



INTRODUCING GENDER IN MANAGEMENT

Introduction

The focus of Chapter 2 is the concept of 'career' and the notion of equality of opportunity for women. We examine the position of women managers in the labour market and in relation to the corporate boardroom and family business. We look briefly at the women's rights movement, and at the influence of liberal feminism on the equal opportunities agenda. In doing this, we consider the economic history of women's pay and attempt to provide social and economic explanations for women's limited progress in the labour market. To begin with, we examine the history of women's employment. This is because a sense of the historical background to a social issue can be helpful in understanding current events and situations. Thus, we locate the issue of women's employment in its social context, considering the history of women's position in society over the past 150 years, which helps to explain women's constrained progression in the labour market. Secondly, we consider some of the arguments put forward by feminist scholars and activists, including a consideration of the concepts of Marxist feminism, radical feminism and of patriarchy, which present a range of reasons for discrimination against women.

It's all Gone too far?

There can be an assumption that women's rights have been achieved and inequality vanquished. If this were the case, there would be no need, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, for feminism, or for any feminist social activism like the women's

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liberation movement. Admittedly, women's entry to most professions is easier now than it was thirty years ago. Girls are doing well at school and, in the UK, more women than men are going to university. If we look below the surface, however, we observe that all is not as straightforward, or as 'equal', as it may seem. Today, over thirty years since equal opportunities legislation supposedly outlawed discrimination against women managers and promised equal pay regardless of gender, men continue to earn more, and to progress more easily up the career ladder, than women do.

If you turn on the television news or flick through a newspaper, it will be evident that equal opportunities for women in the labour market is still an important issue. This is the case not only in Britain, but in Europe and in the USA. In the corporate world, women Chief Executive Officers are still very few in number, and the gender pay gap (which means that women receive less remuneration than men for doing an equivalent job) still remains a newsworthy issue. It is not uncommon to hear stories of women who lose their jobs when they become pregnant, or of women who are excluded from career opportunities which are on offer to men. In a spate of sex discrimination claims, women bankers are challenging traditional male-dominated cultures in the world of finance, and government think tanks have acknowledged the continued lack of equality of opportunity for women at all levels in the job market (Women and Work Commission 2006).

Thus, there are still a range of problems such as discrimination and inequality in relation to gender. For example, the gender pay gap remains high: on average at just under 20 per cent in the UK for full-time women workers and up to 40 per cent for part-timers (EOC 2005a). In the USA the gender pay gap is even higher, at around 28 per cent for full-time female workers (Padavic and Reskin 2002). Figures provided by the women's labour bureau in the USA demonstrate that qualifications do not necessarily reduce the gender pay gap. In 2003, in America, men with a bachelor's degree or higher qualification earned a median weekly wage of \$1,131. Women qualified to bachelor's level or higher earned a median weekly wage of \$832 – so, as a percentage, highly qualified women are earning 26.4 per cent less than men (US Department of Labor 2005: 33–4). The gender pay gap affects black and minority ethnic women even more severely than it does white women. For example, in the USA in 1998, as a proportion of men's wages, white women earned 73 per cent, African-American women

63 per cent and Hispanic-American women only 53 per cent (Seager 2005).

With regard to executive status, it remains the case that very few women are appointed to corporate 'top jobs' in Europe and America (Vinnicombe and Bank 2003; Singh and Vinnicombe 2004). In major corporate and professional situations, women often find that their upward progress is blocked (or challenged) when it comes to gaining executive status, while equivalent male colleagues appear to move upwards with comparative ease. A report in *The Economist* (2005) notes that, despite the American government's specially appointed Glass Ceiling Commission (established in 1995 to bring down the barriers that prevented women from reaching the top of the corporate ladder), women account for 46.5 per cent of America's workforce but for less than 8 per cent of its top managers. This figure has altered very little since 1995 when the Commission was set up. In the UK, the situation is similar: while 44 per cent of the workforce is female, very few women command positions on corporate boards. In 2001, only 5 per cent of FTSE 100 companies had more than 20 per cent female directors on their boards, with 43 per cent having no female directors at all (Vinnicombe and Bank 2003). And in 2002, only 61 per cent of the top 100 companies included any female directors at all on their boards – a figure which was down from 64 per cent in 1999 (Singh and Vinnicombe 2004). Even where some improvements can be seen in the numbers of women on corporate boards, the number of female executives remains tiny. For example, between 2000 and 2004 the total number of female executive directors of FTSE 100 companies rose from 11 to 17. However, in comparison with the number of men in such posts (400 male executive directors), even the improved figure could be regarded as negligible (*Economist* 2005: 67). As Jill Treanor, writing in *The Guardian* points out, boardrooms in Britain continue to be afflicted by what she terms as 'pale male' syndrome and there is little sign or promise of change:

Women are failing to smash through the glass ceiling in FTSE boardrooms, despite attempts to promote diversity at the highest corporate level in Britain ... women [are] losing out in new appointments to the boardroom with only 12.5 of new positions filled by women ... and few women are on the brink of promotion to the top. (Treanor 2006: 3)

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Thus, although women may be well qualified, and might work in organisations purporting to have policies which offer equality of opportunity, the career ladder for women in large companies is often foreshortened, while the male ladder extends to the top of the career tree. Women are often hived off into specialist or gendered positions, such as human resources – known as the ‘velvet ghetto’. These have knock-on effects such as less power and resources, shorter career ladders, less status, less value, less pay and fewer benefits. In sum, women are still segregated vertically in terms of the career ladder and horizontally into particular jobs that are seen as less valued.

During the 1960s, the term ‘glass ceiling’ was coined to describe the organisational processes that create disadvantage and the difficulties that women face in trying to reach the highest echelons of their particular field. The glass ceiling has been described as a barrier which is transparent but impassable, so that women can see the top of the management hierarchy, but may not reach it. For example, it points to the way that women can find it difficult to obtain the mentoring, training and special project experience that is often needed for advancing in organisations. It is important to note (and we shall discuss this in detail in Chapters 3–5) that for black and minority ethnic women, the situation is even worse, as women in these groups are likely to experience unfair treatment not only because of their gender, but also in relation to their ethnic background. In their research on women’s professional identities, Bell and Nkomo (2001) acknowledge the existence of the glass ceiling as a barrier to promotion for all women. However, they suggest that black and minority ethnic women are also faced with a ‘concrete wall’, meaning that wherever they turn their career progression is limited, and they are prevented by organisational practices and processes from even seeing the top of the career ladder, never mind climbing it.

These processes do not simply operate in large corporate or public services organisations. In both large and small firms, women are often absent at board level within family businesses, where sons continue to take precedence over daughters and where women’s contribution is frequently marginalised (Mulholland 1996; Hamilton 2006). This lack of women in executive roles within family businesses is more significant than you might at first imagine. This is because the importance of family businesses to the global economy is to some extent masked, due to the tendency of the

financial press to focus on large corporate organisations – a pattern which is replicated in management textbooks. The entrepreneurial literature suggests that the contribution of family firms to global business is huge. Family firms of varying shapes and sizes represent between 75 and 95 per cent of firms registered world-wide and family businesses account for up to 65 per cent of GDP (Howorth et al. 2006). Mulholland (1996) demonstrates how, even though they may resist this as they struggle to claim their place in the family boardroom, female kin in wealthy family firms experience discrimination in terms of both pay and career opportunities as explicitly as if they were employed in the corporate sector:

female kin ... play a central and necessary role in the formation of units of wealth, [but find] their efforts appropriated by male kin and their progress stymied when they are marginalised and excluded from the management and ownership of private wealth. (Mulholland 1996: 78)

Likewise, Hamilton has observed that women are often ‘invisible’ in the formation of family businesses. Hamilton observes how women may play a fundamental part both in the establishment and the running of family businesses, but are often excluded from the social and economic rewards, working without remuneration and/or being denied partnership status. Hamilton (2006: 8) notes that, where women do achieve social and economic recognition in family firms, this is likely to be difficult to attain and daughters may be obliged to spend years ‘working [their way up] due to the requirement to “prove” themselves’ in a manner which is not imposed upon male family members. Hamilton acknowledges the difficulties, for women, of fighting male colleagues and bosses within the context of their own families because loyalty to their fathers, brothers and other male kin might pressure daughters and their mothers to ‘acquiesce to a particular set of power relations which assume that men [will] lead the business and draw upon the labour and support of female kin’ (Hamilton 2006: 9). Hamilton (2006: 15) observes how, frequently, the traditional ‘construct/discourse of the “heroic” male owner manager and the invisible woman [is drawn upon] to present the business to the outside world as a particularly recognisable form of organisation’, since the preservation of this male narrative enhances the position of the family firm (and consequently profit) within the business world.

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The situation is similar in the context of careers which have traditionally been associated with academic qualifications and the 'professions'. While it is true that women are more highly educated now than there were in the past, it remains the case that in most professions, it is men, and not women, who hold the senior, and the most prestigious roles (Edwards and Wajcman 2005; Gatrell 2005). This is especially likely to occur in professions which have traditionally been male preserves, such as medicine, academia, banking and the judiciary. Thus, in higher education, the number of women professors remains low, at around 16 per cent (Association of University Teachers 2003) and there are a few women vice-chancellors. And in politics, the number of female MPs remains consistently less than the number of male MPs, with only around 20 per cent of seats in the British House of Commons held by women (EOC 2005a).

How can we start to understand and explain these statistics? Why are there so few women in senior management roles? Why are black women in a worse position? Why are women segregated into different types of work? There are many different theories which attempt to answer these questions and we turn to these in the sections and chapters below.

Women's Historical Position in the Labour Market

Contemporary discourses [about equal employment opportunities for women] do not sweep away the old world order. They come laden with its resonances. (Hughes 2002: 60)

As the quote above implies, one way to account for these different types of inequality is through examining the history of women's work and education. Historically, women have been associated with homemaking and men with employment. This has been the case not only in middle-class, but also in working-class households, where 'the gradual exclusion of children from the workplace [post-industrial revolution] meant constraints on the labour time and resources of the household, with women carrying the major child-care burden' (Morris 1990: 7). In legal terms, the social position of women was officially inferior to that of men until the last quarter of the twentieth century. The recent history of

women's employment provides part of the explanation why women managers still receive lower levels of pay and opportunity than men – despite legislation which is supposed to prevent discrimination. As Eagly and Karau (2002) and Desmarais and Alksnis (2005) have argued, historical precedents are hard to shift because the habits of the past reproduce the social behaviour of the future. Thus, organisations continue to base their expectations about gender, roles and behaviour on what used to happen in the past:

organizations and the people within them continue to hold the implicit assumption that the ideal worker is a white man who is employed full time. ... The idea persists that women should be responsible for [the home]. ... We believe that all working woman are violating the normative assumptions of the role of women to some degree. (Desmarais and Alksnis 2005: 459)

Until the late nineteenth century, married women were not permitted to own property, and any money that they inherited, or earned, automatically belonged to their husbands or fathers. From Victorian times to the present date, women were automatically allocated the task of producing and raising the next generation of children, as well as cooking, laundering and cleaning. If they were working class, women were expected to provide supplementary income for the household (but were paid significantly less than men) and were regarded as reserve labour in times of economic growth (Grint 2005). However, middle-class women were not expected to 'go out' to work other than in exceptional conditions, for example when men were away from home fighting wars. In times of war, women of all social classes were encouraged to substitute for men employed in lower-ranking positions (though even during war-time, senior posts were reserved for men). However, women were expected to withdraw gracefully from the labour market when soldiers returned, allowing homecoming men to reclaim available jobs (Summerfield 1998).

We have already acknowledged that, from the mid-1970s onwards (following the enactment of equal rights legislation in the UK and the USA), employed women have had the legal right to expect the same treatment as their male equivalents. However, it is worth pointing out that, until this date in both Britain and America, it was perfectly legal and above board to discriminate

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against women. Employers could dismiss women, or deny them promotion on grounds of their gender, especially if they were pregnant. Furthermore, employers could (and did) pay women less money than men, even if the women were doing jobs with an equivalent level of responsibility.

Such unequal employment conditions meant that most women were unlikely to be able to afford to run their own homes. Before the Second World War, therefore, women often went into service, or worked in factories for lower pay than men, and many working-class women would have married for economic reasons. Middle- and upper-class women were not expected to 'go out' to work, but to marry and become mothers. Rowbotham (1997: 26), quoting Cicely Hamilton's 1912 advice on 'Marriage as a Trade', observes how '[d]omestic toil was a culture which meant that [poorer] women "learned to look upon [themselves] ... as creature[s] from whom much must be demanded and to whom little must be given"'. Those who lived in households where domestic help could be afforded had fewer domestic responsibilities, but precious little else with which to occupy themselves. Rowbotham (1997: 26) recounts how, when the young upper-class Lady Violet Bonham-Carter asked her governess about her future role in life, the governess's answer was clear. 'Until you are eighteen', Violet was told, 'you will do lessons.' 'And Afterwards?' Violet then asked. 'And afterwards,' replied the governess, 'you will do nothing.'

Men at Work, Women at Home

One of the dominant rationales for women's position in the labour market that comes from this kind of historical account is that of socialisation, as introduced in the gender definition in the introduction of this book. This is the idea that women are socialised in different ways from men when they are growing up within the home, at school and in wider society. It fits in with the first model of gender discussed in Chapter 1. A historical example of this kind of socialisation, which still has enduring impact, is the so-called image of 'ideal' womanhood which was promulgated from the 1950s through to the early 1970s by the American sociologist Talcott Parsons (Parsons and Bales 1956).

Parsons' work was influential in both Britain and the USA at this time because it offered policy makers a convenient picture of family life in which heterosexual men and women would marry, have

children and share the division of labour in the traditional gendered fashion. The workplace was seen to require characteristics of logic and objectivity, and Parsons and Bales (1956) attributed to men 'Instrumental' traits, meaning that they were ascribed 'rational' psychological attributes and were thus seen to be more suited to the workplace than were women. Husbands were thus employed and fulfilled a public role by going 'out' to work, while wives were allocated the task of fulfilling private, domestic requirements. Parsons and Bales (1956: 163) identified women as inherently 'expressive' or emotional, meaning that they were regarded as unsuited to management roles within the workplace, but were seen to be eminently suitable for the 'integrative-supportive role' within the heterosexual domestic setting (Parsons and Bales 1956: 314). At odds with their argument that women were genetically predisposed to possess 'expressive' qualities, Parsons and Bales underlined social expectations that women should learn and 'develop the skills in human relations which are central to making the home harmonious' (Parsons and Bales 1956: 163). This suggested that expressive skills were not, in fact, innate, but must be acquired through socialisation. Women's role was, therefore, that of housewife, and housewives were expected to clean, shop and bear children (Parsons and Bales 1956). The 'correct' way of performing the role of 'ideal woman' was thus socially defined, and this did not include going out to work or exhibiting work-oriented, ambitious behaviour, as these characteristics were associated only with men (Rich 1977). The idea of 'woman and home' was perpetuated throughout the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. In popular culture, women were depicted in the maternal domestic role, cooking, cleaning and caring for children, while fathers went out to work (Kerr 2005, originally published 1968).

Parsons and Bales (1956: 14–15) stated:

The role of housewife is still the ... predominant one for the married woman with small children. ... [T]he adult feminine role is anchored ... in the internal affairs of the family as wife, mother and manager in the household, while the role of the adult male is ... anchored in the occupational world, in his job.

Parsons' idealised picture of family life did not, of course, correspond with the diversity of family practices in 1950s and 1960s Britain or America. Parsons and Bales universalised the concept of

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'the family', members of which were, by implication, white, well educated, heterosexual, able-bodied and middle-class. Parsons has been criticised for this failing because, as Giddens (1984: 257) argues: 'Parsons's concentration on normative consensus as the foundation of the integration of societies leads him seriously to underestimate the significance of contestation of norms'. Most importantly in this respect, as Bernardes points out, many 'families' in America were very different from the stereotypical images that Parsons described. Bernardes (1997: 5) observes how:

In a society with widespread poverty, a large range of ethnic minorities and a large working class, Parsons' claim that: It is of course a commonplace that the American family is predominantly and in a sense increasingly an urban middle-class family ... that has emerged a remarkably uniform, basic type of family ... the nuclear family' [seems extraordinary].

Nevertheless, this 'ideal' of the traditional heterosexual family fitted in perfectly with post-war British and American employment policy, which until the mid-1960s was committed to the model of full male employment which came to be a 'taken-for-granted aspect of social and economic life' (Morris 1990: 10). The significance of Parson's work in relation to the social roles of men and women cannot, therefore, be underestimated. While it was unlikely that Parsons wrote with the strategic desire of shaping social behaviours and policy, his work was, nevertheless, highly influential with regard to social practice. It has been suggested by Horna and Lupri (1987) that, whether Parsons intended this or not, his research was responsible for normalising heterosexual roles in which women did housework at home and men were employed. Horna and Lupri (1987: 54) stated: 'Parsons ... has lent credence to role complementarity in the family in assuming that sex-role segregation is necessary for family stability ... husband and wives perform different tasks (functions) that combine to meet all family "needs"'.

Deeply ingrained and historical practices and ideas about the role of women were reflected in the body of scholarly texts about 'work' that were produced during the 1950s, 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s, which focused predominantly on men's paid labour and either ignored women employees altogether, or studied women in relation only to 'normative' male experiences and traits, especially in relation to management (Brewis and Linstead 2004).

This was partly because most women were employed only at the lowliest levels in organisations, meaning that 'classic' texts on managing and decision making never mentioned gender, assuming that 'management' meant 'male' and partly because the male 'norm' of 'rational' decision making and behaviour was regarded as the one best way of managing.

Thus, in historical and legislative practice, in the context of both the Parsonian model of womanhood and scholarly work on management, it can be seen that women were rarely associated with management unless this related to management within the domestic setting. The notion of social exchange, whereby women offered domestic and reproductive labour in exchange for financial support from men, left women in the position where they were utterly dependent upon husbands, and reliant upon men for social status outside marriage. As Morris (1990: 82) points out, the problem with the idea of the exchange of labour between women and men 'causes differential power with marriage [and this] accrues to the male spouse who has the provider role ... the domestic female worker [is] exploited and oppressed'. The advantages, for men, of retaining a situation where they are free from the responsibilities associated with 'low-status, monotonous' housework which 'brings no financial remuneration, is performed to no externally established standards and receive[s] no recognition' are obvious (Morris 1990: 81).

Thus, even in the twenty-first century, the notion of the female breadwinner contradicts deeply ingrained ideas about the social role of women and provokes challenges from those who might wish to see women more easily confined to the home. The association of women with domestic labour continues to be perpetuated by writers like Tooley (2002), who argues that women are more suited to the domestic environment than they are to paid work, and suggests that women's growing entry into the labour market has served only to cause them unhappiness, a situation which could be reversed if women were to eschew careers in favour of housework: 'there are gender differences in the way men and women respond to domesticity. Many women ... feel [unhappiness] in being moved away from a sphere that could be the source of their fulfilment [the home] to a sphere which is clearly not [employment]' (Tooley 2002: 120).

There are also other important historical workplace gendered inequalities. Summerfield (1998) observes that even during the

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war years and just after, some professions, such as teaching and the civil service, still had a 'marriage bar', obliging women to leave their employment on marriage. Until the 1970s, it was officially the case that employed women could be dismissed if they became pregnant, and there was no obligation on the part of employers to keep women's jobs open once they had gone on maternity leave. Furthermore, women's part in political processes was almost invisible until after the First World War. Less than 100 years ago, women were denied the right to vote, and even in supposedly 'democratic' countries like Britain and America, only men had the opportunity to elect the (male) politicians whose job it was to run the country. Even when legislation allowing women the vote was enacted in Britain, this applied only to women over 30 years of age and women under 30 were, finally, 'allowed to vote [only] after the passing of the Equal Franchise Act in 1928' (Rowbotham 1997: 121).

In the UK, until the 1970s, university education was open only to the privileged few – and most of the privileged few were men. In the nineteenth century, scholarship was seen to be detrimental to the reproductive function of middle-class women (Showalter and Showalter 1972), and in 1970 Greer noted that:

Three times as many girls as boys leave school at fifteen; only one third of A-level students are girls and only a quarter of university students. Three quarters of eighteen year-old girls in our society receive no training or higher education at all. (Greer 2006: 132)

In England, although Cambridge University admitted women to Girton College in 1869, women were not officially 'members' of the university. Thus, while women were allowed to *study* for a degree, only men received the award, and gained the letters after their name. Even when women were allowed to graduate (which in the case of Cambridge students was not until after the Second World War), the numbers of women at university remained limited to around 20 per cent. It was not until the late 1960s and early 1970s that the numbers of women attending university began, gradually, to increase, until we reach the situation today where, in Britain, just over 50 per cent of graduates are female (Dyhouse 2006).

This brief historical overview provides some potential explanations for contemporary workplace discrimination and inequalities but there are other theories and debates to which we turn now,

starting with liberal feminism, the concept of patriarchy and radical feminism.

Liberal Feminism and the Origins of 'Equal Opportunities' for Women

Women have always found ways to fight and resist discriminatory practices, individually and collectively, but one very important force in the way that equality, workplace activism and women and work are considered is the women's liberation movement which started in the 1960s and 1970s. As a result of this movement, the notion of equal employment opportunities for women began to impact on public consciousness at the end of the 1960s in both Britain and America (Rowbotham 1997). One significant output of this movement was the idea of expanding the concept of work and workplace to include women's unpaid work at home and in the community as opposed to just paid work in the public sphere. Thus, one important early women's liberation campaign was 'wages for housework': a campaign to show how women 'worked' in the domestic sphere: bringing up children, doing housework, doing emotional labour and undertaking caring work for other dependents and in the wider community. It also emphasised that this 'work' was unpaid but that it enabled men to work in the public sphere, and capitalism to operate, as a result.

There were many different types of feminist thinking within the women's liberation movement. One influential example in 1970s Britain came with Germaine Greer, who raised awareness of women's rights and of the equal opportunities agenda with the publication of her seminal but accessible text *The Female Eunuch* (2006 [1970]). Greer's book called for women to challenge the status quo by exercising their agency and independence, and she argued for women to be offered better opportunities in education and employment. In *The Female Eunuch*, Greer argued that women were undervalued, underpaid and poorly protected by legislation, and she campaigned for employed women to be paid the same as men who were doing equivalent jobs. At the time she wrote it, Greer's book and the improvements in women's circumstances that it proposed were considered to be highly controversial. The notion that women should be afforded equal pay and equal job opportunities caused a storm both politically and among

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individual men and women (Greer 2006). Focusing on home relations, another important book was Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), which was widely read and quoted in the USA and the UK. In Britain and America, the 1960s represented an era of economic growth, with new career opportunities for men, but the continued expectation that middle-class women would be economically dependant wives whose 'job' was to bear children and do the housework. Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* 'gave voice to many women's previously inchoate longings to move out of the household and domestic confinement and to participate in an "equal partnership of the sexes"' (Chancer and Watkins 2006: 31). These two texts, then, encapsulated certain types of feminist thinking on gender, work and inequality.

Both books can be seen as being influenced by what is known as a liberal feminist tradition. Liberal feminism is a long-standing movement which links back to 'first wave' feminist publications such as Mary Wollestonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (2004 [1792]). There are many ways to understand women's inequality and discrimination, and liberal feminism and its equal opportunities agenda is a dominant model taken up by some feminist academics and policy makers. Liberal feminism asserts that women's equality with men should be achieved through incremental changes in the education and legal systems. Liberal feminism does not challenge the categories of 'man' or 'woman' and so does not seek to unsettle the gendered binary of organising the world. However, the liberal feminist argument contends that 'sex', in the biological sense of being classified as male or female, does not justify sex discrimination. It argues that men and women are similar, and women are just as capable of doing any job as a man. Liberal feminism does not reject the idea of society as it is, but seeks some limited reform of capitalist systems as they currently exist.

The liberal approach to feminism has been criticised from the 1970s onwards because it failed to distinguish between different groups of 'women' (implying that all women's needs are the same), and in doing so was seen to privilege white middle-class women who already had better opportunities than other groups. Influential US black critical race academic bell hooks, for example, (1986: 136) points out that if 'poor women had set the agenda for the feminist movement ... class struggle would [have been] a central feminist issue'. Carole Truman, observing contemporary ideas about equality of opportunity, which sprang from liberal feminist

ideals, contends that equal opportunities policies are most beneficial to 'white, middle class women where the only disadvantage they experience is based on their gender. "Equality of opportunity" may only serve those women who are already advantaged by the class structure and may obscure important differences between women' (Truman 1996: 42).

Liberal feminism is also seen as overly moderate, because of its assumption that it is possible to achieve change by working within (as opposed to transforming) contemporary social systems, working gradually to persuade governments and employers of the need for incremental change. Thus, hooks has stated:

I think we have to fight the idea that somehow we have to refashion feminism so that it appears not to be revolutionary – so that it appears not to be about struggle. ... I say the minute you begin to oppose patriarchy, you're progressive. If our real agenda is altering patriarchy and sexist oppression we are talking about a left, revolutionary movement. (1993, quoted in Beasley 1999: 31)

However, while liberal feminism may not address the concerns of feminists who seek fundamental political change through addressing questions of difference, a consideration of liberal feminism is important in this book in the context of understanding gender in management. This is because, as Beasley (1999: 53) points out:

... liberal feminism provides a framework for the development of 'moderate' feminist politics and practices which can be employed ... by government agencies. ... Given liberal feminism's concern with working for attainable social change within the existing confines of modern Western society, it is not surprising that ... most feminists have made use of this framework [and] liberal feminism is the most commonly borrowed approach in the feminist pantheon.

For this reason, liberal feminist approaches are most attractive to policy makers and governing bodies who have a vested interest in retaining the status quo and who might fear the negative impact, on them, of major structural changes to society. In our view, feminism and the notion of women's participation in public life remains a threat to those who continue to see high-level management as a

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male preserve. Because they do not promote revolution, but seek only change to existing structures, liberal feminist philosophies offer policy makers the appealing combination of both the least intimidating and the apparently simplest means of accommodating women's requirements to participate in society. Thus, liberal feminist ideas have underpinned many of the equal opportunities policies and practices designed to protect and enhance women's rights to the present day.

Some of the views on the limitations of liberal feminism are shared by the authors of this text, and we go on to explore these in more detail in forthcoming chapters. Like Cockburn (1991), however, we acknowledge that liberal feminist campaigners have fought hard to achieve improvements in many spheres where women have, for centuries, been oppressed, including workplace discrimination and the gender pay gap, divorce and the right to child support, education and occupational segregation.

The liberal feminist movement has made a difference to many women's lives in the twenty-first century. For example, it has assisted important agencies such as the Equal Opportunities Commission in the UK and the Women's Labor Bureau in the USA with arguments and evidence required to shape legislation and battle long-standing inequalities which continue to disadvantage women, such as the right of employers to dismiss pregnant women. Significant changes in UK legislation, such as the Equal Pay Act (passed in 1970; in effect from 1975) and the Sex Discrimination Act (1975), mean that women are supposed to be treated on equal terms with men, and should not experience discrimination in relation to pay or conditions on grounds of their gender (Rowbotham 1997). The ideas of liberal feminism also influence ideas on race, sexuality and disability, and diversity, as we shall see in the next chapter.

Feminist Marxism and Capitalist Relations

Another explanatory framework for analysing gender discrimination in the workplace is Marxism. There are many different versions of Marxism but, in essence, Marxism has been an influential way of understanding class relations and class struggles in the workplace. It is based on the view that capitalism as an economic system is reliant on particular ways of organising work relations or so-called 'relations of production'. Its main focus has

been on the exploitation of the working class by the middle class. Feminists have critiqued Marxist thinking for its lack of attention to gender (Barrett 1980, cited in Adkins and Lury 1996; Halford and Leonard 2001). In their view, women's unpaid work in the home is central to enabling men to work and capitalism to continue. Thus, they argue that relations of reproduction, that is the domestic work that women undertake, are essential for continuing the relations of production – in the workplace. The family is understood, ideologically and materially, as central to capitalism. In particular, it is argued that women's unpaid domestic labour, and the gendered division of labour with women doing some jobs and men doing other jobs, mainly in the public sphere, is in the interests of capitalism. Paying for domestic work on the open market would not be seen as in the interests of capitalism (Halford and Leonard 2001). As a result, capitalism keeps women in poorly paid, unskilled and short-term jobs, with few rights and little trade union support so that they can be dispensed with as slumps occur – a process known as a reserve army of labour (Halford and Leonard 2001). Largely an economic theory, feminist Marxism views sexual labour in the home as the main factor in women's discrimination and inequality in the workplace. In this view, gender is reproduced through and because of the needs of capitalism (Adkins and Lury 1996).

Patriarchy and Women's Oppression

Having discussed liberal feminism as one way of understanding inequality, we now turn to another way of explaining discrimination in the workplace: patriarchy. While some feminist scholars attribute unequal relations between women and men to class and capitalism, others suggest that 'the source of women's oppression and domination as unpaid labourers', in circumstances where contemporary women still have less opportunity than their male counterparts to attain 'executive' public positions, 'is not capitalism but patriarchy' (Morris 1990: 83). Without denying the importance of class or ethnicity (or claiming that patriarchy is the only explanation for gender subordination), feminist writers such as Walby (1990) have contended that patriarchy nevertheless pervades all aspects of life and education. They argue that 'the concept of "patriarchy" is indispensable for an analysis of gender inequality

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(Walby 1990: 1). Although the subject of much debate, the theory of patriarchy seeks to explain why and how women still experience inequality and discrimination. In essence, patriarchy is understood as a system of social structures and practices which are used by men to dominate and oppress women (Walby 1990). In the workplace, the notion of patriarchy explains, in part, how women's economic and personal needs are subordinated to those of men.

For some theorists, patriarchy is so much a part of everyday lives that it operates as a fundamental socialisation system: both men and women are seen as being locked into traditional sex roles from an early age, via education systems. Davies and Banks (1992: 45) argue that, from the age of 4 and earlier, children are 'informed by powerful discourses of gender. It is the power of those discourses to trap children within conventional meanings and modes'. Scraton (1990: 90) asserts that patriarchal values are ingrained in young people via the schools system. She argues that girls and young women are persuaded by physical education, at school, to believe that they are 'weaker, less powerful' than men, and suggests that (especially sports) 'teachers [may] justify their practice of stereotyping and use biology as an explanation even though their own ... experiences [are] at variance with their views' (Scraton 1990: 91). Thus, women become used to being patronised and excluded from social opportunities from childhood (and men become used to excluding them) because their future reproductive status is regarded as a constraint from a very early age: 'gender needs to be theorised as being structured by a dominant hegemonic masculinity which not only forms the basis of male-female relationships but also is conveyed and internalised through institutions' (Scraton 1990: 91). In this view, patriarchal ideologies and relations take hold through home and school socialisation.

Patriarchal theorists suggest that matters do not improve for those women who, once they leave the education system, enter into employment. There are seen to be a range of patriarchal relations in paid work, including the practices which create vertical and horizontal job and occupation segregation. 'Accepted' practices in the workplace continue to discriminate against women while masquerading as apparently non-gendered policies, with women's identity as potential childbearers overriding other issues such as equal opportunities. As Cockburn (2002: 180) has reflected:

Even if the woman ... is celibate or childless, she is seen and represented as one of the maternal sex. Much of the argument surrounding Equal Opportunities at work circles about the question: can women ever be equal, given their different relation to reproduction? (original emphasis)

Writers such as Cockburn (2002) and Walby (1990) consider that it is not women's reproductive status which limits their power, but repressive social systems of male domination. In accordance with this view, Sylvia Walby (1990: 67) suggests that: 'Motherhood as an institution under patriarchy does give women a lot of problems, but this is due to patriarchy, not to motherhood itself. There is nothing essentially oppressive about children'. In this view, patriarchy is a systemic system of domination which structures all walks of life, including the workplace.

Radical Feminism

Descriptions of patriarchy are associated with a radical form of feminism. Radical feminists differentiate themselves from histories or theories based on the previous development of 'malestream' thought (such as Marxism), and believe that 'it is gender relations rather than class relations that generate fundamental inequalities in the social world' (Porter 1998: 186). In this view, it is not capitalism but men as a group who dominate women. radical feminism is a departure from liberal feminism because radical feminists regard the assertion of women's rights through incremental policy changes to be overly accepting of the status quo which places men' and male needs, at the centre of society and social policy. Radical feminists 'give a positive value to womanhood rather than supporting a notion of assimilating women into areas of activity associated with men' (Beasley 1999: 54). Women are understood as having different experiences, interests and ways of being from men. Radical feminism regards 'women's oppression [as] the oldest, most widespread, the most obdurate and the most extreme form of oppression that exists between humans' (Porter 1998: 186) and radical feminists insist that 'the distinguishing character of women's oppression is their oppression as women, not as members of other groups such as their social class' (Beasley 1999: 54). Rather than trying to be the same as men, therefore, radical feminists celebrate

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the concepts of womanhood and sisterhood. While it is acknowledged by recent writers that 'women' cannot be treated as a homogeneous group (Beasley 1999), radical feminists nevertheless focus on 'women's similarities and the pleasures of forming ... bonds between women in a world where such bonds are marginalised or dismissed' (Beasley 1999: 54). Thus, special groups of women, such as lesbians and mothers, are celebrated by radical feminists on the basis that they have unique characteristics associated with womanhood that men cannot share.

Some of the key early writers on women's domestic and reproductive labour, such as Rich (1977) and Oakley (1981), embraced the politics of radical feminism, celebrating womanhood and motherhood, and challenging patriarchy as they sought to pursue 'revolutionary practice ... with an emphasis on small group organisation ... stress[ing] practical political strategies and ... focus[ing] on *the politics of the 'private' sphere*, in particular sexuality, motherhood and bodies' (Beasley 1999: 56–7, original emphasis).

In accordance with some elements of radical feminist beliefs, we consider society to be inherently patriarchal, with the scales loaded against women who seek to achieve equal status in almost any field: 'men as a group dominate women as a group and are the main beneficiaries of the subordination of women' (Walby 1990: 3). Informed by the work of writers such as Rich (1977), Oakley (1981) and Firestone (1970), we acknowledge that the roots of patriarchy are inextricably linked with women's reproductive status, and with the female body. At the same time, however, we suggest that there are problems associated with radical feminism which, with its all-embracing approach, may privilege the voices of some women at the expense of other groups, for example black and minority ethnic, and disabled women. bell hooks, for example, has argued for a black feminist political agenda since the beginning of the 1980s (Hooks 1981), although at the same time as emphasising the difference between black and white feminist politics, hooks remains concerned at the notion that women's differences make feminist unity impossible because too much fragmentation may weaken the feminist movement. Other feminist writers see cohesion between mainstream (usually white) and other groups of women as problematic, on the basis that the needs of the minority group will be suppressed. Anneka Marshall, for example, observed in 1994 how mainstream sociological and feminist approaches to research on gender 'do not

sufficiently examine the experiences of black women', who are often 'excluded from the creation of sociological and feminist thought' (Marshall 1994: 106, 108).

In summary, then, there have been many positive changes for women since Frieden and Greer wrote their famous texts, and there are many more opportunities for women within the labour market than there were in 1970. Probably for the very reason that it advocates incremental progress within traditional social contexts, liberal feminism has facilitated significant change and remains the favoured approach among policy makers and governing bodies. However, despite improvements in women's position in the labour market, progress remains limited and the 'top' jobs within industry, family business and the professions continue to be filled not by non-mothers, or women with children, but by men. When it comes to very senior public roles in society, women have not achieved equality of opportunity and the 'glass ceiling' and concrete and maternal walls remain firmly in place. These views focus on how gendered practices in organisations are shaped by wider social, economic and cultural processes. In the next chapter, while not letting go of this emphasis, we turn to theories on gender which focus on how organisational settings themselves actively create gendered practices which then, in turn, feed into other arenas. Partly due to the slow pace (and the resulting slow progress) of the liberal feminist/equal opportunities agenda, but partly also because liberal feminist approaches fail to differentiate between different groups of women, many feminist scholars are developing ideas which depart from the liberal feminist notion that women can make gradual progress towards equality with men through incremental changes in the educational and legal systems and without changing conventional social norms. In Chapters 3–5 we discuss how scholarship and new ideas have begun to impact on both scholarship and on the policy agenda.