into.*

*Child Care Worker 7*

*It's one of those things you stumble across and I went into, so I didn't see myself doing it, seeing I could never keep my own room clean at home, so – but yeah it's definitely not something I thought I'd be doing.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 9*

*I was in year 11 so it was 2003 and again one of my younger brother's friends came over, he was at our house one day, and his mum came to pick him up and my mum was talking to his mum and she happens to be a manager here at [organisation's name]. Mum was saying 'yeah, [name] is looking for a job' or they just got talking about it and she suggested it, she said 'why doesn't he submit his application to [organisation's name], at this time of year they're looking to recruit young people especially' and I said 'okay'.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 4*

Six aged care workers, 7 child care, 7 sales workers and 9 commercial cleaners were classified as finders. Finders were more likely to mention the role of 'significant others' in both influencing their decision to enter a female dominated occupation and in securing employment within these occupations. They were also more likely to mention that they had obtained employment in the case study occupations with relative ease.



### 6.4.3 Transients

Transients were those men who sought out the case study occupations with the intention that it would be temporary employment, a transition along the way to something else.

*I always look at it as I'm eventually going to get the job that I want, a career basically, and this was always going to be – like this was going to support me while I'm at school and uni. I don't think it's going to go further than what it is now. Yeah. As harsh as it might sound I wouldn't want to stay here.* Sale Assistant Worker 10

*I really feel as if like – I don't see a future there...I feel like – they know that anyway. I just feel as soon as uni is out the way I can get that job that's going to move me on.* Sales Assistant Worker 11

All six men that indicated that they would leave their jobs in female dominated occupations were aged 25 years and below, and had worked (i.e. are currently unemployed) or currently work in sales.

Unsurprisingly, transients were more likely to identify positively with the casual hours the case study jobs offered as it allowed them to combine work with study pursuits.

While the male sales assistants in this research commonly indicated that employment was transitional, Canny (2002) suggests a potential shift in the attitudes of young men towards retail as an employing sector, as a result of their experience of working in the sector as students. She suggests that retailers may target students who are currently working part-time to be potential managers in the future. In this way, jobs that have traditionally been seen as transitional may now, in fact, facilitate upward mobility once students have completed their studies, such that it may now be considered by students as a sector with good employment prospects.

The patterns of entry into female dominated occupations identified above largely correspond to existing research that has sought to trace the dynamics of men's entry into gender atypical work (Simpson 2005; Williams and Villemez 1993). However, it is questionable that these entry patterns would be distinctive to men entering female dominated occupations. Arguably, most people (independent of the occupation in which they are entering, and/or their sex) would be able to be grouped into similar

analytical categories according to how they came to be in their occupation. Indeed, the predominance of serendipitous entry routes (finders) is not surprising, given that very few people have a clear idea or map out their career for the rest of the lives. Moreover, the entry patterns tell us very little about why it is that some men enter female dominated jobs while the majority do not. They provide no understanding of the circumstances under which men are able to take jobs that are normatively regarded as women's; such understandings are crucial. It is only by understanding the processes that affect men's willingness and ability to undertake female dominated jobs, that new ideas about how to better reengage economically displaced men with jobs in areas of rising employment are able to be generated.

## **Conclusion**

The chapter has detailed a number of processes that operate on the supply side of the labour market to facilitate men's integration into female dominated occupations. Many of these processes were found to moderate and reduce the impact of gender essentialist exclusion. Men were able to re-cast the gender atypical employment so that it was in line with their male identities, interests and proclivities. This suggests that gender essentialisms' operation in reducing men's willingness to enter gender atypical jobs (identified in Chapter 5) is not insurmountable.

It was also found however, that gender essentialism itself had an integrative function, with many aspects of case study employment being compatible with male essentialism. This suggests that gender essentialism does not always operate in segregative ways, as is usually suggested by scholars of gender stratification.

Importantly however, the processes, while facilitating men's integration into gender atypical jobs, were found in the main to actually reinforce male gender essentialism, and result in gender segmentation within female dominated occupations. However, it is these kinds of male-dominated areas within gender atypical occupations that are likely to provide the key routes back into employment for low skilled unemployed and economically inactive men. It is doubtful though that these areas of the case study occupations will be large enough to absorb the growing number of low skilled unemployed and economically inactive men.

Other processes were also found to operate that were unrelated to gender essentialism and/or its moderation. Men working in female dominated occupations

are afforded a number of benefits - in terms of being looked at as favourable job applicants, receiving additional support, being subject to more relaxed rules and regulation and being overtly appreciated by bosses and clients - as a result of their minority status. Men, if aware of these benefits, may be more willing to supply their labour to jobs characterised as female.

Even though the chapter questions the relevance of entry patterns, the prevalence of serendipitous entry routes among the male workers suggests that men are largely unaware of these advantages, prior to entry into female dominated occupations.

It was also shown that standard labour market factors contributed to men's willingness to enter occupations that are female dominated and feminised. These labour market factors are likely to attract people in general to occupations and jobs, not just men. These include rational decisions about the likelihood of employment given the current and future labour demands in an occupation, difficulties in obtaining employment in traditional male areas, and positive identification with aspects of the work. This suggests that occupational sex integration can be shaped by factors unrelated to gender essentialist traits and proclivities. Standard labour market factors and benefits accrued to minority workers are likely to have an important effect on men's integration into female dominated occupations. However, the fact that men do not commonly take up jobs in the expanding area of employment (which are also female dominated) suggests that for a majority of men, the integrative effect of these standard labour market factors are muted by other processes operating to keep men out of the jobs.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN: Determinants of Low Skilled Men's Exclusion from Female Dominated Jobs: Demand Side Mechanisms**

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### **Introduction**

The previous chapters have focused on the mechanisms that operate on the supply side of the labour market to both produce and reduce occupational sex segregation. However, we know from existing sociological research that various processes are also likely to operate on the demand side of the labour market to produce, reproduce and maintain occupational sex segregation. Despite this, current theorising about the cause of men's limited movement into female dominated occupations rests largely on supply side logic; namely, theorists suggest that men themselves choose not to enter female dominated jobs. There is currently limited empirical research to test whether or not the segregation that is observed does arise principally on the supply side. This chapter provides such an examination. Drawing on interviews with managers and clients within the case study occupations, it details demand side mechanisms that operate to produce and maintain occupational sex segregation, particularly that which is caused by men's limited movement into female dominated jobs.

It is shown that there are indeed processes that operate on the demand side of the labour market that exclude men from case study employment or at least limit their representation in gender atypical jobs. Similar to supply side processes, many of these demand side processes were related to gender essentialism and its operation. While current theorising does not posit demand side gender essentialism to cause men's limited movement into female dominated occupations, in many instances the operation of gender essentialism is consistent with existing knowledge. In some however, its operation differed, and prompts a rethink of what gender essentialism is commonly conceptualised as encompassing.

Other demand side exclusionary mechanisms were unrelated to gender essentialism, and were more about labour market processes that were found to segregate on the basis of sex. These include recruitment sources, discrimination and managers' employment practices. These processes are likely to be found in any sex segregated labour market and impact on both men and women. This chapter focuses on highlighting how these segregative labour market processes operate for men to limit their movement into female dominated occupations.

The chapter provides evidence that suggests, contrary to current theorising, there are demand side exclusionary practises that operate for men at the lower end of the Australian labour market that limits their ability to gain and sustain employment in gender atypical jobs. In doing so, new understandings about why men do not enter female dominated occupations are provided.

## **7.1 Gender essentialist exclusionary practice and its varieties**

Gender essentialism was central to many of the processes that operate on the demand side of the labour market to produce and maintain occupational sex segregation, particularly that caused by men's limited movement into female dominated jobs. The chapter begins by detailing the various ways in which gender essentialism operates on the demand side of the labour market to exclude men from jobs in female dominated occupations.

### **7.1.1 Gender essentialist notion of appropriate jobs for men and women**

One way gender essentialism would be expected to operate on the demand side of the labour market to produce occupational sex segregation, would be by employers and clients being influenced by the same gender essentialist notions of what sex is appropriate for what jobs (as shown in Chapter 5) to lead men to construct the case study occupations as female appropriate work. For the purposes of this research it would be expected that managers and clients associate the tasks undertaken in the case study occupations, with women. More than this, it would be expected that they would position male workers in opposition to these jobs, because they are men.

The interviews with managers and clients within the case study occupations indicated that gender essentialism indeed operates in this way. Many managers and clients drew from gender essentialist notions of gendered appropriate jobs, and constructed the case study occupations as female appropriate work, and positioned men in opposition to the work. However, there were two ways in which they did this.

At one level it was found that managers and clients viewed men to lack a set of natural abilities that they perceived to be central to case study employment. More than this, managers and clients viewed women as being naturally in possession of these skills and therefore viewed case study employment as appropriate for women.

*I guess it's something that men are not naturally given to. Even male nurses in hospitals are still quite a minority.* Aged Care Manager 7

*I know it might be archaic, but women are the cleaners, men are the hunters and gathers. So yeah, a man going to clean the toilet would just be horrifying.*

Commercial Cleaning Manager 4

*I think it's a cultural thing, that men are hunters and gatherers, they're not sort of seen to be – then again not to be demeaning but seen to be in the service industry, to be servants as such. I don't know, the generic makeup might be different as well but quite possibly women are made up to – genetically to be more attentive because – yeah, well through bearing children and all that sort of stuff and being mothers and all that sort of thing; I think that's part of it.* Sales Assistant Manager 5

Grusky and co-authors do not view the demand side operations of gender essentialism as causing men's limited movement into female dominated occupations. However, this is how we would expect gender essentialism to operate on the demand side of the labour market to exclude men from female dominated jobs according to their conceptual schema. Namely, employers and clients would position men and women to have innately different skills, and associate the tasks undertaken within the case study occupations with women's essential abilities.

However, at another level it was found that managers and clients thought that men and women bring different skills to the jobs, but these skills were not necessarily seen as essentially male or female in quite the way dominant theorising about gender essentialism suggests. In these instances, managers and clients simply perceived that women (and men) have different skills arising from their different life experiences, and it is this that makes women more suited to the case study occupations.

For example, in response to questions about why men are not commonly found in the case study occupations, managers and clients sometimes stated that the work women have traditionally undertaken in the private sphere (usually for no pay), equips them with skills that are more conducive to the work tasks undertaken in the case study occupations. It was these life experiences which were thought to make women better suited to employment within the case study occupations.

*Well it probably stems from the fact that say seven out of 10 women usually have kids so they're primed for that role. They've been brought up – I don't know so much about this generation but mum did the cooking, mum did the cleaning, mum wiped our noses, mum potty trained us, and it's like an extension of that. When you're a child you're bald, toothless, you're in nappies and now you're getting older and the same thing is happening to you. Females have got that knowledge before they even do a carer's course, they've got that changing nappies, hanging out washing; it just comes naturally to them.*

*Aged Care Worker 8*

*I think it comes from this gender thing. Men can't take care of this, females are responsible for the cleanliness of the house, keeping it nice, that's a female job. Females have to be doing cleaning and therefore females should be better at cleaning than males.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 3*

This latter gender typing of jobs is a much weaker form of gender essentialism than that of the former. In these examples, the case study occupations were not linked to women's innate or natural skills but to their particular life experiences that results in them acquiring different skills that are better suited to case study employment.

Whichever the operation, the sex typing of the work as women's resulted in men being overlooked or not consider as appropriate employees in the case study occupations. Thirty five respondents aligned the case study occupations with 'women's work' in gender essentialist ways. While people in each case study occupation mentioned this, they were expressed much more by clients and managers in the 'care' case study occupations (aged care n=13 and child care n=10).

#### *Contributing to client's preference for female workers*

The gender essentialist notions of appropriate jobs for men and women and the construction of the case study work as 'women's' also contributed to client preferences, and/or managers' perceptions of client preferences, not to have male workers.

*And even the older males tend to want a female, because they see that as traditional, normal.*

*Aged Care Manager 4*

*And I think with the male clients that it is more a generation thing that they see it as a female role.*

*Aged Care Manager 7*

*We had a male who worked with babies, worked fantastically with babies, and that took a lot of us to discuss with particular parents to say 'hey he is a great worker, give him an opportunity, give him a chance' because they think 'no, it's more a female environment, this is what it should be'.*

*Child Care Manager 2*

Male workers themselves recounted experiences of clients refusing to have them provide a service due to the client's belief that it was 'women's work'.

*We used to have a client in [location], who is no longer with us, he's deceased, and when I first went in there with another male worker and he said 'I don't want you' and I asked why and he said 'This is women's work'. That was his perception. I said 'No it's not, I'm quite capable as any women of cooking, cleaning, washing, giving you a shower, what makes me any different?'*

*Aged Care Worker 1*

*I've had clients say to me straight out that cleaning is not a man's job and I shouldn't be doing it. You know, 'you shouldn't be cleaning the kitchen, you shouldn't be cooking for us, that's not a man's job' and comments like that. I say to them 'well, I go home and do the cleaning and the cooking, so what's the difference?'*

*Aged Care Worker 4*

Clients' preference for female workers had the effect of reducing the demand for male workers within the case study occupations.

*There's not a lot of opportunity for them because a lot of the clients want females.*

*Aged Care Manager 4*

*On the whole the aged group of clients seem to prefer females. Even the male clients prefer female carers.*

*Aged Care Manager 7*

*Contributing to the jobs not presented as legitimate career options by others*

It was also found that gender essentialist notion of appropriate jobs for men and women held by significant others resulted in the case study occupations not being presented as legitimate male employment options by significant others. Recall, a major factor facilitating men's entry into gender atypical employment was having the case study occupations presented as legitimate by significant others (see Chapter 6). Not having these occupations exposed as legitimate career opportunities limited men's representation in them. Eleven respondents thought that not having the case



study occupations presented as legitimate employment options limited men's representation within them.

*I'd always had an interest in working with children but it wasn't, when I was at school, one of those career options put forward on counselling days. It's not really considered a career option. When you're sitting there with your career counsellor at school if you did an aptitude test probably child care wouldn't be on it so I didn't really pursue it.*

*Child Care Manager 6*

*There's no push by TAFEs or anything to encourage males to go into retail unless – the thing to me would be unless you're gay you don't go into a retail environment except, like I said, if it's a pub or a bouncer or something like that. The system from high school, does not start a male – or doesn't condition a male to at least open eyes left and right and say 'hey there are some other options out there rather than just doing a trade or just going into some professional work, there's service industries all around the shop'.*

*Sales Assistant Manager 5*

One could interpret the limited representation of men in female dominated occupations that is caused by gender atypical jobs not being presented as legitimate career options to men by others, to be a supply side determinant of men's exclusion. According to this view, men themselves would actively choose not to undertake the work, as the jobs would be illegitimate for them as men and male workers. However, it is made clear above that men are not complicit in the decision to view these jobs as legitimate or not. Employment within them was simply never presented to men as a choice to consider. As eloquently stated by one interview respondent:

*No I don't think it's that they choose not to, I think they just don't consider it. Like so it's not really an actual choice.*

*Sales Assistant Client 4*

### **7.1.2 Preference for female essentialist attributes**

Another way gender essentialism would be expected to operate on the demand side of the labour market to produce and maintain occupational sex segregation would be by employers and clients displaying a preference for skills and traits that are commonly associated with essentialist notions of femininity.

Consistent with existing research investigating the skills and capabilities desired by employers in the growing lower level services sector (Kerfoot and Korczynski 2005; Nickson and Korczynski 2009), it was found that many of the traits managers and

clients looked for in employees were those that are commonly associated with women or more precisely, essentialist notions of femininity. Moreover, many of these attributes were considered to be innate, being either present or not, in a person.

*I think you can train the selling to a degree and you can train the retail but you can't train the character, the character's in the person.* Sales Assistant Manager 5

*Happy, social, personable, friendly*

By far the most common attribute employers and clients desired in employees were high competency in social skills. This included being a happy, social and friendly person who likes working with people.

*Okay the profile for a retail person: One they've got to like people; you can't have the introverted types who would rather not be face to face with people, so that's key aspect number one. Number two you're looking for somebody who is a happy person because we've all walked into stores and fronted people who are clearly not happy to be there and instantly the atmosphere in the place –we have to get it right so happy people are important. I guess attitude and social skills are important, both from dealing with existing staff members and dealing with the public as well. Personality and the attitude are the key things you try to recruit because in our game the rest of it you can train in a year or so.* Sales Assistant Manager 1

*If the person has the right attitude, which is happy, helpful, friendly, I can teach them the rest, I can teach them retail, that's not an issue. As long as they have that personality of wanting to help. If you're working with people you have to love it and you have to enjoy what you're doing so that the customer can have a good experience.* Sales Assistant Manager 2

It was found that managers and clients perceived women, more than men, to embody the social skills that they desired.

*You need people skills, you need communication skills and you just need the openness, the friendliness, which I don't see a lot of the guys having.* Sales Assistant Manager 3

*Well I expect them to be polite and helpful. I suppose I do tend to find women are probably a bit more chatty than men and I think that's probably more by nature, I don't know.* Sales Assistant Client 4

Thirty one respondents said that they desired high level social skills in employees. A large number of these respondents were located in the sales assistant occupation (n=14); the remaining 17 respondents were quite evenly distributed across the other three case study occupations.

#### *Appearance and presentation*

Employers and clients also placed emphasis on qualities such as personal presentation, physical appearance, and personal grooming.

*They have to be tidy, clean, you know ironed shirt. We're more particular on the day cleaning staff than we are of the night cleaning staff because they're not in the public view.*

*Commercial Cleaning Client 4*

*Yeah they've certainly got to look the part and there are different standards in different areas of the business. I mean guys over in the trade yard can get away with being a bit scruffy and rougher and that almost makes them fit the part whereas say somebody selling the display bathroom ware we've got there, they have to be very well presented.*

*Sales Assistant Manager 1*

*She's only four foot nothing, long hair, braces, just lovely smile on her and it's yep I want to have this person on board. So I suppose I'm looking from a customer point of view but I'm also looking from a store point of view. You've got to scrub up and look your best sort of thing and when dealing with more people, dealing with the customers.*

*Sales Assistant Manager 3*

Again, it was thought that women were more likely than men to present themselves appropriately for case study employment.

*I think a greater proportion of women are able to present themselves appropriately for retail.*

*Sales Assistant Client 1*

*The lad that I hired about six months for dock work, he comes to work, his shirt's untucked, it's not ironed. He's got this skew whiff looking tie and he's got a bit of a surfie sort of hairdo and that's - yeah and that's the way he comes to work and that's why we didn't consider him for something out on the shop floor. If he's going to go out on the shop floor he's got to lift his presentation standard.*

*Sales Assistant Manager 3*

Thirteen respondents mentioned the importance of appearance and presentation in employees; these respondents were evenly distributed between the cleaning and sales case study occupations. It is interesting that respondents from commercial cleaning held these concerns about appearance and presentation. The desire for employees with good presentation and appearance in cleaning was particularly important for day cleaners in high public flow areas (such as shopping centres); however, it will be shown that day cleaners are more likely to be women.

The importance of appearance and presentation for workers in low level service sector jobs has only recently begun to receive attention by academics. This research has explored a form of labour in low level service work which has been subsequently termed 'aesthetic labour' (Nickson and Korczynski 2009; Nickson, Warhurst, Cullen, and Watt 2003; Nickson, Warhurst, Witz, and Cullen 2001). Essentially such labour is '...a supply of embodied capacities and attributes possessed by workers at the point of entry into employment. Employers then mobilise, develop and commodify these capacities and attributes through processes of recruitment, selection and training, transforming them into 'competences' and 'skills' which are then geared towards producing a 'style' of service encounter deliberately intended to appeal to the sense of customers, most obviously in a visual or aural way. Although analytically more complex, "looking good" or "sounding right" are the most overt manifestations of aesthetic labour' (Nickson et. al 2003:185).

People who lack work, such as low skilled men who have been shifted out of the labour market due to economic restructuring, are disproportionately disadvantaged in meeting the presentation and appearance requirements desired by employers and clients in the growing low level feminised services sector. This is because employment is the central means by which financial income is generated, which in turn provides the means to purchase the goods and services that are the prerequisites for good appearance and presentation, such as clothing, personal hygiene products, haircuts, dental services etc. Therefore, reduced finances resulting from unemployment also reduces a person's capacity to purchase the goods and services to maintain and improve appearance and presentation.

## *Caring*

In aged care and child care, clients and managers desired people who had a genuine interest in caring for others.

*I can think of a word, and I think that it's people that care, you know a caring people that really have feelings about people and they're able to care for that person and really mean it and then move on to the next person.*

*Aged Care Client Focus Group 2 Participant*

*Putting the interests of the child first is a really important. We deal with people who are considered vulnerable so you really need to have a strong ethics for caring and you need to be able to think about why you do it.*

*Child Care Manager 6*

Again, managers and clients thought women were more caring than men.

*You assume anyone coming into the role or coming in for an interview wants to care. They want to share, that's a part of their nature, that's why they're there.*

*I: And do you think women more commonly have that caring nature than men?*

*That's a hard generalisation, but it seems that that's my experience, yes.*

*Aged Care Manager 5*

*I'd need a mum there, yeah. I guess growing up dads weren't the sole carers, it was the mums and I guess that just follows through. I mean dads don't have that nurturing nature – that's generalising but a lot of dads don't have that.*

*Child Care Client 2*

The ability to genuinely care for another was also perceived to be something that was innate in a person.

*The art of caring, how do you define it? You can teach skills, but how do you define that art?*

*Aged Care Manager 4*

Twelve respondents (mainly managers and clients from child care and aged care case study occupations) had a desire for employees to have a genuine interest in caring for others.

It is clear from the above discussion that the skills and attributes most valued and desired in the gender atypical case study occupations – social intelligence, looking good and sounding right, caring – are consistent with essentialist notions of femininity or at a minimum, not predominantly associated with men, particularly low skilled working class men. Also, the skills and attributes that employers and clients see as desirable in employees are largely demand side reflections of what the gender essentialist logic positions women as being naturally able to supply to jobs. Indeed, we see above that many clients and managers explicitly positioned women to embody these skills and attributes more than men. There were also no contrary views expressed in the interviews - i.e. no managers or clients regarded men as being more likely to embody these skills and attributes than women.

### **7.1.3 Gender essentialism and the belief that women are better**

Another obvious way gender essentialism would operate on the demand side of the labour market to exclude men from case study employment would simply be by managers and clients internalising the gender essentialist logic that presumes that women are more suited than men for work requiring service, nurturance and interpersonal interaction and, as a result, viewing women as better or more capable employees in the case study occupations than men. Interviews with managers and clients suggest that in some instances this was indeed the case.

Eight managers and clients, distributed evenly between the case study occupations, believed that women do a better job or that men are just not as capable as women in undertaking the case study work. This resulted in managers being reluctant to employ men, and clients being reluctant to receive a service from a male worker.

*I don't see myself as good and as patient as a person, in terms of caring for [son's name], as [mum's name] is and I'd naturally assume that other men would be the same. So I think just because you're a professional carer or whatever, and you're a bloke, doesn't necessarily mean you're as good as my wife would be.*

*Child Care Client 4*

*Women are much better. Much, much better. I prefer a husband and wife; it's like a positive and a negative. The woman is a positive and the guy falls a little bit behind and that's 99% of the time. I'd probably have a guy doing the heavy work, but when it's office work, where you've got to pick things up and dust, women are much better.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 1*

Combined, the above discussions illustrate various ways in which gender essentialism operates to reduce the demand for men in female dominated occupations. These primarily relate to managers' and clients' perceptions that men lack, or women are more likely to have, a set of (gendered) abilities or traits that they view as central to work in the case study occupations.

This is how gender essentialism is conceptualised to operate in existing understandings. However, there are other gender essentialist processes that operate to reduce the demand for male workers in female dominated occupations, that are not related to a set of abilities or proclivities that men lack, but are actually related to a set of (gendered) abilities or proclivities that men are assumed to have which makes them unsuitable for these jobs.

#### **7.1.4 Gender essentialism and the threat posed by men**

Thirteen respondents thought that men have (inherent) characteristics that make them more dangerous, and it is this risk, or threat, that makes men unsuitable for case study employment.

##### *Sexual deviancy*

The most common trait that was said to reduce the demand for men in female dominated occupations was the risk posed by the possibility of men's sexual deviancy. Ten respondents attributed their preference not to have male workers to their concerns over men's sexual motivations for undertaking the work and/or fear of sexual abuse from male workers.

*There was, there was one [man] and I was always a bit wary about it. I don't know if this is the right thing to say but what instantly springs to mind is paedophiles. I don't know whether that's common but that's what instantly – what do they want?*

*Child Care Client 2*

*My immediate perception is that there's got to be something wrong, or weird, or sexual, like 'Oh that's a bit weird, why would a grown man want to hang around young kids?'*

*Child Care Client 5*

*I don't want that, cos they're in an office situation and there's girls bending into a desk while they're doing it, you can't afford to have that risk. If it makes me uncomfortable it's going to make other women uncomfortable.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 5*

These concerns were particularly heightened when the work involved interaction with children. The majority of respondents (n= 6 out of 10) that expressed concerns over men's sexual motivations, or feared sexual abuse from male workers, were from the child care case study.

Even in jobs such as commercial school cleaning, the thought that men inherently posed a risk of sexual abuse was found to reduce the demand for male workers.

*I would rather employ women in the schools, than men. That is mostly because I don't want to have any problems. Males with the young girls there and all that, they have to clean the toilets and things like that, so it can be a bit of a risk that you're taking. In my eyes I would employ more women for schools.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 3*

The concern over men's sexual motivation and the risk they pose when working with children was so pervasive it also spilt over into the public sphere.

*I think it's really sad that often when we see men with children, we initially think 'oh are they okay?' or 'what's he doing with them?' and that's sad. And I do it myself I see a screaming child being dragged along by a male – if it's by their mum in a supermarket you're not so worried but if you see them with a man it's 'should I say something?' so you just watch and if it's a female you go 'oh the poor woman, her daughter's giving her a really hard time'.*

*Child Care Client 3*

### *Uncomfortableness*

A few participants (3) stated that their preference not to have a male worker was a result of how uncomfortable or embarrassed this would make them feel. For some this was to do with issues of modesty and how having a male worker would compromise this.

*I was told that my usual carer was coming one night, um, and when the time came I went to answer the door, and I called to her to come in as she usually does, and it wasn't her, and uh so I went to the door and it was a man, never seen him before,*



*haven't heard of him before, and he said I've come to check visit, which is because I was dressed and I get undressed with the carer and um take shoes and things off which I can't bend down to do, so I said come in, he said what do they usually do, I said undress me but just undo that button at the back there will you please. Brought up in modesty, you know, in all these years and it's embarrassing. So uh, he just stayed ten minutes and chatted away to make me comfortable and easy but I did my own dressing that night, and I was very embarrassed about it.*

*Aged Care Client Focus Group 2 Participant*

For others it was the uncomfortableness associated with being perceived as ignorant or stupid when purchasing items that men were presumed to be more knowledgeable about.

*I must admit I sometimes go to a local [name] store and I like them because the staff there are – they have got a lot of female workers there and I'm a single female and I often find that I am more comfortable to ask them a hardware question than I would a bloke that might think I'm an idiot or something. So I must admit I do go there for that reason.*

*Sales Assistant Client 1*

The above highlights the process by which (gendered) traits that men are presumed to have - risk of sexual abuse, knowledge or expertise - position men as posing a threat in gender atypical work environments, particularly when the service being provided in that environment is usually received by women or vulnerable groups. While these traits are not ones which are generally considered when thinking about gender essentialism, they are absolutely gendered. Men are positioned as the more dangerous sex being inherently more capable of sexual assault and/or abuse or to a lesser extreme, making the other sex feel inadequate or uncomfortable. In this way they can be viewed as a kind of gender essentialism, but not one that constructs men as lacking abilities to work in gender atypical environments but one that constructs men as possessing (essential) characteristics that make them dangerous in gender atypical environment, particularly those where interaction with women and children are likely.

Overall it has been shown above that gender essentialism operates in a variety of ways on the demand side of the labour market to exclude men from, or at least make their employment problematic in, female dominated occupations. However, the power of the above various operations of gender essentialism in shaping managers'

and clients' preferences not to have male workers, or to desire female workers, was found to vary according to a number of factors. These included the environment in which the service was being provided, the tasks that were being undertaken, and the type of men who were to provide the service. I turn now to consider how each of these factors influenced the power of demand side gender essentialist exclusionary practices.

#### **7.1.5 Gender essentialism's operation in particular environments**

Managers' and clients' preference not to have male workers was found to be dependent on the environment in which the service was being provided. Twenty five managers and clients, evenly distributed between case study occupations, said that they preferred not to have male workers in particular environments within the case study occupations.

For example, in aged care, managers' and clients' preference not to have a male worker was largely associated with the risk of sexual abuse from male workers and/or the uncomfortableness experienced by someone receiving care. However, this preference varied according to the location in which the care was being provided. Receiving care from a male worker in a person's own home was much more of a concern than receiving care from a male worker in institutional settings such as hospitals.

*When I've been in hospital I've had male nurses and think nothing about it but in my home it just seems a bit different, silly I suppose but it does seem different.*

*Aged Care Client Focus Group 1 Participant*

*Often female clients who have been in hospital a lot are not fussed by a male worker because they are used to it. In hospital you get different people every day and a lot of those are male. People who have never been in hospital or have just been at home are quite reluctant to have a man coming in and showering them.*

*Aged Care Manager 7*

In child care, the preference not to have male workers was largely a result of managers' and clients' suspicions of men's sexual motivation for undertaking the work and/or the risk of sexual abuse. However, this suspicion was clearly less of an issue in institutional based care settings compared to home based care settings.

*I mean if the man is working in a child care centre they've obviously had to go through all of the security checks and the health checks, police checks and whatever else, so I kind of feel confident if they were employed by a child care centre that they'd passed all of that stuff. If it was not in that environment - I probably would feel differently if it was a nanny because you don't necessarily have that level of assurance that they've passed all those checks and balances but in a professional child care centre - if I trusted the centre and trusted the centre's director I don't think I'd have a problem with that.*

*Child Care Client 4*

In commercial cleaning, clients and managers had a preference not to have males working in particular areas. These areas were usually female dominated spaces or spaces where men were not considered appropriate or where women were perceived to be more capable and/or competent.

*Obviously for a lady cleaner to come into a men's toilet and say 'oh it's just the cleaner, just checking, that's okay' whereas a male comes in 'excuse me ladies - oh sorry ladies I'm just waiting for it to be empty to clean' and they get all etchy about it and the guy feels awkward about it. So I find that especially with elderly people, you know, they don't like a male coming in.*

*Commercial Cleaning Client 5*

*There might be a lot of women around and they don't want guys. They might have had a sexual harassment problem, that's happened, where we have just had only women there. It was actually a block of surgeries for women and they must have had an issue or something because they said they'd prefer women and we said that was no problem and just got women.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 1*

Clients and managers also preferred female workers in high public flow areas as they were considered to be more approachable than male workers.

*I find that men, they have issues with being out in a busy mall when someone's saying 'excuse me sir I've just made a spill sorry' and they find it hard to be - to take that on board and go 'yeah no worries, that's what I'm here for' whereas they're better out in the car park where when no-one's around they get their head down, bum up and they get stuck into it. So I think in that sense - and I think the public are more likely to approach a lady cleaner to say 'excuse me where's the toilets?' or 'there's no toilet paper' whereas a man can be a bit more confrontational and they just think 'I won't say anything'.*

*Commercial Cleaning Client 5*

Male commercial cleaners themselves thought that they were excluded from particular areas within commercial cleaning.

*I used to work there before during the day as a – during the day, floor – a cleaner during the day, but their policy over there – and it's a bad policy – where males are not allowed to go in female toilets and you'll find – and it's not just only there, I know a lot of places where that happens. Male cleaners are not allowed to go in female toilets but it's all right for females to go in the male toilets so what's the difference?*

Commercial Cleaning Worker 11

*It's hard for men in that way because they don't want men on the floor during the day in certain jobs.*

Commercial Cleaning Worker 5

*Some of the buildings I've been in it's been just all women staff, clients on the floor, so they just wanted a female and that was it. They said they didn't want males or anything.*

Commercial Cleaning Worker 6

Finally, in sales, clients had a preference not to receive a service from male workers in certain types of retail environments, usually clothing. This preference was largely driven by the embarrassment they would experience if served by male workers.

*See clothing's very intimate because you go in there and you've got insecurities about your body and you're trying on clothes and quite often the sales assistant will come and help you with sizes and stuff like that and I don't know that I'd feel comfortable with a man in that situation. Yeah. I don't want to be trying on a bra in front of a man and having him fit me obviously for something personal like that.*

Sales Assistant Client 4

It also resulted from the association of the provision of these services with roles undertaken in the private sphere, usually by women.

*If I was buying something like underwear or something like that I'd probably prefer a female to serve me. I don't know why; I don't know why. I suppose it's also because when you're growing up as a kid your mum handles all of that stuff and your dad would never purchase those items or even care about those items. So as a male you're just used to – it seems to be ordinary to be served by a female for those items whereas it would be a little unusual for a male to serve you for those items.*

Sales Assistant Client 2

This preference not to receive a service from male workers in particular retail environments meant that men were limited in the areas of retail in which they could work.

*Females can work anywhere and the guys are a little bit restricted in where the company is comfortable to put them.* Sales Assistant Manager 3

Despite this quote, we would expect this gender preference in retail to go both ways; e.g., men would be preferred in hardware, sport shops, car sales – areas that cater for men’s interests/competence - and women would be preferred in clothing, baby goods, beauty products etc. - areas that cater for women’s essentialist interests. The point is that gender essentialism operates to confine men, and women, to certain spaces within retail - but women are more able to move between different areas within retail due to essentialist notions of femininity (servicing and catering to the needs of others) that operate to construct women to be more suitable for this work, in any area.

#### **7.1.6 Gender essentialism and men doing certain tasks**

Closely related to the preference not to have men working in particular environments was clients’ and managers’ preference not to have male workers undertaking particular tasks. Thirteen respondents, mainly from the aged and child care case study occupations, said that they had a preference not to have male workers doing certain tasks. This was overwhelmingly driven by clients’ demands and managers’ attempts to meet these demands.

In aged care this usually related to clients not wanting to receive personal care services from a male worker, particularly showering.

*I won't have a man shower me.* Aged Care Client Focus Group 1 Participant

*I've had a man clean the house for about six months, he was extremely good. Um, but unfortunately he went on to become a carer. Um, I was quite happy having him clean. I don't know how I'd feel about having a male carer.*

Aged Care Client Focus Group 2 Participant

Again, male workers themselves found that they were excluded from doing certain tasks, particularly those involving personal care.

*Females here, for example, who would specifically ask for a female to attend to them, especially when it comes to showering and things like that. Otherwise with regular activities, they're okay feeding and things.*

*Aged Care Worker 7*

In child care, clients requested that male workers were not involved in changing children's nappies and or toileting activities.

*If it's changing children, in terms of toilet training and nappy changing, we have had parents that have requested for those particular workers not to participate in those care giving skills. That's pretty big for males wanting to come into the scenario when you're trying to treat them as an equal.*

*Child Care Manager 2*

Again, male child care workers themselves believed that they were excluded from undertaking these care activities.

*A lot of parents, when they first come into our room and see there's a guy in there, they simply say 'I don't want him to change my child's nappies, I don't want him to assist with toileting, I don't want this, I don't want that, I don't want my child near him'.*

*Child Care Worker 6*

### **7.1.7 Gender essentialism and the construction of appropriate male workers**

Finally it was found that managers' and clients' preference not to have male workers was dependent on the type of male providing the service. Twelve respondents, clients and managers from each case study group, said that they would prefer not to have a certain type of man provide a service.

In aged care, this was primarily related to the ethnicity of the male worker. In general, carers from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) were more of a concern than white western care workers. Combined with being a man, NESB male care workers were perceived very unfavourably.

*I'd been here about 3 months I suppose and they used to shower me and anyway I went in the shower to get ready and there was a big black negro came in. Well had they told me I wouldn't have cared cos I know he'd have been a nurse or a male nurse probably, at the time, but oh, I just about fainted.*

*Aged Care Client Focus Group 1 Participant*

*I had a male nurse come in for what I call a back rub and I didn't take any notice but he was an older man and had been doing for years, where some times when you get like an Asian person come in, you're not sure...you think about it more I suppose.*

*I: So when you said you get an Asian person, is that an Asian female or an Asian male?*

*Asian male.*

*I: What about an Asian female, would you care about that?*

*No that wouldn't bother me. Aged Care Client Focus Group 1 Participant*

In child care, the preference not to have certain types of male workers was primarily associated with the age and appearance of the male workers. Clients and managers were much more comfortable about having young, attractive male child care workers. By contrast, a middle aged man of average appearance was viewed unfavourably.

*Because of the way he looks. Because he's a bit young and funky. But there's plenty of other men who by their physical appearance I would think 'Hmm that's a bit odd' and that's really wrong, even if you later called yourself up and thought that he was actually an alright guy. Child Care Client 5*

*With our other male at [organisation name], he's not unattractive, but he's not young and handsome like these fellows. And there are some people who are like 'who's that man?' and that don't feel comfortable having him around their children. So we try not to place him with anyone who's going to be uncomfortable. Child Care Manager 1*

In sales, it was again age that influenced the types of male workers that were considered appropriate or not. However, in sales, clients and managers desired older workers who they perceive to be less intimidating and more experienced and knowledgeable about products.

*I find older people are less intimidating. Like I do find women less intimidating in certain situations and I also find older men less intimidating in a sense.*

*Sales Assistant Client 1*

*I can't remember what it was I was buying but I was buying something of significance and it was – you know, this 19 year old bloke trying to sell it to me and I just – it's horrible but I just didn't have any faith in that person because I just didn't feel like they could possibly know as much as they were claiming to know.*

*Sales Assistant Client 4*

The above discussion highlights how gender essentialist exclusionary practices operate more powerfully in particular areas within the case study occupations; in regards to particular types of task being undertaken; and for certain types of men compared to others. Although present in all, the variation in the power of gender essentialism according to the above factors differed according to case study occupation. So for example, in aged and child care, gender essentialism operated to restrict men from undertaking certain tasks, much more than it restricted them in working in particular environments; however, in sales and commercial cleaning, the reverse was true. While this is analytically interesting, it does not help us understand why men are entering aged care and commercial cleaning and not child care or sales.

If gender essentialism was central to the explanations for men's limited movement into female dominated occupations, I would expect that its operation would be more powerful in those occupations that men are not entering (i.e. child care and sales). However, the above analysis suggests that demand side gender essentialism operates much more in the 'care' case study occupations than in sales and cleaning. It seems then that the operation of gender essentialist exclusionary practices is related to the level of sex segregation within the occupations, aged care and child care being highly sex segregated and commercial cleaning and sales being less sex segregated.

The findings however, do suggest that there are some tasks, types of men, and particular environments within each of the case study occupations in which gender essentialism may not operate as powerfully in influencing clients' and managers' preferences for a worker of a particular sex. These also seem to be more apparent in the case study occupations into which men are entering i.e. aged care and commercial cleaning. It is these areas that need to be the focus in strategies that attempt to reengage men displaced by economic restructuring, with work in areas of rising employment that are female dominated.



### 7.1.8 Gender essentialism and managers employment practices

It was also found that gender essentialism maintains and perpetuates occupational sex segregation indirectly through standard labour market processes. The most common was found to be related to managers' employment and hiring practices.

*Clients' preference leading to managers' reluctance to hire men*

For example, it was made clear by respondents that client preference not to have male workers impacted on managers' employment decisions. Managers were reluctant to employ men, due to a fear of losing or not attracting clients, or to concerns over there being limited use of men's labour due to client preferences to have female workers. Six managers across the case study occupation could be seen to be reluctant to hire men due to client preferences.

*Clients mightn't be as open to it and so it's a bit of a risk to take on a male. We might not be able to get work for him because people mightn't want that or maybe he won't be good at it.*

*Aged Care Manager 6*

*There might be lots more people that are not so liberal perhaps and it's got to be about what customers want and if you've got a child care centre that's got an equal balance and no-one's using your service because they're scared then you've got to make a commercial decision.*

*Child Care Manager 3*

A child care manager recounted her initial response to the possibility of having a male work in her centre.

*We had a male worker here doing cleaning at night, and he was here every night and he wanted to get into childcare, so the assistant manager came to me and told me, she said we've got some casual vacancies, what do you think. I said 'no way, in particular the "silver spooners" will leave' and she said 'I'm telling you, you have to consider it'. We had a good enough relationship that she could challenge me and she said 'it's equal opportunity, it's not ok', and I said 'well, we're going to lose business and it's going to be our jobs on the line' and she 'yep, I know that, but I think we need to do it'. So we interviewed him, he didn't have any childcare skills, there was a lot of things that we had to explain to parents and there were 3 or 4 families that left and said they wouldn't have anything to do with this centre because we had male workers.*

*Child Care Manager 1*

An unemployed male who was trying to obtain work in child care recounted his experiences of being knocked back from a job due to manager's reluctance to hire a man as a result of client preferences not to have male workers.

*Sometimes because parents don't want a man. I've come up against that once. One child care place did say 'sorry, the parents don't want a male care worker, we'd like to employ you but we need to stay open'.* Unemployed 25

#### *Contributing to management burden*

Even if men were employed in the case study occupations, clients' concerns about male workers resulted in a heightened surveillance of male workers by management, and contributed to a 'management burden' to ensure that the organisation complied with clients' wishes not to have men in particular environments, or doing particular work tasks. Four respondents, all of whom were from the child care case study, acknowledged the additional management male workers required as a result of clients' preferences.

*So I don't think I'd treat the males any different, except to say, be really careful and don't put yourself at risk. I know that you've got the best intention when you're running down to the laundry room to get a clean pair of knickers, so you take 3 with you so that staff hasn't got 15 on their own, but be mindful of how that could be interpreted. They wouldn't take any notice of me going down there with 3 children, but you go down there with three children and it might set alarm bells. So just telling them to be mindful how they protect themselves and as a manager you're more mindful of watching.* Child Care Manager 1

*There is also a struggle with males because of parents. We have had certain parents that will say 'please don't allow that male worker to care for my child' and that is significant in terms of how that room is then managed and in terms of how other parents then see that particular worker.* Child Care Manager 2

*I think sometimes they think differently about things and that can be a little bit problematic as a director sometimes, that might be a bit trickier to manage.* Child Care Manager 4

The above findings make clear that gender essentialist views held by clients and consumers about male workers impact on managers' employment practise and can exclude men from employment within gender atypical jobs. Customers' preferences

are so powerful they can lead to managers being reluctant to hire men, or if they do, to an increased management burden. In this way gender essentialism again maintains and perpetuates occupational sex segregation, although it does so indirectly through standard labour market processes. The powerful role of the client in maintaining occupational sex segregation is consistent with existing research that explores the sanctions imposed on workers who transgress norms about gender appropriate work (Kerfoot and Korczynski 2005; Nickson and Korczynski 2009; Williams 1992; Williams 1995).

### *Discrimination*

While clients' preferences and managers' internalisation of these preferences provided the most compelling evidence of discrimination against male workers, there were examples of discrimination being experienced by male workers that led them to experience gender atypical work negatively, and contribute to their minority status within the case study occupations.

For example, some male workers (n=10) said that they had been unfairly treated by their co-workers and/or managers as a result of their gender.

*I mean even today [Organisation Name] is 85 percent female staff and there is a bit of – well back then especially there was a lot of sexism involved. I used to go to locations where there were female carers and even female co-ordinators are 'what's a man doing here? This is women's work'.*

*Aged Care Worker 3*

*I have had an experience of direct discrimination where I was having a chat about a position that was coming up, with the director, and was told after the chat that she probably wouldn't give me the job because they'd just had a bad experience with a male student, which I felt was a complete case of discrimination. I didn't take it any further, I thought at the time 'well I don't really want this job if that's your approach'.*

*Child Care Manager 3*

Managers (n=5) also acknowledged that the industry was unfair in the treatment of male workers or that they themselves discriminated against male workers in their hiring practices.

*I think my feeling here is that there is a perception that there's a certain type of person that they want to employ. I haven't been here long, but I would think that the idea of a male worker wouldn't, they wouldn't even look at.* Aged Care Manager 6

*If I was to employ I would specifically look for a female. There is an expectation when people walk in here. I think a female – and this is not sexist at all but in some ways it is because men walking in would like to see a well-groomed attractive woman, females would like to see a well-groomed woman that is hopefully not more attractive than they think they are, so it doesn't become – from a female to female it doesn't become a competition thing. But definitely I would look for a female rather than a male.*

Sales Assistant Manager 5

Others perceived more subtle forms of discrimination such as male toilets being used as store rooms or simply not having male toilets.

*I come into the office and they have male and female toilets here and everything like that but the one stand-out thing that sort of I thought to myself was a bit strange is that you've got male toilets that are not being up kept and being used as a storeroom and you've got female toilets and when us three male care workers come in for staff meetings you have to use the female toilets.* Aged Care Worker 4

*Things like facilities. We only have 1 toilet here, and that's for 30 staff, male and female. The blokes have never said, hey it would be nice if we had our own toilet, but I guess I've just been really lucky.* Child Care Manager 1

Workers and managers in each of the case study occupations mentioned both these direct and more subtle forms of discrimination.

#### *Glass ceiling for men*

Existing research has shown that a 'glass escalator' operates for men working in female dominated professions which results in men experiencing faster progression to more senior positions (Williams 1992; Williams 1995). However, in contrast, this research found that for men working in low skilled female dominated occupations, a glass ceiling operates to limit their advancement in the hierarchy of the organisation or industry.

*Probably the biggest dislike overall is that for a male care worker or a male support worker in this industry I don't see a lot of – like from working as a care worker I don't see a lot of males progressing in the workplace. They don't get supported to progress in their work, like into a higher level. They get very much – you've got females that are – through the structure of it you've got all female orientated, all female dominated. You haven't got males involved as co-ordinators. That was the same case at [Organisation Name] as well as [Organisation Name], you don't see males progress through to be co-ordinators. Like you don't see male nurses involved in this type of industry.*

*Aged Care Worker 4*

*I firmly don't believe that from personal experience. I think men are still held back within the aged care industry and I don't really understand why, so I can't make a comment about that. I actually believe that still happens.*

*Aged Care Manager 1*

*It was just like the sixties flipped around sort of thing. Instead of being male dominated and females trying to work their way up it was female dominated and males trying to work their way up. Yeah it just wasn't going to happen. Just was not going to happen. The powerbrokers were at the top there and that was it. I suppose when I look at this store I find that the girls are probably promoted a little bit quicker.*

*Sales Assistant Manager 3*

Both managers and workers mentioned a predominance of women, or lack of men, in higher positions.

*I've only had one male supervisor in the whole time, mostly the supervisors are female.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 10*

*At the moment we've got 2 females working as area managers and 1 male working as an area manager. I would say it would be predominantly again female, in the area managers' position.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 3*

While the finding that a glass ceiling operates for men in female dominated occupations at the lower end of the labour market is contrary to existing research, it also contradicts findings presented in Chapter 6 of this research, that identified men's faster career progression as a benefit accrued to men employed in female dominated jobs - which may entice men to enter gender atypical employment. However, the frequency with which career progression was said to be a benefit was far less than it was said to be a limitation of working in female dominated occupations. Five

respondents mentioned faster career progression compared to 15 identifying their sex being a barrier to career progression. These respondents were evenly distributed across the case study occupations.

In addition, it was also said that, for male workers who sought career mobility within the case study occupations, the flat organisational structure of case study employment often meant that men who wished to move up within the industry were moved out of the occupation and into semi-related professions (see Chapter 5). Moreover, the decision to pursue higher paid positions was driven primarily by male workers' dissatisfaction with the wages and employment conditions within the case study occupations, combined with the more attractive wages and conditions on offer in other professions. Taking account of the evidence presented above, it seems that the glass ceiling present for men in the case study occupations is another factor that would influence men's decisions, or force men who desire upward mobility, to pursue employment opportunities in semi-related professions.

## **7.2 Segregating labour market processes**

There were other processes operating on the demand side of the labour market that excluded men from case study employment, that were largely unrelated to gender essentialism or its variants. These can be seen to be labour market processes or mechanisms that produce and reproduce occupation sex segregation. These processes are ones that are likely to be found in any segregated labour market and would impact on both men and women. This research highlights how they operate for men to limit their movement into female dominated occupations.

### **7.2.1 Recruitment sources favouring female employment and maintaining the status quo**

It was found that managers' main sources of recruitment were likely to maintain the gender status quo and therefore occupational sex segregation within the case study occupations.

#### *Predominance of informal recruitment methods*

Many managers (n=11) relied on informal recruitment methods to find new employees; these included recruiting friends of current employees. However, the majority of current employees were female and their friends also tended to be women.

*Sometimes people who are already with us, if they've got people who are looking for work, even though they may not have any experience, sometimes we are willing to take them because of the recommendation from an existing cleaner. So we take people like that.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 3*

*So, yes, as far as recruiting a cleaner, I know I've had others – I've really relied on people who actually are known– say, for example, they've said to me “we've got a person, she does X, X, X” – and I say ‘she’ because it probably has been more women.*

*Commercial Cleaning Client 3*

This finding is consistent with research which has found that social networks tend to perpetuate occupational sex segregation, because social networks themselves tend to be segregated by sex (Braddock and McPartland 1987; Reskin 1993; Straits 1998). However, as pointed out in Chapter 6, social networks can also destabilise occupational sex segregation when they transmit gender atypical labour market information.

Another common source of recruitment was to look within the industry or organisation for workers, which maintained the gendered status quo as the workforce was already female dominated.

*I'll contact my network of other people in the centres and see if they've got somebody that they've been really happy with but can't provide them with a great deal of work or whatever.*

*Child Care Manager 6*

*I suppose we have quite strategic succession planning so when a vacancy becomes available we look internally first and foremost and then if we've exhausted all avenues internally we'll go to market.*

*Sales Assistant Manager 4*

The above methods of recruitment were particularly relied upon in cleaning and sales. Eleven respondents mentioned using informal methods of recruitment, eight of whom came from the aforementioned case study occupations.

### *TAFE and Student placements*

The main recruitment source favoured by employers in aged and child care was TAFE students that were undertaking their student placement within the organisation. Managers were able to evaluate the student's potential and offer employment to those that they viewed positively. Six respondents said that TAFE student placements were a recruitment source; all of whom were from the aged and child care case study.

*Generally I have found the best way, besides advertising, because advertising costs you a lot of money, is actually by having people do their placement for Cert III actually on site. So we've actually got a contract with TAFE, that we actually have their personal care workers doing placements with us or at one of the other sites. Next month I've got 4 personal care staff doing placement work with us, and that gives us the ability to watch how they work, to interact and get to know them and that's a good recruiting pool that is.*

*Aged Care Manager 3*

*What we do is we watch students. So if we've got a student coming in and they've shown a lot of interest, we tell them if they are interested in work, to put in an application. And so that's how we get them.*

*Child Care Manager 1*

*We also use a lot of students that go through TAFE and uni and if they prove themselves here on student days they normally end up working for us.*

*Child Care Manager 6*

Relying on TAFE student placements as a recruitment source would not in itself pose a barrier to men's entry into gender atypical jobs if men and women were equally represented in these courses.

However, current enrolment statistics indicate that men comprise just 10 percent of all students currently enrolled to study AQF Diploma level and below qualifications in aged and disabled care, and child care (NCVER 2009). While men's underrepresentation in these courses could be possibly due to gender essentialism affecting student choices, employers' reliance on student placements as recruitment sources maintains occupational sex segregation.



*Men's negative experiences of TAFE*

In addition, some male aged care and child care workers (n=6) recounted quite negative experiences of education and training courses that they undertook to gain or maintain employment within the gender atypical jobs. These negative experiences may account for men's limited representation in these gender atypical education and training courses. These included being the only male, being looked at as deviant and experiencing isolation. They also observed that much of the reading and course material was directed at women, further contributing to their experience of isolation. The men consistently mentioned that these negative experiences contributed to consideration of leaving the course and too many of their male student counterparts dropping out of the course.

*I found it a little bit hard because there is heaps of girls groups and it's kind of like all the literature is targeted at females. The tutors, sometimes you feel like they're questioning why you're there, whether you're there just to pick up. So it's taken a while for people to actually realize that I want to be a teacher....Like even the text books talk about "the female carer" and it's especially hard in some....we have a subject at the moment "Children in families and communities" and it's a lot about abuse and neglect, that sort of thing, and it's always about the guy assaults children or assaults the wife and I know that's more common, but it kind of gets tough to hear that every day. You feel like you're being accused....I knew there weren't many guys compared to girls, but I didn't think it would be like that. I think there were about 10 guys to start off with in first year and then dropout rate for guys was crazy. I think it dropped to 3. I kind of felt like I didn't want to go in.* Child Care Worker 1

*It's pretty hard studying, not only because you're a guy, but the older you get, usually students in child care are about 18 or 19 and you feel a bit out of place, and you are. They don't want to study with you because you're not 18 or 19. If I was an older woman, it would be not as much as being an older guy, because you're lucky if you get another guy in the course with you.* Unemployed 25

Increasing men's participation in gender atypical education and training is a necessary step to increases in men's entry into female dominated occupations. Men's negative experience of gender atypical education and training suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the role of further education and training institutions in producing and maintaining occupational sex segregation. As stated by one manager:

*From what's being offered to them at TAFE and why they are continuing or not continuing would be something that's probably interesting. Really it's only one other male that I've worked with that has been qualified but the rest have always been unqualified, which is another reason why they leave the industry, because the pay again is that much less. But yeah definitely probably looking at the education side of it and what opportunities they're given and what centres they're placed at, if they are placed at centres that have other males and does that influence their choice of continuing or not? What experiences they've had and what made them continue within the industry from their experiences – only because the two guys that I studied with have dropped out and they probably never really ever entered into the industry.*

*Child Care Manager 3*

A comprehensive examination of the role of further education and training institutions in producing and maintaining occupational sex segregation is even more pressing considering the significant role these institutions, or various actors operating within them, play in shaping men's decisions to enter gender atypical employment or not (Chapter 5; Chapter 6 and this chapter, section 7.1.1).

## **7.2.2 Unsuitable or undesirable characteristics in potential employees**

In addition to those skills and characteristics that they desired, employers also discussed a number of characteristics or attributes that they would use to screen applicants out, or consider unsuitable and undesirable in potential employees. Some of these negative traits were obviously the reverse of those traits that employers desired in potential employees. For example, poor appearance and presentation, and ineffective communication skills were viewed negatively by employers. However, other characteristics that employers viewed negatively had the (unintentional) effect of excluding many men from case study employment.

### *Experience*

For example, many managers (15) said that they had a preference for people who had previous experience working in the occupation. This unintentionally favours women and maintains occupational sex segregation, as women are more likely than men to have previously worked in the female dominated case study jobs. If employers are unwilling to provide workers who have little or no previous experience with opportunities for employment, men's ability to enter is restricted.

*For an unqualified position we tend to receive a lot of applications. Not all of them have any experience in child care and I guess that's probably where the first cut-off is, if you've had experience or you haven't had experience.* Child Care Manager 3

*I look at two things, what experience they've actually had in providing care anywhere, and the second thing I look at is maturity. I have found in experience, that even though a mature worker may not have had the actual hands on experience, just their attitude is better than someone who is may be 20 and straight out of Cert III. So that's what I look for in my applicants.* Aged Care Manager 4

*People who are experienced.* Commercial Cleaning Manager 2

*No qualifications. You can go right through to a store manager and not require any qualifications, or formal qualifications, but certainly experience would come into play. We look for retail experience, to see whether they've had retail experience and it might be minimal experience which is fine. So looking from a resume point of view I suppose we would initially look for retail experience.* Sales Assistant Manager 4

Other characteristics or traits were considered negative as they signified that a person may pose a risk to the organisation, employer or business.

#### *Criminal record*

For example, given that many of the occupations required employees to interact with vulnerable groups or have access to private areas, employment was often conditional on a satisfactory criminal history check. Having a criminal record therefore automatically excluded an applicant from appointment.

*We require people to have police checks and that may be a reason why men don't take it up because often men are more likely to have a criminal record of some sort.*

*Commercial Cleaning Client 1*

#### *Pre-existing injury*

Having a pre-existing injury was also viewed negatively by employers - particularly employers in commercial cleaning - as it increased their risks of worker compensation claims.

*Our biggest concern is work cover, if they've been on work cover it's a real grey area there, we wouldn't even consider them.* Commercial Cleaning Manager 1

### *Fractured employment history*

Employers (in each case study occupation) also often used the work history of a job applicant as an indicator of their potential productivity and or reliability. Having a history of employment interspersed with periods of unemployment was viewed negatively by employers.

*If they say that they've had 3 cleaning jobs in the last 6 months, then it sort of raises a red flag. If they've had a lot of jobs in a short space of time, you know they're probably not going to stick around. But if you're talking to somebody that's been at the same job for 2 years, then straight away they'd be the person that you'd get in for an interview.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 2*

### *No driver's license*

Five employers (n=4 from cleaning and 1 from aged care) stated that having access to private transport was essential to successfully carrying out the work task in the case study occupations. Not having a car or driver's licences was therefore viewed unfavourably by employers.

*The ones that don't have access to transport. Some of our jobs they'll need to carry stuff with them, so they need a car to be able to carry their vacuum cleaners and that type of thing. Also, some of the places are out of the way, or early morning, so you can't get public transport. Driver's license is a big one.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 2*

*They need to have access to a vehicle, because they need to be reliable, could not use public transport to get to these jobs.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 5*

### *Prevalence of undesirable traits among men*

The above characteristics considered unfavourably by managers in the case study occupations are characteristics that are not gender specific. If either men or women had these characteristics they would be overlooked for case study employment. However, these characteristics are of central importance to understanding why low skilled men are not entering these gender atypical jobs.

Table 8.4 documents the prevalence of traits that managers viewed as undesirable among the unemployed men that participated in the research. The table makes clear that the various traits identified by managers to be undesirable are common among low skilled unemployed men. The most widespread were having an unstable work history, not having a driver's licence or having a pre-existing injury or illness. Half of the unemployed men mentioned each of these traits.

Table 8.4: Prevalence of undesirable traits among men

Major Node	Number
Criminal record	7
Ineffective communication skills	4
Injury illness	12
Lack of experience	9
No license	13
Unstable work history	13

Indeed of the 25 unemployed men interviewed, 22 indicated that they had at least one of these undesirable traits. In most cases the men actually had more than one. Only three unemployed men were found not to have any of these traits.

Combined with the evidence presented above, the majority of the unemployed male participants would be likely to be excluded from employment within the gender atypical case study occupations simply on the basis that they commonly embody traits or characteristics that are perceived unfavourably by employers. It is also likely that some of the above characteristics would be viewed unfavourably by employers in others jobs. But perhaps they are especially an obstacle to personal and interactive service jobs, particularly having a criminal record, unstable work history and/or ineffective communication skills. What this suggests is that focusing just on the gender division of labour can mask differences among men (and women) in their accessing to gender atypical employment. Gender intersects with other factors to marginalise groups of men (or women) comparative to other men (women).

### 7.2.3 Minorities creating minorities

Hinted at already in this chapter, and others, is the idea that the demand for male workers in the case study occupations is affected by the sex of the predominant client group. In most instances the more frequent users of the services provided by the case study occupations are female. Fathers do not generally enlist the services of a child care centre; this is usually left up to the primary care giver who is traditionally female. Women are more likely to consume a wider variety of products than men and buy for a wider variety of people (e.g. children, grandchildren, friends and parents). Women have a greater life expectancy than males and tend to marry men who are older. Women are therefore likely to be the carers for their spouses but have to rely on aged care services for their own care.

The next chapter will show that where the client base is predominantly male, the demand for male workers also increases. However, the fact that male clients are a minority in most of the case study occupations had the effect of limiting the demand for male workers, and therefore making them a minority within the case study occupations.

*We need and want a certain number of females out there because a large percentage of the customers we deal with are female.*

*Sales Assistant Manager 1*

However, it was also noted that men's minority status within the occupations further restricted men's ability to move into these gender atypical jobs, as clients were reluctant to desire male employees as they were unsure, not used to, or unfamiliar with male workers providing these types of services. Men's current minority status further making them a minority was mentioned by 11 interview respondents.

*For a team like this one, where they have not had a male worker, I think it would be strange, I think they would find it strange, because 'oh, we haven't done that before'. So I think it's challenging, the culture, and the idea that women do this work.*

*Aged Care Manager 6*

*I don't see a problem with it but it's just getting past that stigma that's been attached to men working in child care. You just don't see it and that's probably why questions are raised, because you don't see it.*

*Child Care Client 2*

## Conclusion

This chapter has outlined a number of demand side processes that operate to exclude men from, or at least reduce their representation in, gender atypical employment. The chapter therefore provides compelling evidence that, contrary to existing theories, there are demand side mechanisms that operate at the lower end of the labour market to limit men's movements into gender atypical jobs. Gender essentialism was found to be central to most of these.

Clients and managers were found to internalise extant gender essentialist notions of appropriate jobs for men and women. These align the work undertaken in the case study occupations with women, and in doing so maintain occupational sex segregation.

Gender essentialist notions of appropriate jobs for men and women also operated to restrict case study employment being presented as legitimate male jobs by significant others. Men were not complicit in the decision to view these jobs as legitimate or not. Employment within them was simply never presented to men as a choice to consider.

The skills desired by clients and managers in the case study occupations were consistent with essentialist notions of femininity or at a minimum, not predominantly associated with men, particularly low skilled working class men. Moreover, the characteristics and attributes employers viewed unfavourably in job seekers largely preclude low skilled working class men (and potentially women) from case study employment. This suggests that issues of gender essentialism are hardly important if you have a criminal record, poor employment history, ill health/injury etc.

Managers and clients were also found to subscribe to the gender essentialist logic that presumes that women are more suited than men to work requiring service, nurturance and interpersonal interaction and, as a result, view women as better or more capable employees in the case study occupations than men.

These operations of gender essentialism are largely consistent with existing understandings. These posit that gender essentialism constructs men as essentially lacking abilities and traits to work in female jobs. However, this research also found that there are other gender essentialist processes that operate to reduce the demand for male workers in female dominated occupations that are not related to a set of

ability or proclivities that men lack, but are actually related to a set of (gendered) abilities or proclivities that men have which makes them unsuitable for these jobs.

This operation of gender essentialism positions men as the more dangerous sex, being inherently more capable of sexual assault and/or abuse, or to a lesser extreme, making the other sex feel inadequate. In this way it constructs men not as lacking abilities to work in gender atypical environments but as possessing (essential) qualities that make them dangerous in gender atypical environments - particularly those where intimate interaction with women and children are likely.

However, the power of the above various operations of gender essentialism in shaping managers' and clients' preferences not to have male workers, or to desire female workers, was found to vary according to a number of factors. These included the environment in which the service was being provided, the tasks that were being undertaken and the type of men who were to provide the service. This suggests that there are some tasks, types of men, and particular environments within each of the case study areas in which gender essentialism may not operate as powerfully in influencing clients' and managers' preferences for a worker of a particular sex. It is these areas that need to be the focus in strategies that attempt to reengage men displaced by economic restructuring with work in areas of rising employment, which tend to be female dominated. This is considered at length in the following chapter.

The chapter also highlighted that there were other processes operating on the demand side of the labour market that excluded men from case study employment that were largely unrelated to gender essentialism or its variants. These can be seen to be labour market processes or mechanisms that produce and reproduce occupation sex segregation; they are likely to be found in any segregated labour market, and would impact on both men and women. The chapter highlighted how they operate for men to limit their movement into female dominated occupations.

The most compelling of these labour market processes in excluding men from gender atypical employment related to managers' discriminatory hiring and/or employment practices. Of most interest to future research is managers' reliance on informal recruitment methods, particularly TAFE student placements. This would not in itself pose a barrier to men's entry into gender atypical jobs if men and women were equally represented in the relevant TAFE courses. However, current enrolment statistics indicate that men comprise a minority of the student population in these



courses. One reason for this is that gender essentialism is affecting student choices; another may be men's negative experiences of these education and training courses. Increasing men's participation in gender atypical education and training is a necessary step to increases in men's entry into female dominated occupations. These findings suggest that more attention needs to be paid to the role of further education and training institutions in producing and maintaining the occupational sex segregation that occurs in the labour market. Further attention is even more warranted given the significant role these institutions, or various actors operating within them, play in shaping men's decisions to enter gender atypical employment or not (Chapter 5; Chapter 6 and this chapter, section 7.1.1).

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: Determinants of Low Skilled Men's Integration into Female Dominated Jobs: Demand Side Factors**

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### **Introduction**

The previous chapter outlined evidence to suggest, contrary to current theorising, that there are indeed processes that operate on the demand side of the labour market to produce and maintain the occupational sex segregation that is caused by men's limited movement into female dominated jobs. However, we also know that men do obtain employment in gender atypical jobs. Indeed, Chapter 6 outlined a number of processes that operate on the supply side of the labour market to facilitate men's integration into occupations that are normatively regarded as female. This chapter focuses on detailing the integrative processes that may operate on the other side of the labour market. Drawing on data collected in interviews with managers and clients within the case study occupations, it focuses on revealing any demand side mechanisms that operate to increase men's representation in gender atypical jobs.

It is shown that a number of processes operate on the demand side of the labour market that additionally facilitate men's integration, or at least increase their representation, in gender atypical jobs. Many of these processes are related to gender essentialism in some way.

Similar to its operation on the supply side, gender essentialism was found to have an integrative function on the demand side, with many managers and clients perceiving certain aspects of case study employment to require, or at least be compatible with, male essentialist traits and proclivities. The demand for male essentialist traits in turn increased men's representation in the female dominated occupations.

Importantly however, the demand for male essentialist traits is found to be confined to particular areas within the case study occupations. This has the effect of producing specialist male ghettos within the female dominated case study occupations, which in turn re-establishes male essentialism.

Other processes were found to moderate and reduce the impact of gender essentialist exclusion and/or counteract its negative homogenising processes.

However, others were unrelated to gender essentialism and more about demand that arises for male workers as a result of their minority status.

New understandings about how demand side processes can facilitate men's integration into female dominated occupations are provided. This extends existing theorising about the conditions that increase men's movement into female dominated occupations. These understandings can be used to generate further ideas about how to reengage men who have been displaced in the new economy, with jobs in areas of rising employment but which are traditionally regarded as female.

### **8.1 Gender essentialism and the demand for male workers**

The previous chapter identified that gender essentialism was central to many of the processes that operate to reduce the demand for male workers in female dominated occupations and produce and maintain occupational sex segregation, particularly that which is caused by men's limited movement into female dominated jobs. However, it is also found that a number of traits stereotypically associated with essentialist notions of men and masculinity were valued and regarded positively by managers and clients within the case study occupations. These traits include physical strength, authority, being less at risk and particular knowledge and expertises. The demand for these traits in turn increased the demand for male workers, and facilitated their integration into female dominated occupations.

There were two main ways in which gender essentialism operated to generate a demand for male workers within the case study occupations. Firstly, it was found that managers and clients constructed certain aspects of case study employment as requiring skills that they associate with men and masculinity.

This is how gender essentialism would be expected to operate on the demand side of the labour market to facilitate men's integration into case study occupations; namely managers and clients would perceive certain aspects of case study employment to require skills and abilities that they consider men to be more likely to possess.

However, at another level, managers and clients simply viewed certain male essentialist traits and proclivities as being compatible with case study employment, or an advantage of male employment within the case study jobs. I distinguish between these two different operations of gender essentialism in the discussion below.

### 8.1.1 Physical strength

Physical strength is one of the most obvious traits gender essentialism positions men to possess. Indeed, Grusky and co-authors (2004; 2008) consider the gender essentialism that emphasises male physicality to be one of the main reasons why men predominate in (relatively undesirable) manual occupations. However, physical strength is not a trait solely valued and required in manual occupations of the sort identified by Grusky and co-authors. Indeed, physical strength was an employment attribute that was viewed positively within the female dominated case study occupations. Thirty respondents across the case study occupations thought that men's physical strength was beneficial to the work undertaken in the case study occupations. However, there were two ways in which men's physicality was viewed positively.

Some respondents (n=11) simply perceived men's physical strength as a positive attribute of men's employment within the female dominated occupations.

*The older ladies seem very happy to have a man come and do their house work, they seem to think he's going to be a good, strong, strapping lad and he's going to do a good job.*  
Aged Care Manager 5

*Participant 1: They're taller and they can get up higher.*

*Participant 6: They can clean on top of my fridge all right.*

*Participant 1: And they can lift dining chairs and vacuum under the table.*

Aged Care Client Focus Group 2

*You know kids love to climb on them and you can't do that to ladies because they get hurt. [name] always climbs on dad and beats him up and does all that sort of stuff. Imagine guys at child care doing that? Kids would love it, absolutely love it.*

Child Care Client 2

However, the majority (n=19) thought that certain aspects of case study employment required undertaking heavy work tasks, and aligned men with having the physical strength to be more able to undertake these tasks. The necessity of having someone to do the heavy work within the case study occupation contributed to a demand for male workers.

*Sometimes the male workers, I know it's sexist, but they've got the physical strength. And we've got some children with some challenging behaviours.*

*Child Care Manager 1*

*I'd probably have a guy doing the heavy work....Guys are good behind a machine, it's a bit hard for a women because it's a bit heavier.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 1*

*Men are good at doing the carpet cleaning and stripping or sealing the floors and using buffing machines and big machinery. It's very hard if we have a female doing the job, if we need to have carpets cleaned, you can't just put in a machine and ask her to do it. She can't do it physically, we need a man. So yeah I definitely think that we need more men.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 4*

Male workers within each of the case study occupations themselves experienced being assigned the heavy work, or viewing their ability to undertake the heavy work as facilitating their employment. Eighteen men said that they are given the heavy work.

*I do all of the heavy work actually and some of the companies require the men to do the vacuuming and that sort of thing, with backpacks and that sort of thing, and whatever else, all the heavy work, and the women will do the light work.*

*Commercial Cleaning Worker 6*

*I often get called to lift stuff, like 'would a male sales assistant come to the registers' and it's because they want me to lift something, where if they got a female they could lift it anyway.*

*Sales Assistant Worker 8*

*And that's why I spent so much time with acquired brain injury, because they were quite often young fellahs who had been in car accidents and you just needed brute strength, sometimes, to handle them. That's why I got most of my work, because I was a male.*

*Aged Care Worker 3*

*Like just say if something heavy needs to be moved the first thing they do is they come and get you. Yeah here everyone comes and gets me. I don't mind because physically I probably am stronger than most of the women here.*

*Child Care Worker 6*

### 8.1.2 Authority and/or disciplinary figure

The logic of gender essentialism also commonly positions men to be more of an authority and/or disciplinary figure than women. Indeed, it is this positioning which often results in men being viewed as unsuitable for employment in female dominated occupations. Recall, managers, clients and men themselves all constructed the case study occupations to involve high level customer contact, and undertaking personal care tasks. As such, they also viewed the work to require traits such as high level social skills, being a people person, caring, and friendliness, which they aligned with women. These traits are somewhat antithetical to being authoritarian and/or imposing discipline.

However, seven respondents, mainly managers, considered certain aspects of case study employment to require workers who were authoritative and/or could impose discipline. More than this, managers considered men to be more likely to have these traits. As a result, male workers were perceived to be more able, and were sought out, to deal with difficult situations and/or clients within the case study occupations.

*We wish we could get more [male workers] because we are dealing with some complex clients and I think a male is a little bit more of a figure so to speak, and some of the female carers, they do get a bit hesitant about some of our clients.*

*Aged Care Manager 1*

*... some of our regular children who might have a delay. So we ask to have the male working in that room on that day. Because even though they don't have to exert anything physical, it's just the persona of them.*

*Child Care Manager 1*

*There's probably a consideration when it comes to security and safety within the store. Having the male presence may help resolve an issue, even if it's just standing there, which is what we do. If there's a security issue and an asset protection officer needs some back-up our guys just go there and we just stand there. We are just a presence and help reinforce the asset protection officers who are mostly female. I think if that was for – if that was women it would be – it wouldn't have the same effect. Not that we're standing there hands on hips type of thing but it's just a presence and it's just a support.*

*Sale Assistant Manager 3*

Having a demand for male workers due to their ability to be more of an authority and/or disciplinary figure was reported by participants in all case study occupations, except commercial cleaning. Respondents commonly emphasised this trait in the context of dealing with clients. It is unsurprising then that in an occupation such as cleaning, where much of the work that is undertaken is autonomous, and interaction is mainly between physical things and not people, that this trait was not thought to be of particular importance.

### 8.1.3 Capacity to deal with risks

Maybe because of gender essentialism's emphasis on men's authority and/or physicality, managers (and some clients) also often perceived men to be inherently more able to deal with risks posed by certain aspects of case study employment. Ten respondents thought that men's capacity to deal with risks increased the demand for male workers.

In some instances the risk that men were perceived to be better able to deal with, was that posed by the type of client receiving a particular service.

*And I must admit, I particularly look for male workers, because of my clients, there are quite a few of my clients that are male only because of the risk they produce to the staff. I specifically look very carefully for any male application and probably favour them, because that's my biggest need. I certainly found that because of my priority access clients, there was a need to look at strategies to recruit males.*

*Aged Care Manager 4*

More often however, it was considered that men were less at risk given the time and location of the work and the autonomous nature of the work.

*I mean there's another thing; a lot of cleaning is done at night so for safety it is safer for a male to be working at night rather than females.* Commercial Cleaning Client 3

*Sometimes we'd prefer men. Especially if it's a site where they are working by themselves at night, we'd much prefer to put a male in that sort of area. Cos of the safety concerns. There's just some jobs that are more suited to a man than what they are to a woman.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 2*

Many also said that clients would request male workers as they were concerned about the safety of female workers in particular situations.

*It's surprising how many clients out there request a male or female....they'll say to us that they don't want a female, they want a male.... some clients say they don't want women for safety reasons.* Commercial Cleaning Manager 4

Male workers themselves also mentioned being able to obtain employment due to their ability to undertake the difficult and unsafe jobs.

*I used to go to places where these dirty old men would pat up the females and all that and they'd complain to the cleaning company and so they used to send me there. A couple of old blokes said to me 'what you doing here?' 'Well I'm your new cleaner mate'. 'Why?' 'You can't keep your hands off the females, that's the reason you've got me'. 'I don't want you'. 'Well you're not getting her back so you put up with me or you don't have nothing'.* Commercial Cleaning Worker 11

*As far as acquired brain injury went, yeah. Some of them were psychotic and physically dangerous. I mean the first guy I had to work with had an ambition to kill the carer and he'd try regularly. So we were cannon fodder. Any male fool enough to turn up got the job....They realise we can be useful and they need a few males in certain situations so they sort of live with it.* Aged Care Worker 3

*When I first started with [organisation name] I had a lot of hard to do male clients with behavioural problems and a lot of psychological issues and that was thrown at me. Because no female support worker or care worker wanted to deal with it, or could deal with it, they put a male in that environment because they thought that 'you're a bloke, you can handle that'.* Aged Care Worker 4

The safety concern posed by the nature of the work was also said to reduce women's willingness to undertake the work. This had the consequence of increasing the demand for men and facilitating men's representation within the case study occupations.

*Council public toilets and stuff like that, girls don't want to be going in there at night, cleaning them, locking them up. So I think it's the nature of our work, how we've ended up with the guys staying.* Commercial Cleaning Manager 5

*But I suppose the females are more likely to say no because they feel more physically vulnerable in these situations.* Aged Care Manager 4



The perception that men were more able to deal with the risks posed by the nature of the work - clients, locations, hours etc - was mentioned only by aged care and commercial cleaning case study participants. Interestingly, these occupations were also the ones in which men were found to have made increases in their gender share of employment.

#### **8.1.4 Presumed knowledge and/or expertise**

Managers, and some clients, within the child care and sales case study occupations also said that, in certain instances, men were more likely than women to have the appropriate (gendered) knowledge and/or expertise to undertake the work in the case study occupations. Fourteen respondents could be seen to consider men to have more appropriate knowledge and expertise for certain work tasks, and were therefore better suited than women to particular work areas or tasks within the case study occupations.

For example, in child care it was thought that male workers were important as they would have knowledge and experiences about things specific to males that would make them more appropriate to provide care, particularly to boys.

*Boys are different to girls; even though we're told they're not, they are. They play differently and they do different things and they have different interests so it's good for them to be more natural, for the boys to do what comes naturally to them with a bloke. It seems to help them I think; I know my son likes it.* Child Care Client 3

*So I think having a male childcare worker, particularly for those boys, once they get to [name] age and above, it's probably really good to demonstrate some of those things that women don't do, that we think we do, but subconsciously we are in the kitchen making cups of tea, not out kicking a soccer ball.* Child Care Client 5

There was also a perception that men were more playful and therefore were more likely to engage children in play activities, especially outdoor play activities and rough and tumble play.

*It's because they do the rough play which is so important in children's development and females might feel a bit uncomfortable.* Child Care Manager 1

*Well with the boys – I mean going outside, kicking a footy, getting dirty, guys love to do that. [name] loves to do that, whereas I'm not such a fan of going out and getting dirty because I've got to clean it up.* Child Care Client 2

In sales, gender essentialism operated to assign male competencies with the selling of particular products.

*I went to [organisation name] the other day because I was interested in buying some paint to paint a cement floor in my laundry and a woman sales assistant came up to me and said 'can I help you?' and I remember thinking to myself 'oh, is she going to know the products well enough?'* Sales Assistant Client 1

*I suppose if I was going to go and buy a plasma TV I would expect – I would need the female to work harder to demonstrate that she knew what she was talking about and would need to be confident.* Sales Assistant Client 2

Eight respondents in the sales assistant case study mentioned a preference to receive services from a male in particular settings, due to the presumption that men would have more appropriate knowledge and/or expertise.

It is interesting that the perception that men have more appropriate (gendered) knowledge and expertise for certain work tasks, and are therefore better suited than women to particular work areas or tasks within the case study occupations, was confined to the child care and sales assistant occupations. These are the two occupations in which men were found not to be increasing their share of employment (Chapter 4). It suggests that while men may be presumed to have knowledge and expertise that make them better suited to particular areas or work tasks within the case study occupation, this may not actually result in a large scale entry of men into the occupations as these work task or areas may constitute only a small percentage of the total work undertaken within the case study occupations.

#### **8.1.5 Demand specific to certain areas**

While the above gender essentialist stereotypes operated to generate a demand for male workers, it is found that this demand was specific to certain areas within the case study occupations.

## *Aged Care*

For example, in aged care physical strength was often perceived to be more of a requirement, and therefore demanded more, in areas that provided higher levels of care to clients (i.e. residential aged care facilities).

For example, a manager of an aged care program attributed the absence of men in her current organisation to the lower level care provided to clients. This compared to the organisation at which she previously worked, and in which men were employed, where the clients required higher levels of care.

*But also I think, here compared to the other place, my other employment, we had a lot more clients, but we also had higher level clients. Whereas in this organisation or this team, the client's needs are more around domestic assistance. So I think that the reason why we don't have men, which is very interesting. And it's a shame.*

*Aged Care Manager 6*

Male workers themselves said that they mainly worked with higher level needs clients.

*I'm mainly high care, like most blokes you'll find are straight in high care and in like dementia, whatever, like in the harder stuff with more sort of physical.*

*Aged Care Worker 6*

The level of risk posed by clients also influences the area in which male workers were in demand. Within residential care settings, male workers often worked in high care wards with complex patients such as those with dementia or acquired brain injury. Within community based settings, clients with complex needs - mental health problems, behavioural problems, and drug and alcohol addiction - often received services from targeted catchment programs; such programs were also more likely to display a preference for male workers. Indeed, managers of these programs questioned whether they would have a demand for male workers were it not for their complex needs clients.

*It's an interesting dilemma because how much we could use a male in a community setting if I didn't have these priority clients is not a lot.*

*Aged Care Manager 4*

### *Sales Assistants*

In sales, gender essentialism operated to associate men with the selling of particular products. This in turn meant that men were concentrated in specific areas of retail that reflected men's presumed (essentialist) competencies - e.g. hardware, electronics, gardening, technical knowledge etc.

*See in hardware it's a blokey thing, there's an expertise thing and there's manual handling so I think it will be always be fairly different in this kind of hardware store.*

*Sales Assistant Manager 1*

*Like if I had someone in, say quilt sets, it's a lot of technical information as opposed to plates and stuff like that where you go 'oh that's pretty, that'll look nice on your table' so I would think that the men might be more suited to the quilt sets so they can have facts and figures and the women would be more emotional about it and 'this would look nice on your table' and that sort of thing.*

*Sales Assistant Manager 2*

In addition, the perception that men were physically stronger meant that men were often in demand in areas where more of the heavy work was undertaken.

*Stock fill, that tends to be male dominated as well because girls just can't lift a whole heap of heavy boxes around generally.*

*Sales Assistant Manager 1*

*We do look for, in our group interviews, males who would be happy to do stock work on our dock.*

*Sales Assistant Manager 4*

### *Cleaning*

Within cleaning, the alignment of men with the capacity to deal with risk meant that they were often in demand to carry out work undertaken at night, particularly that which was done autonomously and in public spaces.

*Obviously the day cleaners are predominantly female and then our night, car park bin cleaners and night cleaners are male.*

*Commercial Cleaning Client 4*

The emphasis on men's physicality meant that they were also more likely to be allocated jobs in industrial and physically demanding environments.

*There's just some jobs that are more suited to a man than what they are to a woman. Some of the factory areas and things like that. In all the shopping centres and that, you're looking at mainly men working the scrubbing machines, the buffing machines, all that type of stuff is mainly men and people specifically look for men to fill those jobs.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 2*

*I hire a male to do the wood work and metal work area in schools. Work in that area in that school is very hard. Usually females can't do that sort of work because there is a lot of heavy lifting and a lot of females can't do that sort of work. There is some suitable work for males.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 3*

This also had the effect of increasing men's representation in specialised areas of the cleaning industry such as carpet cleaning, window cleaning, and industrial cleaning that were considered to be more labour intensive.

*If you're looking at carpet cleaning, window cleaning, there's more men in that side of things.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 2*

*But at the same time, during the holiday period, we do a thing called period cleaning which is different to day to day period, that's the time where you do all the cleaning of high dusting, strip and seal, polishing, window cleaning, for that we employ a lot of males. And also some of the other areas like carpet cleaning and all that we do in the holidays, we give that to subcontractors. So if you take that area, it's dominated by males.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 3*

Men, by virtue of being a man, were also demanded for work that was undertaken in environments that are stereotypically regarded as male spheres.

*It depends what area we are looking at. Retirement villages and resorts and motels, yes I think women are much better. For the hotels and the offices and the factories, I think men work much better. I think because factories are really dirty, they are blokey, blokey situations. Most of the factories start in the afternoon and there's lots of men there who are swearing and doing their stuff, a man doesn't mind that. But a lady might get offended. I find talking to the ladies, they get frustrated with that kind of environment, because you clean it and then you turn around and it's dirty again. Whereas a man can walk away from it.*

*Commercial Cleaning Manager 4*

### *Child Care*

In child care, the positioning of men as being more of an authority and/or disciplinary figure meant that male workers were sought out to work with children with learning difficulties and/or challenging behaviours.

In addition, there were also numerous comments made about the relative predominance of men in Out of School Hours Care (OSHC) and vocational care which catered to the needs of older children. This was commonly attributed to men being better able to relate to older children, possibly because of their propensity for outdoor play activities.

*You'll actually find that males work better in OSH – out of school hours – simply because of their age group and relating to a particular age. Child Care Manager 3*

*There are males in the after school care now and in the vacation care there are always a couple of guys as well who are younger men. They coach all the sport and stuff. And I think the guys that are in after school care – I don't know that they'd want to be with the really little kids. Child Care Client 3*

The finding that men predominated in particular areas of female dominated occupations is consistent with previous research that has looked at men working in female dominated professions, such as social workers, librarians and teachers. That research found that men are channelled into particular specialisations within female dominated professions that are regarded as more appropriate to their gender, and which also often carry greater rewards and prestige (Lupton 2006; Simpson 2004; Simpson 2005; Simpson 2009; Williams 1992; Williams 1995).

However, in the research reported on here, men benefited little from their allocation to particular areas. The only potential exception to this was in commercial cleaning where men's tendency to predominate in specialised cleaning services also meant they were likely to be sub-contractors and therefore have some additional benefits afforded to them - e.g. be their own boss, ability to directly negotiate payment, more autonomy etc.

Overall, 37 respondents across the case study occupations thought that the demand for male essentialist traits were specific to certain areas.

Having the demand for men's essentialist traits confined to specific areas within the case study occupations obviously reduces the demand for male workers in other areas of the occupations, and therefore restricts occupational sex integration. It also has the consequence of making men minorities within the case study occupation, as the particular areas in which men's essentialist traits are in demand may be limited.

As highlighted by one sales assistant.

*So if you break down the departments there's definitely more areas with girls in them yeah.* *Sales Assistant worker 4*

Finally, having the demand for men's essentialist traits confined to specific areas within the case study occupations results in specialist male ghettos being produced within the female dominated occupations.

Overall the evidence outlined above extends our understanding about why the male workers experienced being a man positively in terms of obtaining employment within the case study occupations (see 6.2.1 in Chapter 6). As seen above, this is not only because men are numerically rare, but also because managers and clients construct various aspects of the case study occupations as requiring traits and proclivities that are consistent with the male essentialist package. The demand for such traits contributes to men being looked at as suitable employees.

Sociology has long informed us that demand for workers and particular skills is not something defined solely outside the workplace, as economists tend to suggest. Instead the whole realm of what is demanded in a particular occupation - skill sets etc - are sites of social construction and contestation, specific to the work place and occupations (Braverman 1975; Reskin 1988; Steinberg 1990). Indeed as was discussed in Chapter 2, gender essentialist stereotypes and an occupation's task content are crucial in determining in the first instance whether a job will be labelled as either men's or women's work.

However, what is seen above are clear examples of how demand is renegotiated within sex segregated occupations, in ways that subsequently allow members of the opposite sex to enter. In the first instance there is a renegotiation of what the case study work involves (strength, risk, discipline); after work tasks within the occupations are (re)defined in these ways, it is easier for men to enter.

For example, in aged care, when managers and clients (re)define the work to require strength and the capacity to deal with risk, they are redefining what skill sets are in demand. This demand is away from female essentialist traits and proclivities - caring, nurturance, interpersonal interaction - and towards male essentialist traits and proclivities. This has the consequence of increasing men's representation within the case study occupations.

This again highlights gender essentialism's integrative function and dispels the common contention that gender essentialism operates solely in segregative ways. Indeed the demand for male workers in female dominated occupations is constructed by reference to gender essentialism. Moreover, as was shown above in relation to the safety concerns posed by the nature of work, once the work is reconstructed to require attributes stereotypically associated with men, a concurrent reduction in the demand and/or supply of female workers can occur.

The findings also suggest that forms of female advantaging and male advantaging gender essentialism not only operate at the macro level to produce the contemporary occupational sex segregation regime, as identified by Charles and Grusky (Charles and Grusky 2004) but also at the micro or occupational level to influence men's representation (or not) in female dominated jobs.

However, gender essentialism's integrative function was variable between the four case study occupations. Interestingly those occupations in which men have been found to be increasing their share of employment (aged care and cleaning) were more prevalent among those constructing aspects of the work in ways that provide an opportunity for men to enter. Within child care and sales, gender essentialism operated to align men with particular competencies and expertise that make them better suited to particular areas or work tasks within the case study occupation, but it is possible that these work task or areas may constitute only a small percentage of the total work undertaken within the case study occupations. However, it is also possible that what is driving the increase in the proportion of workers who are male in aged care and commercial cleaning is the fact that demand for workers in areas constructed as 'male' is increasing more quickly than it is in the 'female' areas. Unfortunately the data does not allow us to determine which of the above scenarios may be at play.



However, a possible consequence of gender essentialism's integrative operation is that once tasks are constructed in ways (from the point of view of gender essentialism) that lead to a demand for male workers, specialist male ghettos may be produced within female dominated occupations. This would have the effect of both producing gender segmentation within female dominated occupations, and re-establishing male essentialism - this time within gender atypical jobs - by defining what is and what is not appropriate work for men in female dominated occupations. This helps us understand why gender essentialism is so intractable; even when it operates in integrative ways, its consequence is actually to re-establish itself.

It is important to note that men who enter gender atypical jobs through openings in 'male areas' of the jobs may be able to subsequently move into other less 'male' areas of the case study occupations. Indeed, this may be a longer term pathway to reducing occupational sex segregation. However, this research did not find many instances where this was the case.

The findings however, do point to particular areas within the case study occupations that could be the focus of strategies that attempt to reengage men displaced by economic restructuring with work in areas of rising employment, which tend to be female dominated. In aged care these areas include high care and services providing care to clients with complex needs; in retail these include areas that cater to men's interests/competence (e.g., hardware, electronics, gardening, car parts etc.); in commercial cleaning these areas include factory/warehouse cleaning, industrial cleaning, specialised cleaning services such as carpet and window cleaning, and cleaning that is undertaken at night and in public spaces; and finally in child care these areas include after school hours and vacation care where the focus (in part) may be less on personal care and more on engaging in play activities.

The previous section documented how gender essentialism operates on the demand side of the labour market to facilitate men's integration into jobs normatively regarded as female. However, other processes also operated on the demand side of the labour market to assist men's entry into female dominated occupations. Some of these processes were found to moderate and/or reduce gender essentialism homogenising and exclusionary operation. Others however, were more about demand that results from men's minority status as workers. I turn now to consider each of these processes.

## **8.2 Minority workers counteracting gender essentialism negative homogenising processes**

One set of processes that was found to operate to increase men's representation in female dominated occupations related to men's function, as minority workers, in counteracting the negative homogenising processes of gender essentialism. While gender essentialism operated in various ways to construct the case study work and the skills, traits, and dispositions required within them as appropriately female, managers (and some clients) also recognised that having a workforce dominated by one sex had a number of negative consequences for both workers and clients. It was found that managers considered male workers to be important in counteracting the homogenising effects. There were two main areas that these homogenising processes were perceived to negatively impact. One was on the relationships between clients and workers; the other was in relationships between workers.

### **8.2.1 Relationship between workers and clients**

Male workers were considered beneficial to clients within the case study occupations as they increased clients' contact with men and provided a role model and/or exposure to being a man.

#### *Increase client contact with men*

For example, in aged care, managers perceived the female dominated workforce along with the female dominated nature of the broader health/care system in which clients were located, to result in clients having little opportunity for contact with men. This was perceived unfavourably, as many consider clients to desire and benefit from male companionship. Male workers were therefore viewed positively and sought out to increase clients' contact with men.

*They might be able to relate better to our older men. Even though they might be a little confronted that they might be showering them, certainly when it comes to social support, talking about fishing, footy, they might have more common things to talk about than say a woman. But yes, the fact that they're male is important, I think it's very important.*

*Aged Care Manager 4*

*Because there are always women in this environment, it might be women in the aged care or the meals on wheels women. So there's all these women and they actually really enjoy seeing a man and having a different interaction. It's probably more normal. In society we are men and women, we have different interactions with them in our general every day, like at the petrol station, or the shop. Whereas older people, who sometimes are confined to their home, don't get to interact with men and women. So when they've got all these women coming in, it's not a real equal balance of what it would be like in society.*

*Aged Care Manager 6*

The male companionship provided by male workers was not only thought to be important to male clients but also to female clients.

*I think it would be good to have more male workers. A lot of females don't get male company. They may be a widow with female companionship only. So I think that they would enjoy the male worker company.*

*Aged Care Manager 7*

*For some of our older ladies, they love having the men visit. They love having them do the shopping, they love having any interaction with them. It just sparks. There's that natural interaction that's just a little different. For the men, it's another man to be involved with. The men can get quite isolating as they get older. Predominantly it's women, but all the contact they have is with women, so when they actually get to have a male worker that's visiting them regularly, they have a chance to develop a decent relationship.*

*Aged Care Manager 5*

The perception that clients desired and needed male companionship - which could be met by male workers - was mentioned by 10 respondents, all of whom were from either aged care or child care case studies.

*Provide male role model and or exposure to being a man*

Specific to child care was the perception that the female dominated workforce had the negative consequence of limiting children's access to male role models. Sixteen respondents from the child care case study occupation mentioned that male workers were beneficial in the homogeneous workforce, as they provide children with a male role model and/or exposure to being a man.

*It's probably good for boys to have a male role model in a situation like that instead of all these women buzzing around.*

*Child Care Client 4*

*A lot of families will support the need that there is a male in here simply because children need to be exposed to that.*

*Child Care Manager 2*

*I mean I think it's great to have men working in child care, I think it's really important for children to have that male influence as well.*

*Child Care Manager 5*

Existing research similarly finds that parents and managers value male workers for their ability to provide children with a male role model and exposure to being a man (Cameron 2001; Rolfe 2006).

### **8.2.2 Workplace and relationship among workers**

In addition to the negative homogenising processes that affect clients, male workers were considered to counteract many negatives of a female dominated workplace and improve relationships between workers.

*Bring different (male) dynamic*

One assumption of gender essentialism is that men and women bring fundamentally different skills, traits and dispositions to the work place which influence how they undertake the work. Having a workforce dominated by one sex would therefore result in a homogenising of how work is undertaken within the case study occupations. Nine respondents, mainly managers, said that having male workers counteracted this. These respondents perceived men to bring a different dynamic to the workplace and a different way of doing things. This was viewed favourably as it opened up a different way of looking at work tasks and complemented female workers.

*You look at him and go 'I wish I could do that'. I don't know what it is. I guess some of us look at him and go 'oh he's male so he's got a different point of view and a different way that he looks at what's going on' and it would be nice to be able to step back and – as much as we have a go at our partners or husbands or whatever and go 'why can't you see it, it's because you're a male' – to be able to stand back and go 'well, you know, he sees it a completely different way'. I guess that's why they are an asset within the centre, because they do give you a really different point of view, they see it a different way, they have those attachments and bonds in a different way.*

*Child Care Manager 3*

*Men in child care are great. I think they bring something and have a different thinking. I think they do bring something to the centre and certainly there's some families that walk in and will say 'great, you've got a man here' so from that perspective I think that it's quite positive.*

*Child Care Manager 4*

Male workers themselves thought that they undertake work tasks differently to their female counterparts, but that this actually lead to a complementary of skills within the case study occupations.

*I think that – I mean we're so different, we're pretty different workers, [name] and I, compared to the girls and it's a pretty good dynamic. We look after kids quite differently but it's quite a good partnership.*

*Child Care Male Worker 7*

#### *Provide gender mix*

Closely related to the above was the view that male workers simply contributed to workforce heterogeneity. Male workers were perceived to provide a gender balance or gender mix (even though men were still a minority) within the case study occupations. This was thought to benefit the work environment, clients and the relationship between workers.

*We have a preference for male carers, because it's a good balance, it's nice to have a mix. We do notice it when we have males leave.*

*Aged Care Manager 1*

*Yeah I guess it's that female dynamic that can happen in a workplace where everyone is female and everybody kind of rides the same way. Yeah they do mix it up a bit.*

*Child Care Manager 3*

*Definitely there is a demand for it [male employment]. Just like from my point of view it's even for the mix. Like you can't have all the same type of people, you can't have all girls working together, you've got to have a mixture and you can't – even if you do have all girls you've got to have a mixture of personalities so that they can get along and they can work together. For the work environment – and I think it's probably true anywhere – you need to have a mixture of people, a mixture of personalities.*

*Sales Assistant Manager 3*

The positives of male employment in terms of providing more of a gender balance or mix were mentioned by participants (n=18) across all case study occupations. It was more frequently reported by managers (n=12), particularly managers working within aged and child care.

*Reduction in perceived bitchiness and gossip*

Finally, nine respondents - again mainly managers - considered male workers contributed to a reduction in the perceived (stereotypical) negatives of a female dominated workplace - bitchiness and gossip.

*Women behave differently when you've got a balance of men around. There's not so much bitching and complaining. I think it can promote them working a little bit more professionally. Don't get me wrong, I'm not biased, I've worked in a predominantly female based industry. I worked as a carer for 18 years and I've been doing this for 15. So I've experienced it.*

*Aged Care Manager 1*

*I think that it actually breaks up the bitchiness of women working together. They don't get involved in the politics. A lot of women working together, you tend have a lot of a sometimes, sarcastic, bitchy environment, where as males tend not to get involved. I think they bring a kind of detachment with them, but again it depends on their personality.*

*Aged Care Manager 3*

The positive impact male workers were perceived to have on reducing the level of bitchiness and gossip in these predominately female work environments was mentioned by participants across the 4 case study occupations, but was particularly predominant among aged care participants.

### **8.3 Moderating the impact of gender essentialist exclusion**

While the above processes operated to counteract gender essentialism negative homogenising processes, other processes operated to moderate or destabilise gender essentialist notions of appropriate jobs for men and women.

### 8.3.1 Prior History of Male Employment

Similarly to what was found to be operating for male workers, an important factor influencing managers' perception of men being appropriate and suitable employees (or not) in the case study occupations, was whether managers had previous experience with male workers within the organisation, or had previously worked with men. A prior history of male employment contributed to a reduction in the feminine association of the job, and legitimised male employment.

*My experience in my previous role, there were male workers, that was how it was. There wasn't a lot of them, but they were part of the team, there was no issues. Whereas for a team like this one, where they have not had a male worker, I think it would be strange, I think they would find it strange, because 'oh, we haven't done that before'. So I think it's challenging, the culture, and the idea that women do this work.*

*Aged Care Manager 6*

*I guess we've always kind of had men around the place. Before that staff member we had another casual staff member – not that he worked on the floor with kids but one of our cooks was a male. One of our admin people was a male as well ...It's funny, I was talking to our casual staff member a while ago about – I can't remember how we got onto it but I said – I was saying 'I wonder why it is that we're lucky enough to have three men here' and he said 'that's because you value the men, not just the men but the staff'.*

*Child Care Manager 5*

Having male workers within the organisations was also viewed as favourable in terms of recruiting more male workers.

*I don't know if it's because we have men here that men are attracted to work here; I don't know if that's something ... so I don't know if that brings in other males, because they don't feel quite so threatened by the large female co-workers. So I don't know if it is that we just happen to be lucky and have men working for us or if it is because we do have a pool of male workers and so more male workers are attracted to us.*

*Child Care Manager 3*

*I think we are fed through TAFE and university a lot of the male students.*

*I: Because you have males working here?*

*It's never been articulated but I'm guessing that's what they're thinking, that they're thinking well ...there more likely to stay on but also the environment. There are some centres that have never had males and I daresay there'd still be people who would still be suspicious or uncertain of working with men in child care, certainly from families but also from staff. Placing a student in that type of environment may not have the best outcomes for the student so we often will get male students when they're available come to us for the simple reason that this is an environment that's used to having males working with children.*

*Child Care Manager 6*

Seven respondents thought that a prior history of male employment positively influenced men's representation within female dominated occupations. The overwhelming majority (n=6) of those who mentioned this were managers working in child care case.

## **8.4 Demand for minority workers**

Other processes were found to be operating on the demand side of the labour market that were unrelated to gender essentialism and/or moderated its effects. These were more about demand that arises for male workers due to their minority status.

### **8.4.1 Minority clients generating a demand for minority workers**

Discussed in the previous chapter was the idea that the demand for male workers in the case study occupations is influenced by the sex of the predominant client group. In most instances the more frequent users of the services provided by the case study occupations are female. This was shown to negatively influence the demand for male workers. However, where the client base was male, the demand for male workers increased.

*Just like a woman would be more comfortable with a woman care worker, a man might be more comfortable with a male care worker.*

*Aged Care Manager 4*

In aged care, the demand for male workers was often attributed to the embarrassment that male clients experienced in having personal care tasks provided by female workers.



*We had this guy, who has since passed on, but he did say to me one time 'oh thank goodness you're here' because he used to get embarrassed with women doing personal care and so whenever I was on I used to make it a point of saying 'look I'll look after this guy and you do this woman'.*

*Aged Care Worker 2*

*For them it's like their daughter seeing them naked and showering them. So we are getting a few issues with that, but we've got enough male staff on site to be able to negotiate around that. We're sensitive with that as well.*

*Aged Care Manager 1*

In other instances it was attributed to men not being able to take direction from women.

*We had a couple that only wanted a male, they didn't want to be bossed around by a female.*

*Aged Care Manager 4*

The preference among male aged care clients for male aged care workers, also meant that male workers were preferred in organisations where the client base was predominately male.

*We have a preference for male carers, because this site is predominantly male residents. We have 34 males and 6 female clients. So because it's predominantly a male based client group, we encourage as many males as we can. We do notice it when we have males leave.*

*Aged Care Manager 1*

*We're unique in packages in that a lot of our clients are males, because you usually find that most package older people are actually females so to be honest, we would probably go for the male.*

*Aged Care Manager 2*

#### **8.4.2 Numerical rarity and the demand for minority workers**

Similarly to the benefits men perceived to experience as a result of being a minority worker (see Chapter 6), managers and clients suggested that the numerical rarity of men within the case study occupations contributed to men being viewed as desirable employees. Male workers were a novelty and something new within many of the case study occupations.

*Men become a rarity, we are really very interested when we have a man's CV come in, let alone a personal care worker.*

*Aged Care Manager 5*

*A lot of centres struggle to get male workers and when you do get them you do like to keep them though obviously, for various reasons, that doesn't tend to happen. I guess it's more so that you hope to hang onto them, there's no guarantees you will. It's because they are a novice, they're something new to a centre, especially if a centre's never had males before. I've worked with males so I know what they're capable of doing.*

*Child Care Manager 2*

Managers also reported than having minority workers on their staff increased the demand for their services.

*We made a point in telling families as they came in, that we have male and female workers here. Then we found that people chose us because we had male workers.*

*Child Care Manager 1*

Eleven respondents, managers and clients, said that men's numerical rarity generated a demand for male workers. Three respondents were from aged care, 3 from sales, with the remainder being from the child care case study occupation. Again, the predominance of child care respondents is not all that surprising. As identified in the previous chapter, this is consistent with existing research that has found the more female dominated an occupation, the greater the preference for male workers (Williams 1992).

It is interesting that respondents in the most sex integrated occupation among those selected for case study, commercial cleaning, did not once mention a demand for men due to their numerical rarity. This is consistent with the argument put forth in Chapter 6. That is, the less integrating the occupation - measured by men not experiencing an increase in their share of employment - the more likely male workers will benefit from their minority status. Conversely, as the occupation becomes more integrated - measured by men experiencing an increase in their share of employment - these benefits diminish, and may be non-existent in occupations where men are winning out to women.

The fact that men's minority status generated a demand for male employees seems to provide evidence that disputes some of the demand side explanations for occupational sex segregation. There are no group averages that are being referred to, no in-group biases preventing men from entry. In these examples men are looked at favourably primarily because they are rare.

## Conclusion

This chapter has detailed a number of processes that operated on the demand side of the labour market to facilitate men's entry into jobs normatively regarded as female. Consistent with findings of previous chapters, gender essentialism was central to most of these processes.

Many managers and clients constructed certain aspects of case study employment to require, or at least be compatible with, male essentialist traits and proclivities. The demand for male essentialist traits in turn increased men's representation in the female dominated occupations.

Importantly however, the demand for male essentialist traits was found to be confined to particular areas within the case study occupations. This has the effect of producing specialist male ghettos within the female dominated case study occupations, which in turn re-establishes male essentialism (this time within gender atypical jobs) by defining what is and what is not appropriate work for men in female dominated occupations. This helps us understand why gender essentialism is so intractable. Even when it operates in integrative ways, its consequence is actually to re-establish itself.

However, the findings do point to particular areas within the case study occupations that could be the focus of strategies that attempt to reengage men displaced by economic restructuring with work in areas of rising employment, which tend to be female dominated. In aged care these areas include high care and services providing care to clients with complex needs; in retail these include areas that cater to men's interests/competence (i.e. hardware, electronics, gardening, car parts etc.); in commercial cleaning these areas include factory/warehouse cleaning, industrial cleaning, specialised cleaning services such as carpet and window cleaning, and cleaning that is undertaken at night and in public spaces; and finally in child care these areas include after school hours and vocation care where the focus (in part) may be less on personal care and more on engaging in play activities.

Men, after entering gender atypical jobs through openings in 'male' areas, may be subsequently able to move into other less 'male' areas of the case study occupations. Indeed, this may be a longer terms pathway to reducing occupational sex segregation.

These findings also allow us to understand how demand is renegotiated within sex segregated occupations in ways that subsequently allow members of the opposite sex to enter. In the first instance there is a renegotiation of what the case study work involves (strength, risk, discipline). After work tasks within the occupations are redefined in these ways it is easier for men to enter.

The findings highlight again gender essentialism's integrative function, and dispel the common contention that gender essentialism operates solely in segregative ways. However, the integrative operation of gender essentialism was variable between the four different occupations. Interestingly those occupations in which men have been found to be increasing their gender share of employment (aged care and cleaning) were more prevalent among those redefining aspects of the work in ways that increased the demand for male workers. Within child care and sales, gender essentialism operated to align men with particular competencies and expertise that make them better suited to particular areas or work tasks within the case study occupation, but these work tasks or areas may constitute only a small percentage of the total work undertaken within the case study occupations.

Other processes operated on the demand side of the labour market to facilitate men's entry into female dominated occupations. Some of these processes related to gender essentialism, and were found to moderate and/or reduce its homogenising and exclusionary operation. Others however, were unrelated to gender essentialism and more about demand that results from men's minority status as workers.

## CHAPTER NINE: Conclusions

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### 9.1 Overview

Faced with the deterioration of low skilled men's labour market situation, this thesis has utilised occupational sex segregation - a concept traditionally used to explain women's employment outcomes - to further understand low skilled men's employment opportunities in the contemporary Australian labour market.

Drawing on recent studies, the thesis identified a number of points about current trends in occupational sex segregation. Firstly, after some dramatic reductions in the 1970s and 1980s, declines have stalled. The declines in occupational sex segregation that have occurred have largely been confined to professional and managerial occupations. This is mainly because women have entered these upper end occupations that were formerly the confines of men. Men however, have not entered women's jobs at any occupational level.

Men's resistance to taking on gender atypical employment has been recognised as a key barrier to future declines in occupational sex segregation and achieving greater gender equality (Blau, Brinton, and Grusky 2006; England 2006b; England 2010; Grusky and Levanon 2008). It was argued in this thesis that men's aversion to female occupations is also a necessary component of the explanation for the deterioration of low skilled men's labour market situation. Any solution to men's withdrawal from the labour market involves men taking advantage of the rising lower level service sector employment, and therefore undertaking work that is traditionally regarded as women's. The question is why are men not moving into these female dominated occupations, apparently preferring to be unemployed or withdraw from the workforce rather than do 'women's work'?

This thesis drew from leading scholars of gender stratification to understand men's resistance to working in female typed occupations. These scholars consider gender essentialism - the notion that men and women are innately and fundamentally different in interests and skills - to be a primary determinant of (horizontal) occupational sex segregation and its continuation. Moreover, they view the occupational sex segregation that results from men's limited inroads into female dominated occupations to be largely caused by mechanisms that operate on the supply side of the labour market. In other words, they suggest that men themselves

choose not to enter female dominated occupations because of the relative loss of status and money that this would entail (England 2006b; England 2010), and/or because men understand their own competencies in terms of the gender essentialist package that associates men with status, prestige, physical strength and technical tasks. Men enter occupations that reflect these preferences and capacities and exclude themselves from those that don't (Grusky and Levanon 2008).

This thesis has argued that while these supply side explanations for men's limited inroads into female occupations seemingly hold at the upper end of the occupational spectrum where men (and women) currently have a number of alternative employment choices, they seem less plausible at the lower end of the occupational spectrum where traditional employment opportunities for low skilled men have substantially declined. The current choice faced by many low skilled men is to either undertake the low level service work that is experiencing growth, and therefore undertake work that is traditionally seen as women's, or not to have work at all.

There is currently limited empirical research that examines whether or not the segregation that is caused by men's limited movement into female dominated occupations does arise principally on the supply side in the ways conceptualised by Grusky (and various co-authors) and England. The purpose of the thesis is to provide such an examination. It aimed to understand the social processes that generate and/or stall changes in low skilled men's representation in female dominated occupations; and to explore the usefulness of various supply and demand side explanations for occupational sex segregation as vehicles for theorizing about this type of occupational change.

## **9.2 Main findings and contribution of the research**

### **9.2.1 Occupational sex segregation contributes to the decline in low skilled men's labour market opportunities**

There have been no recent comprehensive studies of trends in occupational sex segregation in the Australian labour market. Therefore, using ABS Census data for 1996 and 2006, the research first explored how occupational sex segregation shapes low skilled men's employment opportunities in Australia. Such detailed examination of employment growth by gender and skill are not common, but they are essential in assisting us to understand the current employment opportunities for low skilled men (and women) in a sex segregated Australian labour market.

The empirical evidence indicated that employment for workers with no post-school qualifications has expanded most rapidly in occupations that are female dominated; men with no post-school qualifications are not increasing their share of employment in many of these occupations. Employment has declined most rapidly in occupations that are male dominated. This evidence therefore supports the argument that sex segregation in employment has contributed to the decline in low skilled men's employment opportunities.

### **9.2.2 Occupational differences in sex segregation**

Using results from the above analysis, four low skilled female dominated occupations were strategically selected for close case study. The case study approach involved extensive, structured interviews with men who might take jobs in these occupations (i.e., unemployed men), employers, male workers and clients or customers. In total 105 individual interviews and two group interviews were conducted. The aim of this stage of the research was to understand the possible supply and demand side determinants of men's segregation from, and conversely their integration into, low skilled female dominated occupations.

The occupations selected for case study varied in the extent to which men experienced an increase in their gender shares of employment. Two occupations were chosen where men had not experienced an increase in their share of employment - child care and sale assistants; and two were chosen where men had experienced an increase in their share of employment - aged care and commercial cleaning. Selecting the case study occupations according to this logic ensured that different scenarios in men's entry into, or exclusion from, female dominated occupations were included.

The case study research was designed with the belief that there may be something that is fundamentally different about female occupations where men are making inroads, compared to those where they are not, which can be used to better understand how occupations remain sex segregated. However, the empirical evidence presented in chapters 5-8 indicates that this idea is wrong - there are no such fundamental differences.

Instead, there are numerous processes operating on both the supply and demand side of the labour market. Some of these processes facilitate men's movement into women's occupations, whilst others make it difficult for men to make inroads. These

processes, while differing in their occurrence, were found to operate across all of the case study occupations. The various processes do not operate independently from one another, but interact with each other in ways that compound their effect in generating and/or reducing occupational sex segregation. The reason why some female dominated occupations see men making inroads whilst others do not, is that the overall balance of these forces varies across occupations. In some occupations the cumulative effect of the playing out of the various processes is integrative (men move into female dominated occupations); in others the cumulative effect is to segregate (men are excluded). The gender segregation that is observed then is a product of the balance of the operation of a number of mechanisms in a given occupation, rather than being the result of a single fundamental process.

What this research offers is a comprehensive account of these various supply and demand side mechanisms, and a detailed picture of how they influence men's representation in the four case study occupations. Such accounts are currently lacking, but are essential in developing our understanding of occupational sex segregation (Reskin 2003).

### **9.2.3 Supply vs. Demand side causes of occupational sex segregation**

Consistent with existing explanations for men's limited movement into female dominated occupations, it was found that a number of supply side processes operate to reduce men's willingness to gain and maintain employment within female dominated occupations. Contrary to current theorising, there is also compelling evidence that there are demand side mechanisms that operate at the lower end of the labour market to limit men's movements into gender atypical occupations; that is, for various reasons, employers are reluctant to take on men.

### **9.2.4 The importance of gender essentialism**

Gender essentialism - the notion that men and women are innately and fundamentally different in interests and skills - was central to many of these processes.

Consistent with existing understandings, gender essentialism operated on the supply side of the labour market to reduce men's willingness to gain and maintain employment within female dominated occupations. Male workers and unemployed men viewed the dispositions, skills and ways of being required in the case study



occupations as being averse to them or at least very challenging to perform; in a few instances men linked this aversion to their maleness. More often however, men perceived case study employment as something they could not do simply due to perceptions of self and their preference not to undertake work that is misaligned with these perceptions; they were saying that they personally could not do such work, rather than saying that men in general could/should not. This is a much weaker operation of gender essentialism than that which is suggested by the conceptual schema of Grusky and co-authors, and as such may be less resistant to egalitarian forces than Grusky (and co-authors) or England believe.

Many men also continue to understand their own competencies in terms of standard essentialist visions of masculinity, and pursued and preferred work that requires physicality, practicality, is located outdoors and is full-time and well paid. Indeed, men consistently displayed an aversion to those aspects of female dominated occupations that are antithetical to the kinds of job attributes - independence, physical labour, technical skills - associated with standard essentialist visions of masculinity and appropriate male jobs. This finding is consistent with Grusky (and various co-authors) theorising about the operation of gender essentialism in generating occupational (horizontal) sex segregation.

However, contrary to current theorising, gender essentialism also operated on the demand side of the labour market to produce and maintain occupational sex segregation. Many managers and clients draw on essentialist notions of gender appropriate jobs to construct the case study occupations as female appropriate work, and position men in opposition to the work. More than that, many viewed women as better or more capable employees in the case study jobs than men. Managers and clients also valued and desired skills and attributes in employees - social intelligence, looking good and sounding right, caring - which are consistent with essentialist notions of femininity, or at a minimum not predominantly associated with men, particularly low skilled working class men.

The demand side operations of gender essentialism were again largely consistent with existing understandings, even though these do not regard demand side gender essentialism to cause men's limited representation in female dominated occupations. In a few cases however, the operation of gender essentialism differed and prompts a rethink of what gender essentialism is commonly conceptualised as encompassing.

In these instances gender essentialism positions men as the more dangerous sex, being inherently more capable of sexual assault and/or abuse; or to a lesser extreme, making the other sex feel inadequate. In this way it constructs men not as lacking traits to work in gender atypical environments, but as possessing (essentialist) traits that make them dangerous in gender atypical environments - particularly those where interaction with women and children are likely. These operations of gender essentialism take essentialist notions of masculinity as a starting point, but seem to move on and embrace populist prejudice that equate men who want to do women's work with sexual predators and the sexually suspect. This may be fuelled by continued media coverage of issues such as child and elder abuse, which often includes the assertion that abusers target these settings. This seems then to be much more about sex and sexual deviance than it is to do with gender and gender essentialist traits, and it is not clear that the gender essentialist model deals well with this. Arguably however, the occupational sex segregation that arises from the construction of men as inherently more capable of sexual assault would be much more resistant to policy intervention or integrative processes than the construction of men as being uncaring.

Overall these findings reinforce existing understandings that posit gender essentialism as being a central mechanism by which occupational sex segregation is produced and reproduced. However, we should not extrapolate from this the idea that low skilled men are always *consciously* disbarring themselves from female dominated work. Gender essentialism is deeply embedded and is internalized by men, and others, and manifests itself in embodied social practices (occupational aspirations). It is not (always) men's disdain for the feminine that results in men's limited inroads. Men, and others, are not always complicit in their decision to view these jobs as legitimate or not. Gender atypical jobs are simply never presented - either by themselves or others - as a choice for men to consider.

### **9.2.5 Moderating gender essentialist exclusion**

Despite the power of gender essentialism in limiting men's inroads into gender atypical occupations, mechanisms operate on both the supply and demand side to reduce or moderate its impact.

Some of these mechanisms relate to various conditions that destabilise gender essentialist notions of appropriate jobs for men and women. On the supply side these

include having gender atypical jobs presented as legitimate employment options; having past work experiences in occupations that are similarly characterised by gender bias (although not always as heavily female dominated); and having other males present in the female dominated occupation. The latter condition was also found to be important to managers' perceptions of men being appropriate and suitable employees.

Others however, were examples of individual action explicitly mobilised to counteract gender essentialist's exclusion. On the supply side, men deployed a variety of strategies to moderate the negative reactions initiated by their gender atypical work, and to overcome the associated discomfort with the female image of the job. Common strategies included reconstructing the job content to emphasise its masculine components; retitling the job or not fully disclosing the type of work they do when speaking with family or friends; and renegotiating their identity so that it was not compromised by doing work that is traditionally associated with women.

These strategies suggest ways in which men are successful in moving into gender atypical work; however, these strategies usually have the effect of reinforcing, rather than challenging, male essentialism. For example, men who emphasised the masculine aspects of the job (such as being similar to gardening work, playing sport) perpetuated notions of what is, and what is not, acceptable and appropriate work for men. This does not support Grusky and Levanon's (2008) theorising about the conditions which would see men enter female occupations. For Grusky and Levanon this necessitated men shedding the male essentialist package. However, for the men in this research, it was usually re-establishing male essentialism while working in gender atypical employment that enabled them to work in the case study occupations.

On the demand side, while gender essentialism operated in various ways to construct the case study work and the skills, traits, and dispositions required within them as appropriately female, managers (and some clients) also recognised that having a workforce dominated by one sex had a number of negative consequences for both workers and clients. Male workers were considered to be important in counteracting these negative homogenising effects of gender essentialism. Male workers were viewed positively and were sought out to increase clients' contact with men. They were also considered important in counteracting perceived negatives of a female dominated workplace and to improve relationships between workers.

### 9.2.6 Occupation task content and gender essentialist integrative function

One critical process which has previously received limited attention is the role of gender essentialism in *reducing* occupational sex segregation. However, many managers, clients and male workers do perceive certain aspects of employment within the case study occupations to require, or be compatible with, male traits or proclivities.

For example, male workers found aspects of the case study employment such as its physical nature, (sometimes) being located outside, selling of particular products, allowing independence and autonomy, to be congruent with their own preferences and capacities. Managers and clients also perceived certain aspects of case study employment to require traits that they associate with men and masculinity. These traits include physical strength, authority, being less at risk and particular knowledge and expertises. This suggests, contrary to Grusky et al. (2008; 2000) and England (England 2005; England 2006b; England 2010), that certain aspects of gender atypical employment are compatible with male gender essentialism.

The integrative function of gender essentialism is intimately tied to the division of tasks within occupations. Where some tasks within female occupations can be aligned - either by men themselves or by managers and/or clients - with male essentialist traits or proclivities, men are able to enter. For example, in sales, the perception that stocking shelves or dock work was physically demanding, meant that men were often viewed as preferable employees. In addition, the limited customer contact (independence) that this work entailed meant that many men also preferred working 'out the back' on the dock.

One consequence however, is that these areas then become the stronghold of male employment and are considered by men, and by others, as the appropriate areas in which men should work in gender atypical occupations. This has the effect of both producing gender segmentation within female dominated occupations, and re-establishing male essentialism (this time within gender atypical jobs) by defining what is and what is not appropriate work for men in female dominated occupations. This helps us understand why gender essentialism is so intractable. Even when it operates in integrative ways, its consequence is actually to re-establish itself.

The findings are also important as they are highly suggestive of how the gendering and social construction of occupations and occupational tasks unfold over time. The results of this research suggest a plausible way this may occur.

In the first instance there is a (re)construction of what the work involves (strength, risk, discipline), often in ways that are consistent with gender essentialism. Once work tasks within the occupations are (re)defined in these ways, it is easier for men (women) to enter. For example, in aged care, when managers and clients (re)define the work to require strength and the capacity to deal with risk, they are redefining what skill sets are in demand. This demand is away from female essentialist traits and proclivities (caring, nurturance, interpersonal interaction) and towards male essentialist traits and proclivities. This has the consequence of increasing men's representation within the occupation.

In sex segregated occupations where men (women) start to enter by defining a certain area of it as male (female) work, over time this is reinforced to become a distinctive part of the occupation, and (re)produces gendered divisions of labour. Such processes may also result in the gender segregated parts of one (integrating) occupation to fragment, producing two or more occupations which are sex segregated. Cleaning stands out as an example here. For example, the emphasis on men's physicality has the effect of increasing men's representation in areas that are more physically demanding. These areas then become specialised areas of the industry (carpet cleaning, window cleaning, industrial cleaning) and are male dominated, while the original occupation remains female dominated.

The division of tasks within occupations and its relationship to gender and occupational sex segregation and/or integration indicates that the evolution of occupations and occupational structures are not solely influenced by technological and economic development (which is something often implied), but also by gender (Reskin 1988; Steinberg 1990). Gender processes and gender essentialism are deeply entrenched in the social organisation of work and labour markets. While gender essentialism may be related to some biological differences, they have become so embedded and institutionalised that the dynamics that determine it no longer have much to do with biology. The point is that the construction of tasks that are required in occupations, divisions of labour etc., are all socially constructed. It's not that some occupations inherently must require physical strength that only men tend to possess.

It's that the way the work is carried out - the labour process - tends to emphasise these requirements and maximise them in some occupations, or some aspects of occupations that are defined as male.

### **9.2.7 The role of various actors**

The various operations of gender essentialism additionally highlighted the important role played by people who are outside the traditional labour supply and demand chain (i.e. friends, family, clients and broader social networks) in producing, maintaining and reducing occupational sex segregation. These social actors are often negated, or at least sidelined, in existing explanations of the causes and continuation of occupational sex segregation.

However, the social milieus in which a person's labour market decisions are embedded are central to the production and reproduction of essentialist notions of masculinity and femininity, and the corresponding construction of appropriate jobs for men and women. For example, men's employment preferences were often shaped by reference to their family's and friends' gender essentialist views of appropriate male and female work. Essentialist stereotypes held by others also results in them reacting negatively to men who transgress norms about gender appropriate labour. These sanctions by themselves significantly reduce men's willingness to undertake gender atypical work, but they also result in men changing their behaviour to protect themselves from accusations and negative suspicion, which in turn may led men to experience gender atypical employment negatively and contribute to intentions to leave.

A person's social milieu is also important to processes that destabilise gender essentialist notions of appropriate jobs for men (and women), which in turn facilitates men's integration into female dominated occupations. This includes having family members, often women, who already work in the area encouraging men to give it a go, and actively assisting them in obtaining jobs; people working in education and training institutions providing men with information about gender atypical courses; and employment consultants with whom men come into contact while they were unemployed, who encouraged and provided men with opportunities to enter occupations normatively regarded as female.

In addition to these social networks, the research demonstrates the role played by various workplace actors - potential workers, current workers, managers and clients - in producing and reducing occupational sex segregation. All are shown in the thesis to be intimately involved in processes that generate and/or stall changes in men's representation in female dominated occupations. By including these multiple participant groups, the research provides a much fuller, more complex understanding of the determinants of men's representation in expanding female dominated occupations than does existing research, that usually reports on data collected from one group of respondents - usually men working in female dominated occupations.

The relationship between customers/clients and managers stands out as an example here. Gender essentialist views held by clients and/or consumers resulted in them being reluctant to receive a service from male workers. This additionally impacted on managers' employment decisions. Managers were reluctant to employ men due to a fear of losing, or not attracting clients; or to concerns over there being limited use of men due to clients' preferences to have female workers. The inclusion of these multiple participant groups therefore highlights how various processes operate among and between each of these social actors to generate and/or stall changes in men's representation in female dominated occupations.

### **9.2.8 Non gender essentialist mechanisms**

Processes unrelated to gender essentialism or its variants also operate to impact on men's representation in female dominated occupations. Some of these are related to standard labour market factors that attract or deter people from jobs in general; others are related to men's minority status as workers. These processes are ones that are likely to be found in any segregated labour market and impact on both men and women. The thesis highlighted how they operate for men.

Integrative mechanisms included rational decisions about likelihood of employment given current skills shortages and future labour demand in an occupation; difficulties in obtaining employment in traditional male areas; identifying positively with aspects of the work; and the demand for minority workers. Segregative mechanisms included managers' discriminatory hiring and/or employment practices; men's negative experiences of being a minority worker; unfamiliarity of workplace cultures; and standard labour market characteristics, such as short hours of employment and low pay, particularly compared to that afforded to workers in comparably skilled

jobs. These non-gender essentialist mechanisms have been largely ignored in previous research, but are found to have an important effect. All of these processes intersect with gender, albeit in differing ways, to produce or reduce the occupational sex segregation that is caused by men's limited movement into female dominated occupations.

### **9.2.9 Summary of the contribution of the research**

This thesis addresses a significant social issue, namely, the low levels of employment among men with low levels of education. This is at a time when so called 'women's jobs' are growing and present opportunities for employment. Specifically, this thesis has considered whether occupational sex segregation explains why men are not taking these new job opportunities. In doing so, this thesis challenges the current limits in understanding and extends our knowledge about the role of gender essentialism in producing and maintaining occupational sex segregation. It also raises new and interesting issues pertaining to the gendered division of labour within occupations, with horizontal fracturing across female dominated occupations occurring as work tasks become defined or redefined as male or female. Employing a sophisticated research design that included both the supply and demand side of the labour market, the thesis extends our knowledge of the processes that facilitate and/or exclude men's entry into low skilled female dominated jobs that present employment opportunities in the current labour market. In doing so the thesis allows the possibilities of change to be considered - men entering female dominated occupations - and what types of social policy interventions could achieve more of this change.

### **9.3 Prospects for increasing low skilled men's movement into female dominated jobs**

Overall there are numerous processes operating on both the supply and demand side of the labour market. Some of these processes facilitate men's movement into women's occupations, while others make it difficult for men to make inroads. While the overall balance of these forces varies across occupations, the discovery of integrative mechanisms does allow us to understand some of the conditions that need to transpire to increase men's representation in female dominated occupations. They also point to particular areas where policy intervention may be best targeted to bring



about future declines in occupational sex segregation, particularly that which is caused by men's limited movement into female dominated low skilled jobs.

### **9.3.1 Male areas**

Some men can find particular aspects of the female dominated occupations that are congruent with their own (gendered) interests and proclivities - such as being physical, being active, (sometimes) being located outside, selling of particular products, and allowing independence and autonomy. Managers and clients also perceive particular areas of employment within the case study occupations to require male skills and traits.

In aged care these areas include providing care to clients with complex needs (high care, residential care and community care with high risk clients); in retail these includes areas that are aligned with men's interests/competence (i.e. hardware, electronics, gardening, car parts etc.); in commercial cleaning these areas include factory/warehouse cleaning, industrial cleaning, specialised cleaning services such as carpet and window cleaning, and cleaning that is undertaken at night and in public spaces; and finally in child care these areas include after school hours and vocation care where the focus (in part) may be less on personal care and more on engaging in play activities.

While this has the consequence of producing gender segmentation within female dominated occupations, the findings do point to particular areas within gender atypical occupations that are likely to provide the key entry routes for men. It is these areas that should be the focus of strategies that aim to re-engage low skilled men displaced in the new economy.

An important component of any such strategy would be to emphasise areas of female dominated occupations that are compatible with stereotypical male interests. In addition, strategies would benefit from discussing the merits of male workers - in terms of their presumed skills and attributes - with potential employers/industry peak bodies, to ensure that demand is also encouraged.

It is important to note that men who enter female occupations through openings in 'male areas' of the occupations may, over time as their presence is accepted by themselves and others, be able to subsequently move into other less 'male' areas of the case study occupations. Indeed, this should be considered to be a longer term

pathway to reducing occupational sex segregation. However, this will require an investment by managers, and a willingness of workers and customers to resist gender essentialist notions of appropriate jobs for men and women, to allow men to enter these 'less male' areas.

### **9.3.2 Persistence of gender essentialism**

Men's continued preference for, and pursuit of, work that requires physicality, practicality, is located outdoors and is full-time and well paid suggests that not all men are going to consider female dominated occupations, or even male areas within them, as potential employment options.

For these men, the most likely routes back into employment continue to be jobs that incorporate attributes favoured by men. However, it is important to note, as Glucksmann (2004) does, that occupational linkages within industries and the broader economy mean that growth of some forms of service work - for example, sales - also create openings in other areas of the economy that are traditionally male or at least incorporate attributes favoured by men - such as warehousing, delivery services, forklift and truck driving. It is these kinds of occupations that should be additionally considered as routes back into employment for low skilled unemployed and economically inactive men.

### **9.3.3 Demand side causes of men's exclusion**

Currently, demand side processes are not considered to account for men's limited movement into female dominated occupations. This is interesting considering that much research and policy attention about the exclusion of women from male jobs has focused on demand side mechanisms and practices. The discovery that demand side mechanisms also, in part, negatively impact on men's representation in female dominated occupations suggests that much of what has been learned about encouraging women's employment in men's jobs can and should be applied to encouraging low skilled men into female jobs.

It suggests that demand side strategies and policies, such as anti-discrimination campaigns that explicitly focus on men, currently considered (by Grusky and England) as ones that would have little influence on men's representation in female dominated occupations, may actually have some positive impact. Such strategies could include provisions that employers take on more than one male worker at a time

so that men are not isolated, and to have numerical targets set to ensure male workers constitute a certain proportion of the workforce. Other strategies that could be considered include industrial campaigns promoting the merits of male employment within gender atypical occupations. These may not in themselves reduce demand side discriminatory practices, but may stimulate demand side integrative processes.

#### **9.3.4 Employment conditions**

Employment conditions within female dominated occupations are also important factors in any consideration of increasing men's representation within them. The low wages, short hours and flat organisational structure were found to reduce men's willingness to enter female dominated occupations, or influence their decisions to leave once there.

Improving the employment conditions within these occupations would therefore be likely to have a positive effect. Of note here, is the "equal pay for equal value" test case in the community service sector, currently being heard by Fair Work Australia<sup>27</sup>. It is expected to increase the relative pay of these female dominated jobs, making them more attractive to workers. However, improved employment conditions would be likely to be viewed favourably by both male and female workers, so the impact on men's representation may be muted.

#### **9.4 Limitations**

The research reported on here is not without its limitations.

Many of the processes that are found to influence men's representation in female dominated occupations could arguably also operate for women. For example, many people, both male and female, would display an aversion to (at least some) of the job traits required in the case study occupations. Many would also be attracted to the employment security the occupations provide in terms of current and future labour demand. Without interviewing female workers, I cannot be confident that the findings reflect gender differences. As a result, it is possible that the power of some of the processes in determining men's segregation from, or conversely their integration into, female dominated occupations may be overstated.

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<sup>27</sup> Fair Work Australia is the national workplace relations tribunal. It is an independent body with power to carry out a range of functions relating to the safety net of minimum wages and employment conditions; enterprise bargaining; industrial action; dispute resolution termination of employment; and other workplace matters.

In addition, excluding male workers who previously worked in the female dominated occupations, but who have left may mean that the research has not uncovered the complete range of processes that operate to limit men's representation in female dominated occupations. It may also understate the power of the various processes that influence men's decision to leave gender atypical jobs, and overplay those that influence men to remain in gender atypical employment once there.

As with all qualitative research, caution must be taken in regards to the generalisability of the research findings. While the aim was to produce analytic and not empirical generalisation, I am confident that the findings would be appropriately generalisable to men's representation in other female dominated occupations in Australia, open to workers with limited levels of formal education.

However, the findings are specific to low skilled female dominated occupations. The various processes and their corresponding occurrence may not necessarily be the same as those influencing men's representation in female dominated occupations that are located at the upper end of the occupational spectrum.

## **9.5 Areas for future research**

The research and its findings suggest a number of areas that should be the focus of future inquiry.

### **9.5.1 Occupational sex segregation in the Australian labour market**

There is a current lack of detailed and sophisticated analysis of trends in occupational and industrial sex segregation in the Australian labour market. The focus on the low skilled means that the research reported on here provides only a partial account. Broader analysis would be important in understanding how occupational sex segregation currently shapes both women's and men's labour market opportunities. Such analyses are also important to ensure the continued assessment of the impact of various egalitarian policy initiatives.

### **9.5.2 The role of education and training institutions in producing and reducing occupational sex segregation**

A central way in which occupational sex segregation is produced and reproduced within the economy is through the vocational education and training system. Indeed, this research found that managers, particularly in aged and child care, relied on TAFE

student placements as a method of recruitment. This would not in itself produce occupational sex segregation if men and women were equally represented in the relevant TAFE courses; however, current enrolment statistics indicate that men comprise a small minority of the student population in the relevant courses.

Studies (Dumbrell, De Montfort, Finnegan, and Wright 2000; England 2006b; England 2010) indicate that there are substantial differences in the fields of study undertaken by males and females. It is this sex segregation in fields of study that anticipates the occupational sex segregation that occurs in the workplace. Further research is therefore required to provide insights into how the vocational education and training (VET) system shapes occupational sex segregation and how it can foster occupational sex integration. This attention is even more warranted given the significant role these institutions (or various actors operating within them) play in shaping men's decisions to enter gender atypical employment or not (Chapter 5; Chapter 6; and Chapter 7).

Increasing men's (women's) participation in gender atypical education and training is obviously a necessary step to any future declines in occupational sex segregation. However, de-segregation via training has often been sought only in one direction, i.e. to provide women with opportunities to enter 'male' fields of study. Policy attention is therefore also required to ensure opportunities are provided to men to enter 'female' fields of study.

### **9.5.3 The importance of a person's social milieu**

Existing explanations of occupational sex segregation largely focus on the various attributes of rational actors (workers and employers). However, the importance of a person's social milieu in producing and reducing occupational sex segregation evident in this research suggest that much more attention needs to be paid to these broader social actors in the production, reproduction and reduction of occupational sex segregation.

### **9.5.4 Training gender essentialist skills**

The importance of gender essentialism in the construction of the types of skills and traits that are required and in demand in particular occupations, begs the question of whether or not gender essentialist skills can be trained in the sex that is positioned not to have them.

For example, in this research managers and clients valued and desired skills and attributes in employees such as social skills, looking good and sounding right, and being a caring and nurturing person. Such traits are consistent with essentialist notions of femininity, but it is conceivable that men as well as women would be able to display these traits; men are simply not encouraged to do so.

It would be an interesting avenue of inquiry in future research then, to be able to ascertain whether such skills and attributes could be trained in a person and if so, how. Of particular interest would be assessing the possibility of training such skills in the segment of the population that would most benefit in terms of accessing current employment opportunities - people who are currently unemployed.

#### **9.5.5 Testing supply side assumptions at the upper end of the occupational spectrum**

Finally, this research was set up on the assumption that supply side explanations for men's limited inroads into female dominated occupations hold at the upper end of the occupational spectrum where men (and women) currently have a number of alternative employment choices, but are less plausible at the lower end of the occupational spectrum where traditional employment opportunities for low skilled men have declined.

The discovery that there are demand side processes (gender essentialism being central to many) operating at the lower end of the labour market to exclude men from entering female occupations suggests that these supply side explanations may need to be re-examined to see if they indeed actually hold at the upper end of the labour market.

This is not to suggest that there have been no studies of demand side causes of occupational sex segregation at the upper end of the labour market. Indeed, discrimination - a common demand side mechanism - has been studied a great deal, in many subtle forms, at the upper end of the labour market. However, what is warranted is a detailed examination at the upper end of the occupational spectrum of a specific mechanism - gender essentialism - and its operation on both the demand and supply side in determining men's access to female dominated occupations.

Such research would complement this study and allow for a complete understanding of the various processes that generate and/or stall changes in men's representation in female dominated occupations.

## APPENDIX A3.1: Interview Schedule for Male Workers<sup>28</sup>

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1. I thought it would be good if we start by you briefly telling me about the types of work you have done in the past.
  - Year left school
  - Did they go on to undertake any other qualifications (such as trades, TAFE, etc)
  - Did they complete that qualification?
  - If not, what were the reasons for stopping this study?
  - Pathways into previous jobs
  - Problems (if any) they experienced in obtaining previous jobs
  - How did they overcome these problems?
  - Periods of unemployment
2. Motivating factors for undertaking past work
3. Likes and dislikes about past work
  - If involved in more than one type of employment did they like one type of job more than the other? If so, why?
  - Reasons for leaving past jobs
4. How did you come to be working as a (case study occupation)?
  - Length of time in job
  - Pathways into job – what were they doing previously, how did they find out about job?
  - Motivating factors for occupation choice?
  - How did they experience obtaining job?
  - Problems (if any) they experienced in obtaining job?
  - How did they overcome these problems?
5. Did you ever think you would be working as (case study occupation)?
  - Why/why not?
  - Has it changed the way you see yourself?
6. What do you most like about your job? Why?
  - Co-workers

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<sup>28</sup> This is a generic interview schedule. Amendments were made according to the contextual specificity of each case study occupation group.



- Clients
- Specific aspects of the job such as teamwork, autonomy, options for promotion, option for skill development, financial reward, and status of job
- Minority status as a man

7. What do you least like about your job? Why?

- Co-workers
- Clients
- Specific aspects of the job such as teamwork, autonomy, options for promotion, option for skill development, financial reward, and status of job
- Minority status as a man

8. How does this work compare to your previous employment?

- Are the likes and dislikes different from what you liked and disliked about the previous work you have done?

9. What were the attitudes of your family and friends when you told them you were going to work as a (case study occupation)?

- How did/do you feel about that?
- How do/did you respond?

10. What about other people's reactions? For example, what do people say when you meet them for the first time and you tell them you work as a (case study occupation)?

- How do you feel about that?
- How do you respond?

Obviously I am really interested in men working in the (case study occupation).

11. How have you experienced being a man in this industry?

12. How do you feel about working in a female dominated job?

- Positives
- Negatives

13. Why do you think it is that men do not commonly work in the industry?

14. Do you think that this is necessarily a bad thing?

- If yes, why?
- If no, why not?

15. If yes, can you see any way in changing this? I.e. can the industry do something to try and get more men to consider work in (case study occupation)?

- If yes - what way?
  - Do you think that it is important to do this?
- If no - Why not?

16. Do you see yourself working in the job in say 1 or 2 years?

- If not - why not?
- If so - why?

17. The next question is a hypothetical question and requires you to fill in a brief form.

Okay, so suppose that you had to leave this job in the next month or so and find alternate work, can you rank the following jobs from 1 to 10 in order of preference of the type of job you would most like to work in - 1 being most preferable and 10 being least preferable.

Get them to fill in form.

Can I now get you to briefly reflect about how you ranked the jobs. So for example, why would you least prefer to work as.....

18. I just have a few more questions about you<sup>29</sup>

- Post code or do you live around this area
- Age
- Country of birth
- Main source of income (own / family)
- Highest level of education
- Length of time in occupation

Is there anything else you would like to discuss that you have not yet been able to, or is there anything we have talked about that you would like to elaborate on further?

Thank you for sharing your story with us. It is of great importance. Please be assured that anything you have shared will be treated with the strictest confidence and that you will not be identified in any way.

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<sup>29</sup> This information is usually elicited throughout the interview process, but incorporated here as a reminder to obtain any of this demographic information that has not already been discussed.

## APPENDIX A3.2: Interview Schedule for Unemployed Men

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1. I thought it would be good if we start by you telling me about the types of work (if any) you have done in the past.
  - Year left school
  - Did they go on to undertake any other qualifications (such as trades, TAFE, etc)
  - Did they complete that qualification?
  - If not, what were the reasons for stopping this study?
2. How did you get those jobs?
  - Friends, family, networks, advertisement
  - Problems (if any) they experienced in obtaining previous jobs
  - How did they overcome these problems?
3. How did you become interested in that work?
  - Did you always want to do this type of work? Why?
4. Did you like one type of job more than the other?
  - If so, why? What was it about that job?
5. Thinking about the jobs you have done in the past, what did you most like about them?
6. What did you most dislike about them?
7. Reasons for leaving past jobs
8. What were the situations that lead you to currently not being in paid work?
  - Length of time unemployed
  - Experiences while unemployed (i.e. participation in training programs, seeking work, undertake education)
9. What are your feelings about not working?
  - How do they currently spend their time (looking for work, volunteering, other activities)
  - How does this make them feel?
  - How does this compare to how they felt when working?
10. Do you want to be in paid work?

- If Yes ...
  - What type of work would you want to be in? Why?
  - What do you see as stopping you from obtaining paid work
    - Personal
    - Can't get work in desired area?
    - Not willing to work in other areas?
    - Disability
    - Structural
    - Skill level, lack of previous work experience
    - Location of work
  - Why do you think this is stopping you from securing employment?
  - How does it make you feel?
- If No....
  - Why not?
  - What do you enjoy about your current activities?
  - (skip to question 14)

11. Okay, since we are talking about employment preferences, can you rank the following jobs from 1 to 10 in order of preference of the type of job you would most like to work in - 1 being most preferable and 10 being least preferable.

Can we now briefly talk about how you ranked the jobs? So for example, why would you least prefer to work as.....

12. What do you think would help most in finding work?

13. What do you think helps least in finding work?

14. I just have a few more questions about you<sup>30</sup>:

- Post code or do you live around this area
- Age
- Country of birth
- Main source of income
- Highest level of education
- Time since last in paid work

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<sup>30</sup> This information is usually elicited throughout the interview process, but incorporated here as a reminder to obtain any of this demographic information that has not already been discussed.

## APPENDIX A3.3: Interview Schedule for Managers / Human resource officers<sup>31</sup>

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I thought it would be good if we start by you briefly telling me about a little about your work here (insert organisation)?

1. How long have you worked as a manager/HR officer in this organisation?
  - What did you do before this role?
2. So altogether how long have you worked as a manager/HR officer of (case study occupation)?
3. Can you tell me a little about what your job involves?
  - Probe on responsibilities in regards to recruitment and retrenchment
4. Can you tell me a little about the last time you advertised to fill a vacancy for a (case study occupation)?
  - When was it?
  - And how long before that had you advertised to fill a vacancy for (case study occupation)?
5. Did you have any difficulties? (i.e. length of time taken to fill the job)
  - Was this unique to this recruitment effort?
  - If no, are these are general problems?
6. In the most recent recruitment effort....
  - How many applicants did you get?
  - What was the gender division of the applicant pool?
  - What were your overall impressions of the calibre of the applicant pool?
7. Compared to the other applicants, what was it about the successful applicant that stood out to you?
  - behaviour, gender, age, appearance, manner
8. Were there any applicants that stood out as being particularly bad appointments?
9. What was it about them that stood out to you?
  - behaviour, gender, age, appearance, manner

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<sup>31</sup> This is a generic interview schedule. Amendments were made according to the contextual specificity of each case study occupation group.

10. Do you think some people are more suited to (case study occupation) than other people?

- What types are persons are more suited.
- (Including behaviour, gender, age, appearance, manner)

11. What types of people are just not suitable for (case study occupation)?

12. Thinking about your staff employed as (case study occupation), approximately how many are male and how many are female?

Obviously I am really interested in men working in the (case study occupation).

13. What are your perceptions about men working in (case study occupation)?

- Is there a demand for them?
- Do male and female (case study occupation) undertake different activities?
- Do male (case study occupation) face any particular issues in obtaining employment in (case study occupation)?

14. Why do you think it is that men do not commonly work in (case study occupation)?

- Co-workers
- Clients
- Specific aspects of the job such as teamwork, autonomy, options for promotion, option for skill development, financial reward, and status of job
- Risk associated with the job

15. Do you think that this is necessarily a bad thing?

- If yes - why?
- If no - why not?

16. If yes, can you see any way in changing this? I.e. can the industry do something to try and get more men to consider work in (case study occupation)?

- If yes - what way?
- Do you think that it is important to do this?
- If no, why not?

17. I just have a few more questions about you<sup>32</sup>

- Post code or do you live around this area
- Age
- Country of birth
- Highest level of education

Is there anything else you would like to discuss that you have not yet been able to, or is there anything we have talked about that you would like to elaborate on further?

Thank you for sharing your story with us. It is of great importance. Please be assured that anything you have shared will be treated with the strictest confidence and that you will not be identified in any way.

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<sup>32</sup> This information is usually elicited throughout the interview process, but incorporated here as a reminder to obtain any of this demographic information that has not already been discussed.

## APPENDIX A3.4: Interview Schedule for Customers / Clients of Case Study Occupations<sup>33</sup>

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I thought it would be good if we start by you briefly telling me about a little about your relationship with this (case study occupation) organisation.

1. How long have you been using this organisation?
2. How did this come about?
  - What made you enlist the services of the particular organisation?
  - Have you previously utilised a similar service from another organisation?
  - What made you change?
  - What were your motivations for seeking the service from this particular organisation?
3. What are some of your key expectation in relation to the service provided by (case study occupation)?
  - Workers – traits, i.e. friendly, responsible, reliable, etc.
  - Organisation – cost, service provision, hours of operation, facility, location etc.
4. Thinking back about the different (case study occupation) workers you have dealt with, do any people stand out as being particularly good (case study occupation) workers?
5. What was it about this/these worker(s) that stood out to you?
  - behaviour, gender, age, appearance, manner
6. Are there any people that stand out as being particularly bad (case study occupation) workers?
7. What was it about this worker compared to the others that stood out to you?
  - behaviour, gender, age, appearance, manner
8. Do you think some people are more suited to (case study occupation) than other people?
9. What types are persons are more suited?
  - (Including behaviour, gender, age, appearance, manner)
  - Why do you think that?

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<sup>33</sup> This is a generic interview schedule. Amendments were made according to the contextual specificity of each case study occupation group.



10. What types of people are just not suitable for (case study occupation) work?

- behaviour, gender, age, appearance, manner
- Why do you think that?

Obviously I am particularly interested in men employed as (case study occupation).

11. Do you have any perceptions about men working in (case study occupation)?

- Is there a demand for them?
- Do you observe male and female workers undertaking different tasks?

12. Why do you think that men do not often work in (case study occupation)?

- Co-workers
- Clients
- Specific aspects of the job such as teamwork, autonomy, options for promotion, option for skill development, financial reward, and status of job
- Risk associated with their gender (i.e. sexually suspect, sexually deviant)

13. Do you think it is necessarily a bad thing that men do not normally work in (case study occupation)?

- If yes - why?
- If no - why not?

14. If yes, can you see any way in changing this? I.e. can the industry do something to try and get more men to consider work in (case study occupation)?

15. I just have a few more questions about you<sup>34</sup>

- Post code or do you live around this area
- Age
- Country of birth
- Main source of income (own / family)
- Highest level of education
- occupation

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<sup>34</sup> This information is usually elicited throughout the interview process, but incorporated here as a reminder to obtain any of this demographic information that has not already been discussed.

## APPENDIX A3.5: Focus Group Interview Schedule for Clients of Aged Care Services

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I thought it would be good if we start by going around the table and by you introducing yourself and letting me know how long you have been a client of (organisation name) aged care services.

1. What made you choose (organisation's name)?

Okay, I am really interested in your thoughts about the workers that provide care services to you.

2. Do you have certain expectation about the type of worker that cares for you?
  - Workers - traits, i.e. friendly, responsible, reliable, etc.
3. Thinking back about the different workers you have received care from, do any people stand out as being particularly good at their job?
4. What was it about this worker compared to the others that stood out to you?
  - behaviour, gender, age, appearance, manner
5. Are there any people that stand out as being particularly bad aged (or disabled) care workers?

Okay, so I am really interested in your perception about men working as age carers.

6. What do you think about men working in aged care?
7. Would you have a problem in having a male care worker?
8. Why do you think that men do not often work as aged (or disabled) care workers?
9. Would you like to see more men in aged care?
10. If yes - can you see any way in changing this? I.e. can the industry do something to try and get more men to consider work in aged care?

Is there anything else you would like to discuss that you have not yet been able to, or is there anything we have talked about that you would like to elaborate on further?

Thank you for sharing your story with us. It is of great importance. Please be assured that anything you have shared will be treated with the strictest confidence and that you will not be identified in any way.

## APPENDIX A4.1: Conceptual frameworks guiding the selection of case study occupations

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### A4.1 Defining low skilled

The first issue that needs to be addressed when examining occupational change for a particular skill group is how to measure skill. The skill level of the workforce is not an easy thing to observe directly, and as a result is usually inferred in one of two main ways<sup>35</sup>. The first is to look at the number of people who have specific levels of education and are employed; this approach is typically favoured by economists in studies of human capital (Kelly and Lewis 2003; Wei 2001).

The obvious shortfall with this approach is that many people who have a qualification do not use that qualification directly in their job (Richardson, Tan, Lane, and Flavel 2006). For example, a person employed as a hairdresser may actually hold a Bachelor Degree, even though this occupation does not require this level of educational attainment. In this way, the approach tends to capture the educational attainment of labour supply, rather than the actual skill requirements of the jobs in which people are employed (Autor, Levy, and Murnane 2003). Given the increased propensity for Australians to obtain higher level qualifications, it has been suggested that education 'credentialism' confounds the results (Kelly 2007).

Thus a reliance on measuring qualifications is not, on its own, sufficient. An alternative approach to measure skill is to look at the number of people who are employed in occupations that require a particular level of skill. For example, De Laine et al. (2000) using Australian data, define any worker as skilled who is classified as working in the major ASCO (Australian Standard Classification of Occupations) occupation groups of managers, professionals and associate professionals. However, it has recently been found that the link between occupations and qualifications is quite loose and imprecise, with many people in particular occupations not having the level of formal education designated for such work (Lewis 2008; Richardson and Tan 2008). For example, Richardson and Tan (2008) find that in 2004 only one-third of those working as associate professionals were qualified at the level this occupation is

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<sup>35</sup>There are a few examples of different approaches researchers have adopted to defining skills. Several researchers, in the United States and in Australia, have drawn on the skill indexes incorporated into the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, recently updated and now called O\*NET (Occupational Information Network) to measure skill in analysis of occupational change (Kelly 2007; Kelly and Lewis 2003; Lowry, Molloy, and McGlennon 2009; Pappas 1998; Sheehan and Esposito 2001).

deemed to require (diploma level or above); two thirds held lower levels of formal education designated for such work. Indeed, in each of the 9 major ASCO occupational categories, Richardson and Tan found that a substantial proportion of workers did not hold the requisite levels of education deemed appropriate for the work.

Despite being the most common ways to measure skill, in practice there are limitations to being able to accurately define skills by either a person's occupation or their highest level of education. A better measure of skill would therefore use *both* occupation and level of educational attainment. I develop and apply such a dual measure here. In this research both educational attainment and occupation are used to denote the skill level of the workforce in a particular occupation.

For the purposes of this research, low skilled workers are defined to be those workers who have year 12 or below as their highest level of educational attainment, and who work in occupations that require a skill level commensurate with an educational attainment of Certificate IV and below, or at least 3 years relevant experience. I provide further information about the two measures below.

#### **A4.1.1 Level of educational attainment**

Constructing a consistent time series of employment by highest level of educational attainment was made difficult due to changes in the questions in the data source I used - The ABS Census of Population and Housing. Census questions on educational attainment are not consistent through time. For the purposes of this research I have chosen to adapt an approach adopted by Kennedy and Hedley (2003), who in turn followed Wei's (2001) construction of consistent educational attainment categories for censuses.

In my approach, highest levels of educational attainment have been collapsed into four groupings - no post-school qualifications; Certificate I and II; non-degree post-school qualifications; and degree plus qualifications. Table A4.1.1 details how the categories of the highest level of educational attainment variable were constructed for 1996, 2001 and 2006 censuses so that comparisons could be made over time.

Table A4.1.1: Comparison of Categories of Educational Attainment

<b>Collapsed Educational Attainment Categories</b>	<b>1996 Census</b>	<b>2001 Census</b>	<b>2006 Census</b>
Degree plus qualifications	Postgraduate Diploma, Bachelor Degree, Higher Degree	Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level, Bachelor Degree Level, Postgraduate Degree Level	Postgraduate Degree Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level, Bachelor Degree Level
Non-degree post-school qualifications	Undergraduate Diploma, Associate Diploma, Skilled Vocational Qualifications	Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level, Certificate III & IV Level	Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level, Certificate III & IV Level
Certificate I, II	Basic Vocational Qualifications	Certificate I & II Level Certificate Level, nfd.	Certificate I & II Level, Certificate Level, nfd
No post-school qualification	People fall into this category if they are coded as 'not applicable' on the Post-School Educational Qualification: Level of Attainment Variable*	Those that were coded N/A in Non-School Qualification: Level of Education variable and documented year 12 and below on highest level of schooling completed** variable.	Using Level of Highest Educational Attainment variable, Those with School Education Level year 12 or below or 998 No educational attainment**.

\* excluding those still at school

\*\*excluding Level of Education Inadequately Described, Level of Education Not Stated

An alternative way to treat Certificate I and II is to include them in the no post-school category. However, calculations undertaken by the author suggest that including Certificate I and II in the no post-school category has little impact on the overall patterns detected in occupational employment change for those with no post-school qualification. To maintain consistency with the early approaches taken by Kennedy and Hedley (2003) and Wei's (2001) they remained a separate educational attainment category.

Constructing highest level of educational attainment categories in this way is not without its limitations. One limitation is that these categories understate the substantial degrees of difference in the skill level of individuals within each of the four main categories. For example, a person who has successfully completed year 12 at high school is likely to have acquired, through formal instruction, greater skills than a person who left formal education at year 9 (or obtained a Cert I/II). One would suspect then that this would also translate into very different occupational destinations for the two different educational attainment levels. However, due to changes in how highest level of educational attainment was derived in each census, I was unable to obtain any further breakdowns of the no post-school educational attainment category.

#### **A4.1.2 Occupation**

The ABS uses the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) to code occupation data. ASCO is a hierarchical classification system with different levels of progressively greater detail. At the broadest level, a limited number of categories, which aim to provide an overall picture of an occupation, are provided. The following levels or subdivisions provide an increasingly detailed dissection of these broad categories.

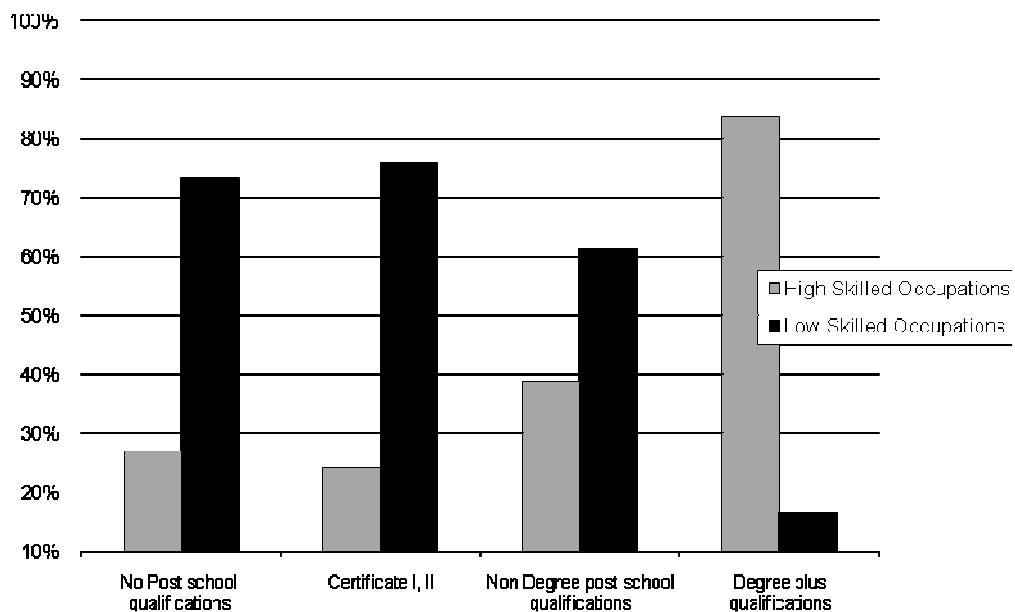
The levels in the ASCO, in order of increasing detail, are: "major group", "sub-major group", "minor group", "unit group", and "occupation". There are nine major groups, which represent the broadest classifications of occupation, such as "professionals" and "labourers". Each major group has within it a number of sub-major groups; each of these sub-major groups has within it a number of minor groups; each of these minor groups has within it a number of unit groups; and each of these unit groups has within it a number of occupations. The occupation level is the most detailed in the ASCO, and includes 986 specific occupations (such as "Fast food cooks", "hairdresser", and "garden labourer"). Because I wanted to be as precise as possible in locating the 4 female dominated occupations where employment has increased most for workers with low levels of formal education, I use occupational data coded at the occupation, or 6 digit level of ASCO. This will provide the greatest degree of detail of the female dominated occupations where employment has increased for workers with low levels of formal education.

The different levels of the ASCO are also intended to be broadly representative of the level of skill required to do each occupation. Thus, occupations in the professional major group require higher or more extensive training and qualification, than jobs in the labourer major group. A table detailing the 9 major ASCO occupational groups and their corresponding skill requirements was presented in Chapter 1.

Given the hierarchical skill level structure of the ASCO, I expect that as people acquire higher levels of education, they take jobs that are higher in the occupational hierarchy. To an extent this effect is observed in Chart A4.1.

Chart A4.1.1 uses 2006 census data to document the proportion of people aged 25-54 in each educational attainment category employed in what I term high skilled occupations - i.e. those working in the major ASCO occupation groups of managers, professionals and associate professionals; and low skill occupations - i.e. those working in the major ASCO occupation groups of tradesperson and related workers; advanced clerical, sales and service workers; intermediate clerical, sales and service workers; intermediate production and transport workers; elementary clerical, sales and service workers; and labourers and related workers.

Figure A4.1.1: Proportion of people aged 25-54 employed in low and high skill occupations as a percent of total employment in each educational attainment category



Source: Author's calculations using ABS 2006 census data.

\*excluding Level of Education Inadequately Described, Level of Education Not Stated

The results indicate the existence of an inverse relationship between higher levels of educational attainment and the propensity to be employed in the lower skill occupations. Therefore to further isolate occupations that are open to workers with limited levels of formal education, I exclude from the analysis of occupational change those working in the major ASCO occupation groups of managers, professionals and associate professionals. This results in reducing the number of occupations that form the basis of the analysis from 986 to 792.

The results also indicate that the proportion of people employed in low skilled jobs does not significantly alter until you start to look at those who have Certificate level III qualifications and above. This lends support to the idea that Certificate level I and II and no post-school qualifications are quite similar in the employment patterns in occupations. It highlights why joining the two educational attainment groups together does not significantly alter the employment growth trends detected.

## **A4.2 Why Census Data**

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) is Australia's major statistical body. It provides robust data on an enormous range of indicators about Australian life, and makes available the most comprehensive information about the Australian workforce.

### **A4.2.1 Labour Force Survey**

The ABS conducts surveys of many features of the labour force. The main survey, the Labour Force Survey (LFS), produces monthly estimates of the labour market activity (i.e., employment, unemployment, and labour force non-participation) of persons aged 15 years and over. The Labour Force Survey has been conducted by the ABS since 1960, and on a quarterly basis since 1978. Information is obtained via face to face or telephone interviews with 60,000 occupants from randomly selected dwellings<sup>36</sup>. Extensive socio-demographic and labour force data is collected, including information pertaining to the respondents' employment status (e.g. full-time or part-time status), hours worked in all jobs, length of time in current job, underemployment, usual hours, hours in main job, preference for working more hours, and occupation and industry in main job. The ABS also collects information on topics related to skills in supplementary surveys to the main Labour Force Survey.

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<sup>36</sup> For further information regarding the Labour Force Survey methodology see ABS 6102.0 (2001) Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods.



The annual labour force supplementary survey of education and work, considers workers' qualifications and training experiences.

The weakness of the Labour Force Survey relates to the constraints posed by its sample size. The LFS (which has a sample size bigger than any other ABS employment survey such as the Survey of Employment and Earnings, the Survey of Employee Earnings and Hours, the Survey of Employment Arrangements and Superannuation, and Survey of Education and Work) is built on a stratified sample of about sixty one thousand responses, a number that equates to 0.45 percent of the total population it is describing. This sample size is too small to provide reliable estimates of employment by occupation except at a highly aggregate level.

As Healy and Richardson (2003) comment in their discussion of the Labour Force Survey:

*Sample-based estimates are excellent for producing reliable aggregate information about large populations, but are less useful for understanding the characteristics of relatively small or specific sub-groups of that total population. Estimates derived from samples become unreliable at very detailed levels, because the number of actual responses used to produce the estimates become very small.* (2003:15)

It is also the case that dissections of the data are not readily available and the data, due to its sample size, does not support detailed analysis of occupational change by educational attainment and gender.

#### **A4.2.2 The Census of Population and Housing**

The Census of Population and Housing is a source of data that has the potential to overcome the limitations posed by the above ABS Labour Force Survey. The Census is the largest data collection undertaken by the ABS. As it is administered to the whole Australian population rather than just a sample of it, it can be used to analyse small or highly specific groups (such as the population in a geographical area of interest, or employment in a particular occupation), in ways that are prohibited by the sampling constraints of other surveys. Indeed the great advantage of using Census data is that analysts can explore occupational change at fine levels of detail - specifically for this research, at the occupation group level. It is also large enough to allow for cross-classification by other variables such as educational attainment and gender.

Another advantage of using Census data is that it allows for reasonably robust comparisons to be made over time, which is crucial when attempting to analyse occupational change. However, the ABS does occasionally change question structure or coding classification, which limits the comparisons that can be made. Indeed this has been the case with the way ABS classified occupations. Prior to 1996, occupation was coded to the first edition of the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ABS 1986). This edition was subsequently revised in 1996 and occupations were coded to the second edition of ASCO (ABS 1997). In 2006, ASCO was superseded by ANZSCO - Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ABS 2006b). However, the ABS made available occupation data for the 2006 Census classified to both ASCO second edition and ANZSCO first edition. A consistent coding frame is required to analyse change, therefore the reference period I use is 1996-2006, where occupation data is coded using the second edition of ASCO.

The other weakness of the Census is its reliance on the “self-enumeration” of responses - i.e., answers are provided by individuals with minimal guidance or instruction from ABS staff. The self-enumerated nature of the Census may result in respondents providing insufficient or imprecise information, or to miss instructions in the questionnaire. This can result in large numbers of ‘not stated’ responses to questions. How to deal with these ‘not stated’ responses poses additional difficulties; some researchers have included ‘not stated’ responses in variables in which they are interested (Kennedy and Hedley 2003; Wei 2001).

However, I have treated missing data as missing data, and have excluded them from the analysis; to do otherwise would result in findings that may not actually be representative of the phenomenon under investigation.

The differences in collection and coding methodologies of the Census have also been said to result in the Census producing estimates of employment that differ from others published by the ABS (Healy and Richardson 2003; Meagher and Healy 2005).

These aspects of the data should be kept in mind when considering the comparisons presented in this chapter, and remind us that these data need to be interpreted with some caution.

While these limitations exist with the Census, it is the only data source large enough to provide robust measures of occupational change at the level of detail desired and with the gender and educational attainment level breakdown required.

### **A4.3 Time Frame of Comparisons**

The reference period used is 1996 to 2006, the boundaries of which are determined by the practicalities of data availability – a Census was conducted in both years – and the need for consistency in how jobs are classified. 1996 was the furthest I could go back without compromising data quality, as a result of changes to the way occupation data was classified.

The decade 1996 and 2006 is an interesting period to explore occupational change. This period was one of relative economic stability, following the recovery from the two earlier recessions; the period is also largely immune from the extremes of the 2007 and 2008 economic boom. Moreover, it seems reasonable to expect that 2006 figures actually present a more accurate picture about the future trends of the labour market. It is expected that in the next year or so, labour market trends will revert back to those evident in 2006.

### **A4.4 Do skills change over the life course?**

I have isolated the analysis to those persons aged between 25-54 years, for which there are two reasons.

The first and most obvious reason to do this, is the fact that the withdrawal from the labour force among men has been particularly significant for those aged between 25 and 54. The research considers men's limited inroads in female dominated occupation as a necessary component of the explanation of why men are withdrawing from the labour market. It seeks overall to understand the possible supply and demand side dimensions to men's segregation from, and conversely their integration into, low level jobs that have traditionally been dominated by women. The analysis therefore needed to isolate those occupations that are growing for this age cohort of men and women.

The second reason is that employment opportunities available to Australians, and the choices they make, vary throughout the life cycle. For example, the jobs of most young people in the workforce (i.e. people aged less than 25 yrs) are entry level, as

they get established in employment. As such, they do not necessarily reflect the type of job they will occupy in their prime working years. By focusing the analysis on those who are aged 25-54 I am able to minimise the impact changing life circumstances has on employment.

#### **A4.5 Is observed employment growth really employment growth after all?**

I have also included in the analysis a breakdown of employment by employment status - full-time and part-time. Again, I have done this for two main reasons.

The first is that it is crucial, due to the changing (growing) rates of part-time employment, to know how this might affect the measurement of which occupations are really offering new opportunities. For example, in one occupation total employment may have grown by 100, but all of the new jobs that were created were on a part-time basis; in another occupation total employment may have grown by 75, but each of the new positions created were full-time. Such issues are needed to be taken into consideration when analysing occupational change. In saying this, I do not exclude occupations to be selected for case study on this basis. Indeed the overall aim is to determine which occupations have experienced growth, be that in either part-time or full-time employment.

The second reason I include an employment status breakdown is simply to try and obtain as much information as possible about the characteristics of the female dominated occupations that are growing, and that are open to workers with limited levels of formal education.

Characteristics such as non-standard employment contracts have been suggested in the literature as contributing to men's reluctance to take on such jobs. I therefore aimed to obtain as much information (without compromising data quality and usability) about the characteristics of the jobs that are experiencing growth. Unfortunately, due to the number of variables included in the analysis, additional variables such as levels of pay were unable to be incorporated as they would have significantly reduced the number of observations and decreased data quality and usability.

**APPENDIX A4.2: Changes in employment and gender share of employment in large employing occupations for all low skilled workers aged 25-54, Australia 1996-2006.**

ASCO Code	Occupation Title	Total number employed 1996	Total number employed 2006	Change 1996-2006 (%)	Raw number change 1996-2006	Total men employed 1996	Total men employed 2006	Change in men's employment 1996-2006	Male Share of employment 1996	Male Share of employment 2006	Change Male Share of employment 1996-2006.
821115	Sales Ass't (Oth Pers & H/hold Gds)	26,706	46,781	75	20,075	7,420	11,214	3,794	28%	24%	-4%
821111	Sales Assist (Food & Drink Prods)	32,600	44,647	37	12,047	5,222	7,374	2,152	16%	17%	0%
511113	Personal Assistant	6,791	18,134	167	11,343	120	245	125	2%	1%	0%
799311	Storeperson	43,390	53,765	24	10,375	29,177	35,090	5,913	67%	65%	-2%
831979	Elementary Service Workers nec	552	10,712	1841	10,160	314	1,621	1,307	57%	15%	-42%
619111	Inquiry Clerk	15,645	25,561	63	9,916	3,921	6,179	2,258	25%	24%	-1%
614111	Accounts Clerk	22,164	31,904	44	9,740	3,442	2,867	-575	16%	9%	-7%
991611	Construction Assistant	8,583	13,416	56	4,833	8,262	12,968	4,706	96%	97%	0%

APPENDIX A4.2: Continued

711211	Forklift Driver	16,741	21,499	28	4,758	16,292	20,723	4,431	97%	96%	-1%
631113	Integration Aide	1,524	6,171	305	4,647	28	262	234	2%	4%	2%
829111	Checkout Operator	12,911	17,126	33	4,215	2,143	2,220	77	17%	13%	-4%
631317	Aged or Disabled Person Carer	16,912	21,117	25	4,205	1,753	2,732	979	10%	13%	3%
920000	Factory Labourers nfd	471	4,296	812	3,825	190	2,547	2,357	40%	59%	19%
631211	Child Care Worker	9,382	13,188	41	3,806	239	408	169	3%	3%	1%
821113	Sales Ass't (Fabric, Cloth & F/wear)	16,133	19,762	22	3,629	1,562	1,648	86	10%	8%	-1%
791111	Miner	7,758	11,250	45	3,492	7,592	10,720	3,128	98%	95%	-3%
619415	Social Security Inspector	1,189	4,335	265	3,146	459	1,103	644	39%	25%	-13%
921411	Food & Drink Proc Mach Attend't	2,804	5,928	111	3,124	2,231	3,925	1,694	80%	66%	-13%
993211	Fast Food Cook	2,495	4,899	96	2,404	1,237	1,962	725	50%	40%	-10%

APPENDIX A4.2: Continued

613111	Receptionist	44,373	46,497	5	2,124	888	1,106	218	2%	2%	0%
992113	Fruit, Veg or Nut Farm Hand	6,710	8,816	31	2,106	3,692	5,375	1,683	55%	61%	6%
999979	Labourers & Related Wkrs nec	4,692	6,787	45	2,095	3,975	5,882	1,907	85%	87%	2%
639111	Dental Assistant	2,114	4,165	97	2,051	18	30	12	1%	1%	0%
711100	Mobile Const'n Plant Ops nfd	4,655	6,705	44	2,050	4,586	6,535	1,949	99%	97%	-1%
799301	Supervisor, Storepersons	2,905	4,951	70	2,046	2,509	4,079	1,570	86%	82%	-4%
621179	Sales Representatives nec	14,624	16,448	12	1,824	10,838	10,332	-506	74%	63%	-11%
731411	Delivery Driver	20,644	22,467	9	1,823	16,494	18,667	2,173	80%	83%	3%
999311	Handyperson	6,944	8,674	25	1,730	6,524	7,884	1,360	94%	91%	-3%
991711	Concreter	9,271	10,856	17	1,585	9,100	10,696	1,596	98%	99%	0%
441211	Fibrous Plasterer	4,619	6,182	34	1,563	4,456	5,969	1,513	96%	97%	0%

APPENDIX A4.2: Continued

992213	Garden Labourer	6,232	7,700	24	1,468	5,514	6,817	1,303	88%	89%	0%
811111	Registry or Filing Clerk	3,331	4,778	43	1,447	784	899	115	24%	19%	-5%
599113	Law Clerk	3,322	4,606	39	1,284	681	640	-41	20%	14%	-7%
791413	Home Improvements Installer	2,801	4,053	45	1,252	2,660	3,910	1,250	95%	96%	2%
911117	Vehicle Cleaner	4,730	5,912	25	1,182	3,406	4,475	1,069	72%	76%	4%
614411	Insurance Clerk	5,703	6,751	18	1,048	1,287	1,406	119	23%	21%	-2%
731111	Heavy Truck Driver	59,652	60,691	2	1,039	58,637	59,032	395	98%	97%	-1%
619913	Debt Collector	3,164	4,183	32	1,019	1,103	1,276	173	35%	31%	-4%
431511	Electron Equipment Tradesperson	3,237	4,236	31	999	2,922	3,965	1,043	90%	94%	3%
614211	Payroll Clerk	9,232	10,108	9	876	2,321	1,524	-797	25%	15%	-10%
639711	Travel Agent	4,345	5,136	18	791	1,100	1,095	-5	25%	21%	-4%



APPENDIX A4.2: Continued

621213	Motor Vehicle Parts Interpreter	4,503	5,261	17	758	3,955	4,504	549	88%	86%	-2%
621211	Motor Veh & Caravan Salesperson	4,938	5,615	14	677	4,475	4,693	218	91%	84%	-7%
615301	Sup, Stock & Purchasing Clerks	7,676	8,325	8	649	5,804	6,492	688	76%	78%	2%
462311	General Gardener	6,712	7,328	9	616	5,593	5,895	302	83%	80%	-3%
621311	Retail Supervisor	7,330	7,879	7	549	3,961	3,232	-729	54%	41%	-13%
831111	Security Officer	12,705	13,067	3	362	10,693	10,711	18	84%	82%	-2%
631411	Personal Care Assistant	8,686	9,026	4	340	3,107	2,560	-547	36%	28%	-7%
712311	Eng Production Systems Wkr	8,638	8,967	4	329	7,921	8,404	483	92%	94%	2%
799111	Motor Veh Parts & Accessor Fitter	3,682	3,964	8	282	3,622	3,895	273	98%	98%	0%
412215	Welder (First Class)	5,761	5,891	2	130	5,669	5,821	152	98%	99%	0%
442111	Painter & Decorator	8,034	8,081	1	47	7,553	7,583	30	94%	94%	0%

APPENDIX A4.2: Continued

615211	Receiving & Dispatching Clerk	5,092	5,070	0	-22	3,004	2,872	-132	59%	57%	-2%
921111	Eng Production Process Worker	6,510	6,321	-3	-189	5,947	5,689	-258	91%	90%	-1%
632311	General Waiter	14,983	14,626	-2	-357	2,522	2,570	48	17%	18%	1%
615313	Purchasing Officer	5,811	5,365	-8	-446	3,641	2,963	-678	63%	55%	-7%
829211	Ticket Seller	4,712	4,214	-11	-498	1,918	1,392	-526	41%	33%	-8%
921211	Product Assembler	16,072	15,542	-3	-530	9,092	10,271	1,179	57%	66%	10%
811413	Postal Delivery Officer	7,009	6,404	-9	-605	5,233	4,544	-689	75%	71%	-4%
441411	Bricklayer	4,585	3,953	-14	-632	4,448	3,861	-587	97%	98%	1%
441113	Carpenter	6,893	6,167	-11	-726	6,737	6,031	-706	98%	98%	0%
591211	Credit & Loans Office	10,890	9,975	-8	-915	4,946	3,672	-1,274	45%	37%	-9%
451311	Cook	14,998	13,612	-9	-1,386	4,132	4,443	311	28%	33%	5%

APPENDIX A4.2: Continued

911113	Domestic Cleaner	9,259	7,699	-17	-1,560	670	912	242	7%	12%	5%
621111	Sales Rep (Pers & H/hold Goods)	17,054	15,462	-9	-1,592	10,382	8,246	-2,136	61%	53%	-8%
612113	Data Entry Operator	17,342	15,717	-9	-1,625	1,975	1,728	-247	11%	11%	0%
922111	Hand Packer	23,611	21,937	-7	-1,674	5,100	5,787	687	22%	26%	5%
821179	Sales Assistants nec	25,232	23,138	-8	-2,094	9,068	9,512	444	36%	41%	5%
811213	Postal Sorting Officer	6,369	4,219	-34	-2,150	3,821	1,925	-1,896	60%	46%	-14%
831511	Laundry Worker	9,403	7,244	-23	-2,159	2,082	1,697	-385	22%	23%	1%
421111	Motor Mechanic	6,444	4,279	-34	-2,165	6,292	4,148	-2,144	98%	97%	-1%
631115	Teacher's Aide	15,159	12,833	-15	-2,326	619	728	109	4%	6%	2%
731311	Automobile Driver	11,052	8,667	-22	-2,385	10,000	7,813	-2,187	90%	90%	0%
731211	Bus Driver	11,659	8,773	-25	-2,886	9,671	6,917	-2,754	83%	79%	-4%

APPENDIX A4.2: Continued

631213	Family Day Care Worker	7,294	4,056	-44	-3,238	76	35	-41	1%	1%	0%
591111	Bookkeeper	35,636	31,840	-11	-3,796	2,104	1,174	-930	6%	4%	-2%
700000	Int Prod'n & Transport Wkrs nfd	8,096	4,299	-47	-3,797	4,880	3,489	-1,391	60%	81%	21%
632211	Bar Attendant	15,921	11,664	-27	-4,257	4,967	3,626	-1,341	31%	31%	0%
993111	Kitchenhand	29,180	24,887	-15	-4,293	4,867	4,746	-121	17%	19%	2%
615311	Stock Clerk	8,820	4,134	-53	-4,686	6,536	2,001	-4,535	74%	48%	-26%
911111	Commercial Cleaner	56,092	50,696	-10	-5,396	13,610	14,232	622	24%	28%	4%
612111	Typist & Word Processing Operat	10,531	4,690	-55	-5,841	255	122	-133	2%	3%	0%
631413	Nursing Assistant	12,890	5,739	-55	-7,151	1,442	932	-510	11%	16%	5%
731000	Road & Rail T'port Drivers nfd	11,563	4,366	-62	-7,197	10,557	3,874	-6,683	91%	89%	-3%
721111	Sewing Machinist	15,182	7,071	-53	-8,111	1,639	990	-649	11%	14%	3%

APPENDIX A4.2: Continued

992111	General Farm Hand	17,299	8,956	-48	-8,343	12,933	7,178	-5,755	75%	80%	5%
911100	Cleaners nfd	20,141	9,563	-53	-10,578	7,016	3,157	-3,859	35%	33%	-2%
611111	General Clerk	94,629	83,255	-12	-11,374	19,147	9,335	-9,812	20%	11%	-9%
900000	Labourers & Related Workers nfd	25,123	8,062	-68	-17,061	16,676	6,807	-9,869	66%	84%	18%
614311	Bank Worker	45,946	24,692	-46	-21,254	7,805	3,745	-4,060	17%	15%	-2%
720000	Intermed Machine Operators nfd	34,922	12,811	-63	-22,111	26,864	10,466	-16,398	77%	82%	5%
821100	Sales Assistants nfd	28,510	6,016	-79	-22,494	7,193	1,796	-5,397	25%	30%	5%
511111	Secretary	83,063	38,846	-53	-44,217	631	296	-335	1%	1%	0%
<b>Total</b>		1,361,693	1,285,457	-6	-76,236	557,950	526,914	-31,036	41	41	0%

Source: Author's Calculations based on 1996 and 2006 ABS Census Data

\*Excludes not stated or not applicable for those aged 25-54 years

### APPENDIX A4.3: Changes in employment and gender share of employment in large employing occupations for low skilled male workers aged 25-54, Australia 1996-2006.

ASCO Code	Occupation Title	Number employed 1996	Number employed 2006	Change 1996-2006 (%)	Raw number change 1996-2006	Proportion of total low skilled male employment <sup>37</sup> 2006 (%)	Male Share of employment 1996	Male Share of employment 2006	Change Male Share of employment 1996-2006.
731111	Heavy Truck Driver	58,637	59,032	1%	395	7.4%	98%	97%	-1%
799311	Storeperson	29,177	35,090	20%	5,913	4.4%	67%	65%	-2%
711211	Forklift Driver	16,292	20,723	27%	4,431	2.6%	97%	96%	-1%
731411	Delivery Driver	16,494	18,667	13%	2,173	2.3%	80%	83%	3%
911111	Commercial Cleaner	13,610	14,232	5%	622	1.8%	24%	28%	4%
991611	Construction Assistant	8,262	12,968	57%	4,706	1.6%	96%	97%	0%
821115	Sales Ass't (Oth Pers & H/hold Gds)	7,420	11,214	51%	3,794	1.4%	28%	24%	-4%
791111	Miner	7,592	10,720	41%	3,128	1.3%	98%	95%	-3%

<sup>37</sup> The total is of all workers with no post-school qualification working in the last 6 major (ASCO) occupation groups - 4 Tradespersons & Related Workers, 5 Adv Clerical & Service Workers, 6 Intermediate Cleric, Sales & Service Workers, 7 Intermediate Production & Transport Workers, 8 Elementary Cleric, Sales & Service Workers, 9 Labourers & Related Workers.

APPENDIX A4.3: Continued

991711	Concreteer	9,100	10,696	18%	1,596	1.3%	98%	99%	0%
831111	Security Officer	10,693	10,711	0%	18	1.3%	84%	82%	-2%
921211	Product Assembler	9,092	10,271	13%	1,179	1.3%	57%	66%	10%
621179	Sales Representatives nec	10,838	10,332	-5%	-506	1.3%	74%	63%	-11%
720000	Intermed Machine Operators nfd	26,864	10,466	-61%	-16,398	1.3%	77%	82%	5%
821179	Sales Assistants nec	9,068	9,512	5%	444	1.2%	36%	41%	5%
611111	General Clerk	19,147	9,335	-51%	-9,812	1.2%	20%	11%	-9%
712311	Eng Production Systems Wkr	7,921	8,404	6%	483	1.1%	92%	94%	2%
621111	Sales Rep (Pers & H/hold Goods)	10,382	8,246	-21%	-2,136	1.0%	61%	53%	-8%
999311	Handyperson	6,524	7,884	21%	1,360	1.0%	94%	91%	-3%
442111	Painter & Decorator	7,553	7,583	0%	30	1.0%	94%	94%	0%
731311	Automobile Driver	10,000	7,813	-22%	-2,187	1.0%	90%	90%	0%
821111	Sales Assist (Food & Drink Prods)	5,222	7,374	41%	2,152	0.9%	16%	17%	0%
992111	General Farm Hand	12,933	7,178	-44%	-5,755	0.9%	75%	80%	5%
711100	Mobile Const'n Plant Ops nfd	4,586	6,535	42%	1,949	0.9%	99%	97%	-1%

APPENDIX A4.3: Continued

992213	Garden Labourer	5,514	6,817	24%	1,303	0.9%	88%	89%	0%
615301	Sup, Stock & Purchasing Clerks	5,804	6,492	12%	688	0.9%	76%	78%	2%
731211	Bus Driver	9,671	6,917	-28%	-2,754	0.8%	83%	79%	-4%
900000	Labourers & Related Workers nfd	16,676	6,807	-59%	-9,869	0.8%	66%	84%	18%
619111	Inquiry Clerk	3,921	6,179	58%	2,258	0.8%	25%	24%	-1%
441211	Fibrous Plasterer	4,456	5,969	34%	1,513	0.8%	96%	97%	0%
462311	General Gardener	5,593	5,895	5%	302	0.8%	83%	80%	-3%
441113	Carpenter	6,737	6,031	-10%	-706	0.7%	98%	98%	0%
999979	Labourers & Related Wkrs nec	3,975	5,882	48%	1,907	0.7%	85%	87%	2%
412215	Welder (First Class)	5,669	5,821	3%	152	0.7%	98%	99%	0%
922111	Hand Packer	5,100	5,787	13%	687	0.7%	22%	26%	5%
921111	Eng Production Process Worker	5,947	5,689	-4%	-258	0.7%	91%	90%	-1%
992113	Fruit, Veg or Nut Farm Hand	3,692	5,375	46%	1,683	0.7%	55%	61%	6%
993111	Kitchenhand	4,867	4,746	-2%	-121	0.6%	17%	19%	2%
621211	Motor Veh & Caravan Salesperson	4,475	4,693	5%	218	0.6%	91%	84%	-7%



APPENDIX A4.3: Continued

811413	Postal Delivery Officer	5,233	4,544	-13%	-689	0.6%	75%	71%	-4%
621213	Motor Vehicle Parts Interpreter	3,955	4,504	14%	549	0.6%	88%	86%	-2%
911117	Vehicle Cleaner	3,406	4,475	31%	1,069	0.6%	72%	76%	4%
451311	Cook	4,132	4,443	8%	311	0.6%	28%	33%	5%
421111	Motor Mechanic	6,292	4,148	-34%	-2,144	0.5%	98%	97%	-1%
799301	Supervisor, Storepersons	2,509	4,079	63%	1,570	0.5%	86%	82%	-4%
431511	Electron Equipment Tradesperson	2,922	3,965	36%	1,043	0.5%	90%	94%	3%
921411	Food & Drink Proc Mach Attend't	2,231	3,925	76%	1,694	0.5%	80%	66%	-13%
791413	Home Improvements Installer	2,660	3,910	47%	1,250	0.5%	95%	96%	2%
799111	Motor Veh Parts & Accessor Fitter	3,622	3,895	8%	273	0.5%	98%	98%	0%
731000	Road & Rail T'port Drivers nfd	10,557	3,874	-63%	-6,683	0.5%	91%	89%	-3%
441411	Bricklayer	4,448	3,861	-13%	-587	0.5%	97%	98%	1%
614311	Bank Worker	7,805	3,745	-52%	-4,060	0.5%	17%	15%	-2%
731511	Train Driver	4,569	3,702	-19%	-867	0.5%	99%	98%	-2%
591211	Credit & Loans Officer	4,946	3,672	-26%	-1,274	0.5%	45%	37%	-9%

APPENDIX A4.3: Continued

462313	Landscape Gardener	4,280	3,633	-15%	-647	0.5%	89%	92%	3%
632211	Bar Attendant	4,967	3,626	-27%	-1,341	0.5%	31%	31%	0%
700000 I	Int Prod'n & Transport Wkrs nfd	4,880	3,489	-29%	-1,391	0.4%	60%	81%	21%
711121	Excavator Operator	1,035	3,383	227%	2,348	0.4%	99%	99%	0%
991915	Fence Erector	2,447	3,295	35%	848	0.4%	94%	95%	1%
411211	Fitter	4,525	3,281	-27%	-1,244	0.4%	97%	98%	1%
621311	Retail Supervisor	3,961	3,232	-18%	-729	0.4%	54%	41%	-13%
712211	Crane, Hoist or Lift Operator	3,571	3,188	-11%	-383	0.4%	98%	98%	0%
911100	Cleaners nfd	7,016	3,157	-55%	-3,859	0.4%	35%	33%	-2%
711911	Ag & Horticult Mobile Plant Oper	3,411	3,097	-9%	-314	0.4%	95%	94%	-1%
991311	Paving & Surfacing Labourer	2,814	3,053	8%	239	0.4%	99%	98%	-1%
441611	Wall & Floor Tiler	2,368	3,027	28%	659	0.4%	95%	95%	0%
615313	Purchasing Officer	3,641	2,963	-19%	-678	0.4%	63%	55%	-7%
615211	Receiving & Dispatching Clerk	3,004	2,872	-4%	-132	0.4%	59%	57%	-2%
614111	Accounts Clerk	3,442	2,867	-17%	-575	0.4%	16%	9%	-7%

APPENDIX A4.3: Continued

711117	Loader Operator	2,955	2,847	-4%	-108	0.4%	98%	97%	-1%
621115	Sales Rep (Blders & Plumbers Supp)	2,380	2,820	18%	440	0.4%	88%	81%	-6%
631317	Aged or Disabled Person Carer	1,753	2,732	56%	979	0.3%	10%	13%	3%
462211	Greenkeeper	3,499	2,673	-24%	-826	0.3%	96%	96%	-1%
431611	General Communications Trades	3,723	2,625	-29%	-1,098	0.3%	94%	95%	1%
632311	General Waiter	2,522	2,570	2%	48	0.3%	17%	18%	1%
631411	Personal Care Assistant	3,107	2,560	-18%	-547	0.3%	36%	28%	-7%
920000	Factory Labourers nfd	190	2,547	1241%	2,357	0.3%	40%	59%	19%
442311 Floor	Floor Finisher	2,296	2,541	11%	245	0.3%	95%	95%	0%
999211	Freight Handler (Road & Rail)	1,924	2,513	31%	589	0.3%	94%	94%	0%
492211	Cabinetmaker	2,659	2,498	-6%	-161	0.3%	93%	94%	1%
921311	Meat works Labourer	2,609	2,466	-5%	-143	0.3%	80%	76%	-4%
451211	Baker	1,902	2,402	26%	500	0.3%	84%	78%	-6%
615201	Sup, Transport & Despatch Clerks	3,356	2,362	-30%	-994	0.3%	86%	83%	-4%
711979	Mobile Plant Operators nec	1,285	2,356	83%	1,071	0.3%	92%	91%	-2%

APPENDIX A4.3: Continued

639311	Prison Officer	2,972	2,347	-21%	-625	0.3%	80%	72%	-8%
499111	Defence Force Member nei	3,080	2,298	-25%	-782	0.3%	91%	92%	1%
412211	Metal Fabricator	1,964	2,269	16%	305	0.3%	97%	98%	1%
498611	Driller	2,252	2,238	-1%	-14	0.3%	99%	99%	0%
829111	Checkout Operator	2,143	2,220	4%	77	0.3%	17%	13%	-4%
921313	Meat Boner & Slicer	2,666	2,214	-17%	-452	0.3%	89%	87%	-2%
731113	Furniture Removalist	2,577	2,182	-15%	-395	0.3%	96%	96%	0%
729911	Industrial Spray Painter	1,642	2,171	32%	529	0.3%	93%	95%	2%
400000	Tradespersons & Related Wkrs nfd	2,401	2,137	-11%	-264	0.3%	87%	91%	4%
461211	Shearer	3,179	2,109	-34%	-1,070	0.3%	98%	98%	0%
498511	Fire Fighter	3,023	2,076	-31%	-947	0.3%	98%	95%	-3%
711111	General Construction Plant Oper	2,302	2,013	-13%	-289	0.3%	95%	97%	2%
615311	Stock Clerk	6,536	2,001	-69%	-4,535	0.3%	74%	48%	-26%
729411	Wood Processing Machine Operator	2,085	1,972	-5%	-113	0.2%	92%	94%	2%
993211	Fast Food Cook	1,237	1,962	59%	725	0.2%	50%	40%	-10%

### APPENDIX A4.3: Continued

811213	Postal Sorting Officer	3,821	1,925	-50%	-1,896	0.2%	60%	46%	-14%
451111	Butcher	2,494	1,916	-23%	-578	0.2%	91%	86%	-4%
911179	Cleaners nec	2,399	1,796	-25%	-603	0.2%	25%	30%	5%
821100	Sales Assistants nfd	7,193	1,796	-75%	-5,397	0.2%	46%	58%	11%
619479	Inter Inspectors & Examiners nec	1,312	1,757	34%	445	0.2%	72%	68%	-5%
612113	Data Entry Operator	1,975	1,728	-13%	-247	0.2%	11%	11%	0%
921979	Process Workers nec	1,096	1,709	56%	613	0.2%	62%	64%	3%
831511	Laundry Worker	2,082	1,697	-18%	-385	0.2%	22%	23%	1%
431111	General Electrician	2,157	1,677	-22%	-480	0.2%	83%	90%	6%
921511	Sawmill Labourer	2,620	1,667	-36%	-953	0.2%	89%	88%	-1%
441511	Solid Plasterer	584	1,665	185%	1,081	0.2%	98%	99%	0%
	<b>Total</b>	638,105	603,045	-6%	-35,060	75	55%	54%	-1%

Author's Calculations based on 1996 and 2006 ABS Census Data

\*Excludes not stated or not applicable for those aged 25-54 years

## APPENDIX A4.4: Changes in employment and gender share of employment in large employing occupations for low skilled female workers aged 25-54, Australia 1996-2006.

ASCO Code	Occupation Title	Number employed 1996	Number employed 2006	Change 1996-2006 (%)	Raw number change 1996-2006	Proportion of total low skilled female employment <sup>38</sup> 2006 (%)	Female Share of employment 1996	female Share of employment 2006	Change female Share of employment 1996-2006.
611111	General Clerk	75,482	73,920	-2%	-1,562	8.2%	79.8%	88.8%	9.0%
613111	Receptionist	43,485	45,391	4%	1,906	5.0%	98.0%	97.6%	-0.4%
511111	Secretary	82,432	38,550	-53%	-43,882	4.3%	99.2%	99.2%	0.0%
821111	Sales Assist (Food& Drink Prods)	27,378	37,273	36%	9,895	4.1%	84.0%	83.5%	-0.5%
911111	Commercial Cleaner	42,482	36,464	-14%	-6,018	4.1%	75.7%	71.9%	-3.8%
821115	Sales Ass't (Oth Pers & H/hold Gds)	19,286	35,567	84%	16,281	4.0%	72.2%	76.0%	3.8%
591111	Bookkeeper	33,532	30,666	-9%	-2,866	3.4%	94.1%	96.3%	2.2%
614111	Accounts Clerk	18,722	29,037	55%	10,315	3.2%	84.5%	91.0%	6.5%

<sup>38</sup> The total is of all workers with no post-school qualification working in the last 6 major (ASCO) occupation groups - 4 Tradespersons & Related Workers, 5 Adv Clerical & Service Workers, 6 Intermediate Cleric, Sales & Service Workers, 7 Intermediate Production & Transport Workers, 8 Elementary Cleric, Sales & Service Workers, 9 Labourers & Related Workers.

APPENDIX A4.4: Continued

614311	Bank Worker	38,141	20,947	-45%	-17,194	2.3%	83.0%	84.8%	1.8%
619111	Inquiry Clerk	11,724	19,382	65%	7,658	2.2%	74.9%	75.8%	-2.4%
993111	Kitchen hand	24,313	20,141	-17%	-4,172	2.2%	83.3%	80.9%	0.9%
799311	Store person	14,213	18,675	31%	4,462	2.1%	32.8%	34.7%	2.0%
511113	Personal Assistant	6,671	17,889	168%	11,218	2.0%	98.2%	98.6%	-2.6%
821113	Sales Ass't (Fabric, Cloth & F/wear)	14,571	18,114	24%	3,543	2.0%	90.3%	91.7%	1.3%
631317	Aged or Disabled Person Carer	15,159	18,385	21%	3,226	2.0%	89.6%	87.1%	0.4%
922111	Hand Packer	18,511	16,150	-13%	-2,361	1.8%	78.4%	73.6%	-4.8%
829111	Checkout Operator	10,768	14,906	38%	4,138	1.7%	83.4%	87.0%	3.6%
612113	Data Entry Operator	15,367	13,989	-9%	-1,378	1.6%	88.6%	89.0%	0.4%
821179	Sales Assistants nec	16,164	13,626	-16%	-2,538	1.5%	64.1%	58.9%	-5.2%
631211	Child Care Worker	9,143	12,780	40%	3,637	1.4%	97.5%	96.9%	-0.5%
632311	General Waiter	12,461	12,056	-3%	-405	1.3%	83.2%	82.4%	-1.6%
631115	Teacher's Aide	14,540	12,105	-17%	-2,435	1.3%	95.9%	94.3%	-0.7%
831979	Elementary Service Workers nec	238	9,091	3720%	8,853	1.0%	43.1%	84.9%	-5.1%

APPENDIX A4.4: Continued

614211	Payroll Clerk	6,911	8,584	24%	1,673	1.0%	74.9%	84.9%	41.8%
451311	Cook	10,866	9,169	-16%	-1,697	1.0%	72.4%	67.4%	10.1%
632211	Bar Attendant	10,954	8,038	-27%	-2,916	0.9%	68.8%	68.9%	0.1%
621111	Sales Rep (Pers & H/hold Goods)	6,672	7,216	8%	544	0.8%	39.1%	46.7%	7.5%
911113	Domestic Cleaner	8,589	6,787	-21%	-1,802	0.8%	92.8%	88.2%	-4.6%
631113	Integration Aide	1,496	5,909	295%	4,413	0.7%	98.2%	95.8%	7.4%
621179	Sales Representatives nec	3,786	6,116	62%	2,330	0.7%	25.9%	37.2%	1.8%
631411	Personal Care Assistant	5,579	6,466	16%	887	0.7%	64.2%	71.6%	8.6%
591211	Credit & Loans Officer	5,944	6,303	6%	359	0.7%	54.6%	63.2%	11.3%
911100	Cleaners nfd	13,125	6,406	-51%	-6,719	0.7%	65.2%	67.0%	-3.2%
721111	Sewing Machinist	13,543	6,081	-55%	-7,462	0.7%	89.2%	86.0%	-2.4%
614411	Insurance Clerk	4,416	5,345	21%	929	0.6%	77.4%	79.2%	-1.3%
921211	Product Assembler	6,980	5,271	-24%	-1,709	0.6%	43.4%	33.9%	1.7%
831511	Laundry Worker	7,321	5,547	-24%	-1,774	0.6%	77.9%	76.6%	-9.5%
639111	Dental Assistant	2,096	4,135	97%	2,039	0.5%	99.1%	99.3%	-5.1%



APPENDIX A4.4: Continued

621311	Retail Supervisor	3,369	4,647	38%	1,278	0.5%	46.0%	59.0%	13.0%
612111	Typist & Word Processing Operators	10,276	4,568	-56%	-5,708	0.5%	97.6%	97.4%	-0.2%
631413	Nursing Assistant	11,448	4,807	-58%	-6,641	0.5%	88.8%	83.8%	-4.6%
821100	Sales Assistants nfd	21,317	4,220	-80%	-17,097	0.5%	74.8%	70.1%	0.1%
8211**	Sales Assistants Grouped	101,121	111,373	10%	10,252	12.3%	76%	78%	1.3%
	Total	721,876	694,345	-3.8%	-27,531	75%	78	79	1%

Source: Author's Calculations based on 1996 and 2006 ABS Census Data

Excludes not stated or not applicable for those aged 25-54 years

\*\* For the purposes of this research, I use the ASCO unit or 4 digit level coding of Sales Assistants. This includes the following 6 digit ASCO occupations

- 821100 Sales Assistants nfd
- 821111 Sales Assist (Food& Drink Prods)
- 821113 Sales Ass't (Fabric, Cloth & F/wear)
- 821115 Sales Ass't (Oth Pers & H/hold Gds)
- 821117 Sales Assist (Postal Services)
- 821179 Sales Assistants nec

## APPENDIX A4.5: Australian Standard Classifications of Occupations (ASCO) Definitions of Selected Case Study Occupations.

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ASCO code	Occupation Title and Description
6313-17	<p><b>Aged or Disabled Person Carer</b> Provides general household assistance, emotional support, care and companionship for aged or disabled people in their homes.</p> <p><b>Skill Level:</b> The entry requirement for this occupation is an AQF Certificate II or higher qualification or at least 1 year's relevant experience.</p> <p><b>Tasks Include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• accompanies aged or disabled people during daily activities</li> <li>• assists clients to move about</li> <li>• prepares or presents food</li> <li>• arranges social activities</li> <li>• performs housekeeping tasks</li> <li>• assists in personal hygiene and dressing</li> <li>• may do shopping and run errands</li> <li>• may live in with the person</li> </ul>
9111-11	<p><b>Commercial Cleaner</b> Cleans industrial work areas, industrial machinery, commercial premises, residential complexes, hospitals and construction sites using heavy duty cleaning equipment.</p> <p><b>Skill Level:</b> The entry requirement for this occupation is completion of compulsory secondary education or higher qualification.</p> <p><b>Tasks Include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• operates industrial vacuum cleaners to clean floors, work areas and machinery</li> <li>• removes rubbish and empties containers, bins and trays</li> <li>• removes dust and dirt from ceilings, walls, overhead pipes and fixtures</li> <li>• applies acids and solvents to surfaces to remove stains and dirt</li> <li>• removes lint, dust, soot, oil, grease, sludge or other residues from machinery, hulls and holds of ships, and interiors and exteriors of furnaces, boilers and tanks</li> <li>• vacuums carpets, curtains and upholstered furniture</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cleans, dusts and polishes furniture, fixtures and fittings</li> <li>• strips old wax from floors, re-waxes and polishes floors</li> <li>• cleans and disinfects laundry and bathroom fixtures, replenishes expendable supplies and reports defective plumbing fixtures</li> <li>• may clean exteriors of buildings by sand-blasting or by applying solvents</li> </ul> <p>Specializations: Aircraft Cabin Cleaner, School Cleaner</p>
6312-11	<p><b>Child Care Worker</b></p> <p>Provides care and supervision for children in programs such as long day care and occasional care in child care centres, hospitals and educational centres.</p> <p><b>Skill Level:</b> The entry requirement for this occupation is an AQF Certificate II or higher qualification or at least 1 year's relevant experience. Registration or licensing may be required.</p> <p><b>Tasks Include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assists in the preparation of materials and equipment for educational or recreational activities</li> <li>• manages children's behaviour and guides children's social development</li> <li>• supervises sleep and rest periods;</li> <li>• serves meals and snacks to children and may assist in meal preparation</li> <li>• assists children with daily routines such as toileting, dressing, eating and sleeping</li> <li>• organises and supervises activity programs according to the age, needs and capacities of individual children</li> <li>• may observe and record the growth, behaviour and development of babies and children and discuss their progress with parents</li> <li>• may take children on outings</li> </ul> <p>Specialisations: Children's Nursery Assistant, Crèche Attendant</p>
8211	<p><b>SALES ASSISTANTS<sup>39</sup></b></p> <p>Sell stock such as food, clothing, hardware, household appliances, office supplies and cosmetics in retail or wholesale establishments.</p> <p><b>Skill Level:</b> The entry requirement for this unit group is completion of compulsory secondary education or higher qualification.</p> <p><b>Tasks Include:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• selling food, drink, clothing, footwear and other personal and household goods and services</li> </ul>

<sup>39</sup> For the purposes of this research, we use the ASCO unit or 4 digit level coding of Sales Assistants.

- advising customers on the selection, price, delivery, use and care of goods and services
- operating cash registers, accepting payments and preparing sales invoices
- stacking and displaying items for sale and wrapping and packing goods sold
- checking stock and participating in stock takes

Occupations:

8211-11 Sales Assistant (Food and Drink Products)

8211-13 Sales Assistant (Fabric, Clothing and Footwear)

8211-15 Sales Assistant (Other Personal and Household Goods)

8211-17 Sales Assistant (Postal Services)

8211-79 Sales Assistants nec

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