VERTICAL OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION AND SECRETARIES:
A MULTIPLE CASE STUDY OF STRUCTURE AND AGENCY

By
Marie Mesmer

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Sociology
University of Surrey

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To my parents

and my little English rose, Abbey
Abstract

This sociological study investigates how the process of vertical occupational segregation by sex is maintained at the end of the 20th century. It explores the secretarial role and opportunities for career advancement beyond this "pink-collar" occupation within four organizations in England that were self-identified as promoting equal opportunities. The evidence stems from case studies conducted at the BBC in 1992 and at the BBC, Channel Four, Rank Xerox, and Unilever in 1994. Data were collected in three forms: (i) semi-structured interviews; 18 with mid- to senior-level secretaries, 10 with managers, and 13 with personnel representatives; (ii) office observations; and (iii) materials related to the individual companies, Opportunity 2000, and the European Community. Secretaries' opportunities for advancement were found to be rare. A pink-collar wall, rather than a glass ceiling, was discovered, due to a combination of structural constraints and the actions, or agency, of secretaries. This research extends the dual-systems model of occupational segregation by using the case study methodology and by including women's experiences and behaviour within the theoretical framework. This study expands current knowledge about the lives of ordinary working women and the persistent phenomenon of occupational segregation.
Acknowledgements

Over the years, I have worked with hundreds of secretaries in the United States and England and am deeply grateful for their insights that led to this dissertation. I am particularly grateful for the generosity and honesty of the women and men interviewed for the study. There are many others I would like to thank for helping me with ideas, expertise, and emotional support throughout this scholarly process: Jen Hlavacek, Howard Feldman, Kathryn Hanchett, Trevor Shine, Reb Burrall, Tom Mesmer’s family, Dana Beckelman, Victor DiBlasi, Jeff Dean, Richard Nino, and Todd Stempien; my supervisors Martin O'Brien and Keith MacDonald; and academics Sue Penna, Nigel Fielding, Myra Strober, Anne Fearful, Bennett Oppenheim, Harry Lyons, Don Hicks, John Lofland, Gary Marx, and Sara Arber.

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INTRODUCTION

"All of us do not have equal talent, but all of us should have an equal opportunity to develop those talents."

John F. Kennedy, 1963, p. 446

The purpose of this sociological study is to explicate how the process of vertical occupational segregation by sex is maintained at the end of the 20th century. This research was designed as a theoretically informed multiple-case study (or multimethod research approach) focusing on the role of secretaries, and their opportunities to move beyond this segregated occupation within four Opportunity 2000 organizations in Southeast England. Understanding how secretaries who are segregated by gender into a few occupations at the lower levels of organizational hierarchies interact with their immediate managers, and whether these relations affect their opportunities for advancement, can help to answer questions about the persistence of occupational segregation. Scholars have debated whether the ongoing process of segregation is due to structural constraints or agency (individual choice and action). Kennedy’s above statement that people “should” have an equal opportunity to develop their talents may be true, however, some may not wish to do so. I propose that the answer is a combination of both choice and constraint and have used the concepts of public and private patriarchal relations in analysing the mechanisms of vertical occupational segregation. By using the terms “public” and “private” patriarchal relations, I mean the personal politics and social structures that shape human relations—the interaction between collective and individual practices of control and resistance.

Occupational segregation by sex is a persistent phenomenon that has been addressed in the work of numerous scholars. Two categories of occupational segregation have been described—horizontal and vertical. "Horizontal occupational segregation exists when men are more commonly working in different types of occupations. Vertical occupational segregation exists when men are most commonly working in higher grade occupations and women are most commonly working in lower grade occupations" (Hakim, 1979, p. 19). Thus, the process of horizontal segregation is maintained by the recruitment of men and women to different jobs. The process of vertical segregation is maintained by either differential recruitment or the confining of women to lower grades within types of occupations.
Few scholars argue that occupational segregation is increasing in industrial societies. Rather, they argue that the pattern is either remaining stable (England, 1981; Jacobs, 1989a) or declining slightly. A slight decline was found in 56 countries between 1960 and 1980 (Jacobs & Lim, 1992) and in Britain between 1971 and 1981 (Bagguley & Walby, 1988). These gains for women are ambiguous. Savage (1992) noted that as organizations restructure there is increased room for women to be employed in specialised niches characterised by the possession of expertise rather than organizational power. Women have made progress, but the reduction in horizontal segregation is offset by vertical segregation, with men working in higher grade and women working in lower grade occupations or within specialised niches. Most changes over recent years have been toward rising female employment resulting in desegregation in some male-dominated sectors but with further increases in female segregation in industries or occupations where they are already concentrated such as clerical and administrative work (Rubery et al., 1998). Employment prospects for women have been increased but particularly in already female-dominated occupations. Crompton (1988) observed that "horizontal segregation may have declined, but vertical segregation has become more prevalent, if not simply more apparent. A major area of job gain for women has been in low-level white-collar and clerical work, a trend which has intensified vertical segregation" (p. 3).

Recent data on secretaries indicates that their work continues to be the most persistently female of all occupations, that present limited advancement opportunities beyond the lower grades in organizational hierarchies (McNally, 1979; Silverstone, 1974; Silverstone & Towler, 1983, p. 32; Truss, 1993, 1994). In the vast majority of Western industrialised nations secretarial work is an almost exclusively female preserve: 99% of secretaries in the United States (United States Department of Labor,
1991), Britain (McNally, 1979), Australia (Pringle, 1989b), Canada, West Germany, and France (Truss, Goffee & Jones, 1995) are women. It has become commonplace to discuss how the lines between so-called blue-collar (i.e. manual) and white-collar (i.e. non-manual) work have been fading with more and more machines moving into the office. However, it has been barely observed that the most dramatic distinctions continue in what can be descriptively termed “pink-collar” work.

Secretarial work can be characterised as one of the pinkest of pink-collar occupations (Bernard, 1981; Howe, 1977). Secretaries are predominantly women working in a relatively low-paying, service-related occupation that tends to fall near the bottom of organizational prestige hierarchies, with limited opportunities for advancement. In addition, secretaries' more expressive actions, or labours of love (an orientation toward maintaining the relations among individuals interacting within a social group), and emotional skills are not as visible nor as rewarded in organizations as skills that are characterised as instrumental and power-oriented. It cannot, however, be denied that secretaries are multi-skilled workers performing highly complex activities in offices, but the processes that allocate prestige have precluded their advancement beyond pink-collar work. Baxter, Lynch-Blosse and Western (1996) found that the lack of a career structure in most clerical sectors imposes limits on women's opportunities and may lead them to lower their career aspirations as they adapt to the inevitable. Furthermore, secretaries occupy a precarious position in large organizations. They work in close proximity to power and therefore have access to knowledge and power, but their career opportunities within organizations are negligible if they adhere to the rules for being a “good secretary” and thus do not cultivate knowledge and power in their own name.
When put into the context of pink-collar work, “in a real sense, the secretary is Everywoman” (Pringle, 1989b, p. xi). Pringle argued “no doubt...there are greater similarities than there are differences in the experiences of secretaries in all the advanced capitalist countries” (p.xii). It could be argued that as a result of technological changes, the need for secretaries will vanish in the future, and they will no longer represent “Everywoman.” Still, sociologists can gain an increased understanding of contemporary secretaries’ orientation to their work and their workplace situation, and this knowledge can highlight the problems that ordinary working women continue to face.

This research project seeks to further understand this group of women workers and vertical segregation within organizations. Some excellent empirical work has been conducted on addressing the relationship between secretaries and corporate power (Benet, 1972; Crompton & Jones, 1984; Game & Pringle, 1983; Kanter, 1977; McNally, 1979; Pringle, 1989a, 1989b, 1993; Silverstone, 1974; Silverstone & Towler, 1983; Truss, 1993, 1994; Truss, Goffee & Jones, 1995; Vinnicombe, 1980). There have, however, been few studies of secretaries that focus on how the process of vertical segregation is part of a system of patriarchal relations that involves segregationist strategies, confining these women to pink-collar work. Most research on the general topic of occupational segregation treats women in management as demarkers in the sociology of gender inequality. More attention has been paid to explaining horizontal segregation and its consequences for women in “top jobs” than vertical segregation and its consequences for ordinary working women. For example, as a result of the historic patterns of segregation that constrain women’s occupational choices, research has found that women are underrepresented at the more senior, well-compensated levels of management within organizational hierarchies. Traditional
academic explanations have also resided mainly at a macro or structural level where the concern for agency, or individual actions, has been omitted or subordinated in analyses. In addition, there has been a lack of attention given to differentiating between the process of horizontal and vertical segregation. The theoretical and practical significance of the study at hand will be outlined in this introductory chapter. It will also establish my background and the events that sparked my sociological imagination and that led me to the systematic scientific study of secretaries' behaviour patterns in workplace settings.

**Researcher Background**

I am an American woman who lived, worked, and studied in England between 1988 and 1992. This thesis addresses issues that stem from areas of personal concern dating back approximately 20 years and that culminate with the beginning of this study in 1992. My experiences within the world of work during those 20 years included, but were not limited to, a total of 10 years of work as a secretary/receptionist, a social science researcher, a consumer market researcher, a postgraduate student in both the United States and England, and a faculty Lecturer in these two countries. Two of those years were spent as a faculty member at the University of East London where I taught sociology. I spent five years in doctoral study at the University of Surrey, where the emphasis of my reading and research was on the sociology of work with a focus on gender, work, and organizations. While living and working in Southeast England between 1988 and 1992, I gained an extensive local acquaintance with women and secretaries. This experience afforded me a wealth of knowledge that I have drawn upon throughout this doctoral research process.
In October 1991, a newspaper article about Opportunity 2000 sparked my sociological imagination. Opportunity 2000 was defined as a positive action, business-led, business-driven, equal opportunity initiative with an aim to increase career opportunities for women working at all levels within the participating organizations. Knowing the slogan of feminists in the early 20th century proclaiming that “deeds not words” would overcome the oppression of women, and that this oppression continues in the structure of paid employment through occupational segregation in the late 20th century, raised an important question for me. Is it possible that the actions of Opportunity 2000 employers could overcome historically reproduced segregationist practices that create barriers to career development for secretaries in the workplace? Initially, I viewed this campaign as the genesis of a human resource management trend in England with the potential to impact on existing career development practices in the member organizations, thereby increasing women’s opportunities for advancement. I thought subsequently that if Opportunity 2000 was not merely public relations rhetoric, then it also could affect positively the persistent phenomenon of vertical occupational segregation. My thinking was that any such equal opportunity campaign promoted as increasing career opportunities for women “at all levels,” should not be applied only to business and professional women already competing with men but should also extend to those often overlooked in secretarial occupations.

My experiences working as a secretary in two English organizations between 1988 and 1989 also added to the thrust of this research project. For example, upon receiving a request from my manager to “fetch” his holiday photographs on my personal lunch hour, I responded with, “No. I’m sorry I won’t have time to do that.” It was this request for personal service, coupled with the surprised reactions to my response from secretarial colleagues that caused me to begin questioning the role of
contemporary secretaries and how their behaviour might maintain the process of vertical occupational segregation. While in England the term *fetch* may have less of a canine referent than in the United States, it still invokes the image of a *servant* running backwards and forwards for the boss or *master*. I thought that contemporary secretaries might assert themselves more strongly since associations such as Professional Secretaries International and collective events such as Secretaries’ Week have depicted secretaries as important contributors to a smooth-running office, rather than as mere subordinate servants. I expected, in light of such collective efforts, that secretaries would resist performing personal tasks for bosses. I also wondered why educated women would choose to remain secretaries if alternative career opportunities were available for them to move beyond this pink-collar occupation. In contemplating the scope of Opportunity 2000, I began to assess the feasibility of a study focused on the orientation to work and situation of secretaries in the Opportunity 2000 organizations, in a quest to advance knowledge related to the sociology of occupational segregation.

**Background of Opportunity 2000**

By the Autumn of 1991, sixty-one major UK organizations had voluntarily joined Opportunity 2000. In doing so, they committed themselves to positive action toward achieving an improved balance of men and women at all levels within their organizations. This, however, can be seen as an attempt to rectify the problems of gender inequality in Britain that would preclude the necessity of adherence to the legal directives of the European Social Charter for European Community integration which was slated to begin in 1992.
In 1992, Britain opposed joining the Social Charter for European integration. The policies outlined in the European Social Charter would require British employers to comply with equal opportunity directives from the European Parliament/Council in Brussels. The focus of the European Social Charter concentrated on integrating European-wide social policies and establishing standards that would ensure that the working lives of all British citizens were of the highest quality. In 1991, the Treaty of Maastricht called upon Britain to expand its social policies. Britain was to integrate the social democratic (i.e. more humanistic) labour laws and policies of the European Community—"to improve employment opportunities for workers in the internal market, and to contribute to raising the standard of living" ("Treaty of Maastricht," 1992, p. 8). As background to European integration, Cockburn (1991) noted that the United Nations Convention of 1979 called for "elimination of all forms of discrimination against women":

> Article 4 of this Convention stated clearly that temporary special measures in any sphere - political, civil, economic, social, or cultural - intended to bring about actual equality between men and women, must not be considered as unlawful sex discrimination. Member states were expected to institute and pursue such measures until such time as the right of women to equality with men proclaimed by the United Nations had been achieved. (p. 31)

However, equality legislation and equality issues fell to the bottom of the political agenda with the election of the Conservative Thatcher government in 1979 (Cockburn, 1991; Useem, 1984). In 1989, the Council of Europe introduced the concept of equality whether of opportunity or results. Yet, British employers have not been compelled to take measures beyond the minimal legal requirements to combat inequality. In Britain, legislation related to both race and sex discrimination is weak, and British law does not issue heavy penalties for violations. British equality laws also
deal with work issues for women on an individual basis and legal action is known to be a gruelling experience; the burden of proof rests on the woman, not the organization. In comparison, U.S. law allows for class action suits by ethnic groups and women. On the other hand, British women have not been as active collectively in their quest for equality as American women have been. In essence, the hands of British women have been tied by restrictive laws. As it now stands, the majority of women in Britain do not have the equality of opportunity experienced by many of their European counterparts where there is a close link between the “private” world of the family and the “public” world of employment. The innovative directives presented in the European Social Charter were viewed as too costly for British employers, and complying with them was seen to be not in the political interest of British employers, who feared over-regulation by the powerful European Court of Justice and Britain’s legal machinery. The political controversy in 1991 over expanding social and gender policies in anticipation of European integration was concurrent with the British government’s opting out of the Social Charter and their endorsement, instead, of Opportunity 2000.

In the 1970s, only a few British employers called themselves equal opportunity employers. In the 1980s, a few progressive organizations, sensitive to these issues, emerged. By 1990, the chair of the Equal Opportunity Commission called for positive action, not reverse discrimination, in order to remove barriers associated with the advancement of women because “equal opportunity legislation in Britain is simply not working” (Miles, 1991, p. 6). Laws purporting to end gender-related inequalities tended to diverge at the point of calling for equality of opportunity or requiring equality of outcomes (Cockburn, 1991). Equality of opportunity means that no doors that are open to men are closed to women. Equality of outcomes is a
concept that was new to Britain—positive or affirmative action for women. Such positive action for women's career development was, hypothetically, the basic tenet behind the Opportunity 2000 equal opportunity initiative.

The rhetoric of Opportunity 2000 was that public commitment from member organizations, defined as action plans to remove barriers to career advancement and increase advancement opportunities for women working within the participating organizations, would lead to a more gender-balanced UK workforce. The Opportunity 2000 mission statement defined public commitment as "voluntarily setting...goals for increasing opportunities for women in the workforce. ...The goals will clearly signal a public commitment to ensure that in all areas and at all levels, women have the opportunity to make progress according to their abilities" (Opportunity 2000, 1991a, p. 1). This campaign was based on the work of the Women's Economic Development Target Team, chaired by Lady Howe (the former chair of the Equal Opportunity Commission) and the results of a research study conducted by Ashridge Management Research Group (AMRG) on behalf of Business in The Community (BITC). AMRG argued that more women will be needed in the workforce by the year 2000 and that many women with A-level education are occupying positions below their potential.

The Henley Centre for Forecasting also predicted a continued, long-term pattern of feminisation of work (McKee, 1991). Women's employment rates were seen as rising at the same time that men's were declining (Hammond & Holton, 1991). In 1971 women made up 36% of the UK workforce, which was projected to increase to 44% by 2001 (Employment Gazette, 1991a). In fact, women were responsible for 90% of the growth in the early 1990s labour force, and the trend was anticipated to continue. In 1991 it was estimated that 76% of British women 25-34 years old and 82% of those 35-44 years old would be economically active by the year
2001. These figures were seen as an important consideration for society because the years between age 25 and 44 are typically child-bearing and child-raising years for most women (Employment Gazette, 1991a). This is also an important consideration for employers who seek to attract and retain these workers, who are seen to possess certain qualities such as teamworking, intuitive skills, and flexibility in greater abundance than men.

The growth in numbers of white-collar workers and their proportional representation within the labour force as a whole has been dramatic since the turn of the 20th century. Yet, despite the rhetoric of equal opportunity, women's work continues to be segregated from that of men's within the structure of paid employment (see Table 1). The proportion of women in white-collar occupations in Britain is shown for the years between 1911 and 1991. In 1911, women comprised nearly 30% of all white-collar workers, but only 21% of them occupying clerical and secretarial positions were women. By 1991, women comprised 47% of the white-collar workforce, but women made up 76% of clerical and secretarial positions. These occupations have been generally regarded as more suitable for women than men (Social Trends 20, 1990) and deemed low-skilled and low-status occupations with limited advancement potential, regardless of the incumbents' experience or levels of education.

The Opportunity 2000 initiative sought to motivate business leaders to recognise the changes in women's labour force participation and to create career development and family-friendly practices, along with implementing policies that
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<th>1991</th>
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<td>All white-collar work</td>
<td>29.8</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>47.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Managers/Administrators</td>
<td>19.8</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>32.0</td>
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<td>Higher professionals</td>
<td>6.0</td>
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<td>Lower (associate) professionals and technicians</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>49.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Foreman and inspectors</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>12.8</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clerical and secretarial</td>
<td>21.4</td>
<td>71.9</td>
<td>76.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales and shop assistants</td>
<td>35.2</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>62.0</td>
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Note. N/A = not applicable. Sources: British Journal of Industrial Relations, 1976, Vol. 14, No.3, Table 7, pg. 348; 1991 Census, Table 4, pg. 216.
reflected the needs of working women. The Women’s Economic Development Target Team projected that, within the next century, more women would be needed as human resources in organizations. The Team encouraged employers to recruit from this labour pool because of the increase in the supply of well-trained women. The evolving structure of the labour market was also expected to make more room for women at the top of organizational hierarchies. AMRG argued that changing attitudes about working women, and tailoring organizational career development practices to meet equal opportunity initiatives was necessary for attracting and retaining the needed labour force of women in the next century.

Opportunity 2000 members stated their dedication to two key objectives—to maximise the potential of women in the workforce and to stem the tide of lost talent and resources leaving British firms annually. The rhetoric of Opportunity 2000 was that positive action brings social change. This change would be considered successful when women were making career progress according to their abilities in all areas and at all levels. Companies would accomplish these objectives by demolishing barriers to women’s opportunities for advancement, as promised in their Opportunity 2000 goals and action plans. AMRG concluded that a change in attitudes, values, and practices, that is, a change in the recruitment, training, and career development practices within organizations, could release the potential of women in the workforce. As a voluntary measure, Opportunity 2000 was designed, hypothetically, to ensure that management practices would improve the career potential of women working at all levels within the member organizations.

The 61 original Opportunity 2000 campaign members are listed in Appendix A. The founding executive members included those from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), British Airways, The Co-operative Bank, ICI, Kingfisher, Legal
& General, Lucas Industries, Midland Bank, National Westminster Bank, Reed International, Reed Personnel Services, the Royal Mail, and J. Sainsbury (Opportunity 2000, 1991b). By the Autumn 1994 anniversary, 275 organizations had joined. All of the Opportunity 2000 organizations were considered to have the “clout” and influencing power necessary to achieve their publicised goals. The Opportunity 2000 organizations selected for this multiple-case study are the BBC, Rank Xerox, Unilever, and Channel Four (the only member of the initial 61 to mention secretaries in their goals and action plans).

**Thesis Summary**

A review of the literature is given in two parts. Chapter 1 establishes the study’s broad theoretical framework. A critique is provided of Walby’s (1986, 1989, 1990) dual-systems theory of patriarchy. Walby’s theory implies that the process of vertical occupational segregation is maintained as a result of public, or collective, segregationist strategies of control which limit or constrain women’s career choices and opportunities in the structure of paid employment. Furthermore, these collective strategies in the paid employment arena are exacerbated by a systematic bias towards patriarchal interests in government policies and actions. However, Walby’s framework is considered by some to be limited or deterministic. It fails to examine how these public patriarchal strategies of segregating women’s work from that of men’s, while maintaining men’s positions of economic power and control, are not only the medium, but also the outcome of active agents within definite social practices or settings. For instance, between secretaries and their bosses, is it not possible that there are personal politics or private practices of control and resistance operating in workplace settings that could have the unintended consequence of precluding career
advancement beyond secretarial work? If so, then those actions could be considered crucial for maintaining the process of vertical occupational segregation. I propose that the methodological approach of this study can extend Walby's analysis by conforming closely to the main empirical implications of structuration theory (Giddens, 1979, 1984). I treat the secretaries concerned as actors who know a great deal, discursively and tacitly, about their respective workplace environments. They are knowledgeable of and actively involved in patriarchal relations in the workplace, not merely passive recipients at the mercy of social forces.

Chapter 2 establishes the study's micro framework. It reviews the history of clerical and secretarial work, definitions of the secretary, and the sociological literature on secretaries as a group. It is within this chapter that I define secretaries as knowledgeable agents, and demonstrate that their interactions with bosses\(^\text{10}\) are, in part, the outcome of adhering to gender norms of behavior.

Chapter 3 provides a discussion of the research methods. This study was designed in late 1991 as a theoretically informed multiple-case study in four Opportunity 2000 organizational settings. In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 mid- to senior-level secretaries, 10 managers, and 13 personnel representatives. While interviews were the main research instrument, they were combined in the subsequent data analysis with direct observations of these workplace sites, and with the examination of documents related to the case study organizations, to Opportunity 2000, and to European Community integration. This chapter explains the rationale for (1) focusing on the interaction among patriarchal relations in the structures of culture, state politics, and paid employment, and (2) sampling that included interviews with one male secretary, and with three secretaries from a university which was not part of the Opportunity 2000 campaign. Designing this
project as a multiple-case study allowed for theory development stemming from comparative evidential support for my initial propositions. With this approach, I can make generalisations from one case to the next on the basis of a match to the underlying theory, but not to a larger universe. Therefore, Walby’s theory, which provided the lens, can be refocused to argue that both public and private forms of patriarchal relations exist in the structure of paid employment that lead to and maintain the process of vertical occupational segregation.

Chapter 4 will describe the gender politics that surround European Community integration and the Opportunity 2000 campaign, and which provide the context for secretaries’ behaviour. State policies and actions have been shown to influence women’s economic status, and women’s access to active labour market schemes (Rubery et al., 1998) that invariably, although not necessarily, present the collective interests of men (Walby, 1990). The consequences of Britain’s political action opposing the Social Charter in 1991-92 on behalf of British employers, and endorsing Opportunity 2000, bear on the lives of pink-collar workers by maintaining the structure of the labour market along gender segregated lines. For secretaries, Opportunity 2000 leaves positive action, such as increasing training and career development practices, up to individual organizational members. Descriptive statistics from Opportunity 2000’s companies will be presented in order to contrast actual practice with the rhetoric of Opportunity 2000. Chapter 4 also describes the case study settings as gendered organizational cultures that constitute the features of and provide the context for patriarchal social relations in the structure of paid work. Organization culture is defined as a pattern of meaning, organized in terms of symbols and representations; something the organization is rather than has (Ramsay & Parker, 1992; Riley, 1983; Smircich, 1985). These organizational cultures incorporate the
symbolic rules of subordination and gendered norms that secretaries are expected to observe. Thus, this chapter provides the political and organizational context for the rules secretaries draw upon and apply in their interactions with bosses and others in the office.

Chapter 5 provides the individual case study organizations’ goals and action plans for increasing all women’s opportunities for advancement and will be compared with their secretaries’ and managers’ subjective experiences of recruitment, promotion, and career development practices. Secretaries’ opportunities and desire to go beyond pink-collar work are found to be minimal due to (1) their knowledge about their organization’s limited career development practices and (2) the conditions under which women in management work, which are perceived to be at the expense of having a “balanced” life.

Chapter 6 shows the secretaries as knowledgeable agents whose activities are connected to the wider normative cultural environment that influences their occupational choice, and their orientation toward secretarial work. The agents of socialization that channel women into secretarial work include parents, peers, and schools. Chapter 7 will show that once a choice is made to work in a pink-collar occupation, most of these secretaries perform their role as an “office wife,” a role of which they are proud. The role of the office wife represents the secretaries’ membership in a female culture whose activities focus on maintaining human relations, cultivating a sense of community, and “making the boss’s life easy.” This includes performing private or domestic tasks that are either voluntary or have been allocated to them by their boss. If they object to these tasks, the secretaries’ non-confrontational forms of resistance such as “going quiet” further reinforce their membership in a female culture. The unintended consequences of their purposive
behaviour tend to reinforce stereotypes and private segregationist practices within traditionally gendered hierarchical organizations. The main thrust of this thesis, then, is that the secretary as agent is consciously aware that patriarchal relations shape patterns of their behaviour and that they are at least partly responsible for reproducing these relations.

I will argue in the concluding Chapter 8 that public and private forms of patriarchal relations in the paid employment structure hinder career advancement beyond secretarial work. The embedding of routines and expectations comes to represent a constraining context that is, at the same time, contingent on highly personalised agreements and negotiations that are endlessly re-performed to establish who belongs in what organizational space or territory. The normative rules of society’s female culture influence the pattern of “office wife” behaviour that affects secretaries’ private relations with bosses. When these societal rules are combined with adherence to the gendered rules of organizational behaviour, opportunities for advancement beyond pink-collar work become severely restricted. The gender politics surrounding Opportunity 2000 provide the context for understanding secretaries as seeking “balance” within gendered organizational structures. In other words, there is something more important than career advancement in secretaries’ actions. Analysed as the recursive duality of structure, or the idea that actions and interactions are independent dualities, the patriarchal relations in the structures of culture, politics and paid work all have certain definite unintended consequences that affect secretaries’ career fate.
CHAPTER I
From Dual-Systems to Structuration

“Subjectivity and power are central to social relations and overcome the dualism of society (determinism) versus individual (voluntarism); object versus subject; theory versus practice.”

David Collinson, 1992, p. 24

This chapter describes the development of the dual-systems theory of patriarchy in relation to occupational segregation. As discussed in the Introduction, Walby’s (1986, 1989, 1990) structural theory is primarily being used as a lens with which to explore how women continue to be vertically segregated within organizational hierarchies. Secretarial work is one case in point, as women in this pink-collar occupation are confined to the lower levels of organizational hierarchies with few opportunities for career advancement beyond it. (See Chapter 2 for a discussion of literature specifically pertaining to the secretarial occupation). Walby’s explanation implies that the articulation between patriarchal and capitalist systems of control over women’s labour that bring about occupational segregation also determine its maintenance. While this theory is necessary, it is insufficient because it resides mainly at a macro or structural level. It omits individual action and behaviour in favour of women’s collective agency and how they actively choose options from the limited opportunities available to them. Indeed, patriarchal forces may influence and constrain occupational choices for women but seeking or staying in pink-collar work could be related to a woman’s own characteristics. Therefore, I extend Walby’s discussion by including the methodological ideas contained in Giddens’ (1979, 1984) structuration theory. In this way, both structure and individual agency are taken into
account. This approach leads toward greater depths for understanding how the process of vertical occupational segregation by sex is maintained.

In this chapter, a brief history of feminist scholarship on explanations of occupational segregation is presented. This history focuses on the strengths and weaknesses of structural theories that led to Walby’s (1986, 1989, 1990) dual-systems analysis.

**History of Feminist Scholarship on Occupational Segregation**

**Capitalism and Patriarchy**

Most feminist theories within sociology regarding women in disadvantaged jobs argue that capitalist and patriarchal institutions and ideologies cause occupational segregation. The work on gender inequality in paid employment in the 1960s and 1970s arose in reaction to mainstream orthodoxies. Feminists criticised social theory as inadequate for explaining the subordination of women and the corollary, occupational segregation. The Marxist perspective on the economic was found weak and insufficient on the grounds that this analysis omits gender in favour of class, collapsing all women into an undifferentiated mass of “cheap labour.” Marxist feminist accounts attempted to solve these problems by linking patriarchy to capitalist modes of production. These efforts were also problematic when considering that the exploitation of women’s unpaid domestic labour contributes to capitalist profit and that this is functional for the capitalist mode of production overall. Women’s occupational roles in the formal economy were explained as those which could be dovetailed to fit in with their unpaid domestic obligations, that is, women’s work consisted of serving husbands working for capitalists, and reproducing the next generation of labourers.¹ Yet, Marxist feminist explanations of the gender division of
labour can be criticised for biological determinism and an over-determined analysis of the demands of the capitalist economy. Marxist feminists consider gender inequality to derive from capitalism; as a result, their theories suffer from being economistic analyses. The Marxist feminist perspective reduces gender inequality to capitalism, rather than recognising the independence of the gender dynamic.

In contrast, radical feminists accounted for the gender division of labour in terms of a patriarchal system of domination in which men as a group dominate women as a group and are the main beneficiaries of the subordination of women. This system of patriarchy as envisioned by radical feminists does not derive from any other system of social inequality. Patriarchy is not a by-product of capitalism. The works of Brownmiller, (1976), Millett (1977), Firestone (1974), and Delphy (1984) broke new ground in the social sciences and feminist theory. They stimulated new forms of political activity that focused directly on women’s relation to men as politically problematic in every area of women’s lives, from the most private to the most public, as indicated in the radical feminist slogan “the personal is political.” Issues concerning who does housework, who interrupts whom in conversation, imposed heterosexuality and rape, or the appropriation of women’s sexuality and bodies along with male violence against women, are considered part of the system of male domination. Still, this perspective tends to conflate arguments about women, treating all women’s experiences as the same, relative to men. Radical feminism suffers from a tendency to essentialism, an implicit or explicit biological reductionism, as well as false universalism, since there are no accounts of women’s differences based on ethnicity and class. While there are contradictions between these schools of feminist thought, it is useful to give an account of them in order to understand the feminist struggle to
overcome the inadequacies of the conventional perspectives in the social sciences that have ignored gender relations in analyses of occupational segregation.

There is controversy over the definition of patriarchy and whether the term is useful as an analytic tool to address gender relations and contemporary power structures (Acker, 1989; Strober, 1984; Walby, 1989; Waters, 1989; Witz, 1992). However, there is agreement that discussions by both Marx and Weber on the development of power structures in modern capitalism fail entirely to address gender relations in the production of occupational sex segregation. Some feminist scholars have used the concept of patriarchy as a lens through which the concepts of power and control can highlight gender relations. Strober (1984) defined patriarchy as a set of personal, social, and economic relationships that enable men to have power over women and the services they provide. Acker (1989) looked at patriarchy in terms of gender as the “structural, relational, and symbolic differentiations between men and women” (p. 238). Thus, as Walby (1990) concluded,

The signifiers of ‘woman’ and ‘man’ have sufficient historical and cross-cultural continuity despite some variations to warrant using such terms. There are sufficient common features and sufficient routinized interconnections which make talking about patriarchy feasible for an understanding of the continuity of gender relations in Western industrialised societies over the last 150 years. (p. 16)

Patriarchy, as defined by Walby (1986, 1990) as a system, or series of structures through which men exploit women, has also been controversial (Acker, 1989, Crompton, 1988, Macdonald, 1995, Strober, 1984; Waters, 1989, Witz, 1992). Still, my main focus is on her conceptualisation of gender structure rather than issues related to theories of its origin, or the possible capitalist/Marxist connotations of exploitation. While I accept the ideas set forth in the discussions related to the
problematic status of the patriarchy concept, I also argue that the concept is too important to be abandoned.

Dual-systems theory was the first feminist theory to synthesise Marxist and radical feminist analyses of contemporary gender inequality. Dual-systems theory was initially formulated by Hartmann (1976, 1979, 1981) and Eisenstein (1979, 1981) then later developed by Walby (1986, 1989, 1990, 1997). This theory considers the articulation of patriarchy and capitalism where both systems are present and important in the structuring of inequality in paid employment. Eisenstein (1979) saw patriarchy and capitalism as fused into one system of capitalist patriarchy, and argued that:

Capitalism and patriarchy are neither autonomous systems nor identical: they are, in their present form, mutually dependent. ... This statement of the mutual dependence of patriarchy and capitalism not only assumes the malleability of patriarchy to the needs of capital but assumes the malleability of capital to the needs of patriarchy. (pp. 22, 27)

Eisenstein (1981) considered the two systems so inter-related and symbiotic that they have become one; patriarchy provides a system of control and law and order, while capitalism provides a system of economy in the pursuit of profit. From this perspective, however, it is difficult to unravel the workings of one system from the other when explaining the persistent phenomenon of occupational segregation. Her notion of one system of capitalist-patriarchy can also be criticised for being an essentialist argument. On the other hand, Hartmann (1979, 1981) conceptualised the two systems as analytically distinct, if empirically interacting. She identified patriarchy as "a social system with a material base" (1979, p. 208).

In her analysis of women's position in the labour market, Hartmann (1979) claimed that capitalism has been built on top of patriarchy. Occupational segregation
by sex is considered a patriarchal strategy “used by organized men to keep access to
the best-paid jobs for themselves at the expense of women” (p. 6).

When women participated in the wage-labor market, they did so in a position as clearly limited by patriarchy as it was by capitalism. Men’s control over women’s labor was altered by the wage-labor system, but it was not eliminated. In the labor market the dominant position of men is maintained by sex-ordered job segregation. ...Women’s subordinate position in the labor market reinforced their subordinate position in the family, and that in turn reinforced their labor-market position. (p. 217)

Hartmann argued that, historically, it has been male workers who have been instrumental in constraining women’s labour force participation. Her position has been substantiated through an analysis of the family wage. This was a wage given to men that was high enough to support non-working dependants, and the demand for a family wage became a central issue for male trade unionists’ bargaining strategies from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Hartmann (1979, 1981) focused on men’s organizational ability to expropriate women’s labour in paid work as well as in the household. This suggests that when men are in better-paid jobs, wives then remain financially dependent, unable to refuse to do the majority of housework and child care. From this perspective, patriarchy in the household today results in women carrying the major load of domestic work even if they are also employed outside the home. One of Hartmann’s strengths was to demonstrate how patriarchal relations have been established and sustained within capitalism, in both the sphere of paid employment and in the sphere of the family. As Witz (1992) noted, “the real strength of Hartmann’s analysis derives from her materialist formulation of a theory of patriarchy. ...The influence of Marxism upon Hartmann comes through in her focus on women’s work activities which provides the material basis for patriarchy” (p. 16). Like
Hartmann, Walby (1986, 1989, 1990) attributed considerable causal powers to patriarchal relations in paid work, but she extended Hartmann’s dual-systems analysis in several important ways (see p. 34 for further discussion).

Most work addressing occupational segregation has either focused on the structure of society, the corporate structural barriers to career advancement for women, or the characteristics of employees. Different versions of the debate surrounding occupational segregation have emphasised different causes. The major controversy in the literature is whether observed gender differences in labour force behaviour can be explained by women having certain characteristics or preferences for certain types of work (supply side), or whether these differences result from institutionalised sex discrimination in the paid employment arena (demand side). In other words, research has been primarily focused on choice versus constraint. Many feminist theories are indicative of the demand-side, whereas socialization and human capital theories are sophisticated versions of supply-side explanations for occupational segregation.

**Human Capital Theory**

Human capital theorists (Polacheck, 1974, 1979; Smelser, 1959) have emphasised the individual level explanation for occupational segregation. Drawn from neoclassical economics and Parsonian functionalism, human capital theory suggests that the gender structure of the labour market is a consequence of the differential socialization of men and women. Women fail to amass the job skills, labour market experience, education and qualifications enabling them to obtain higher quality jobs because of their time spent concentrating on domestic work. Thus, their “human capital,” or total abilities are limited, thereby affecting what they can sell to an
employer. In return, women are paid according to their value to an employer. It is the female role in the household that precludes the acquisition of qualifications; women therefore choose occupations for which lesser skills provide the greatest rewards with the least penalty for intermittent work patterns. Women sacrifice upward mobility and wages to maximise their ability to combine paid work and family responsibilities, a situation which is seen to be functional both for household members and for society. Consequently, an individual’s characteristics determine labour market outcomes that lead to aggregate occupational segregation. Human capital theory in this context can be criticised for having an emphasis on individualism and the presumed rational behaviour of employers.

Important challenges to human capital perspectives have emerged (England, 1981, 1982, 1984; 1992; Gwartney-Gibbs, 1987; Wright, Baxter & Birkelund, 1995). In their recent cross-national study, Wright et al. (1995) found little or no support in six out of seven countries for a self-selection model that suggested that because of family responsibilities women voluntarily make themselves less available for promotion into positions of authority in the workplace. England’s empirical evidence refuted Polachek’s (1974, 1979) claim that women choose lower paying occupations because they would receive less of a penalty for attending to family responsibilities or interrupted work patterns for child rearing. Her work was based on a multivariate analysis of female and male-dominated occupations that held education constant. She concluded that there was no solid support for human capital theory. England did not, however, include work history information, nor did she take into consideration the hierarchical variation within levels of female-dominated occupations. Still, based on cross-national comparisons of women’s labour force participation rates and occupational segregation, Jacobs (1989a, 1989b) also could not conclude that the
specific economic roles women perform are determined by their reproductive role or by their household obligations. A human capital explanation of occupational segregation also "fails to specify why it should be women who specialise in particular tasks [emphasis in original]" that are common in many caring, service, or support pink-collar occupations (Crompton, 1988, p. 13).

In addition, the assumptions of human capital theory are contested, in particular the assumption of a perfect labour market in which employees are paid according to their worth—the best paid jobs are those requiring the greatest skill. Walby (1990), Horrell et al. (1990), and Steinberg (1990) have also criticised this assumption empirically on the grounds that skills are not only a technical issue but also a social one with gender aspects. The more powerful workers are able to get jobs designated as highly skilled and valued. Grading and pay reflects that women are less powerful than men as their human capital, or emotional and social skills go unnoticed. According to England (1992) and England and Herbert (1993), the problem is one of comparable worth. England (1992) pointed out: "women are discriminated against when entire occupations are devalued and paid less because they are done by women and/or involve traditionally female skills" (p. 307). Using 1980 census data for 403 occupational categories, England and Herbert (1993) showed that both women and men earn less if employed in a predominantly female occupation than in a comparable occupation containing more males. They concluded that the economic difference in pay is due to the cultural devaluation of women and the work associated with them, and "if these factors dictated lower wages in female jobs in the past, institutional inertia will maintain lower relative wages for women's jobs for decades" (p. 28).

England (1992) argued that materially-based male power is undoubtedly one reason men succeed in getting their roles defined as more valuable and rewarded. However,
men’s material resources are also in part a result of men’s roles being socially defined as more valuable. England expected that material and ideal phenomena affect each other reciprocally. Thus, as England et al. (1995) reaffirmed, to overcome inequality between men and women would require a radical reassessment of the cultural value placed on “women’s work.”

Human capital theorists and economists regard job choices as reflecting personal preferences. In a similar vein, Hakim (1991) claimed that occupational segregation by sex was the result of women’s personal life goals and preferences that influence their work decisions and occupational choices. She characterised them as “grateful slaves.” This perspective implies that women actively collude in their own confinement to part-time or pink-collar work by having a lower work commitment to a full-time continuous paid work career than men. Hakim’s theory attempts to explain occupational segregation by arguing that only a minority of women are committed to work as a central life goal, with the majority aiming for a homemaker or marriage and family career. Those women committed to “careers” in the paid labour market invest in training and qualifications and achieve higher occupational levels with higher pay. Those women giving priority to “marriage careers” do not invest in their human capital and transfer to part-time work. These women also choose undemanding “jobs” with few responsibilities when they do engage in paid work, hence they are found concentrated in lower grade and lower paid jobs that offer convenient hours with which they are perfectly satisfied. In other words, for most women the desire for full-time paid work involving long term training and promotion prospects take a secondary role to family concerns. Women, therefore, are divided among themselves.

One of the main disagreements with Hakim’s theory is over the reasons for the persistence of gender inequality (hence occupational segregation) in full-time
employment (Ginn, et.al, 1996). Hakim (1991) placed unwarranted emphasis on women’s attitudes and orientations to work—blaming the victim. Even though Hakim (1991) said that the existence of these two qualitatively different groups of women are not fixed and immutable, she omitted a large group of full-time pink-collar workers. While Hakim was not specifically observing particular occupations, her perspective does not account for secretaries working full time who have invested in their human capital, yet still choose to work and remain in a female-dominated occupation. In addition, Hakim has been criticised for identifying women’s attitudes towards work as a causal factor in their orientations to work without longitudinal evidence (Ginn et al., 1996).

Hakim (1995) can also be criticised for arguing against feminist orthodoxy that finds women’s work commitment to be the same as that of men. She makes broad assumptions from her 1991 data that does not show a marked difference between women and men’s work commitment. Hakim (1995) defined work commitment as “work orientation” examining the differences between men and women in terms of “the wish to continue with paid employment even if the purely financial motivation were eliminated (presumably for the intellectual and social rewards of a job...)” (p. 432). Yet, her data showed that 77% of full time working women would still prefer paid jobs compared to 72% of working men (p. 433). Furthermore, Hakim (1991, 1995, 1998) preferred to view enduring occupational segregation in terms of competing priorities of “family” responsibilities. Yet, the structural constraints on women’s capacities to operate in the labour market and in particular occupations have been extensively documented. But as Bruegel (1996) commented, the most disturbing is her attempt to re-establish the myth of women as unstable, unreliable workers
Hakim has not considered how circumstances can frame preferences. Rather, she has read preferences into outcomes.

Hakim’s work offers no explanation of why women should fall into the categories she describes. Her perspective has also been challenged along methodological lines. Bruegel (1996) criticised Hakim’s treatment of statistical evidence. The work orientations of women were treated as givens, and she made broad assumptions without explanation as to why women should fall into the categories she described. She also defined “career only” as those women without children. A more fruitful approach would have been to disaggregate women into those who are childless and those whose children are no longer dependent as Ginn, et al. (1996) suggested. In addition, richer, fuller data could have been obtained by looking at women’s work orientation by their orientations to work, or the role they play within organizations. While Crompton and Harris (1998b) agree with Hakim that women should not be treated as a homogeneous group in respect to their employment behaviour (i.e. career orientations), they are not persuaded by preference theory.

Hakim’s perspective is challenged on the grounds that it seems to rest on psycho-biological classification of female “types” and that it defines commitment based on aggregate level statistics. Crompton and Harris (1998a) argue that gendered structures in employment, in families, and in state institutions play a major part in reproducing the gender order, but “these structures are negotiated and interpreted by changing and flexible gendered subjects” (p. 121). Their work on doctors and bankers claimed that the heterogeneity of women’s approaches to work and family are deeply rooted in early patterns of socialization and structural factors that act as “gendered templates” (p. 124). They demonstrated that while women’s work commitment is constructed over the family/employment life-cycle, external changes also reshape orientations and
commitment to fit changing circumstances. In other words, women do shape their biographies in relation to perceived possibilities, but their choices are not necessarily between alternatives of home/family centredness and career centredness. Some want both and choose accordingly. For instance, women doctors often chose specialities offering convenient or at least regular hours of work (Crompton & Harris, 1998c). Thus, individualistic explanations should not negate the continuing significance of employment and occupational structures in shaping gender relations.

Hakim’s (1991) thesis was developed in part to address explanations that women are actors and responsible for their own lives. Hakim’s review of cross-national research was also in response to what she felt was an unstated assumption that occupational segregation is “imposed” on women unfairly and against their will. She argued that “...theory and research on women’s employment seems particularly prone to an over-socialised view of women, or with structural factors so weighted that choice flies out of the window” (1991, 14). While criticism of Hakim’s preference theory abounds (Crompton & Harris, 1998a; Ginn et al., 1996; Bruegel, 1996; Rubery et al., 1998; Siltanen, 1994), she can be praised for bringing women back into analyses as actors and agents in their own lives. She argued that most women choose work that maintains traditional views of women’s roles; some actively preferring it and others not sufficiently bothered by it to make a stand against it. “Women’s work experiences may be constrained, but women’s perceptions are not blinkered...” (Hakim, 1991, p. 104). Crompton (1997) concurred, claiming that labour market outcomes must be regarded as being shaped by both choice and constraint. “The gender division of labour is the outcome of a number of factors, and ‘choice’ is one of them” (p. 19). However, Crompton and Harris (1998a) suggested that the reasons for these choices “lie in the exigencies of context and structural constraint which Hakim effectively
disregards in her embrace of voluntaristic, rational-choice explanations of women's economic behaviour" (p. 120). Another explanation for the reproduction of occupational segregation, as will be discussed in the next section, is that of cultural gender-typing.

**Cultural Theories of Gender-Typing**

Milkman (1983) has argued that gender-typing is subject to cultural inertia so that “once a job becomes ‘male’ or ‘female,’ the demand for labour to fill it tends to expand or contract as a sex-specific demand, barring major disruptions of labour supply or a basic restructuring of the labour process” (p. 160). The persistence of gender-typing reinforces established patterns of segregation at the lower levels of occupational structures, as they will be the least likely to undergo radical change. Walby (1986) also noted cultural forces: “Once the sex-ratios in occupations have been set, they are usually quite resistant to change” (p. 88). This suggests that once an occupation is gender-typed, its assignment remains stable over long periods of time.

The metaphor of queues is useful for understanding the notion of “relative attractiveness” and the process of occupational segregation (Catanzarite & Strober, 1988; Strober, 1984, 1992; Strober & Catanzarite, 1994; Reskin & Roos, 1990). In this metaphor the labour market is the meeting ground for two queues: a labour queue with white men at the front of the line and an occupation queue in which occupations are arrayed in order of their attractiveness to white men. In deciding which occupations to inhabit, white men choose those occupations that are most attractive to them, leaving available for other race-gender groups those occupations that white men find less attractive. Occupational choices have been subjected to the constraint that white men have been permitted to choose first. Obviously, the metaphor should be
seen as heuristic; in particular, the constructs of a single labour queue and a single occupation queue are oversimplifications. Yet, when examining the gender composition of clerical and secretarial work, these ideas imply that women's increased representation in these occupations occurred because of a decline in attractiveness of the occupation to white men. They also suggest that the secretarial occupation will remain a predominantly female one since it has become equated with "women's" work over time.

The role of culture in maintaining sex-segregated employment can be analysed from the identification of certain aspects of jobs with the cultural attributes of one sex or the other. Still, research has focused more attention on explicating the underlying patriarchal forces that impact on the sex-segregation process overall in Western industrialised countries and constrain women's economic opportunities, rather than distinguishing between horizontal and vertical segregation or including the notion of "choice."

**Walby's Dual-Systems Model**

Dual-systems theory picks up on the debates outlined in the previous sections. Paid work and the analysis of segregation are central to the studies of both Hartmann (1979, 1981) and Walby (1986, 1989, 1990). They offered a dual-systems perspective to argue that patriarchy is a system existing alongside capitalism. Yet Walby criticised Hartmann's analysis as underestimating the tension between patriarchy and capitalism. Walby advanced previous dual-systems analyses when she argued that the interests of capitalism and patriarchy are not invariably in harmony. Walby (1990) stated that "the utilization of women's labour by one system is at the expense of the other; if women are working for capitalists, then they have less time to work for their husbands. While compromises may be struck, this does not vitiate the basic principle
of conflict” (p. 41). Walby argued for theorising more than one causal base, rather than focusing almost entirely upon capitalist relations and the workings of the market. Her theory abandoned base/superstructure models in favour of a less rigid model of patriarchy consisting of six partially independent structures, and also incorporated historical and cross-cultural variation in the forms of women’s subordination over time.

**A System of Patriarchy**

Walby (1990) conceptualised patriarchy as “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (p. 20). Walby (1989) argued that six is the smallest number of interrelated structures that can adequately represent “the most significant constellations of social relations which structure gender relations” (p. 220). (See pp. 37-39 for further discussion of these six structures).

Walby’s dual-systems theory depicted contemporary gender inequality in the workplace as “the result of the structures of a capitalist and patriarchal or capitalist-patriarchal society” (1990, p. 5). Walby argued that the sexual division of labour, or occupations segregated by sex, is a direct result of the articulation between capitalism and patriarchy, which is exacerbated by the systematic bias towards patriarchal interests in state policies and actions. This point is important because previous explanations regarding “the existence of systematic attempts by men to protect their paid jobs at the expense of women tends to be underplayed if not ignored” (Walby, 1986, p. 87). Furthermore, “The nature of polity is important in the structuring of the economy, and the social relations in employment in particular” (Walby, 1997, p. 17). Walby’s analysis was not merely economic, but also political because the significance
of politics and the state in the structuring of the sexual division of labour tends to be neglected or underestimated in gender studies. Walby showed how political advocacy and the representation of women’s interests have been subject to complex changes, such as gaining the vote or a decrease in legislation restricting women’s activities. In 1997, she pointed out that political pressure during the last 20 years led to an increase in the policing of male violence against women, including rape and domestic violence, and an increase in reporting these crimes, but that this has been offset by a decrease in the rate of convictions. Since the 1970s, there has been a major development of equal opportunity legislation, underpinned by treaties of the European Community. But, women still remain underrepresented in the state and various forms of public life.

Walby stated:

In analysing gender politics it is important to see men as actors as well as women. ... Most theories of gender politics have considered only two options: women are passive; women have struggled around their own interests in particular circumstances. These neglect the opposition to women’s struggles to organise around their own interests and to take these interests forward. ... This opposition has come largely, but not entirely, from men. (1997, p. 18)

Walby argued that politics at state level and organized on a collective level have been important in shaping women’s and men’s employment. The comparative research into patterns of occupational segregation across EC member states by Rubery and Fagan (1995) and Rubery et al. (1998) revealed similarities in patterns and trends. The variations arose not only out of the labour market structure but also from differences in state policies towards the labour market and how these shaped women’s position in employment. Walby has referred to a patriarchal state as systematically representing the collective interests of men. This speaks not so much to the gender of state actors, but more to the ways in which the competing political interests of gender
are manifested through the state. For instance, in the 19th century male workers were able to get state support for demands to exclude women from most paid employment. In the late 20th century, the state ostensibly supported women’s equal rights in employment. However, Walby ventured that equal opportunity and equal pay policies have not been pursued with vigour since the degree of inequality between men and women in terms of pay, conditions, and access to well-rewarded occupations has declined only slightly despite increases in women’s participation rates.

**Six structures.** Walby (1986, 1989, 1990) theorised patriarchy from three main levels of abstraction. “The most abstract is that of the system of patriarchy. The next most, the six patriarchal structures. The next, patriarchal practices” (1989, p. 220). Walby wrote:

> I think there are six main patriarchal structures which together constitute a system of patriarchy. These are: a patriarchal mode of production in which women’s labour is expropriated by their husbands; patriarchal relations within waged labour; the patriarchal state; male violence; patriarchal relations within sexuality; and patriarchal culture. (p. 220)

In Walby’s (1990) publication, she preferred not to use the term “mode of production” to describe patriarchal relations in the household. She also added “cultural institutions” to describe patriarchal relations in the wider culture. In Walby (1997), she described how cultural representations of women have changed over time. For instance, while there has been an increase in numbers of women in positions of authority in newspapers/newscasters, there has been a backlash against the use of politically correct language. Thus, those six structures at the most abstract level constitute a system of social relations. Walby viewed this system as distinctly jointed and flexibly connected, the elements of which have causal effects upon each other and
interact in the wider society. She also defined the most concrete level of abstraction in each structure as composed of substructures, or sets of exclusionary or segregationist practices that embody the effects of patriarchal and capitalist structures. Figure 1 is my schematic representation of Walby's dual-systems model of the variety and forms of patriarchy across time and space. This illustrates that paid work represents the main site of women's oppression in the 20th century and is the most impenetrable of the structures, followed by male violence and culture that precludes women's career advancement.

Walby firmly locates the cause of women's oppression and subordination within the economic sphere. Women are then exploited in the family because of their segregation into lower status and lower waged positions within organizations. Like Hartmann, Walby (1986, 1989, 1990) attributed considerable causal powers to patriarchal relations in paid work for sustaining women's subordination throughout society. Her (1986) model of patriarchy prioritised sets of patriarchal relations in domestic and paid work, but also identified other patriarchal relations that are significant for defining patriarchy as a system of interrelated structures. Walby extended Hartmann (1979, 1981) when she differentiated between patriarchal strategies in the workplace. She presented two distinct modes of expropriating women's labour—exclusion and segregation—which act to reinforce each other over time. In other words, she focused on the ways and means of male power in the household and workplace.

**Forms of patriarchy.** Walby (1986, 1990) viewed patriarchal strategies, or exclusion and segregation, as distinct forms of private or public patriarchy dependent upon gender relations in the 19th and 20th centuries. Walby considered patriarchy in
Figure 1. Influence of private and public forms of patriarchy on changes in the main site of women's oppression, indicating that the dominant structure is employment in the 20th century. Adapted from Theorizing Patriarchy, by S. Walby, 1990, p. 24.
the 19th century as a private form where the majority of women were excluded from the paid labour force, thus economically dependent upon and subordinate to husbands in the household. She views patriarchy in the 20th century as a public, or collective, form where women are not excluded from the paid labour force, but are segregated in gender appropriate occupations within the sphere of paid employment. Thus, paid work, rather than the household, has become the main site of women’s oppression in late 20th century society.

Walby (1986) saw that female labour is a central issue in the conflicts and tensions between patriarchal and capitalist interests. The location of women in primarily low paying, low-status occupations is “the consequence of processes of disadvantage, not the cause” (p. 84). The patriarchal forces within the labour market that deny women access to higher paying, higher status jobs account for women being massed in lower paying, lower status occupations. Walby stated, “the pattern of women’s participation in the workplace is a result of material contraints rather than a matter of ‘choice’ or cultural values” (p. 89). In her view, the labour market is more important, and the family less important, as the determinant of women’s participation in the workplace and the jobs they occupy.

According to Walby (1990), patterns of employment as they relate to women are explained only through the history of overlapping rounds of restructuring in employment, which are chiefly influenced by “capitalist relations in industry and by patriarchal relations in the household, in the workplace organization and in the state” (p. 90). For instance, in the white-collar (i.e. non-manual) world of work women are recruited for separate occupations from those of men, graded at a lower level, and paid less while supporting and maintaining men in upper echelon positions within their organization. Furthermore, the effect of overcrowding in segregated occupations
lowers the rate of pay women will receive in these positions, since supply is then
greater than demand. Walby argued that women’s patterns of employment are a
consequence of employers preferring to employ women who can be bought at lower
wages and given worse conditions of employment than men, due to historical
overlapping rounds of discrimination in paid employment.

Struggles over female employment have usually resulted in
one of two outcomes: the exclusion of women from the area
of employment in question or the segregation of women into
jobs which are separate from those of men and which are
graded lower. Segregation is often the result of the struggle
when patriarchal forces have been insufficiently strong to
exclude women altogether. (1990, p. 88)

Walby substantiated her theory by exploring how the systems of patriarchy and
capitalism interact in the sphere of paid work, focusing on engineering, cotton textiles,
and clerical work. She demonstrated that despite efforts to do so, men in the early part
of the 20th century were never successful at establishing an exclusionary strategy to
prevent female workers access to clerical work. They did not have the power. The
opposition to the entry of women to clerical work by male clerks was shown to be
organized weakly in comparison to the strong male engineering unions. Further, the
expansion of clerical work was very rapid. It then became possible to employ women
to cope with routine clerical work and typing, which had the effect of preserving
men’s promotion opportunities, enabling them to move into the new quasi-
professional jobs. Walby argued that men demonstrated the collective strength to turn
to a strategy of segregation in order to minimise direct competition between the sexes.
They did this by preventing women from working in areas dominated by men while
still allowing women to be a cheap source of labour for employers.

Segregation was thus the outcome of a three-fold division of
interests between the employers, the male clerks and the
would-be women clerks. It can be best understood as the
outcome of the articulation of patriarchal and capitalist interests and the compromise arrived at after struggle. (Walby, 1990, p. 26)

Cockburn (1985) also supported the argument that the ability of men to organize played a crucial role in limiting women’s participation in paid employment. The eventual transformation of clerical work from a male to female occupation reinforced the public patriarchal strategy of occupational segregation. Consequently, clerical (and later secretarial) work became deemed a gender-appropriate occupation for women (see Chapter 2). In essence, these occupations became equated with “women’s work.”

Response to Walby’s Model

Even though Walby’s claims for the existence of a system of patriarchy (which results in occupational segregation) can be questioned, it is nonetheless valuable. She went beyond most feminist attempts that utilise only a base/superstructure model of causal relations. While many acknowledge the value of Walby’s theoretical model, it has been challenged. Both Witz (1992) and I challenge her distinction between exclusionary and segregationist strategies. Witz developed a conceptual model of occupational closure strategies to grasp the processes at work. A critical evaluation of neo-Weberian closure theory provided Witz with various concepts of gendered occupational closure with which to analyse processes of occupational segregation in medical occupations. Witz distinguished between two key closure strategies; exclusionary and demarcationary. Exclusionary closure is a strategy in which men control their own occupation, and demarcationary closure is a strategy in which there is an attempt to control the boundary with adjacent occupations. Such closure strategies are shown to have structured effects for vertical and horizontal segregation in these occupations. Segregation is considered a form of exclusion. “The concept of
exclusion needs to be twinned with a new concept, demarcation" (Witz, 1992, p. 30).
A segregationary strategy is “where male and female occupations or jobs are
demarcated by gender, thus creating a hierarchical gendered occupational order
[italics in original]” (p. 30). Segregation is a patriarchal mode of control over
women’s labour visible through private and public patriarchal practices. For instance,
private segregationist practices in the workplace can entail individual managers
controlling the allocation of work tasks, demarcating them by gender. This often
serves to deny women access to high-status, high-paying occupations held by men.

Another criticism applies to Walby’s analysis of the patriarchal relations in
cultural institutions. Walby (1990) defined those relations as composed of a relatively
diverse set of patriarchal practices that are important in shaping gendered subjectivity.
Walby (1989) stated, “patriarchal culture is best analysed as a set of discourses which
are institutionally-rooted, rather than as ideology which is either free-floating or
economically determined” (p. 227). The discourses on femininity and masculinity are
significant for maintaining an ideology of specific occupations as appropriately
suitable for men or women. Lopata (1986), with contributions from Miller and
Barnewolt, offered a wide-ranging review of the social science literature on women’s
employment and job segregation. They found that both the British and American
versions of the “cult of true womanhood” and related ideologies used by men (and
internalised by women) restricted women’s occupational opportunities. The impact of
cultural ideologies, as well as the influence from the active agents of socialization (i.e.
family, peers, schools) in reproducing cultural norms of behaviour, is more complex
than Walby’s thesis describes—as illustrated in the compendium of research compiled
by Hartmann, Kraut and Tily (1986). Hartmann et al. also suggested that the real
barriers to women’s entry into male-dominated managerial occupations seem to lie in
cultural norms and conventions about appropriate behaviour for women and men. Walby’s account of the development of clerical work showed that the process leading to women’s segregation into the lower grades of clerical work in both private and public sector industries seemed to have been achieved almost entirely by ideological controls, such as the marriage bar.

The marriage bar is a key example of the exclusionary and segregationary strategies used by men to limit and control women’s participation in paid work. Walby (1986) pointed out in the concluding chapter that “many social historians, sociologists and economists write as if such patriarchal practices as the marriage bar never existed” (p. 247). Hakim (1988) described the marriage bar practice and the consequences as follows:

The marriage bar turns out to be the rule, jointly enforced by employers and trade unions. That women had to leave paid employment on marriage—effectively excluded married women from the labour market. It is a sharp illustration of Walby’s key point about patriarchy at work. (p. 112).

Lopata et al. (1986) pointed out that strong moral pressures for women to conform to certain role models served the same purpose in America, but a contractual obligation to resign on marriage goes further than mere social pressure.

Walby’s analysis of occupational segregation did not place much emphasis on gender-role socialization stemming from the cultural agents of parents, peers, and schools. These agents are part of the process of instilling fundamental elements of culture in a society’s members and influence young women’s occupational choices. Jacobs (1989b) suggested,

The pressure for women to pursue female-dominated positions does not end in childhood. It is continually reinforced and recreated throughout young adulthood. ...Many women internalise these values, while others successfully challenge the constraints imposed on them.
These two groups of women are not as distinct as many assume. (p. 48)

In other words, as Buchman and Charles (1995) discovered, sex-typical choices made during adolescence limit future occupational choices and thereby exacerbate sex segregation. Walby has challenged the perspectives typically adopted by socialization theory and gender-role analysis. She criticised socialization theory for not accounting for the construction of gender identities—just its acquisition. But the construction of gender identity is through the acquisition of the construction of situated forms of gender specific behaviour reproduced over time. Walby (1990) suggested that the weakness of role analysis is its stress upon values, norms, ideas, and expectations about masculinity and femininity (i.e. gendered subjectivity) in determining occupational choices. In other words, those types of examinations are at the expense of an analysis of the macrostructures of power. Yet Walby (1997) also focused on the significance of time, or the ways in which the past connects to the present, in particular the way in which prior events impact on current events via personal biography in the context of structural change, stating that “the choices that people make early in their lives affect the range of choices open to them later” (p. 11).

Dual-system theorists, like Walby, have argued that women’s occupational choices are constrained because of the structuring of the labour force and the consequence of patriarchal practices that maintain the gender structure in paid work. As Crompton (1988) noted, “In the workplace, men’s power over women more or less consciously operates so as to exclude women from more remunerative and prestigious occupations, and render those tasks and occupations that women do perform as low status ‘women’s’ work [emphasis in original]” (p. 13). However, this debate raises important questions. As an example of a female-dominated occupation, might there
not be a link between secretaries' socialization into a female culture and their occupational choices? Might not secretaries' subjective behaviour in the office reproduce some patriarchal practices in the workplace? In other words, the two perspectives do not necessarily have to be incompatible. Walby admitted that socialization perspectives provide important information, but then criticised approaches that advocate subjectivity since they failed to address the persistence of patriarchal attitudes. Walby's (1986, 1989, 1990) structural perspective on occupational segregation misses a vital level of analysis derived from exploring female behaviour—actions of acquiescence and resistance—within the workplace.

Walby's (1986, 1989, 1990) analysis included concrete patriarchal practices in paid employment, but without a focus on actors and their actions in workplace sites. Walby looked at the process of occupational segregation primarily through the linkages between capitalism and patriarchal domination in paid work. But she did so as Acker (1989) noted, "...through the lens of a theory relatively untouched by the feminist critique, with the old patriarchal images still embedded in an apparently gender-neutral framework" (p. 238). Acker believed that this inevitably would result in "partial understanding." Witz (1992) argued that studying actors and their actions in the workplace is where conclusions regarding the pervasiveness of patriarchy can be reached—and where it is most vulnerable to change. Human actors have the capacity not only to answer questions about how patriarchal relations are maintained but also have the capacity to transform patterns of inequality. Walby can be faulted for her primary focus on macrostructures. Even though Walby (1986) developed a view of women as significant actors in resisting their exploitation and departed from the view of women as acquiescing in their fate, the issue for her was why women are not offered better jobs, not whether women will accept higher or lower paying jobs. I
consider this to be an important aspect, which can be refined by this study, when seeking answers to questions of how vertical occupational segregation is continually reproduced.

Walby’s theory can be criticised as deterministic in its exclusive concentration on social structure, and its failure to examine how these structures are not only the medium, but also the outcome of active agents within definite social practices. Thus as Collinson et al. (1990) have argued, the primacy of structure in Walby’s (1986, 1989, 1990) analysis of power relations and occupational segregation tends to neglect human agency and resistance in favour of an overly deterministic perspective. In other words, she has not accounted for the behaviour of women in reproducing patriarchal relations in paid work. Pitching Walby’s theory of patriarchy at the most concrete level (i.e. segregationist practices in paid work sites) can overcome these criticisms, while complementing and extending her analysis. The point of my analysis is not simply to describe the “facts” of secretaries’ work orientation and situation, but to explicate and understand at a theoretical level the processes through which women’s segregation at work recurs. This is a move to reinstate agency in the understanding of domination and subordination, and that emphasises the everyday practices and experiences of control and resistance. Giddens’ (1976, 1977, 1979, 1984) structuration theory is useful for this type of understanding as his work was an attempt to synthesise distinct and opposed traditions in social theory.
**Structuration and Dual-Systems**

Walby's work constituted a valuable analysis and major development in feminist literature. However, her theory does not provide a sufficient explanation of how the process of vertical occupational segregation is maintained. She has had a tendency to focus more on structures than sites (i.e. places where some activity is or has been conducted) and the individuals' actions within them. Walby (1989, 1990) used the term *structure* to imply a rejection of biological determinism and the notion that every man is in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one. She used a concept of structure *similar* to that of Giddens (1979, 1984) in that it factored in human action to explain the persistence of occupational segregation. Her approach affirmed the existence of deep structures of social life where sets of patriarchal practices can be discovered with systematic enquiry and that it is possible to identify those practices through the study of relations in the workplace. Although Walby (1989) acknowledged that social practices contain both structure and action, she could be criticised for considering structure "to be less individually constituted" (p. 221) as Giddens argued.

Anthony Giddens is one of the leading and most productive sociologists of the post-war period. He has written on classical and contemporary social theory, the sociology of elites, class structures, self-identity and modernity and has recently sought to define a new "Third Way" politics. According to commentators on Giddens (such as O'Brien, 1998, 1999), however, his voluminous recent output, and the political sociology that it implies, remains rooted in the theoretical paradigm of structuration that he developed during the late 1970s and early 1980s. For this reason, I focus my attention on the three key texts (Giddens, 1976, 1979, 1984) in which Giddens developed his structuration world view.
Giddens (1976, 1977) undertook critiques of two broad approaches in social theory, hermeneutics or forms of “interpretive sociology,” and functionalism. His theory was informed by ideas drawn from these approaches. Giddens (1979) provided a critical study of some of the main currents in structuralist thought and developed a position with the principal goal of connecting human action with structural explanation in social analysis. Giddens has been both praised and criticised for his attempt to construct syntheses of rival traditions (Callinicos, 1985; Cassell, 1993; Habermas, 1982). While Giddens’ approach is not necessarily new to the discipline of sociology, his leading theorem of structuration was that “every social actor knows a great deal about the conditions of reproduction of the society of which he or she is a member” (1979, p. 5). In Giddens’ structuration theory, he wished to preserve the hermeneutic tradition’s sensitivity to the interpreting and acting subject, while recognising the structural aspects of social practice. He developed the perspective that structures are both enabling and constraining. His “duality of structure” has served to conceptualise social systems as the outcome of an interaction between underlying structures and intentional conduct.

Knowledgeable human agents do not make society in circumstances of their own choosing....The realm of human agency is bounded, the production of the constitution of society is a skilled accomplishment of its members, but one that does not take place under conditions that are wholly intended or wholly comprehended by them. (1976, pp. 160, 102)

Giddens argued that human action is the subject of social interaction, of engaging in face-to-face contact with other subjects in the manner analysed by Goffman (1969). Goffman (1974) stated, “the first issue is not interaction but fram[ing]...to make sense out of...interaction” (p. 127). In other words, one cannot reach a scientific understanding of an interaction unless one understands the rules of
the frame, or situated context, in which an interaction takes place. Giddens also argued that those who are subject to the power of dominant groups are knowledgeable human agents, so that power should be seen in relational terms. Thus, human beings are not simply swept along by history, but as knowledgeable human agents, can ultimately resist or actively alter the conditions of their own lives that were originally thrust upon them by powerful dominant groups.

Giddens (1976, 1979) has suggested that humans act within historically specific bounds. Callinicos (1985) noted that “the scope for agency (and hence resistance) in history varies according to the specific circumstances in which people find themselves” (p. 116). Further, the scope of resistance differs according to the structural capacities of particular groups of people, capacities that can enable as well as constrain. Giddens’ concept that social structures arise as the unintended consequences of individual actions has been criticised on the grounds that he has failed to overcome the duality of agency and structure, and that his concept secures the primacy of agents over structure. Still, his perspective is of value when exploring human actions, and the beliefs, desires, and intentions that produce them in order to account for the existence of structures and of the practices bound up with them.

Giddens treated the acting subject and the notion of “practical” and “discursive” consciousness, for which the actor may not have explanatory capability, as a fundamental feature of the theory of structuration. Practical consciousness indicates those tacit stocks of knowledge that actors draw upon in social activity, while discursive consciousness is the knowledge which actors are able to express on the level of discourse. For example, a secretary may have practical knowledge of patriarchal relations in paid work, but not necessarily the theoretical knowledge of the social scientist. Therefore, we can recognise that what an actor knows as a competent
member of society is revealed in contexts that stretch beyond those of the day-to-day activity in which they are historically and spatially located. But if we understand the situated character of secretaries’ activities, then we can identify the conscious and unconscious conditions of action and the unintended consequences of action. Using this approach, one is able to view the deeply layered patriarchal structures of society in which individuals create and recreate structures from various patterns of interaction.

Structures are the rules and resources individuals follow and utilise in the interaction process. Additionally, they are analysed as dualities—both the medium and the outcome of interaction. They are the medium because structures provide the rules and resources that individuals must draw on to interact meaningfully. They are the outcome because rules and resources exist only through being applied and acknowledged in interaction; they have no reality independent of the social practices they constitute. The importance of individual actors needs to be underscored since they are the carriers and creators of the rules and resources, i.e., the structures. Furthermore, structuring processes create complex institutional patterns. Thus, structuration is grounded in individual interactions that, over time and across space, constitute institutions.

Giddens also argued that human beings have “transformative capacity” with the peculiar ability to consciously control and monitor the exercise of causal powers. To Giddens, transformative capacity forms the basis of human action—the “could have done otherwise” which refers to the unique property of human beings to reflect upon and choose between alternative actions. This capacity connects action to domination and power. Therefore, a central concern of structuration theory is the identification of the conditions that govern the continuity or transformation of
structures, and therefore the reproduction of social systems. However, in his statement on structuration theory, Giddens said relatively little directly about organizations, only that in organizations "the reflexive regulation of the conditions of system reproduction looms large in the continuity of day-to-day practice" (1984, p. 200). Even though criticism abounds of Giddens' theory of structuration and his attempt to overcome the duality of agency and structure, the reproach is inappropriate when analysing the persistent phenomenon of occupational segregation through Walby's (1986, 1989, 1990) theory of patriarchy. Her theory secures the primacy of structure over agency. But, it can be refined by an empirical investigation of secretaries and their opportunities to go beyond a pink-collar occupation. In this way, patriarchal relations in the workplace, which govern the continuity or transformation of the patriarchal structure of paid work, can be identified. Thus, Giddens' structuration theory can be used to lend support to and go beyond Walby's systems' notion of the reproduction of patriarchal relations. For an analysis of the persistence of occupational segregation by sex, a broader understanding of the material and social conditions of women in particular occupations is needed.

**Structure, Agency and Organizational Practice**

I want to consider the research described by Willis (1977) because it was compelling in detail and suggestive in drawing implications about structure and agency that range far beyond the context in which the study was actually carried out. Willis (1977) studied a group of working class young people in a school located in a poor area of Birmingham. He treated the boys concerned as actors who knew a great deal, discursively and tacitly, about the school environment of which they formed a part. While describing in an insightful manner the dialectic of control within the
school setting, he showed how the rebellious attitudes that the boys took towards the authority system of the school had unintended consequences that affected their fate. When leaving school, the boys took up unskilled, unrewarding jobs, thus facilitating the reproduction of some general features of capitalist-industrial labour.

In his study, Willis made it clear that “the lads” could say a great deal discursively about their views on authority relations in the school and why they reacted to them as they did. Willis showed that humour, banter, and aggressive sarcasm were elements of the discursive modes of expression of “the lads.” They were the fundamental features of their knowledgeable “penetration” of the school system. The joking culture of “the lads” both displayed a very complex understanding of the basis of teacher’s authority, and at the same time, directly questioned that authority by subverting the language in which it is normally expressed. “Because they actively contest the authority relations of the school, they are adept at picking out where the bases of the teachers’ claims to authority lie, and where their weakest points are as the wielders of discipline and as individual personalities” (Cassell, 1993, p. 158). The bounds of what “the lads” knew about the circumstances in which they lived out their lives was fairly confined, but they still had an imprecise awareness of aspects of the wider society that influenced the contexts of their own behaviour. Willis described the aggressive joking culture which “the lads” had developed within the school milieu as actually resembling that of the shop-floor culture of the work situations into which they tended to move once leaving school. Cassell noted that the “unintended and ironical consequence of their ‘partial penetration’ of the limited life chances open to them is actively to perpetuate the conditions which help to limit those very life chances” (p. 161). Willis’s research was not only a superb ethnographic study of an informal group within a school, but also can be seen as an empirical example of
Giddens’ structuration theory, which it preceded. Willis demonstrated how the activities of “the lads,” within a restricted context, contributed to the reproduction of larger institutional forms because he stressed that “social forces” operate through “agents’” reasoned actions.

The quantitative and qualitative evidence presented by Catanzarite and Strober (1993), Strober (1992, 1984), Strober and Catanzarite (1994), and Strober and Tyack (1980) also indicated that the extent of occupational segregation by sex depends on both employer and employee behaviour. Their conclusions were based on studies of the gender recomposition of the maquiladora workforce (i.e. assembly production workers in Mexico), female school teachers, and physicians. They showed that what influences the gender composition of an occupation depends upon the demand side of the market as well as on the supply side which is consistent with Giddens’ notion of structuration. Similarly, in their review of the literature on gender, bureaucracy and organizational culture, Ramsay and Parker (1992) considered that Walby’s argument underplayed the role that actors have in reproducing patriarchal and capitalist structures. On an analytical level, they separate the structural conditions for organizations and the practices of actors within those organizations. They argue that patriarchal and capitalist structures are continually recreated through the everyday practices of actors, both male and female.

It has also been argued that supply side explanations should not obscure the continuing significance of employment and occupational structures in shaping gender relations. Crompton (1996, 1997), Crompton and Harris (1998a), Crompton and LeFeuvre (1992), and Crompton and Sanderson (1990) compared women’s employment in France and Great Britain at the macro, meso and microlevels, drawing
on work-life history interviews conducted with women in finance and pharmacy. Despite national variation of the political and organizational contexts, they found considerable similarities at the occupational and individual levels. They concluded that labour market outcomes must be regarded as being shaped by both choice and constraint, the structural factors shaping women's employment patterns (i.e. actions of employers, the state, and organizational masculine exclusionary practices). Women, they argued, can and do make choices but in the aggregate, their lack of power and resources over time means that they are able to choose but that they are also constrained. Siltanen's (1994) work on telephone operators, postal workers and mail sorters also found that patriarchal forces influence women's job choices but that staying within these jobs was also related to women wanting more "time for family," and taking pride in emotional/interpersonal tasks. Siltanen used "time for family" as the primary measure of social experience. However, this indicator does not measure how social life influenced employment decisions for those without families or for those with children no longer dependent.

Truss (1994) and Truss, Goffee and Jones (1995) used questionnaire and interview data collected from secretaries and bosses in England, France and Germany to assess whether the gender composition of many occupations explains how they developed and maintained a female identity. They found that secretarial work in all three countries conformed to gender stereotypes, and that the secretary as agent acts to shape her work identity, but that organizational and societal factors also maintained stereotypes (see p. 89 in Chapter 2 for further discussion).

The empirical data presented by Collinson and Knights (1986) on female clerical workers and gendered job segregation within an insurance office showed that male-dominated management control and female clerical subordination are highly
complex conditions—and consequences of each other. They argued that job
segregation arises and is reinforced by the actions of both men and women in their
pursuit of whatever form of personal security⁷ is valued within the context of
capitalist and patriarchal social relations of employment. By examining employment
practices and their impact on the labour process, Collinson and Knights revealed
capitalist and patriarchal structures to be a consequence, as well as a condition, of
employers’ and employees’ mutually reinforcing efforts to sustain and/or advance
material and symbolic security, which has the effect of institutionalising gendered job
segregation. They argued that the reproduction of occupational segregation involves
not only capitalist and patriarchal structures of power but also “the identity-securing
strategies of the participants involved in domination, subordination and resistance” (p.
172).

Researchers have shown that labour market practices and gender identity are
mutually reinforcing, revealing how sex discrimination or occupational segregation
can be “reproduced, rationalised and resisted by those in positions of both
domination and subordination [italics in original]” (Collinson, Knights, & Collinson,
1990, p. 4).⁸ The case-study evidence that Collinson et al. provide was drawn from
forty-five private-sector organizations representing five separate industries across the
Northwest of England. They explored the power relations of the labour market and
recruitment process by focusing on the forms of control and resistance that were found
to characterise sex discrimination in employee job selection. Their theoretically
informed examination incorporated subjective meanings and experiences that support
the notion that the persistence of occupational segregation is the outcome of active
knowledgeable agents within organizational settings.
Few, if any, people accept unequal treatment willingly and passively. When protesting or fighting back openly are too dangerous, members of a minority, such as women, may employ what Scott (1985, 1987) called “weapons of the weak.” Women, it is occasionally argued, can exercise considerable power to the extent that they do not openly challenge the formal myth of male dominance. For most subordinate groups, who as a matter of sheer history have had little prospect of improving their status, hiding behind a mask of compliance or quiet resistance have been the only options. Based on those observable behaviours that are apparently acquiescent, one may claim that women accept their situation as a normal, even justifiable, part of the social or patriarchal order. This explanation of passivity assumes at least a fatalistic acceptance. As Scott (1985) suggested, understanding the resistance of thinking, social beings—their consciousness—the symbols, the norms, the ideological forms they create constitute an indispensable background to their behaviour. However partial women’s understanding of their work situation, describing the patterns of their everyday resistance “grounds that description in an analysis of the conflicts of meaning and value in which these patterns arise and to which they contribute” (p. 38).

An example of this would be Ames’ (1996) participant observation study of secretaries at a New York department of social services office. She found that although these secretaries recognised their position at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy, they resisted the demeaning effects of this organizational structure by working in a collegial fashion that challenged their own subordination and asserted their importance to the organization from their ability to quit if necessary. However, these women also gained satisfaction through the achievement of bureaucratically assigned responsibilities and thus reinforced the structure in some ways despite their resistance attempts. Likewise, an ethnography of a private law firm and legal
corporate department by Pierce (1995) emphasised how structure and agency are involved in maintaining and reproducing the gendered division of labour. She stressed that this is a dynamic process involving power and the possibilities for resistance, illustrated by the fact that women often do not passively acquiesce to gendered rules regarding emotion. Yet, the caretaking, or “mothering” practices of paralegals constitute emotional exchanges that reproduce the structure of gender relations.

In the present study I depart from Walby’s theory of patriarchy and occupational segregation on the grounds of her distinction between the patriarchal strategies of exclusion versus segregation. I have refined her description of patriarchal relations in culture, which she described mainly as cultural institutions. I will argue that current debates on occupational segregation are remiss because they have not asked how the maintenance of vertical occupational segregation within organizations might involve women’s actions. Debates have been centred on an analysis of constraint versus choice, or patriarchal structures versus socialization. However, by studying the concrete, everyday behaviour of secretaries (including their opportunities for advancement and their coping and resisting strategies) in paid work sites, sociologists can gain a better understanding of how both choice and constraint are involved in reproducing patriarchal relations in structures of paid employment. If structures are indeed “emergent properties of practices” as Walby (1990, p. 20) asserted, then a need exists to explore the conduct of knowledgeable human agents who produce, reproduce, and transform everyday practices and social structures.
**Conclusion**

Debates over structure versus agency as the foundation for social theory have been ongoing since sociology's inception. At issue is the validity of structural perspectives and the extent to which social explanation must incorporate the purposive actor. These debates are extremely relevant in relation to occupational segregation, particularly the dual-systems theory, because it originated in part as a critique of Marxist perspectives. Efforts to extend the Marxist analysis have incorporated a theory of gender and male dominance, along with greater attention to subjectivity and the social actor. As a result, explanations that highlight agency have figured more prominently than those emphasising structural processes. However, most agency theories attempting to explain occupational segregation treat gender as an individual characteristic that shapes the interests and dispositions of actors, ignoring its role in shaping the macrostructure within which action occurs. In contrast, most structural approaches seem to minimise the theoretical significance of agency. The challenge lies in analysing occupational segregation from a perspective that recognises the social relations of capitalism and patriarchy as both motivators of action, and as a property of structural position that can be seen at the microlevel.

Walby's (1986, 1989, 1990) dual-systems model of patriarchy contributed to feminist theories explaining the phenomenon of occupational segregation. She has advanced previous analyses when identifying more than one causal structure and in arguing that capitalism and patriarchy are not invariably in harmony, and that institutionalised segregationist practices create and maintain gendered occupations in paid employment. Yet, among others, Collinson and Knights (1986), Collinson, Knights, and Collinson (1990), and Knights and Willmott (1985) criticised Walby's approach as a deterministic theory. They have argued that she failed to examine the
actions of active agents within different paid work sites who play their part in reproducing and/or transforming the gendered division of labour. This study can advance Walby's theory of patriarchy by adopting a position in light of research that incorporates agency and subjectivity in analyses of occupational segregation in paid work sites. Exploring the everyday practices that maintain structures is at least a step towards an integration of micro and macrosociologies. Studying secretaries, I will argue, extends theories of occupational segregation in the struggle to improve the occupational position of women. It is important to study the role of modern secretaries and how they relate to others in the office. The actions of secretaries may unintentionally reproduce private segregationist practices in the workplace. In the next chapter I will present literature on secretaries as pink-collar workers and comment on empirical work related to them in order to integrate a micro perspective into broader theoretical frameworks regarding occupational segregation.
CHAPTER II
Structure, Agency and Secretarial Work

“What is the perfect secretary? She is a girl of doglike devotion, ambitious only for her boss' success. She has initiative, and can be expected to perform all chores and errands without advice. She is a perfectionist about details. She believes and practices the maxim of modern business, that it is the man who does the thinking and the girl who does the work.”

Shepherd Mead, 1965, p. 19

This chapter will focus on key aspects of secretarial work as one of the quintessential pink-collar occupations and will examine secretaries in relation to their advancement opportunities. A brief historical overview of clerical and secretarial work will be presented as a way of grounding the concepts of patriarchal relations of control and resistance in paid work. Literature related to the gendered construct of the secretary as “office wife” is relevant, as this will clarify that secretaries, as knowledgeable agents, maintain private patriarchal relations in the workplace through their own behaviour and interaction with bosses. Forms of resistance used by women in paid work, particularly everyday, non-confrontational strategies, will be discussed to develop a more satisfactory understanding of the mechanisms that govern the process of vertical occupational segregation.

Nature of Women’s Work

Studies of White-Collar Work

Some confusion surrounds the term “white-collar work.” Broadly speaking it is used to distinguish all non-manual from manual occupations and connotes differences in working conditions, career prospects, method of payment, and
orientations to work. However, within non-manual work, groups such as professional and managerial employees are distinct from clerical and secretarial workers in many ways. I will adopt Bernard (1981) and Howe's (1977) term “pink collar” to designate the low-status, low-paid clerical and secretarial administrative support positions predominately held by women. Pink-collar work should be treated as distinct from a general white-collar classification partly because women constitute an overwhelming majority of those employed in this sphere of work, and partly because the authority and status associated with it differ significantly from white-collar occupations.

Furthermore, the experience of career advancement for women in pink-collar occupations is also distinct from those women who occupy other white-collar positions.

The 1990s have become a pivotal time in business that should lead to an expansion of secretaries' opportunities for career advancement in the 21st century. It has been argued that we have shifted away from a manufacturing industrial age to an "information age" where globalisation and a service orientation are redefining the context of secretarial work and workplace relations. Employees such as secretaries, who possess communication and human relations' skills and technological competence, have become valuable assets to employers in every office, industry and sector of the economy. Like other white-collar workers, secretaries are engaged in a labour process without necessarily producing a physical commodity. Those workers engaged in non-manual employment contribute to the generation of profit from the "mental services" they provide (Smith, Knights & Willmott, 1991). Secretaries' knowledge has been developed from the labour processes of gathering, collating, managing and disseminating information that have become vital and integral to every department of every organization, especially in large multi-national organizations. In
addition, many managerial tasks are now being performed by secretaries, and the lines of distinction between managerial and secretarial work are blurring as a result of the shift in the economy, advances in technology, and organizational restructuring (Hirschhorn, cited in Murphree, 1986, p. 35). This change did not take place overnight, but happened gradually over half a century. Sociologists can now question whether the degree of supervisory control has shifted, and if the knowledge that executive secretaries wield from their combined human relations and technological skills have become organizational conduits for secretarial advancement. On this basis, studying secretaries as pink-collar workers, and studying their occupational opportunities in the context of Opportunity 2000 is an important sociological task.

Over the last 20 years feminist literature has had a considerable impact on the direction of research into female employment, because past research in industrial sociology made little mention of women employees. In the early 1970s, Jessie Bernard said, “practically all sociology to date has been a sociology of the male world” (cited in Reinharz, 1992a, p. 11). Some of the industries and groups that have attracted a lot of attention from social scientists over time include coal miners, fishermen, dockworkers, lorry drivers, printers, steelworkers, seafarers, affluent workers and shipbuilding workers, to name a few. However, these studies shed no light on the expectations and actions of women as employees. To be fair, few women worked in most of those fields, but when they did hold such positions, researchers extended the scope of their study primarily to consider the implications of work for family and community life, and vice versa. These studies also did not acknowledge that the absence of women in many cases was due, not to the nature of the work, but to either the tight control of the labour market exercised by men through their unions or to the policies and practices of employers. For example, women worked successfully at
many jobs in shipbuilding during the Second World War in Britain and the U.S., but were excluded from such production work afterwards. It may seem rather unfair to complain about the lack of such a reference when the dominance of men in such industries is so widely taken for granted. But as is the case with respect to some other aspects of the employment relationship, questioning that which has been taken for granted is essential for a more adequate analysis of the persistent phenomenon of occupational segregation.

In some ways, the failure to pay attention to the significance of sexual divisions of labour in industry is particularly surprising in the case of Elton Mayo’s Hawthorne experiments (Roethlisberger & Dickson, 1939) and Willis’s (1977) study of working class school leavers. The findings of Roethlisberger and Dickson presented a striking contrast between the findings of the Relay Assembly Test Room group of experiments and those of the Bank Wiring Observation Room. In the former work situation, all the employees were women, and as a consequence of the changes, intended or unintended, that were introduced by the investigators, these workers increased their output, at least temporarily, and gave evidence of increasingly cooperative attitudes towards management. In the latter, a cohesive work group of men restricted their output, contrary to management’s intentions and interests, and the investigators appeared to conclude that there was very little the supervisor or anyone else could do about it. Yet, the significance of the relay assemblers being women (who, in addition, had a male supervisor in the test room) and the wiremen being men was not discussed. This was despite the authors’ clear comments on differences between male and female attitudes as expressed in the interviewing programme. In 1977, Willis could write about “working class school leavers getting working class jobs,” with little mention of young women. As Maynard (1990) observed, the
omission of women points to a rich and wide-ranging literature that presents an historic ungendered orthodoxy in sociological theory.

Early research showed that women’s attitudes and experiences of work have been basically footnoted, as in the case of Lockwood (1958), or that their occupational choices were directly related to their position in the life cycle. Thus, variations in behaviour were assumed to be unimportant or depended on differences in age, marital status, and the presence or absence of dependent relatives. These studies have leaned too heavily upon stereotypical assumptions about female dispositions and priorities, particularly in the way in which the occupational attitudes of single female employees were presented. One of the most consistent themes in the literature was that women, compared to men, display a consistently attenuated level of occupational aspiration. In Lockwood (1958), the young single girl was often presented as an instrumentally oriented worker with a difference—marriage was her central life-interest.

Women have largely gone into office jobs that require little skill and carry small responsibility. … A large proportion are young, unmarried women and for many of them clerical work is ‘just a job like any other’ taken up in the interval between leaving school and getting married. It is known that girls are especially attracted to clerical work because of its social status, and also, it may be surmised, because of the opportunity it affords for meeting desirable marriage partners in the blackcoated class. In short, the strictly vocational nature of office work is here very much attenuated. (p. 125)

Many sociologists in the 1970s suggested that women were “naturally” suited to certain types of work because they were employed in boring, monotonous and routine jobs. They concluded that women’s chief attachment was to the home. Therefore, a woman’s earnings were considered only “pin” money to supplement a husband’s earnings. Arguments such as these supported the parochial views of many male sociologists. The notion that the occupational distribution of young women is
readily explained in terms of their own preoccupation with matrimony has been extremely unconvincing. Whatever else one might want to say about it, this view has had the effect of closing off sociological investigation rather than inviting it. It has been shown to be an argument “framed with an apparent disregard for the existence of inertia and discrimination amongst employers in relation to the provision of training and promotion opportunities for girls” (McNally, 1979, p.12). These studies ignored the objective realities of the labour market as well as the subjective reality of the labour market for the workers concerned. One must be doubtful, then, about the way in which some social scientists have tried to provide a general account of certain social processes in industrial situations (or paid work in general). These accounts have assumed implicitly that their analyses would be valid for situations in which either sex were employed. On these grounds, then, it would seem that a fundamental shift in emphasis for empirical sociology was in order.

There has been a body of criticism directed at the way in which sociologists have traditionally researched and represented female members of society. Criticism has come from feminist researchers who saw the main themes for empirical research focusing upon gender relationships within the family or domestic context, and from a male perspective in social science research. McNally (1979) articulated the apparent unwillingness of sociologists to explore more systematically the many sources of the stereotypical analysis of the female home-centredness argument. According to the popular stereotype, Britain’s post-war economy offered women the opportunity to realise their modest ambitions, and women therefore passively, naturally, and happily accepted subordinate status in the labour market. Moreover, the failure to examine systematically the factors influencing women’s orientation to work and their career aspirations has allowed the belief to prevail that women attach little importance to
promotion or to interesting work. Indeed, as Hakim (1988) suggested, one might say that the nature of women's orientation to work represents the most conspicuously neglected subject for empirical investigation. The outcome of this critique has been a proliferation of literature that changed the manner in which sexual divisions of labour are both conceptualised and investigated. The varied analyses and arguments of Beechey (1987), Bernard (1971, 1981), Chodorow (1978), Dex (1987), Gilligan (1977), Hakim (1991), Hartmann, Kraut & Tilly (1986), Oakley (1974, 1979), and Walby (1986, 1989, 1990), to name but a few, have helped to reorient and redirect the conventional focus on male workers.

An abundance of research since the 1970s focused on women in the labour market which has overcome the omission of women in classic studies in the sociology of work. Within the tradition of sociology there has also been a diversity of perspectives to account for women's status within the world of paid work. A great deal of research has focused on rising rates of economic activity among married women since World War II and how this has impacted on familial relationships (Ginn & Sandell, 1997; Hochshild & Machung, 1989; Oakley, 1974; Siltanen, 1994; Wajcman, 1996). Other studies have stressed the lack of choice and opportunities that necessitated resignation to one's fate in response to the reality of limited alternatives (Baxter, Lynch-Blosse, & Western, 1996; Walby, 1986, 1990). Walby firmly located the cause of women's subordination within the economic sphere that impacts on their relations within the household, because women have been segregated into lower status positions within organizations.

Scholars such as Bellin and Miller (1990), Halford (1992), Rubery, Smith, Fagan, and Grimshaw (1998), and Walby (1986, 1988b, 1990, 1994, 1997, 1999) have also pointed out the inattention to the gendered dimension of state policies and how
they have shaped women's position in employment. For instance, Bellin and Miller (1990) argued that envisioning the future labour force participation of women in abstraction from the political context is impossible. They showed that economic outcomes are not self-generating, but are produced and perpetuated by regimes that have the power to do things differently. Thus, the trend of occupational segregation by sex owes much to political inputs.

It seems that although research energies have been directed toward the phenomena of working wives and their domestic circumstances, attention has been diverted away from categories of ordinary women who are pink-collar workers or how the process of vertical occupational segregation has been maintained. In addition, there has been a lack of research attention to the dimension of subjective meaning that includes women's experiences of, and actions within, the structure of paid work. Instead, much research has concentrated on the structural determinants of worker behaviour, and as a result, there is a scarcity of information on how these forces are countered or resisted. To overcome this deficiency, this study on secretaries investigates empirically their orientation to work and their work situation, which is defined as their role and ability to manoeuvre within gendered organizational hierarchies of prestige.

Like the work of Ames (1996), Dex (1987), Game and Pringle (1983), Machung (1984, 1988), McNally (1979), Truss, Goffee, and Jones (1995), and Pringle (1989a, 1989b, 1993), this study, then, shifts the focus away from the domestic circumstances of secretaries to the nature of their work and workplace situation. It does not assume that female orientations to work are fixed solely by their upbringing and education and later by their domestic obligations, but explores the extent to which they are sustained, modified or frustrated by the experience of work itself.
Indeed, Acker (1990), Epstein (1990), Ramsay and Parker (1992), and Witz and Savage (1992) have connected the cultural underpinnings of organizational structures and power within the organizations themselves, and the intersubjective aspects of work to patterns of social inequality. Epstein focused attention on the culture of the workplace and the work values that bind together occupational groups, as well as on the meaning workers attach to their jobs. Both Acker, and Ramsay and Parker looked at the cultural features of gendered organizations. Acker argued that gender is a basic element in “organizational logic” with systematic advantages for men that are constantly reconstituted through underlying assumptions and practices. Ramsay and Parker viewed organizations as cultures that appear as webs of meaning and are constructed through the everyday practices of actors. In essence, the written work rules, managerial directives, documents, clothing, language, and various symbols of masculine hierarchical status represent the unrecognised material out of which the organization has been structured. Further, as Acker (1990) stated:

The concept “a job” is thus implicitly a gendered concept, even though organizational logic presents it as gender neutral. “A job” already contains the gender-based division of labour and the separation between the public and private sphere. The concept of “a job” assumes a particular gendered organization of domestic life and social production. (p. 149)

She argued that hierarchies have been gendered because those employees committed to full time paid employment have been deemed more suited to responsibility and authority, leaving those with additional obligations in the lower ranks. Thus, the terms and conditions of paid work have rendered labour force participation convenient for men and problematic for most women (Davies, 1992).

Recent studies on the nature of work have also called attention to the declining significance of work as a form of identity for workers under contemporary capitalism.
Wheeler (1990) challenged the notion that work activity is truly central to a worker’s life and well-being. He suggested that for some people, like secretaries, work is merely an occupation, rather than those known as “workaholics” for whom work is not only an occupation, but also a preoccupation (p. 143). In other words, the work ethic of those for whom work is a preoccupation translates into the belief that free time is simply inferior time outside that used for work, and not a necessary or major part of life. Friedson (1990) expanded upon this notion.

The only viable criterion for distinguishing leisure from work and various types of work from each other becomes the social meaning of activities, their value and the context in which they are undertaken. The same activity can be leisure, or nonwork, in one context and work in another. (p. 152)

Friedson (1990) attempted to clarify the generic nature of work and its relation to economy and society by delineating a special kind of work, which he named “labours of love” (see pp. 92-94 for further discussion). Friedson’s concept refers to and derives from Finch and Groves’ (1983) study of community care workers and the emotional labour debate after Hochschild (1983). To Friedson, labours of love are voluntary, freely chosen, and can be congenial to the worker’s nature, thus allowing for self-fulfilment. Some workers may engage in paid work that is closely related to a labour of love, requiring the use of the same or related skills as they use in their everyday lives. The work of nurses, secretaries, and schoolteachers for example, requires qualities such as dedication, sympathy, and a measure of altruism that is parallel to the unpaid care of dependants in the family and community. However, research on nurses (Mackay, 1989; Davies, 1992) has alerted us to the processes of trivialization and devaluation of work that include labours of love. This has not been altogether negative as Davies noted. “(W)hile nursing is devalued as a form of work
and women are devalued as a species of worker, nurses are valued as women for the
caring work they do” (p. 246). Still, she suggested that in contemporary work settings,
like offices or hospitals, women often face simultaneous valuation and devaluation
leading to “confused commitment” and frustration with their subordinate status. These
perspectives provided a rationale for studying secretaries, and their work activities,
which are embedded in a work world composed of sexual divisions of labour and an
array of sustaining persons and institutions. We may question whether the means of
earning a living influence the labours of love themselves or vice versa.

Before 1979 there were few empirical studies focusing on the attitudes and
experiences of clerical workers. Certainly Lockwood’s (1958) study explored the
world of white-collar clerical work, yet gave minimal attention to female employees.
Crozier’s (1971) study of Parisian office workers offered little to explain the
mechanisms that confine women to the lower levels of the office hierarchy, but was
nonetheless instrumental at the time in suggesting that clerks can determine their own
work situation. Benet’s (1972) work was exclusively devoted to the subject of the
female office worker, yet did not incorporate any systematic analysis of their attitudes
and work situations. The majority of studies on white-collar work were focused on
males occupied within this sector, but have nevertheless generated a great deal of
information which is of direct relevance in the present context, particularly in relation
to sources of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with advancement from pink-collar work.
Silverstone’s (1974) and Kanter’s (1977) work advanced knowledge about women in
the office. While their focus on women challenged the assumption that women’s
attitudes toward work are fixed by their out-of-work preoccupations and
circumstances, these classic studies need to be updated in the context of new political
and ideological projects like Opportunity 2000.
McNally (1979) also concentrated exclusively on female office workers. She found that patriarchy in paid work acted as a barrier to occupational advancement beyond the ceiling of the executive secretarial ranks. McNally's work indicates clearly that it is important to consider and reconsider the relationship between boss and secretary and the extent to which the boss helps or hinders women's attempts to improve their work situation. There had been very few contemporary pieces of research concerned wholly, or in part, with the subject of secretaries until Game and Pringle's (1983) and Pringle's (1989b) work in Australia, and the comparative study on secretaries in France, Germany and England by Truss (1993) and Truss, Goffee, and Jones (1995). Yet, as Pringle (1989b) observed, there is "no single answer to the question 'what is a secretary?'" (p. 2).

What is a Secretary?

Secretaries (when historically investigated at all) appear to be subsumed under the general homogeneous heading of "women office workers." Most stress that they are women and work for a boss, reflecting a conventional assumption that "secretary" is a gendered category and takes its meaning from its relation to another gendered category, that of "bosses." A secretary has been seen as an appendage of her boss. In addition, the equation of secretary with "wife" has been important in establishing the normative version of a secretary. However, "we cannot simply point to a place in the labour process and say, that is occupied by secretaries [italics in original]" (Pringle, 1989b, p.2). There are no steadfast tasks performed exclusively by secretaries. Research has shown that the job content of the secretary is more dependent on the interaction between boss and secretary than on any formal definition of the scope of secretarial work. Silverstone and Towler (1984) suggested that secretaries' "job
content depends on the whim of the manager” (p. 562). Further, “She (the secretary) works for him (her boss)—her only function being to case his workload [italics in original]” (Held, 1982, p. 18, translation cited in Truss, Goffee & Jones, 1995, p. 1333). Thus, what a secretary is, and what a secretary does, are closely linked.

Game and Pringle (1983) and Pringle’s (1989a, 1989b, 1993) studies of secretaries attempted to locate “work” in the context of debates concerning culture, sexuality and subjectivity. Their research was not one of political economy. However, they have offered a critique of the existing labour market and of labour process theories. Pringle (1989b) was concerned with the processes and relations of power (including sexuality) rather than with the concrete details of companies, organizations or industries. Secretaries are located in every part of the economy, so it became necessary to sample a wide range of workplaces and conduct a large number of interviews in and around Sydney, Australia in order to be in a position to make generalisations. Pringle’s research included more than empirical accounts of secretaries. She was equally concerned with the broader theoretical questions, and therefore organized the material around discourses of power, rather than analyses of the labour process. To her, issues such as the labour process and proletarianisation, technological change, occupational health and sexual harassment had already featured in many accounts of clerical work. While she saw these issues as important, Pringle wanted to avoid a framework that latches onto them as the “tangibles.” She focused instead on the relationship between secretaries as an identifiable social group and the discursive construction of secretaries as a category; on the relationship between power structures and the day-to-day negotiation and production of power; and on the connections between domination, sexuality and pleasure. Thus, she presented the boss-secretary relationship not as an archaic remnant of the past, but as an archetype
of the workings of contemporary bureaucracy and the system of patriarchy. She noted the following:

One comes to know about secretaries and to identify them as a group through the ways in which they are represented. The secretary is constructed in popular culture in a way that plays down the importance of what she does in favour of discussion of what she is. Secretaries are part of folklore and popular culture and are represented in stereotypical ways in advertising and the media, even in pornography. (1989b, p. 2)

To Pringle, the gender dimension has been included as an organizing principle of work relations, including accounts of masculinity and sexuality in the workplace (Cockburn, 1983, 1986; Game & Pringle, 1983; Hearn & Parkin, 1987).

This includes the realisation that gender is not merely created at home and that work is one of a number of important sites of its construction; and the understanding of the importance of the ideological and the symbolic in constructing the 'economic.' (Pringle, 1989b, p. ix)

In other words, organizations have been underpinned by discourses on power and sexuality that mark out gendered roles within them.

Kanter’s (1977) discussion of the secretary/boss relationship has been viewed as operating within a Weberian framework of bureaucratic rationality (Witz & Savage, 1992). In the hierarchy of white-collar organizations, bosses typically do not assume their organizational identity from their relationship with their secretaries, but from relations with equals and superiors in their own and other organizations. On the other hand, secretaries are positioned as subordinates whose status is defined in direct relation to the hierarchical status of their managers. Kanter insisted that the boss-secretary relation is the prime example of all workplace power relations that illustrate the workings of modern bureaucracies. Pringle (1989a), on the other hand, adopted a view of power in terms of a discursive relation that creates the possibility of
resistance. Her account of the boss-secretary relation was that both have power and that the secretary may have her own quiet means of resistance. Pringle argued that Weber’s account of power and rationality has a gender subtext because it was formed around a particular kind of masculinity based on the exclusion of the personal from any definition of rationality. “The apparent neutrality of rules and goals disguises the class and gender interests served by men” (p 161).

The changing nature of the economy and bureaucratic organizations in the late 20th century have brought about a change in secretarial work that challenges traditional patriarchal relations in workplaces and secretaries’ relatively lowly status within them. Colwill (1985) and Pringle (1989b) have argued that, “the status of secretaries has never been as high as the responsibilities of their position would warrant” (Colwill, 1985, p. 12). They attributed this, in part, to the gender composition of the workforce, arguing that any occupation dominated by women tends to be granted only low status with few opportunities for advancement, a situation stemming from the historic sex-stereotyping of occupations. However, Kanter (1977) argued that the principle of the bureaucratic organization is gender-neutral; once sex-stereotyping of occupations has been established it is the dynamics of bureaucracy, rather than of gender relations, that act to reinforce and perpetuate it. Acker (1990) and Witz and Savage (1992) have also criticised this analysis, arguing that bureaucracies privilege attributes linked to masculinity and male work life arrangements, thus precluding secretaries from opportunities to realise any modest ambitions beyond working for a boss of higher status. Cockburn (1991) also revealed men’s relation to equal opportunities for women in organizations as one that takes on board the principle of equal treatment by arguing women must assimilate and strive to be indistinguishable from men. In other words, for secretaries to advance within a
gendered bureaucratic organization, they must adhere to the conventions of an
hegemonic masculine ideology. However, it is incumbent upon sociologists to account
for the subjectivity of contemporary secretaries in the reproduction of patriarchal
relations in paid work, by studying them as conscious human agents who attach
meaning to their actions related to career advancement.

Like Willis’s (1977) study of working class culture and Bernard’s (1981) study
of the female world, I will argue that secretaries are part of a female culture that has
influenced and reinforced cultural norms and conventions about appropriate behaviour
for women. Secretaries' behaviour (or labours of love) in the office may serve as a
barrier to entry into the historically male-dominated managerial terrain. Before further
discussion about secretaries, a brief history of clerical work will be presented. This
history focuses on the changes to office work as a result of economic and
technological advances that provide the context for the evolution of secretarial work
as "women's work."

**History of Clerical Work to the 1970s**

With the expansion in the scale of manufacturing and commercial enterprise in
the second half of the nineteenth century, there came a tremendous demand for those
equipped with clerical skills, namely literacy and numeracy. The expansion of the
British Empire and overseas markets accentuated the demand for clerks as workers
who were required to process correspondence quickly. Under monopoly capitalism
there was a proliferation of paperwork, the result of a desire to maintain accurate
records and as a way of checking and cross checking correspondences.

Simultaneously, the natural habitat of the clerk became the office. The old-style clerks
of the 19th century were almost exclusively male and held a highly personal
relationship with their employers. Some were sons or relatives of the owners of the enterprises, who were undertaking an apprenticeship with a career path of eventually either taking over the business or becoming a professional via promotion. Lockwood (1958) wrote of the relationship between the clerk and his employer as a form of a "gentleman’s agreement." However, this relationship was often exploited, and "great expectations" frequently came to nothing. C. Wright Mills’ (1951) description of the American counterpart was similar, a picture of servitude and dependence. He suggested that many clerks were willing to submit to uncertain conditions because in doing so they might gain respectability and the status of a gentleman. The appeal of white-collar work, including clerical work, lay in its potential for secure employment. Braverman (1974) suggested that while there was considerable diversity in the character of clerical occupations during early industrial capitalism, their incumbents had little in common with the clerks of the late 19th century. The distinction derives from the fact that early generations of clerks were untouched by the processes of rationalisation and mechanisation.

**Rationalisation and specialisation.** Office work has been transformed since the end of the Second World War by an increasing specialisation of functions and the standardisation of administrative procedures. Mills (1951) wrote that the effectiveness of the entire industrial unit depended upon the efficiency of the office. He also wrote of the alienating conditions of modern work with respect to the commercial enterprise, where impersonal bureaucratic structures existed. According to Mills, “the modern office with its tens of thousands of square feet and its factory-like flow of work is not an informal, friendly place. The drag and beat of work, the ‘production unit’ tempo, require that time consumed by anything but business at hand be explained and apologised for” (p. 204).
Weber's writings on bureaucracy have been equated with the processes of industrial rationalisation. His "ideal-type" specified impersonality and emotional detachment to maximise rational decision-making, together with a rigid hierarchy that featured top-down communication and clear-cut specialisation of tasks, to accomplish diverse tasks efficiently where rewards were based on merit. Yet, the emergence of the bureaucratic career was defined in gendered terms as a male career (Crompton, 1986). Career progress from junior to senior jobs was premised on the fact that large amounts of routine work were carried out by women not eligible for promotion, thus enhancing the prospects of men in the organization. The marriage bar also allowed husbands to devote large amounts of time to the organizations' business because they had wives carrying out the unpaid domestic services of keeping hearth and home.

Weber's ideology of meritocracy and the rational criteria used to recruit and promote within organizations had a gendered subtext. To scholars such as Ramsay and Parker (1992), there was no "logical reason" why some specialisms or people within any complex organization should be more important than others or given a higher status and reward position within the organization (pp. 256-257). Weber's perspective has been seen to reflect both capitalist and patriarchal assumptions about control, skill, and rationality (Ramsay & Parker, 1992). Lockwood (1958) suggested that the traditional private social relationships of the office militated against the development of impersonality and bureaucratisation. But, by the 1970s, management strategies for controlling productivity and efficiency were applying to the office as well as the shop floor. Braverman's (1974) view was that there was little distinction between the modern office and the factory. He spoke of office work as deskilling, characterising it as dull, boring and dehumanised—alienating. His description of office work and the clerks within it postdated Lockwood's by sixteen years. Braverman considered the
office indistinguishable from the factory, and the clerk a helpless attendant of a highly
mechanised, high-speed labour process.

**Justifying segregation.** Crozier (1971) described the growth of the white-
collar workforce during the twentieth century as one of revolutionary proportions
comparable to the industrial revolution of the 19th century. The expansion and
proliferation of white-collar jobs in the late 19th century enabled many men to move
into lower and middle-management positions. Employers started to recruit women
into clerical work with the rationale that women worked better on routine tasks and at
lower wages than male clerks. Those men who had the opportunity to leave clerical
work also took collective steps to protect themselves from female invasion into the
new managerial groups. Since managerial and accounting occupations required
training and extensive qualifications, women were effectively disqualified from such
jobs and confined to the lower levels of the office hierarchy (Davies, 1974; Walby,
1986). Because of employers’ preference for cheap, relatively docile labour in all
sectors, job segregation became a negotiated outcome of a struggle between men,
employers and women; and “a strategy to overcome men’s resistance” to being
displaced (Walby, 1986, p. 154). Walby wrote, “this was not a case of skilled workers
merely trying to maintain their position *vis-à-vis* capitalist employers, but rather had a
specifically patriarchal dimension [italics in original]” (p. 150). In other words, at the
turn of the century men did not want married women in paid work at all; they should
be at home performing the role of the housewife.

In Victorian society, even if girls went out to work, they were usually still
living at home, in which case wages could be pitched accordingly.

It was common for parents still to bear the cost of feeding
and lodging of their girl, with her earning only enough from
working full-time to dress herself. This was the start of the
pernicious doctrine that women should work only for pin-money. (Davies, 1975, p. 80)

Women who entered clerical work also came from a narrow range of the population, most from middle-class backgrounds. Most, having no husband to support them, worked out of necessity. Working in offices, as opposed to being nannies, teachers or nurses offered a measure of independence from families or employers heretofore not found.

Many girls from working-class backgrounds likewise sought jobs in offices in preference to the drudgery of domestic service. ... The fact that office girls were typically single, young, much more independent and often more 'daring' in their appearance has much to do with the contemporary image of the typist or secretary as a man-hunting good-time girl. (Benet, 1972, pp. 53-54)

For the army of office girls, employers were not interested in furthering women's liberation but motivated by expedience and cost efficiency. Conditions were harsh. Their freedom was limited. They could not go out of the office building during working hours. They were separated from the men in the offices (thereby negating the 'husband hunting' territory theory) and given work by a female supervisor only. The ideology that women worked only for "pin money" further reinforced the justification for low wages being applicable to young women still partially supported by their parents.

A transformation in the sexual composition of the clerical and later secretarial labour force accompanied the growth of white-collar work. "The very significant expansion of clerical occupations between 1870 and 1974 is largely accounted for by the changing structure of capital" (Walby, 1986, p. 144). In the 19th century, office work was essentially a masculine domain, but by the mid-twentieth century, office work had become quintessentially feminine. As Davies (1975) noted, "the growing
specialisation of office functions in turn served to debase clerical employment from what it had been…a way to managerial status” (p. 81). Employers appeared to be well aware of the advantages of hiring women clerical workers; they were seen to be more punctual and efficient, and reconciled to lack of promotion (Anderson, 1988). A typist could not expect to be promoted to positions of authority in the office regardless of how well she typed. The assumption and justification for segregation confirmed that the ambition of a secretary would be determined by the prestige and position of her boss, rather than in terms of merit or any ultimate measure of her competence.

Secretaries as Pink-Collar Workers

Evolution of Secretarial Work

The nature of secretarial work has changed dramatically over time. Prior to World War I, the clerical and secretarial occupation was a male preserve (Benet, 1972; Davies, 1974, 1975). The rate of women entering these occupations was at its highest around the two world wars (Anderson, 1988). Under monopoly capitalism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the proliferation of paperwork and the subsequent growth of the white-collar workforce, enabled promotion out of office work for many men. While men as a group moved into new managerial jobs, they also had the collective strength to limit women’s access to them. Thus, the gender transformation in office work was not merely one of more clerical jobs becoming available to women, but also of the concept “women’s work” being assigned to specific technological tools, namely the typewriter and telephone. In the 1880s, shorthand was a skill jealously guarded by men and associated with a masculine image. Once office work became associated with “women’s work,” shorthand became linked with typing as a feminine skill. It was through the major use of the typewriter that the female
gender composition of the secretarial occupation became solidified. The skills involved in typing and telephoning became those appropriately suitable for women.

Remington introduced the first typewriters in 1873, but typewriters were not in general use until the 1890s. Typewriters eased the entry of women into offices. It was entry, however, not into the new professions of accounting, office management, and company Secretaryship, but to routine office chores (Davies, 1975). As typewriters came into general use, typing became accepted as an appropriate skill for women. And, as office work became regarded as women’s work, so the tasks they performed became known as those not requiring demands on the intellect. Typing skills were not compared to those required by typography, which was a man’s craftskill, but were equated with piano playing—the universal accomplishment of young ladies (Zimmeck, 1986). Thus, women became stereotyped as endowed with greater finger dexterity and, therefore, as being the most fitting operators of typewriters (Davies, 1975), an assumption that limited their advancement potential. By the 1970s,

The jobs of comptometer operating, filing, copy-typing and telephone answering are not renowned as stepping stones to the director’s chair, while the job of secretary is sometimes alleged to lead in that direction, but quite incorrectly so. The jobs that women do in the white-collar world on the whole preclude upward movement, and in the case of those positions which theoretically offer some opportunities for advancement through the ranks, men rather than women tend to benefit.³ (McNally, 1979, p. 44)

However, Silverstone (1974) believed that secretarial work could be considered a bridging occupation where the potential for movement to another type of job was particularly great. Yet, he also found that most employers did not consider that there was a natural progression from secretarial to executive duties, and that any such movement would necessitate a specialised form of training. He suggested that any
exercise of hierarchical authority or power would be experienced, at most, vicariously by the average secretary.

**Definitions of the secretary.** The nature of secretarial work, along with the definition of the secretary, has changed over time. Though men retained a presence in the area until World War II, secretarial work is currently presented as quintessentially feminine. Further, all women have been assumed capable of typing which has trivialised secretarial work and minimised the real contribution secretaries make to the smooth running of formal organizations.

An older meaning or definition of *secretary* lives on in titles such as Secretary of State, Press Secretary, British Foreign Secretary, or American Defense Secretary, signifying primarily male preserves exercising enormous power. This type of Secretary can be defined as the following:

One who is entrusted with private or secret matters; one whose office is to write for another, especially one who is employed to conduct correspondence, to keep records and (usually) to transact other business for another person or for a society, corporation or public body. (Pringle, 1993, p. 134)

According to Pringle, this definition would be acceptable to men who are Secretaries in a company or union. However, these men would be uncomfortable with being compared to an administrative secretary or anyone serving a manager. Pringle offered a second definition of secretary to demonstrate a transition of meaning:

Private secretary – a secretary employed by a minister of state or other high official for the personal correspondence connected with his official positions. Also applied to a secretary in the employ of a particular person (as distinguished from the secretary to a society, etc.). (p. 135)

Private secretaries or assistants to senior managers still act as officers of the company or organization, but are usually included with typists for purposes of official statistics. As Murphree (1986) pointed out, "secretary" tends to be a catchall category for any
worker who performs tasks that support the work of others, usually a manager or other professional. Official statistics, however, often make no distinction between typists and secretaries, as though one could legitimately regard life in data processing departments as identical to life in the inner sanctum of the senior executive’s suite of offices. Moreover, “their continuity with secretaries in the earlier sense goes largely unacknowledged” (Pringle, 1993, p. 135). A third definition more accurately conveys the contemporary secretary. According to Pringle, this definition indicated the shift to women’s work: “A person employed to help deal with correspondence, typing, filing and similar routine work” (p. 135). While typing and filing may be the most observable characteristics of the job, they actually constitute a small portion of the average secretary’s time (Murphree, 1986).

The twin processes of technological and business rationalisation have brought about a division of clerical functions into two separate components, executed by two different groups of employees. The first category is: the true secretary—the boss’s personal assistant—who performs a degree of routine tasks such as typing, taking dictation, filing, and spending a great deal of time organizing her boss’s daily activities. The other category is a worker engaged in routine paper work (e.g. data processing), and who is located at some distance from the corridors of power. New technologies continually transform the skills and tasks involved in secretarial work. Still, secretaries have been lumped into categories with other groups such as “typists and stenographers” and “other clerical” workers. Some “professional” or “career” secretaries would prefer a narrower definition. Yet bosses have been happy to use the term broadly, so they can maintain a clear division between secretaries and management and avoid acknowledging the skills of “top” secretaries. Bosses have been unwilling to promote their secretaries and thus risk losing someone with “inside
knowledge” about themselves and their way of working, or to risk losing the symbol of their status (Benet, 1972; Golding, 1986; Kanter, 1977; Pringle, 1989b; Vinnecombe, 1980). The only aspect of the work situation shared by all secretaries has been that men typically hire them, fire them, and in some cases regard them as sexual entertainment (Pringle, 1989b). More importantly, because of the unclear boundaries surrounding secretarial work, bosses have been able to exercise a great deal of control over them by allocating tasks demarcated by gender.

Benet (1972), Kanter (1977), and Pringle (1989b) revealed that the more elevated the executive, the more closely his secretary’s duties approximated those of a “wife” who carries out “domestic” duties at work (Benet, 1972, p. 72). These duties were seen as extending beyond formal boundaries and geared towards relieving men of having to bother with the messy and unpredictable details of day-to-day existence (Benet, 1972; Golding, 1986; Vinnecombe, 1980). For some feminist scholars, the performance of domestic tasks for bosses has been a means of reinforcing the Victorian “cult of true womanhood.” This was a notion based on the ideology that women know their place and conform to their circumstances, behaving in similarly gendered modes both outside and inside bureaucracies. The place of women, then, is in relation to ordering “the materiality of the everyday world, be this a kitchen or office” (Witz & Savage, 1992, p. 25). With this in mind, the patriarchal relations in the office can metaphorically be viewed as the boss being the “oak,” and his secretary, the “vine,” which perpetuates secretaries’ inferior position, rendering occupational advancement extremely difficult. It therefore becomes essential to reconsider the relations between secretaries and their bosses with the recognition that their gendered relational quality is a two-way power relation. As Witz and Savage (1992) suggested:
The whole concept of ‘dependency’ within the context of gender relations acquires an interesting new twist, for it is men who are dependent upon the concretizing activities of women in order to sustain their involvement in the everyday world of, for example, bureaucratic administration. (p. 26)

Thus, my research will be devoted to exploring the role of contemporary secretaries who are situated at the heart of the status hierarchy of female office workers and their subsequent opportunities for advancement. The “office wife” as Pringle (1989b) argued, “distinguishes the secretary from other clerical workers and represents the highest position to which members of these groups could aspire” (p. 6).

**The role of the secretary.** Golding (1986) and Pringle (1989b) have argued that the secretary’s job is defined by its very nature as a feminine role. Similarly, the management role is defined as masculine, even with a female manager. Furthermore, the way in which the role of the secretary is defined reflects the gender stereotype surrounding the occupation. For instance, the secretarial role has been defined as the “office wife” (Benet, 1972; Kanter, 1977; McNally, 1979; Pringle, 1989a, 1989b; Truss, 1993, 1994; Truss, Goffee & Jones, 1995) and viewed as a mirror of male/female relations in society. A traditional wife’s domestic duties have been custodial and supportive, so the secretary’s office duties are regarded as revolving not only around technical capabilities, such as typing, word processing, shorthand dictation, etc., but have also involved emotional aspects in generally supporting and representing the boss. Thus, the secretary’s role has been to assist the boss by taking care of personal and administrative matters, while he/she concentrates directly on a work project at hand (Golding, 1986; Kanter, 1977; Pringle, 1989b). The equation of a secretary with wife was important in establishing normative versions of the secretarial role, but there has not been a clear job description of this employment category.
Debates about changes in secretarial work frequently have been cast in terms of how far “office marriages” have changed. In the late 1990s, we can now question whether the distinction between “deference” and “respect” has been replaced by “friendship” and “team-work” as Pringle (1989b) suggested. Are they merely the opposite sides of the same coin? Informality in itself is no guarantee of a more reciprocal, equitable relationship, as it might instead serve to disguise the operations of private forms of patriarchal relations that the secretary as “office wife” engages in with her boss, whether they are male or female.

**The Secretary as Office Wife**

The origin of the “office wife” lies in the early part of the 20th century, the role stemming from the controversy over the appropriateness of whether middle-class women should work outside the home. The “office wife” term itself signified that the primary and rightful role of women was as a wife, thereby restricting paid employment to low paying support roles. The office wife is portrayed as subservient and reserved:

> The extension of her boss, loyal, trustworthy and devoted. She is expected to “love, honour, and obey,” relieving him of the routine and the trivial, creating the conditions for his detachment from the mundane rituals of everyday life. She is the gatekeeper, protecting him from those who would waste his time or want to know his private business, mediating his relations with the outside world and even with himself. ...She may either rival the wife or liaise with her in order to “organise” him. (Pringle, 1989b, p. 7)

The two main requirements of the office wife were that she was deferential and “ladylike.” For Pringle, “the qualities of a ‘good woman’ are encapsulated in the ‘good secretary’” (p. 3). The association with domestic roles and the stereotyping of
individuals occupying secretarial positions illuminate contemporary problems for secretaries.

Texts of the 1950s and 1960s were full of pious clichés related to how secretaries should behave like ladies. It was the task of business colleges to produce these characteristics rather than merely a set of technical skills. Today's managers continue to speak in similar terms when referring to their "ideal" secretary, and most accept the relationship as analogous to a fairly traditional marriage with a clear-cut division of labour. The secretary's task, similar to that of a wife, has been to manage the myriad of details in the life of the boss, enabling him or her to focus solely on a business activity. While suitably deferential, the secretary must possess enough initiative to anticipate and act on the boss's behalf. This requires that she is thoroughly aware of the business and in tune with the boss's moods, thought processes, and ways of working (Pringle, 1989b). Pringle suggested that even though the relationship may be less formal than it used to be, and the boss more likely to be on first-name terms with his secretary, "he still wants his needs anticipated and met, his instructions carried out without question, and his secretary always available to him" (1989b, p.8).

Even though most contemporary secretaries work for more than one person, there is always a "boss" with whom they have a special private relation. Bosses often do not admit to sharing a secretary; she is still "their" secretary who happens to work for other people as well. While thoroughly subordinate to her boss, the secretary is allocated considerable authority; however, as an office wife, her opportunities for advancement have been constrained.

One of the main concerns within the sociological literature on secretaries has been to show the associations that exist between secretarial work and "women's work" in general. Silverstone and Towler (1983) have claimed that secretarial work
has been carried out primarily by women, and consequently, singled out as stereotypical "women's work" (p. 32). Truss (1993) and Truss, Goffee and Jones (1995) found that this has been true, not just in English-speaking countries (Benet, 1972; Kanter, 1977; Pringle, 1989b; Silverstone & Towler, 1983), but also in France and Germany as well.

To assess how the gendered nature of secretarial work relates to the development and maintenance a female identity, Truss et al. (1995) reported the findings of their cross-national case study of multinational organizations in France, England and Germany. Their research (185 questionnaires and 33 interviews with secretaries, 22 with their bosses, and six with personnel representatives) found that secretarial work in all three countries conformed to gender stereotypes, but that organizational and societal factors also impinged on the social construction of secretarial work. They reported important national differences in education and training and substantial similarities across organizational contexts. The domestic side of secretarial work (defined as making coffee, running personal errands, and washing up) was much less in evidence in France than in the other two countries. In Germany, there appeared to be a strong expectation that domestic tasks should form a part of the secretary's job. The English secretaries were found to fall somewhere in between these two extremes. One common thread across all three countries was the view held by both bosses and secretaries that the carrying out of domestic duties was based on an existing personal relationship between the individuals. Therefore, Truss et al. considered the dynamics of the occupational structure and the role played by national institutions in shaping patterns and experiences of women's work and also gave consideration to the role of the secretary as agent, acting to shape her work identity. They concluded that the interaction between these processes made up the social
construction of secretarial work, rendering promotion out of secretarial work extremely rare.

The secretary when viewed as an “office wife” is a woman who has a mixture of abilities and qualities similar to that of a “good woman.” Women have spent a great deal of their time performing the drudgery at home and in the office, while men make the decisions. Both types of work have become increasingly mechanised, making secretaries more productive and less burdened with routine tasks. A crucial difference is that of tenure and job security in organizations. A prevalent opinion expressed in secretarial manuals’ was that the boss is always right even when he is wrong. The perfect secretary, like the perfect wife, knows her place, conforms to the expectations, and is willing to do the personal tasks for the boss or his family. It could be argued that these sorts of activities are thought to distinguish the exceptional secretaries from the merely capable, or that they are reinforcing the values inherent in a female culture. When secretaries perform their role as an office wife they tend to criss-cross social and work roles. Thus, in the context of pink-collar work, we can question whether secretaries’ labours of love, or emotion work, influence their forms of resistance to private segregationist practices, thereby affecting their opportunities for advancement beyond pink-collar work.

The Female Culture

Much of secretarial labour includes not only intellectual work but also includes emotional aspects of work that may be perceived as invisible, yet essential to fulfilling the goals of the boss and organization. If sociologists are to connect the cultural or intersubjective aspects of work to patterns of social inequality, then we must focus attention on the culture of the workplace and on the work values that bind
occupational groups together. Furthermore, if we attempt to specify how people act and think about their work, and consequently themselves, we must also look to the wider culture which establishes the normative rules. Bernard (1981) argued that women are the products of a female world, which is an entity in its own right, not merely by-products of the male world. Therefore, the behaviour of secretaries, like other pink-collar workers such as nurses or elementary schoolteachers (Howe, 1977, p. 21) would represent their subjective gender identities in and out of work, and would reflect the conventions and values inherent in this female world.

Bernard (1981) characterised the female world as one demonstrating "the kin-and locale-based or Gemeinschaft [italics added] nature of its structure and the love-and/or-duty ethos of its culture" (p. 28). The ethos is not a cash nexus exchange, but "grants" of goods and services in order to build community "by which loyalty is created, legitimacy accepted, and love fostered" (pp. 26-27). Tönnies himself identified the Gemeinschaft with the female world. "The realm of life and work in Gemeinschaft is particularly befitting to women; indeed, it is even necessary for them" (1957, p. 162). In other words, women tend to form strong, stable, social and emotional bonds that are enduring. They have shared common norms and values that are community and identity building in nature. This world is emotionally expansive.

In Epstein's (1990) research on communications workers, ample evidence was found of communal behaviour among workers, "with all the gemeinschaft relations celebrated by students of workplace solidarity" (p. 93). Andrisani (1978) found that interpersonal relationships at work, particularly the quality of friendships at work, were the most important predictors of work satisfaction for women. For secretaries, this would mean that they anchor their identity and status in communal groups. With other women, they would be most relaxed, and at ease. Their actions in the office
would also be geared toward building a sense of community. Bernard has claimed that the activities of women mediate the Gesellschaft or capitalistic world peopled primarily by men, a world which is highly competitive, impersonal, rational, calculating and motivated by self-interest; one that values “making it,” at whatever cost. “This behaviour can be lethal to the human spirit leaving modern human beings in a futile quest for community” (Bernard, 1981, p. 24). Balbo (1987) used the metaphor of patchwork quilts when she analysed the ways in which women, through their “servicing” work, hold together a complicated, fragmentary, modern society. In meeting human needs, women’s skills range from emotional to managerial—essential in an increasingly service-based economy and information age society. Thus, the skills and values common to women meet the human need for community.

**Labours of love.** Bernard (1981) has characterised the female culture as one emphasising community, love, harmony, kindness, politeness, and compassion. These human qualities have been shown to be associated with performing a “crazy quilt” (Balbo, 1987) of organizational, technical and emotional work. From these perspectives, it can be argued that secretaries attach importance to contributing to their boss’s and their own status through the performance of domestic tasks. These actions can be considered status enhancement work. For instance, if the secretary as an office wife is able to have a nice office and render hospitality, then this is a means of “status enhancement” (Coser, 1990, p. 81). As Coser suggested, women’s cultural activities can be considered part of this status maintenance work. These activities can include gossip, gift exchanges, and even management of feasts where secretaries increase the status of the department, and since the boss is considered the head of the department, of the boss. Bernard also discussed the idea of the “thereness of women” (p. 10). This would mean that even if a secretary is not present, or if present, was not talking or
even interacting with her boss, the secretary as an office wife is still “there” serving as a stabiliser of the boss’ life. Her round-the-clock “thereness” can amount to more time than the time the boss spends in her presence. He/she can go about their business secure in the knowledge that the secretary is still there to listen, to respond, and to interact when or if he/she needs her. This equates to psychological time that the secretary as an office wife is spending with the boss.

Bernard’s (1981) characterisation of the female culture included “the strongly conditioned values of women...those of duty, obligation, and sacrifice” (p. 29). This characterisation did not rest on sentimental or patronising or largely negative perspectives, but rather on the evidence from academic research. She presented literature documenting that the world of women has indeed been a kin- and locale-based world in which women perform an integrating function in society. Gilligan (1977) found that the values of solidarity and harmony far outweighed “the ideal of equality” (p. 485). The visible components of the female culture can be found in their rituals, norms, roles, rules of behaviour and expectations, dress customs, gestures and communication patterns, all of which are reflected in everyday life—the symbolism of femininity. However, we should be cautious when valorising the relational qualities of caring and emotion work. Drawing on Ruddick’s (1989) analysis of “maternal thinking,” Eisenstein suggested that modes of maternal thinking and acting should be seen as learned, and that not everything symbolised by women’s culture in the past is useful for women in the present or future (cited in Witz & Savage, 1992, p. 44).

The only viable criterion for distinguishing various types of work from each other in relation to the society and economy becomes the social meaning of activities, their value and the context in which they are undertaken. For secretaries, much of the work that they do has involved emotional work (Hochshild, 1983), or labours of love
(Friedson, 1990). Labours of love for secretaries can include providing domestic service for bosses such as buying their lunches, collecting dry cleaning, doing minor errands, playing hostess, making personal travel arrangements or buying gifts for the boss's wife and/or children. Subsequently, their labours of love may also affect their forms of resistance to providing these domestic tasks in the office. Yet, like most research on women in work settings, there has been a lack of material that covers thoroughly their resistance to such private patriarchal practices.

Female strategies of resistance. Even writers who have produced research on particular female work settings such as Westwood (1984), Pollert (1981) and Pierce (1995), have not highlighted female forms of resistance to the same extent as contemporary pieces of work about male labour. In the case of secretaries, resistance is rarely mentioned. The research on secretaries conducted by Ames (1996) did find that secretaries challenged their subordination by leaving the organization if necessary; but because they also gained satisfaction through accomplishing assigned responsibilities, secretaries reinforced the power and control structured within the organization. This observation certainly highlights the need for more research to be undertaken that focuses on the elements of a female culture in workplace settings. Three recent pieces of work that do focus on female strategies of resistance to organizational control are relevant for this current study of secretaries.

Lee-Treweek (1997) and Shapiro-Perl (1984) captured a wide range of female strategies of resistance, both individual and collective, to the subordinating and/or oppressive conditions in which women in a jewellery factory and women working as nursing auxiliaries in nursing homes faced. They both showed that female forms of resistance on an everyday level were mainly non-confrontational and less readily perceivable than on a formal level. For instance, Lee-Treweek's ethnographic study of
nursing auxiliary workers described their ambiguous relationship to authority as an acceptance of their place, and yet, at other times, as resistance to the organizational hierarchy. She called them “strategies of resistance” to make explicit what is implicit in women workers’ words and actions. Lee-Treweek found that subcultures developed within the caring workplace, and the workers’ strategies of resistance, were mainly ones of non-compliance, or as Goffman (1961) described “situational withdrawal.” Total silence, rather than screaming, crying or talking back, was the active form of women’s resistance. The auxiliary workers felt that it was their job “to cope” with their work situation. Pride in their work was obtained by “going the distance”, getting through often excessive amounts of work, and “laughing” with friends about it (Lee-Treweek, 1997, p. 59).

Similarly, Davies (1992) described the management style of nurses as “coping management” which was seen as a particularly female management style associated with aspects of female socialization (p. 238). While her study did not directly analyse nurses’ strategies of resistance, Davies observed this behaviour as “a response to organizational neglect and a strategy that in the end reinforces that neglect” (p. 239). Coping was described as the result of gender socialization that underlined service to others, a personal commitment to the task, and getting on with whatever needs to be done. “The process of coping...while in one sense a very active one, can also be seen as ‘passivity’ in the sense of a failure to challenge the status quo and no effort to change the circumstances in which the work is done” (p. 240). To the extent that nurses bring elements of the female culture to the conduct of their work, coping in this context can be seen as a non-confrontational strategy involving both compliance and resistance.
Shapiro-Perl's (1984) fieldwork in a Rhode Island jewellery factory found that women assembly workers used pacing to regulate their output while serving their economic interests, akin to the findings from the Hawthorne studies. However, she also found that griping and antics were a collective protest to their work situation—safely performed, however, in the loo. This behaviour was analysed as deliberate stalling and thus as a form of passive resistance. The self-preserving resistance strategy proved self-defeating in the end. The most serious act of resistance that these workers demonstrated was threatening to quit. However, this form of resistance was waged as individuals, engaged in solitary acts of defiance.

Exploring female strategies of resistance can certainly lead sociologists in the direction of understanding women workers as agents who possess knowledge about patriarchal relations in paid work environments. Machung (1992) described the organizational rules of subordination in the clerical hierarchy, which included hiding talents, giving credit upwards, focusing on details, doing it perfectly, and keeping silent. This would suggest that secretaries reinforce their gender identity when applying the rules of subordination; a strategy that ends up denying them opportunities to develop highly rewarded competencies. Secretaries might resist the power relations between themselves and bosses, but in a non-confrontational manner, which undermines their advancement potential.

**Technology, Advancement and Collective Action**

**Technology.** Lanier (1992) provides an outline of the history of office automation from 1870 to 1990 shown in Appendix B. Changes to computer hardware
and software since the 1960s are indicative of the magnitude of recent economic and social transformations. As a result of the emergence of new forms of work related to major changes in technology, the role of contemporary secretaries has expanded. Fearful (1992, 1994) found that as a result of changes in computing, clerical workers have developed additional skills and knowledge that extend their roles within organizations.

Technological innovations that introduced word processing equipment in the late 1970s fundamentally altered the secretarial position within organizations. In the early 1980s, Macintosh introduced a new computer operating system, making secretaries’ technical jobs easier. Macintosh, and then IBM, function keys were amended by the technology of the “mouse” where one simply has to “click” on an icon to quickly produce or modify a document, graph, or chart. Over the last two decades, the evolution in high-speed computers, information technologies, software, and telecommunications have all affected secretarial work, the managing of organizations, and workplace relations (Coates, 1992).

The mental knowledge now required in the secretarial labour process deals with the production of information in fast-paced business environments. Computers have facilitated the development of data generation, calculation and problem solving skills. For secretaries, the improvement in communication technology has required knowledge of specific computer software programs, and is associated with mental challenges. Zuboff (1988) referred to these as “intellective skills” that involve abilities of “abstraction, explicit inference and procedural reasoning” (pp. 75-76). The expertise in secretarial work now involves data analysis capacities, knowledge of word processing, data bases, spreadsheets, automated filing, computer e-mail, and use...
of the internet services' systems that require creativity, autonomy, responsibility, and the ability to cope with difficulties.

During the 1980s a demand increased in advanced capitalist countries for flexible, mental-service workers accustomed to doing multi-task jobs (Castells & Aoyama, 1994). Global market competition and economic instability also forced many businesses to "downsize" or restructure their hierarchical layers, and as a result, some responsibilities formerly belonging to managers became part of the secretary's purview. The changes to the office since the advent of computer technology have added to the complexity of emotional, social, intellectual, and technical skills needed for secretarial work. I have provided an overview of the complex role of contemporary secretaries in Figure 2 and some secretarial tasks that include emotional skills as well as technical and creative skills. Office tasks now demand higher technical and creative expertise used to coordinate and organize information that is crucial to office productivity. While we are a long way from discovering the main features and social implications in the 21st century workplace, the level of job complexity (i.e. mastery of technological and management skills) involved in the secretarial labour process could open doors for their career advancement.
## Secretarial Tasks

| Corporate communications assistant |  |
| ----------------------------------- |  |
| Assumes managerial responsibilities | Technical and interpersonal problem solving |
| Coordinate meetings (i.e., diary management) | Production of annual/quarterly reports |
| Prepare budgets and spreadsheets | Distribute reports |
| Produce and maintain documents |  |
| Generate mailing lists | Gatekeeper |
| Handle phones | Excellent verbal/written communication |
| Excellent organization skills | Type 50-100 wpm |
| Work well under pressure | Manage large volumes of work |
| Manage on-line information services | Top five computer jobs: |
| Spreadsheet |  |
| Mailing list maintenance | Retrieving information |
| Word processing | Scheduling |

### Office Wife: Emotional Skills

- Make manager's life as easy as possible
- Become indispensable
- Play hostess (i.e., coffee/tea service)
- Face-to-face shorthand dictation
- Perform personal/domestic services
- Fetch personal items
- Solve Interpersonal Problems

### Technical and Creative Skills

- Unravel computer complexities
- Access on-line services for data, voice, facsimile, telex, and word processing
- Perform administrative operations of greater responsibility due to restructuring of mid-management ranks
- Information producer (i.e., mastery of computer hardware and software)
- Computer medium gives liberty to explore database management, accounting spreadsheets, and desktop publishing
- Develop skills that combine knowing how to create and use extended interpersonal networks with how to translate access to sources of specialized knowledge/information into attractive products
- Solve technical problems
- Make rational choices between alternatives to produce organized, coordinated actions

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**Figure 2.** The complex roles of secretaries and the tasks that include emotional, technical and creative skills.
**Advancement.** As a result of computer technology, secretaries are now able to take on more duties, enhance their status, and therefore, may be able to improve their potential for advancement. Computer technology has the capacity to free secretaries from more tedious work, enhance their position as a valuable part of a management team, and enable them to move beyond the stereotypical role of an office wife. In the 1990s the role of the secretary expanded, so that as a group their advancement potential could stem from the attained skills of a communications specialist, and producer and manager of information. With mastery of computer software programs, secretaries are also better equipped to solve problems.

Studies have shown that the skills needed to perform secretarial tasks have similarities to those types of skills required of management (Bredlin, 1990; Brooke, 1992; Gittler, 1990; Mahaffie, 1992; Myers, 1990; Pringle, 1989b). Today's secretary joins the workforce with knowledge of personal computing systems that can be used to (a) gain access to information via a wide variety of sources, (b) network through telecommunications, and (c) build valuable information databases. Technology can be seen as an organizational conduit for secretarial advancement, providing opportunities for secretaries to become editors, authors, and valuable sources of information. Some studies have shown that advancement for secretaries depends on their mastery of modern office technology (Brooke, 1992; Halal, 1992; McLaughlin, 1983; Mahaffie, 1992). Yet other studies in gendered organizations have shown that opportunities to move beyond secretarial work have been rare (Golding & Golding, 1984; Pringle, 1989a, 1989b; Truss, 1993, 1994; Truss, Goffee & Jones, 1995). Savage (1992) suggested that while women in white-collar occupations have a considerable degree of autonomy to exercise their expertise, like secretaries, they do not have equal access to promotional career paths.
Women's opportunities to advance beyond pink-collar work may be further restricted by the evolution in high-speed computers, information technologies, and telecommunications. Advances in technology have challenged the traditional base of bureaucratic authority, based on patterns of restricted, one-way communication and the monopoly of knowledge. The traditional base of authority for middle and lower level managers has been threatened by mental workers developing the skills of problem resolution, computer analysis, and autonomous control (OECD, 1993). As Taylor and Van Every (1993) argued, “the new networking and personal computing technologies incorporate a hierarchy-destroying, or fragmenting property. They are a Pandora’s box” (p. 166). We can now question whether promoting an increased specialisation of secretarial tasks might become a patriarchal strategy to limit secretaries' advancement potential. As Walby (1988a) suggested, organizational settings have been gendered materially as well as ideologically. When personal computers arrived in the workplace, they were associated with typing, therefore, women. Walby (1988a) noted:

The computer was the brainchild of male engineers and born into a male line of production technology. The fact that it has a keyboard rather like a (feminine) typewriter confuses no one for long. ...When boys/men use the keyboard they often take care to do so with two fingers only, so that they cannot be thought to be typists. (p. 38)

The way in which the role of the secretary has been historically defined (objectively and subjectively) could augment the gender stereotype surrounding the occupation—despite modern demand for higher levels of technological, organizational, and communication skills. It could be argued, then, that as women perceive their limited chances for advancement, they focus on personal rather than organizational rewards.
Pringle (1993) has argued that despite technological advances in the office, the underlying meaning, status, primary responsibilities, and the term “secretary” itself remain equated with office wife. She cited one of the main factors confining women to the lower rungs of the office ladder—the patriarchal assumption that females tend to be “unstable” employees. Employers’ attitudes have been based upon fallacious or simplistic perceptions of women and their attitudes to work. They have been reluctant to promote or to train women for more interesting jobs whom they feel are unlikely to stay with the firm very long. Some of the stereotypical responses have been either that secretaries are “not cut out” for business or “they do not have what it takes” to succeed. Pringle showed how patriarchy among 1970s chief executives was illustrated by the fact that they surrounded themselves with the symbols of achievement, and that one of these “status” symbols was the secretary. She suggested that a display of sexual superiority tended to confirm the boss’s position of power and authority. Therefore, he would be unlikely to promote his subordinate to a position similar to his own.

Another theme in the literature discussing why secretaries would not become management executives was that some of them did not seek promotion of this kind. They enjoyed the vicarious status of being associated with their boss and did not entertain thoughts of moving into the arena of decision-making. Secretaries saw no comparison between their tasks and those of their bosses; they were distinct. Promotion, to them meant working for a higher status boss. Pringle (1989b) and McNally (1979), however, saw resignation to the inevitable rather than a low level of ambition as the most important factor determining lack of progression into higher status and rewarded posts. For secretaries, one of the principle sources of job dissatisfaction was found to be the lack of opportunities for promotion and the exercise of a greater degree of responsibility (Silverstone, 1974).
Collective action. Research has shown that many secretaries believe the status of the occupation has declined over the years. This belief includes the idea that the usefulness of the secretarial career as a stepping stone into management levels for women has declined. To arrest the decline in their status, a small group of American women in the 1940s formed the National Secretaries Association dedicated to the proposition that secretaries deserve more status, recognition and responsibility. The result was a programme to convince employers that the secretary could be a professional person as much as the accountant, the draughtsman, engineer or lawyer—if only she were given more responsible tasks than mere typing and dictation.

The collective struggle for improved conditions and professional recognition of secretaries began in the late 1940s, when large numbers of women began to remain in the workforce following marriage. Secretarial associations objected to the stereotypes and references to female office workers as “girls,” as well as to the undignified representations of them as “sex objects.” In 1952, the U.S. Department of Commerce joined Professional Secretaries International (PSI) in sponsoring the first National Secretaries Week to recognise “the American secretary, upon whose skills, loyalty, and efficiency the functions of business and government offices depend” (Sabo, 1992, p. 17). Secretaries’ Week promoted the idea of “raises, not roses or chocolates,” suggesting that material rewards such as money were the appropriate means for acknowledging the professional contributions that secretaries make in the workplace, rather than gifts typically associated with wives or girlfriends. Events like Secretaries’ Week have been designed to help increase public awareness of the vital role secretaries’ play in business, industry, education, government and the professions. During the 1970s, secretarial associations continued to struggle for professional recognition by promoting secretarial work as a career and a profession rather than just
a stopgap between leaving school and getting married. In Australia, secretaries were arguing that they were not hired for making tea. While some secretarial associations were calling for professionalisation, others were becoming more militant. In the United States, organizations like Nine to Five and Women Office Workers developed a national presence, along with considerable militancy (Pringle, 1989b).

Founded in England in 1974, the Association of Personal Assistants and Secretaries had 1000 members in 22 countries by 1994. This association sought to create an awareness and understanding of how secretaries have expanded their roles as a result of the rapid changes in technology (Jaszczak, 1995). The Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical, and Computer Staff was founded in England in 1890 as the Clerical and Administrative Workers’ Union, and by 1994 had more than 78,000 members. Their goal has been to advance the economic and social interests of their members, regulate relations between members and employers, and promote favourable legislation, employment assistance, and legal aid. They, too, have held annual conventions for secretaries. Another secretarial association, the Institute of Qualified Professional Secretaries (IQPS), was formed in 1957 and had 3000 members across the UK by 1993. Their stated goal was “to facilitate and encourage the training and continuing professional development of secretaries and to enable them to make a maximum contribution in their field of activity” (IQPS, 1993, p. 3).

These explicit messages from secretarial associations all call for increasing the status of secretaries in the workplace. However, all these associations have been unsuccessful in their attempts to convince employers and the general public that secretaries may be considered on a par with members of either the traditional or the new professions.
Secretarial associations and their collective attempts to increase secretaries' status have stressed the skill and experience of secretaries. They have objected to their sexual and familial definitions. They have urged playing down the "special" relationship between boss and secretary in favour of secretaries being considered an autonomous part of the management team—as career women. Yet this can be seen as a contradictory term, for it raises questions about whether it is possible to be both a "good woman" and to have a career. According to Pringle (1989b), it has been only since the 1970s that the "career" secretary has gained much public recognition, which stemmed from:

...the struggles of secretaries themselves supported by the women’s movement; the more sophisticated communications and decision-making requirements of large corporate structures; severe shortages of people with skills and qualifications; technological change with its implications for the transformation of jobs and skills; and the arrival, in the 1980s, of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Affirmative Action (AA) legislation which has created at least the potential for a proper recognition of secretarial skills and the opening up of career positions.

(p. 16)

To the extent that contemporary secretaries have become part of the management team, and participate in management meetings, they therefore should be entitled to incentive pay as well as to a share of profits and bonuses. However, Pringle (1989b) argued that promoting professionalisation comes into conflict with traditional expectations; for example, is it professional behaviour to make tea/coffee as a hostess might? There has been a tendency to play down this aspect of the job as trivial, yet "it is of immense symbolic importance to bosses not less than secretaries" (p.20). With professionalisation, then, who will perform the duties of office wife? Such questions address the relation between professionalisation and femininity. There are still those who assume that secretaries will continue to be women, and that their role will still be
defined as being that of a "good woman," a role in which they will conform and adjust their demeanour and skills to meet the needs of their boss.

**Conclusion**

White-collar work has been gender stratified. By the middle of the 20th century most clerical and secretarial work had become well and truly performed by women. Pink-collar workers have been described as women who occupy the lower-paid, less prestigious territories of white-collar work. For many pink-collar workers, office work has represented an occupational ghetto (or cul-de-sac) in spite of advances in information technology and collective attempts to raise their status. Yet, the growth of women in office work has been a major reason for the importance of that work in research about women's employment.

McNally (1979) was dissatisfied with the way sociologists neglected to study a particular group of workers, namely female office workers. In her opinion the neglect stemmed from a tendency to prejude clerical work as not worth exploring relative to those occupations thought to be more bizarre, colourful, degraded, or privileged. Although the recent growth of scholarly interest in women's position in society has done much to rectify the problems of general neglect, it remains the case that there are few published studies which examine systematically secretaries' orientation to work and their career aspirations in a pink-collar context. It may be that sociologists view this area of study as coming under the heading of the de-skilling thesis of Braverman, since office technology has been the catalyst for occupational change. Studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s of working women could be considered myopic, because of a tendency to focus on women in "top jobs" mainly at an aggregate level. Therefore, an empirical void leaves unanswered the question of how the process of
vertical occupational segregation persists from the perspective of secretaries working in gendered organizations.

This current study will include the ideas of socialization presented by gender role theorists. Bernard (1981) and Howe (1977) conclude that as a part of a female culture, women actively choose pink-collar occupations that integrate their caring or supportive roles in society with those in the workplace. From this perspective, “work is seen not just as a source of income, but also a primary source of social identity” (Crompton, 1988, p. 9). Balbo’s (1987) work complements that of Bernard’s (1981) when she analyses the ways in which women, through their “servicing” work, hold together a complicated, fragmentary, modern society. In meeting human needs, their skills range from emotional to managerial—essential in an increasingly service-based economy and information age society. The skills and values common to women meet the human need for community. Subsequently, their emotional labours of love may affect their forms of resistance to segregationist practices in paid work. With this in mind, it can be said that women operate within the material conditions of their existence, undertaking pink-collar work, such as the secretarial occupation, that integrates their identity while they provide emotional services that create a sense of community.

Research has shown that there is a blending of social and work roles when secretaries perform their role as an “office wife.” Thus, in the context of pink-collar work, we can question whether secretaries’ labours of love and emotion work affect their forms of resistance to private and public segregationist practices of control in the structure of paid employment, thereby affecting their own opportunities for career advancement beyond pink-collar work.
CHAPTER III

Methods

"Theory must remain at best hypothetical, at worst unreal and barren [unless we have detailed] case studies and surveys dealing with the experiences of selected groups of women in diverse cultures and time periods."

Berenice Carroll, 1976, p. xii

The question of how the process of vertical occupational segregation is maintained suggested the starting-point for an analysis of secretaries' roles and their opportunities for advancement beyond pink-collar work. In designing this project, consideration was given to the limited nature of Walby's (1986, 1989, 1990) theory of patriarchy. This project was designed as a theoretically informed multiple-case study using interviews, observations, and documents as the sources of data.

The opening quotation suggests that without case studies, feminist theories fall short in analysing the experiences of ordinary working women. I felt that the case study methodology adopted in this study was the most appropriate one for analysing the experiences of secretaries in workplace settings. Among others, Reinharz (1992b) has emphasised that qualitative work better reflects the nature of human and therefore women's experiences. When attempting to define secretaries' tacit knowledge regarding the institution of work, Frenkel et al. (1995) said that theoretically guided case study research would be necessary. It would need to be comparative in order to capture the effects of variations in organizational structures. The interview method has also been deemed the most efficient and best form of obtaining information on institutionalised norms and statuses, and the method of observation for capturing unverbalised norms (Zelditch, 1967). When using the case study methodology, data
from interviews, observations, and documents can be analysed as “methodological triangulation” (Fielding & Fielding, 1986, p. 25). In this way, Walby’s theory can be extended to include both structure and agency as mechanisms for maintaining the persistent phenomenon of occupational segregation.

This chapter focuses on the details of the case study methodology and the procedures I used to select the organizations, the subjects, and the tools to conduct this study. It also shows the constant interplay of data gathering and analysis procedures. The aim of this investigation was to draw comparisons between the career development activities in four Opportunity 2000 organizations, through analysis of interviews with 18 mid- to senior-level secretaries working within them. Office observations, and interviews with 10 managers and 13 with personnel representatives supplemented the interviews with secretaries. The sampling strategy in this qualitative inquiry was theoretically driven by a conceptual question; thus, the concern was not for “representativeness.” The prime concern was to get to the construct of patriarchy, to see different instances of it, at different moments, in different places, and with different people (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In other words, my concern was with the conditions under which the theory operates, not with the generalisation of the findings to other settings.

Theoretical sampling (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) also afforded me an opportunity to substantiate emergent categories by conducting interviews in four organizations (three large and one small), and with three secretaries in a university setting and one male secretary. The secretaries’ actions within these diverse workplaces have been taken to represent one factor in maintaining occupational segregation and to illustrate the way the process is reproduced by particular patriarchal relations in paid work environments.
Case Study Methodology

The term *methodology* refers to the epistemological foundations of deduction and inference, or the manner in which an interpretation is derived from the data. This study was designed to expand Walby's (1986, 1989, 1990) theory of patriarchy, by bridging the gap between structure and agency as oppositional perspectives on occupational segregation. It was designed to complete the circuit begun by structural theorists in their look at patriarchal relations, especially as they are situated in the context of contemporary workplaces. In order to complete that investigation, the individual actor must be taken into account. This approach conforms closely to the main empirical implications of structuration theory (Giddens, 1976, 1979, 1984). Giddens' synthesis of rival traditions has suggested that the "practice" of reproducing societal institutions was performed by the acting agent, as well as by the structure that provides context and boundaries for action. Walby's theory focused on the patriarchal structure of paid work as the main site of women's oppression in the 20th century. However, a question still remains: How do the structural properties (i.e. patriarchal relations, career development practices, disparity of status and pay, etc.) of organizational practices come into being as independent social constructions, reified beyond the potential for the human actor to understand, transform, or reproduce via an active, purposeful engagement? The structural properties of segregationist practices are as much the means of segregation as they are the outcome, and the actor is knee deep in the process of reproducing and being reproduced by those practices.

I have employed three research methods to look at the conditions and processes of practice. These methods will be discussed below. The workplace has been one of those social worlds constructed via the recursive nature of structure and
the individual. Giddens calls these "locations" of process; the workplace is a circuit of reproduction. In other words, to know these circuits of reproduction, it needs to be understood that "all structural properties of social systems...are the medium and outcome of the contingently accomplished activities of situated actors" (Cassell, 1993, p.132). Walby has missed the self-reflexive nature of the individual in her theory. She has implied that the supra-ordinate position of structural properties have been the fundamental means for reproducing patriarchal practices for workplace control. On the other hand, Giddens emphasised the conditions of that reproduction. Situated actors are not just monitoring the action between the two (structure and individual), but are simultaneously reproducing the very structural properties that they are monitoring. One cannot go to the "structure" of paid work and ask how it constrains women's careers. In order to have an understanding of the continued existence of patriarchal norms and segregationist practices in paid work, one must ask the partner of this construction—the individual actor. With a discursive ability, secretaries can answer both how and why their career opportunities have been constrained. When dealing with Walby's structural explanation of occupational segregation the case study approach allowed for an exploration of the conduct of secretaries with the capacity to produce, reproduce, and transform organizational practices.

Giddens (1989) argued, "The way forward in bridging the gap between 'structural' and 'action' approaches is to recognise that we actively make and remake social structure during the course of our everyday activities" [italics in original] (p. 705). In designing this study, I took into account the "voice" of secretaries as the primary means of knowing about their experiences of work and career opportunities. They can answer how patriarchal relations are reproduced, as far as they know it, by discursively giving voice to reason, intention, and motivation. In carrying out these
interviews, care was taken to be aware of how my "personal reflexivity" shaped my approach to and interpretation of the interviews (Brannen, 1988; Brewer, 1994; Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992c).

Acker (1989), Crompton (1988), and Reinharz (1992b) have proposed that in-depth qualitative studies are necessary to understand the manner in which gender infuses social life. However, Walby (1986, 1990) has been critical of qualitative approaches. She based this criticism on the grounds that while they provide documentation on the lives of women that can be analysed in a variety of ways, they fail to systematically address the persistence of patriarchal attitudes, or that there has been a tendency toward essentialism, biological reductionism, and false universalism. Walby (1986) presumed that it was at the level of a “social system that gender relations may be explained, not that of individual men, nor that of discrete social institutions” (p. 51). Walby therefore concluded that the notion of patriarchy was outside the range of concepts admissible in an interpretive sociological tradition because “their analyses are stuck on a micro level and cannot deal adequately with important forms of social structuring” (p.66). Walby (1990) stated that the “usage of qualitative methods in interviewing women about their experiences within the workplace in order to gain knowledge about patriarchal relations in the labour market does not engage in an identification of the underlying structures of social life” (pp. 17-18). Therefore, qualitative methods are of little value to gain an understanding of the concrete realisations of patriarchal relations in the workplace. What Walby failed to consider was how studying those private segregationist practices that exist in organizations, operating at the micro level, in paid work sites, can complement macrolevel analyses of gender relations.
On the other hand, Erikson (1990) among others has argued, "in fact, qualitative field studies, for all their widely advertised imprecisions, offer by far our best opportunity to understand how the ways of work are impressed on the persons exposed to them" (p. 31). To those sociologists trying to find grounding in the world of work for women, many researchers, including myself, argue that case studies and qualitative methods are especially useful when examining patriarchal relations in paid work sites. "Patriarchal relations" can serve as a sensitising conceptual device for helping to understand the way people relate to others and the work they do everyday. For instance, the organizational practices involved in delegating tasks or in the expectations of secretaries by their bosses have been influenced by past patriarchal relations in paid employment. The value of interviewing secretaries resides in gaining knowledge about how they feel about work and how they experience it. Acker (1989) proposed that "in-depth qualitative studies are not the sole avenue to an understanding of how gender infuses social life, only that they are necessary" (p. 239). And, as Crompton (1988) stated:

"Exploration of occupational segregation raises issues of more general theoretical and methodological concern. These have to do with both the nature of the occupational structure and the manner in which it is studied by social scientists. The occupational structure, and the people within it, is a continuing expression of the indivisibility of the "economic" and "social." The nature of women's employment throws all of these points into even sharper relief; it simply cannot be grasped unless the interdependence of economic and socio-cultural factors is taken as a starting point. ... The processes and direction of occupational segregation can only be understood through theoretically informed case studies." (pp. 34-35)

Many feminist projects have used case studies and interviews to describe the personal, everyday experiences of women, especially those on the margins of power (Kanter, 1977; Oakley, 1974, 1981; Pringle, 1989b). Max Weber (1949) argued that
studying social phenomena must include the study of conscious human agents who attach sense or meaning to their actions. A full understanding of social action, therefore, must involve empathetic understanding—*verstehen*. Qualitative researchers have affirmed the existence and importance of the subjective (i.e., the meaning-making at the center of social life). Case studies and qualitative methods have been found “extremely instructive in demonstrating the relation between individual lives and societal arrangements [affecting women]” (Reinharz, 1992b, p. 170). Feminist researchers have used interviews to validate women’s feelings and activities that have either been ignored or devalued in some research, and to understand more fully the broader context of human interaction. To overcome often inaccurate or incomplete knowledge, many feminist researchers advocated micro-level analyses and the use of qualitative case studies to develop adequate theory and understanding of social phenomena that directly affect women.

Crompton (1988) and Siltanen (1994) have called for case studies of well-defined jobs, or within identifiable employment settings, to uncover the history and social circumstances of gender segregated employment. Detailed research of this sort can illuminate the gender processes and social practices involved in the reproduction and transformation of segregated employment that is often presented in the explanation of aggregate patterns. Smith (1987) argued that we need knowledge about women’s history and experiences, as viewed from the standpoint of women. Therefore, when using the case study methodology and comparative methods, I was able to incorporate and understand the role of secretaries and their subjective understanding of career advancement within workplace sites (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1984, 1993). From this methodological perspective, an internally consistent argument can be constructed “with theoretical referents from a series of
empirical facts in the form of texts, perceptions and social acts” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 14). The case study methodology also allowed for an examination of the implications of paradigm contrasts and connections, permitting a more sophisticated approach to analysis of the mechanisms involved in maintaining vertical occupational segregation.

Case studies have provided opportunities to gain inside or first person accounts of phenomena under investigation in organizational settings (Bryman, 1988a; Bryman & Burgess, 1994a). In attempting to discover the secretaries' opportunities for advancement within their respective organizations, Crompton and Jones (1988) have said that it is important to examine organizational differences. “The differences between organizations in terms of the structuring of promotion are only available via the case study method” (p. 79). The case study methodology in which multiple sources of evidence are used was the most comprehensive research strategy to employ when investigating the phenomenon of occupational segregation within the political and organizational context of Opportunity 2000. As a research endeavour, “the case study contributes uniquely to our knowledge of individual, organizational, and social phenomena” (Yin, 1984, p. 14). The logic behind designing this multiple-case study stemmed from that of Mitchell (1983) and Yin (1984):

Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions, and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a “sample,” and the investigator's goal is to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). (Yin, 1984, p. 21)

In case studies statistical inference is not invoked at all. Instead the inferential process turns exclusively on the theoretically necessary linkages among features in the case study. The validity of the extrapolation depends not on the typicality or representativeness of the case but upon the
A major strength of case study data collection is the opportunity to use many different sources of evidence. In the social science community, there is widespread acceptance of the objectivity of survey research findings. Surveying a carefully drawn sample of secretaries working in Opportunity 2000 organizations about the effects of promotion practices on their careers since the initiative’s launch would have allowed for precise comparisons to be made between their answers. However, important differences between their viewpoints and experiences could have been missed. A survey would not show: (a) Subjective perspectives of secretaries on Opportunity 2000, or (b) the ways in which their interactions with bosses are involved in complex sets of factors producing real-life outcomes, or (c) the nature of these mechanisms by which the outcomes are generated (Platt, 1988).

The results from interviews and observations can be used as indicators of complex social processes. The ability to interrelate gender, cultural, and organizational variables within a context of organizational and political situations shows the applicability of patriarchal relations in terms of their “spread” across the range of secretaries’ experience (Fielding & Fielding, 1986, p. 59). For these reasons, the evidence produced from a multiple-case study can be considered more compelling, and the overall study regarded as more robust than a survey of secretaries (Yin, 1984).

The multiple-case study approach used in this study was therefore deemed the most appropriate because it allowed for the discursive disclosure of secretaries’ perceptions of career opportunities or constraints as knowledgeable actors working in these organizations. Thus, in-depth semi-structured interviews with secretaries were the primary research method. The other methods for supplementing and validating the
interview data were observations at the case study organizational sites, and analysis of documents and other relevant materials (see p. 123 for discussion on analytic procedure).

**Study Design**

This research was designed as a multiple-case study using interviews, observations, and documents. It presented the ability to explicate the ways secretaries, in particular, those working in Opportunity 2000 organizations, understand their roles and career opportunities, account for them, take action, and otherwise manage their day-to-day situations (Bryman, 1988a; Bryman & Burgess, 1994a; Crompton, 1988; Platt, 1988; Reinharz, 1992b; Yin, 1984; 1993). Interview methods were designed to capture data on and to incorporate the perspectives of local “inside” secretaries. The interview process was based upon a commitment to interact directly with secretaries in determining whether their roles and available opportunities for career advancement were a matter of choice or constraint, or a combination of both (Cook & Fonow, 1986; Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992b, 1992c). This direct interaction was also designed to facilitate the discovery of new and unexpected concepts emerging from the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

As a multiple-case study, this investigation was focused on grounding general propositions in empirical data based upon Walby’s (1986, 1989, 1990) dual-systems theory of occupational segregation. Walby’s theory has suggested that sex segregation in employment is a direct result of patriarchal relations in paid work, implying that these relations are maintained by segregationist practices of control. She has argued that these relations in the sphere of paid work have kept men in high-paying positions and women in low-paying ones through collective strategies of segregation. As a
patriarchal mode of control, segregation has led to “the devaluation of women’s work, which itself becomes a social fact with determinate effects...” (Walby, 1989, p. 223).

Walby has stated, however, that it is possible to identify sets of patriarchal practices in paid work sites in relation to a system of six structures. Since Walby defined these structures as emergent properties of practices, a research opportunity existed to design this study to explore further those everyday practices in paid work settings that maintain structures. This approach can lead toward an integration of micro and macrosociologies (Knorr-Cetina & Cicourel, 1981).

I decided to approach the problem of vertical occupational segregation as it is situated in the structure of paid work and within the political context of European integration and Opportunity 2000. For a Ph.D. thesis, designing an empirical study to explore the interaction between the patriarchal relations in the six structures identified by Walby (1986, 1989, 1990) was not feasible when combining three methods of research. Therefore my project was designed to explore the interaction between patriarchal relations in culture, politics, and paid work in four case study organizations, and using three methods of research.

The value of this multiple-case study was the ability to examine a theory that claimed that patriarchal relations in culture, politics, and paid work constrain women’s career possibilities. This involved creating general propositions and the application of a priori categories to ensure that certain topics were addressed. The subsequent collection of data was guided by the following propositions.

1. That the interactions of mid- to senior-level secretaries with their boss in the role of office wife represents a private form of patriarchal relations in paid work that restricts opportunities to move beyond a pink-collar occupation.
2. That within the political context of European integration, the actions of the British government to oppose the Social Charter and endorse Opportunity 2000 represented the collective interests of employers and the gender politics within the structure of the state, constraining women's opportunities to move beyond pink-collar work.

3. That within the organizational context of Opportunity 2000, the actions of the case study employers represented a public form of patriarchy by maintaining segregationist career development practices within their organizations that constrained the careers of mid- to senior-level secretaries.

These propositions informed how the data would be collected and coded for the subsequent analysis.

As a result of the grounded context of Opportunity 2000, I went to the literature on the sociology of work and human resource management to develop analytic categories. The construct of office wife was borrowed from the literature on secretaries (Benet, 1972; Kanter, 1977; McNally, 1979; Pringle, 1989b). Thus, one of the pre-defined analytic categories was the “office wife.” This refers to the status of secretaries and the roles assigned to them by bosses in the office and by the secretaries themselves. The concept of patriarchy was operationalised at both the macro and micro levels. At the macro level, patriarchal relations were defined as the collective segregationist practices within and across the organizations in terms of training, recruitment, and promotion opportunities. At the micro level, patriarchal relations were defined as private segregationist practices between secretaries and bosses. This
included individual bosses allocating private or domestic tasks to secretaries and the secretaries’ forms of resistance to or compliance with them.

Other categories that were initially thought to be relevant included: age; marital status; education; class; awareness of Opportunity 2000; awareness of the women’s movement; the nature of secretarial work and whether technology was enskilling or deskilling; socialization into pink-collar work; mothers or grandmothers in the paid labour force; career aspirations and desire for advancement; verbal and non-verbal gestures of power and authority; symbols of balancing the needs of workers alongside the needs of the organization; signs or documents on Opportunity 2000 or equality of opportunity; and space: general and personal. As an on-going analytical process, these categories were omitted, modified, or refined for the final analysis. For example, the categories of class and awareness of the women’s movement were omitted in the final analysis because they did not emerge as important variables related to secretaries’ behaviour in the specific situations where the research was conducted. It was through the collation of these categories that I was able to develop an inductive analysis that illuminated the specific features of the office wife role and the mechanism of private patriarchal relations in paid work. These analytic categories were not only pre-defined but were also grounded in the data. For instance, the “office wife” category included the following subcategories for analysis:

- Resistance or non-resistance to domestic tasks
- Secretarial role in relation to the boss
- Secretaries’ perspectives on their role and actual role in the office
- Their role in the communication process (technology)
- Their perceptions of and aspirations for career advancement in their organizations.

Having previously been a secretary in America, I was “native” to the field of enquiry, with all the inherent dangers that this carries of over-identification with research
subjects. I was aware that my bias about women exercising their voice and trying to change the system entered into my initial analysis from time to time.

The development of the analytic subcategory related to secretaries’ forms of resistance to segregationist practices stemmed from my data that included instances where secretaries “went quiet” when instructed to do something they did not want to do or when they found themselves in a situation they did not like. Initially, I viewed this negatively, as a lack of resistance to authority. Later, it became apparent, in the context of other practices, that “going quiet” was interwoven with other personal strategies for demonstrating dissatisfaction, for disrupting the normal functioning of the workplace and, ultimately, was indeed a strategy of resistance.¹ This process involved the messy task of reading and rereading the data and retrieving from my transcripts and field notes those cases previously coded. The coding became an end in itself. Miles and Huberman (1984) summed it up well: “coding is hard, onerous work. It is not nearly so much fun as getting to the good stuff in the field” (p. 63).

While my style of doing qualitative analysis followed the case study methodological guidelines, I also included a number of features from “grounded theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which today, is discussed in many methodology texts (Burgess et al., 1984; Hammersley, 1992a, 1992b; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). From making constant comparisons of the data under the heading of “office wife,” for example, I then broadly grouped service, emotional support, harmony, and community as analytic subcategories of the ethos of a female culture for the final analysis. A high inference concept, or theme, of “balance” emerged as significant. This notion of balance was related to the secretaries’ choice of secretarial work, the role of secretaries, their female forms of resistance to private segregationist practices, and to their career aspirations.
The interviews with selected secretaries allowed them to detail how the social-structural and social-interactional processes are involved in maintaining vertical occupational segregation. The treatment of the secretaries' accounts were in terms of the dictum of W.I. Thomas: “If men [sic] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences” (Thomas, 1928, p. 572). This micro/macro theme was explored by asking them how they came to choose the secretarial occupation and whether their role was that of an “office wife” to their boss. I also asked them what they knew about their organizations’ involvement in Opportunity 2000, and how the career development structure in their organization operated to facilitate opportunities for advancement. In this study, it was the secretaries who provided discursive descriptions of the gendered norms of behaviour and the rules of subordination within their organizations. The methodological principle of verstehen, or understanding, was realised through this approach.

Emphasis was placed on the accounts of the mid- to senior level secretaries and their subjective understanding of the underlying patriarchal relations that generated their opportunities for career advancement. The interview data were supplemented by data from observations of the organizational settings and from the content of available documents. All the transcripts, field notes, and documents were recorded and kept as archival data. The evidence extracted from interviews, observations, and documents have added depth to an analysis of patriarchal relations in paid work and to the outcomes of segregationist practices for secretaries’ workplace situation.

The research design was comparative along two dimensions. First, because I used a case study approach, I needed to select the Opportunity 2000 organizations that allowed theoretically pertinent comparisons to be made. The second comparative
dimension was the role of secretaries working in the case study organizations that were compared to those working in a university department. Universities are public sector organizations, and their career ladders are far more specialised following initial entry. I compared their occupational choices, roles as contemporary secretaries, and career aspirations to see if they differed from those in the case study organizations.

**Procedures**

**Company Selection**

The first question in the process of selection was how the case study organizations should be identified. The second question was on what criteria should they be selected. The criterion upon which the selection was based was location (i.e. central London), size of the organization (i.e. large numbers of employees and hierarchical layers), and organization type (i.e. private sector and service based). The headquarters of the four organizations that were selected were all in central London, which made phone calls and site visits relatively easy.

A methodological procedure was implemented to arrive at the choice of specific case study organizations. The selection of organizations was not made with the intention that they were representative of the 61 original Opportunity 2000 members (see Appendix A), but they nevertheless were illustrative of the range of organizations that existed in the 1991 launch. From the eight Opportunity 2000 organizations granting access for a case study (see p. 125), the BBC, Rank Xerox, Unilever, and Channel Four organizations were selected. These Opportunity 2000 organizational cases were chosen with the prediction of similar results, and one non-Opportunity 2000 case, a university department, was selected with the expectation of contrary results (Yin, 1984).
The career development structures within the four selected Opportunity 2000 organizations have historically been similar in terms of recruitment and promotion practices. Weber’s “ideal type” bureaucracy described the structure of formal organizations as rational and impersonal where seniority, and hence promotion, was based on merit.

Another criterion for selecting the BBC, Rank Xerox, and Unilever organizations was their status as large organizations sharing a similar multinational focus in their unique business activities. As major UK organizations and global leaders, these organizations have the power to diffuse influential messages regarding equal opportunity issues by their collective equality of outcome actions. Channel Four was specifically chosen because out of the original 61 Opportunity 2000 members, they were the only organization that published goals and action plans that specifically dealt with the career development of secretaries.

In this age of information, concentrating on professional, mainly private sector, service organizations also guided the decision to select these Opportunity 2000 companies. White-collar workers in the private sector—including secretaries—are engaged in nonmanual employment, contributing to the generation of profit from the mental services they provide (Smith, Knights, & Willmott, 1991). I expected to find an increase in career advancement opportunities for the secretaries in these information and service-based Opportunity 2000 organizations. Consequently, I predicted that a secretary would have increased opportunities for advancement within Rank Xerox, Unilever, the BBC, and Channel Four due to the public statements of action by their executive leaders.

A final criterion in the case study selection included the opportunity to explore variations of not only career development practices within these organizations but also
variation in the roles of secretaries. Platt (1988) suggested that “it must follow that those with other (perhaps less extreme) values on the same variables are also covered by it” (p. 16). In other words, even though these organizational cases are, in some relevant senses, of the same kind, studying the differences in their career development practices and the roles of their secretaries assured a more complete analysis.

Lastly, selecting Rank Xerox, Unilever, the BBC and Channel Four was also guided by an intention to compare the results of this study with the same or similar organizations in America in a future study. One preliminary interview toward this end has been conducted with a secretary at Lever Brothers in San Francisco. Contact has also been established at Xerox, in both San Francisco and Dallas, as well as at the CBS and ABC broadcasting networks in New York.

**Gaining Access**

The process of gaining access to these organizations took place during the first phase of research in 1992. It involved telephoning the Director of Opportunity 2000 to arrange a meeting at their London headquarters. This meeting was the first opportunity for making observations and collecting material on Opportunity 2000 members. The director provided *The Summary of Goals and Action Plans* of the original 61 Opportunity 2000 campaign organizations and suggested that any of the 13 founding members might be open to participating in my study. I then telephoned each of the 61 members to obtain the name of their company director and their address. The people with whom I spoke gave me general background information about the involvement of these organizations in the Opportunity 2000 initiative.

Taking the advice from the Opportunity 2000 Director, I wrote letters to the 13 founding members, proposing my research aims along with a request for an
introductory meeting. I also had personal contacts at the BBC, Unilever, and Rank Xerox who gave me the names of people to contact directly in negotiating access to these companies. Prompt and positive responses were received from Marks & Spencer, the BBC, Coopers Lybrand & Deloitte, Unilever, Rank Xerox, J. Sainsbury, Channel Four, and Reed Personnel Services. Subsequent meetings were arranged with members of corporate personnel and equal opportunity officers from the above eight companies, as well as one chief executive officer.

The BBC was the first founding Opportunity 2000 organization that agreed to participate in the 1992 study. In gaining access, one of my personal contacts, a senior manager in the company, intervened on my behalf with the BBC's equal opportunity officers. Strategically positioned as an informant (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983), she was also able to obtain and give me information and survey documents on the BBC's equal opportunity activities, generate inside accounts, and assist in the production of relevant data and valid interpretations. Following an introductory letter and phone call, a meeting with three personnel officers was arranged to negotiate access for the study.

During this first meeting, I met with three BBC equal opportunity department officers. Their objection to the study was that secretaries would probably not have aspirations to advance beyond their present level of work so those officers could not quite understand my focus. But, they granted access to their organization anyway. Their comments led me to create an inducement for gaining access to subsequent organizations. In exchange for them permitting the study, I offered to produce an executive summary of the findings. I also suggested that by allowing such a study to be conducted with their employees, it could be viewed as a form of staff development
in which their employees might feel valued by the company allowing a researcher to interview them.

In letters and conversations with organizational gatekeepers, the advice offered by Buchanan, Boddy, and McCalman (1988) was followed. One suggestion was to avoid language such as "research," "interview," and "publish," replacing it with "learn from your experience," "conversation," and "write an account" (p. 57). In meetings, I presented my study as a process of discovery and learning about their organization through the eyes of their own employees. In Lofland’s (1971) words, “I sought to find out what is fundamental or central to the people under observation” (p. 2).

I found that organizational gatekeepers commonly blocked access to information, and constrained the time allowed for interviews and observation out of a concern that normal operations might be disrupted or sensitive materials disclosed. In trying to overcome and support these concerns, I offered to interview individuals at their workstations for no longer than 45 minutes, to avoid disruption of business. I also assured the gatekeepers that interviews with managers were not expected to run beyond 30 minutes. Once in, however, the average interview lasted from an hour to an hour and a half. During access negotiations, I requested all available company documents, especially those relating to Opportunity 2000 and equal opportunity policies. Information packs available to outsiders were always offered, but I found it difficult to obtain specific internal records or statistics related to their workforce. Most of the requested information was received only after interviewing a secretary with whom I had established a friendly rapport.

During these entry negotiations with organizational representatives, my credentials, university affiliation, knowledge, contacts, and firsthand experience as a secretary contributed to the process of gaining entry. I established my qualifications
and competence—in short, my credibility—as an essential condition for obtaining full cooperation. My mature age of over 30, personality, demeanour, and attire emphasized my knowledge of business protocol, as well as the serious nature of my scholarly interests. Lofland (1971) noted, “the observer should attend to matters of grooming and dress. A general principle is to attempt to be inconspicuous and inoffensive in the setting...one will at least attempt to match whatever degree of formality or informality of dress the setting or occasion calls for” (p. 100). My deportment was also conveyed through the articulation of a sound, interesting, and ethical research proposal. I also entered each organizational setting with an endorsement as a bona fide researcher from the Director of Opportunity 2000. In the end, I gained access for a case study conducted at three BBC sites in 1992, six months after the launch of Opportunity 2000. I also gained access to Rank Xerox, Unilever, and Channel Four organizational sites. The latter three studies were conducted in the autumn of 1994, three years after the Opportunity 2000 launch. In the autumn of 1994, I also conducted interviews with three secretaries from a university not affiliated with Opportunity 2000.

Subjects

Negotiating research access to interview the case study employees involved an opportunistic approach (Buchanan, Boddy, & McCalman, 1988; Crompton & Jones, 1988; Miles & Huberman, 1994). This was also a limitation of my methods. The organizational level of the secretaries was self-selected, but was mediated by the organizational representatives. My preference would have been to select the secretaries from personnel files or organization charts, but due to my specific requirements, this was not an option. The study was designed to interview mid- to senior-level female secretaries because the literature on secretaries has distinguished
the “office wife” as the highest position to which members of the secretarial group could aspire. As Pringle (1989b) concluded, the individual boss/secretary relationship has become largely restricted to senior management. In the context of Opportunity 2000, and with the focus on developing the career potential of women at all levels, secretaries at senior levels were predicted as having the most likely chance of advancement beyond their present rank. My intention to interview mid- to senior level secretaries was not only to assess the applicability of the office wife construct, but to assess whether advances in office technology and the increasing need for workers with intellectual, organizational, technical, and communications skills might improve their opportunities for advancement.

The study was also designed to interview managers and personnel representatives working in these organizations. A total of ten managers and 13 organizational representatives were interviewed. The Director of Opportunity 2000 was interviewed twice—once in 1992 and again in 1994. Her secretary was also interviewed in 1994. (See Table 2 for information on interview subjects).
Table 2
Interview Subjects: Secretaries, Managers, and Organizational Positions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Secretaries</th>
<th>Year of Interview</th>
<th>Managers</th>
<th>Manager’s Organizational Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>British Broadcasting Corporation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>1992 &amp; 1994</td>
<td>Sue</td>
<td>Personnel Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annette</td>
<td>1992 &amp; 1994</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kay</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Vaughn</td>
<td>Tech Op Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Personal Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
<td>Equal Opps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>1994 &amp; 1994</td>
<td>Joanna</td>
<td>Group Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>*Melanie</td>
<td>Finance Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unilever</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Graham</td>
<td>UK Personal Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
<td>Ed Liaison Manager/Personal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Roger</td>
<td>Personal Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rank Xerox</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
<td>Business Service Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvonne</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Ian</td>
<td>Finance Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrina</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Trevor</td>
<td>UK Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Channel Four, Opportunity 2000, University Secretaries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary (Ch. 4)</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Vickie</td>
<td>General Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth (O2000)</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Margaret</td>
<td>O2000 Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha (Univ.)</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dept Head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol (Univ.)</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dept Admin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill (Univ.)</td>
<td>1994</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dept Admin</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: PC = Pink-Collar; O2000 = Opportunity 2000; * = Personal Contact
Because the case study research subjects were not chosen randomly, some caution is required in making generalisations to these organizations. While gatekeepers did not appear to have a hidden agenda in the selection of subjects, any selection procedure that relies on others, even partially, remains biased in relation to those who selected them. For example, no women of colour were formally interviewed.

Eighteen secretaries between the ages of 25 and 63 participated in this study. Two of the 18 secretaries were interviewed twice, first in 1992 and then again in 1994.

I conducted one interview with a male secretary who worked for a high-ranking woman in senior management. Some of the interview excerpts with this male secretary have been included in the writing up of the results because his accounts meshed closely with those of the other secretaries. This was unexpected but important in the analysis. Interviewing secretaries working full time was an important criterion due to the underlying focus that Opportunity 2000 placed on full-time working women. However, I interviewed two secretaries who worked a job share, but who had previously worked full time. The high-ranking secretaries who were interviewed worked in various departments (personnel, operations, marketing and finance) with managers ranging from directors to department heads for an average of seven years or more. Three secretaries worked with senior management women and the rest worked with men.

I approached the secretaries as both an insider and outsider (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). I identified myself as having been a secretary in America and England while attending university. Lofland's (1971, p. 101) notion of the observer as "socially acceptable incompetent" where "people almost everywhere feel they know and understand that role" enhanced my acceptability. While I identified myself as
having been a secretary, I still assumed the role of one to be taught about their work in England who would not be offended by being told obvious things. Before entering the field, each secretary had been previously contacted by telephone to arrange a convenient time to meet in order to conduct an interview. These initial conversations provided not only an opportunity to establish trust and a friendly rapport, but also to take jotted notes. I found the secretaries receptive and eager to discuss the proposed topics. I then met with the secretaries either in the lobby of their building or at their desks.

To create a greater sense of ease, the interviews were conducted at each secretary’s workstation. This was also done so that I could observe routine office behaviour. I favoured a casual approach and asked, “Would you mind if I tape-recorded our conversation so I don’t have to take a lot of notes?” This approach was successful in obtaining agreement to record the interviews. The secretaries were responsive and open to talking about themselves. My experience could have been due to disclosing my cultural identity and to being a white female researcher interviewing white secretaries from similar backgrounds to my own (Brannen, 1988; Song & Parker, 1995; Oakley, 1981). Establishing rapport was relatively easy due to our mutual efforts to convey a friendly and relaxed demeanour; we interacted as simply conversing over coffee. Disclosing that I had been a secretary in America established trust and provided the secretaries with an opportunity to ask questions about my experiences as a secretary in two different countries. When rapport was developed, it seemed inappropriate not to answer their questions (Oakley, 1981; Reinharz, 1992c). Therefore, these interviews reflected the fact that I was keen to detail the everyday experiences of ordinary working women and that it was a two-way process.
The fact that I had disclosed spending periods of time as a secretary in both England and America minimised any potential fear, discomfort, or awkwardness that another fieldworker might experience upon entering this setting. My apparent ease in responding to questions posed by the secretaries furthered a general acceptance of my presence and the establishment of trust. Finally, assuring them of confidentiality was essential in gaining acceptance and obtaining rich results. All the interviews were conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the British Sociological Association and the American Sociological Association. All participants have been given pseudonyms in the thesis.

**Case Study Methods**

**Interviews and Transcription**

I approached the research subjects as knowledgeable agents. Giddens noted, "to be a human being is to be a purposive agent, who both has reasons for his or her activities and is able, if asked, to elaborate discursively upon those reasons..." (cited in Cassell, 1993, p. 90). I also approached the interviewees based upon the guidelines of Lofland (1971), Lofland and Lofland (1984), Hammersley and Atkinson (1983), and feminist scholars such as Oakley (1981) and Reinharz (1992c). The questions within the interview schedule covered various categories that have been previously mentioned. Questions about the "office wife" role and their relationship with their boss were derived from Pringle (1989b). The interview schedule with managers included their knowledge of Opportunity 2000, their perceptions of secretarial career advancement, their relationship with their secretary, and whether "office wife" would be an appropriate description of their secretary's role (see Appendix C). After the first pilot interviews with secretaries at the BBC, I learned that they were not aware of
Opportunity 2000. Therefore, in order to remain consistent between the 1992 and 1994 interviews with secretaries, I modified the interview schedules to include their perceptions about equal opportunities (see Appendices D and E). In 1994, I asked the secretaries about their knowledge of Opportunity 2000, their opportunities for advancement within their organization, their typical days in the office, and whether "office wife" would describe their role as a secretary. In addition, based upon my story, how they would respond to being told to fetch a manager's holiday pictures on their lunch hour.

The interviews were all tape-recorded. As the size of the recorder was very small, it was easily placed on a desk during interviews. I fully transcribed all interviews verbatim. I transcribed the interviews based on the guidelines advocated by Reinharz (1992c). For instance, I wanted to familiarise readers with the people who were studied and enable the reader to "hear" their speech as spoken rather than rephrased as "correct" English. I also incorporated some of the transcription techniques detailed by Sacks, Schlegoff, and Jefferson (1974). The transcription notation used in the transcript excerpts included:

- [ ] Brackets around laughter and proper names
- *italics* or CAPS Capital letters or italics are used to indicate an utterance, or part thereof, that is spoken much louder than the surrounding talk
- ! An exclamation point to indicate an animated tone, not necessarily an exclamation
- underline Emphasis upon words is indicated by underlining
- Um and Uh Written as spoken to give the subjects their own voice
- **I** Bold type "I" indicates interviewer question.
Full transcription was a time consuming task, but it also allowed me to take additional notes and added to the depth of data analysis. The transcripts were then subjected to content analysis. The response statements from interviewees were divided into a number of themes and subthemes based upon the a priori categories and those that emerged from the interview data.

**Focus of Observations**

The secretaries' activities were situated in the context of their work environments. The structural properties of their organizational cultures were inferred from visible signs of what happened or existed at some previous time (Scott, 1990) and from their gendered features (Acker, 1990; Ramsay & Parker, 1992; Sheppard, 1989).

My observations were focused on the symbolic representations of the gendered features of these organizational cultures and the norms or practices of status, power, and control within them to connect human action with structural explanations (Goffman, 1963, 1967, 1971; Henley, 1977; Kanter, 1977, Peters & Waterman, 1982; Ramsay & Parker, 1992; Riley, 1983; Sheppard, 1989; Smircich, 1983a, 1983b, 1985; Thorne & Henley, 1975). The observable, visible signs of gendered organizational cultures included the buildings, mission statements about equal opportunity or Opportunity 2000, clothing, and the space/territory of managers versus secretaries.

Proponents of the interpretive paradigm have also studied corporate cultures as "webs of meaning, organized in terms of symbols and representations" (Smircich, 1985, p. 63). The physical and social world are assumed to be mediated by symbolic processes reflected in the descriptions and actions of individuals and through material symbols of a gendered hierarchy. In other words, structure and symbols are both the medium
and outcome of interaction. When applying this integrative perspective to organizational research, Riley (1983) noted the following:

The stores of knowledge each individual has about interaction in general (a language, grammar rules, social norms to guide conversation, etc.) combined with knowledge of a specific organization (standard operating procedures, the organizational chart, available resources, etc.) can be drawn upon strategically by individuals to achieve their own goals. (p. 415)

I observed the features of gendered hierarchical organizations that privileged the dominant interests of the top (male) managers. I attempted to record everything within my line of vision related to the organizational culture. This involved observing the architecture and the décor within the building, the layout of offices as material symbols of status, and the signs of a commitment to equal opportunity or mission statements as the artifacts of the culture. I supplemented the interviews with observational notes about the interaction between secretarial staff and management, and the style of normal interchanges in lunchrooms or pubs.

I used Lofland’s (1971) criteria for field observations. “The first step in taking field notes is to evoke one’s culturally common sense and shared notion of what constitutes a descriptive report of something happening” (p. 102). For example, I made a mental note about parking hassles at the BBC and the security precautions that I had to go through during the first phase of my research. I also made a mental note during the first phase of the study at the BBC that the offices of senior management were quite grand and open by comparison to their secretaries’ cramped and busy workstations. These mental notes were then jotted down, separated, made into full field notes, and put into one or more of the analytic categories developed as part of the research process. I always carried a small notebook to make notes of an event or observation. After an interview, I would generally stop in the ladies room to jot down
my observations. Travelling by train and the London Tube gave me an opportunity to make more notes at the end of each day’s observations. Writing in the notebook, I recorded observations, plans, methodological and theoretical notes, and personal feelings.

Lofland and others have advised writing up full field notes at the end of a day and cloistering oneself for the purpose of doing so. The writing of field notes takes personal discipline and time, and at times I put off writing full field notes for a given day or skipped one or more days. To be sure, memory decays over time and the accumulation of new experiences confounds the problem. But, I did make detailed notes in my notebook of the setting and interactions within the settings during and at the end of each day to jog my memory later. At times, I tape-recorded my notes since I had a tape recorder for the main purpose of conducting the interviews.

I kept on-going analytic records throughout the data collection, looking for supporting and non-supporting data. One jotted note was that prior to each interview, a secretary would offer to bring me coffee or tea. This repeated observation became a theoretical note about this hostess gesture and its relation to private segregationist practices. Drawing on the literature from various fields such as human resources, I also made theoretical notes regarding the presence or absence of mission statements and other tangible symbols of equal opportunity policies within the respective organizational cultures. I even made a jotted note during my first meeting at the Opportunity 2000 headquarters that a portrait of the Prince of Wales hung on the wall, but not the mission statement describing the initiative.
Documents

For case studies, the most important use of documents is "to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources" (Yin, 1984, p. 80). Documentary research involves the systematic scrutiny of printed or written materials. The analysis of documents in a general sense is the written text. This method provides a way systematically to organize and summarise both the obvious, or intended content, and the underlying, perhaps unintended, context of communication restricting women's career development. Scott (1990) believed "that the uses and limitations of documentary sources can only be appreciated when they are understood in their social context as historical products" (p. x). A major sub-type of documentary research identified by Giddens (1989) consists of the reanalysis of officially published statistics.

Scrutinising contemporary literature from secretarial associations and newspaper reports on European integration and the EC Social Charter helped uncover the conflicts and struggles that lay behind government and employer actions giving background to the secretaries situated context in these Opportunity 2000 organizations. Officially published reports and statistics are more reliable than newspapers. "however, even such statistics must always be interpreted by the researcher, who has to be aware of the many limitations they can have" (Giddens, 1989, p. 677).

The officially published reports used in this study included government reports or documents on European integration and the EC Social Charter, and Opportunity 2000 research or organizational summary reports. Newspaper reports from 1991 to 1994 were included and analysed in terms of the political events surrounding European Community integration and the early 1990s economy. All materials were
analysed in terms of their content giving background to the political and paid work contexts which produce and reproduce the behaviour of secretaries.

Scott's (1990) four appraisal criteria were used in the analysis of materials. The documentary sources were assessed according to their authenticity, credibility, representativeness, and meaning. Thus, I examined these sources by asking if they were genuine and whether they came from unquestionable origin. Were they free from error or distortion? Was the evidence typical of its kind, and was the evidence clear and comprehensible? Official reports about Opportunity 2000 and its members were obtained primarily through the Opportunity 2000 Director and her secretary. Company reports or surveys about the individual companies were obtained primarily through the secretaries interviewed.

Data Analysis

Information derived from case studies is crucial to our understanding of organizations and the actions of people working within them. The general analytic research strategy of the case study methodology relies on qualitative work that is inductive rather than deductive.

There was a close connection between coding the interview data (whether pre-specified and later revised, or emergent) and generating concepts. The content analysis required being sensitive to repetitions of incidents or words, unusual occurrences, and how people say things—with laughter, embarrassment, or anger. I also felt that it was important to gain as fully as possible an understanding of the context of social interaction. In the analysis of the secretaries' conduct, I adhered to Cassell's (1993) approach. The focus was placed on attending to the modes in which the secretaries drew upon structural properties in the reproduction of patriarchal social relations.
"The analysis of strategic conduct means giving primacy to discursive and practical consciousness, and to strategies of control within defined contextual boundaries" (Cassell, 1993, p. 156). The analysis of the interview data concentrated upon the contextually situated activities of secretaries. I followed three tenets in the analysis of interview transcripts: (a) Avoid impoverished descriptions of agents' knowledgeability, (b) provide a sophisticated account of motivation, and (c) give an interpretation of the dialectic of control (p. 157). The secretaries’ choices and actions were inferred from their accounts of past and present behaviour with bosses and others along with evidence of their work situation.

Once the data were collected and transcribed, it was analysed to check that there were no negative or inconsistent pieces of evidence (Denzin, 1970, 1978; Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). A process of triangulation was used (Denzin, 1970). Fielding and Fielding (1986) point out that "Triangulation puts the researcher in a frame of mind to regard his or her own material critically, to test it, to identify its weaknesses, to identify where to test further doing something different" (p. 24). In Fielding and Fielding’s study of police recruits, their qualitative data included an “interview aid form” completed by recruiting officers, an essay on “why I want to join the police” by recruits, in-depth interviews, plus observations of sample recruits in the training school and on the beat (p. 25). Hence, matters identified in the interviews could be checked against performance. They concluded that such procedures stimulated an awareness that there was “no one ‘truth’ even in relation to quite specific, discrete, and limited incidents” (p. 25). Like Fielding and Fielding, I used Denzin’s notion of “methodological triangulation.”

There is methodological triangulation, where there are two variants: ‘within-method’ approaches, when the same method is used on different occasions (without which one
could hardly refer to ‘method’ at all), and ‘between-method’ approaches, when different methods are applied to the same subject in explicit relation to each other. (Fielding & Fielding, 1986, p. 25)

I conducted the in-depth interviews with secretaries within the case study organizations and then checked the data against observations and related available documents. This permitted me to examine the relation of accounts to what actually happens in the office regarding interactions with others and structured opportunities for career advancement. Inspection and analysis of the content of Opportunity 2000 materials was also performed accordingly. It was from the “piling up” of numerous points of similarity between settings and the persons being compared that I counteracted threats to validity identified in each (Fielding & Fielding, 1986).

Triangulation can be conceptualised as checking a fact collected by one method using another method, and then justifying the results by means of another.

For case study analysis, one analytic strategy is the use of pattern matching, which compares an empirically based pattern with a predicted one (Campbell, 1975, Miles & Huberman, 1994). Pattern matching is a technique whereby several pieces of information from the same case are related to a theoretical proposition: an “effects” proposition and a “no effects” proposition. I used this approach to build an explanation of the social processes involved in maintaining vertical occupational segregation, by stipulating a related set of causal links. For example, the causal links reflected the interaction between the patriarchal relations in culture, politics, and paid work, and the actions of secretaries. Finding a similar pattern of results within and across the organizations provided evidence either supporting or refuting the initial propositions, helping to understand factors contributing to theories on occupational segregation.
Within the case study organizations, the gendered features of the organizational cultures and the secretaries’ accounts of their occupational goals and opportunities were analysed. These organizational cultures provided the norms and rules for subordination and the context for secretaries’ career motivations. This information was supported by the individual secretaries’ accounts and their collective knowledge about their opportunities for advancement within their respective Opportunity 2000 organization.

Mixed strategies were therefore used in the analysis. Both a variable-oriented approach and a case-oriented approach inform this study. Case-oriented analysis is efficient at finding specific, concrete, historically grounded patterns common to small sets of cases. Still, individual case dynamics, as such, are often underplayed. A case-oriented approach considers the underlying similarities; looks at associations, causes, and effects within one case; and then compares the results with those of other cases. Yin (1984) advocated a replication strategy that is used to study one case in depth, and then subsequent cases are compared for pattern matches. The BBC was the base case in this study; the data from the 1992 study was analysed in depth and my results were presented at two seminars and one conference. In 1994, the other organizational cases were examined for similar patterns as well as variation. However, case-oriented findings have often been viewed as particularistic (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Therefore, variable-oriented strategies were also incorporated into the analysis to seek themes common to multiple cases. Miles and Huberman have indicated that it is possible, and desirable, to combine or integrate case-oriented and variable-oriented approaches. This is precisely what this study was designed to accomplish.

Yin (1984) has considered it useful to examine cases where the pattern is expected to be weaker or absent on a theoretical basis. For example, recruitment,
promotion, and career development practices were expected to increase opportunities for secretarial advancement in all the case study organizations because they were equal opportunity employers as members of Opportunity 2000. This pattern was expected to be quite strong at Channel Four, particularly because they mentioned increasing career opportunities for secretaries in their Opportunity 2000 goals and action plan. On the other hand, increasing opportunities for secretaries to advance at the university site were anticipated to be weaker or absent, since this organization was not involved with Opportunity 2000.

The case study data were coded on the set of categories, indicating both private and public segregationist practices that comprise the patriarchal relations in the wider culture, organizational culture, politics, and paid work. Certain themes emerged from the data as core elements from participant responses, and the determining factor was often the frequency with which something was observed or stated in interviews, or the conceptual elaboration of the phenomenon.

Miles and Huberman (1994) have suggested using a wide variety of graphic displays to present one's conceptual framework, context of analysis, and results. I chose to use a strategy known as stacking comparable cases that greatly facilitated the analysis of data according to a set of variables. Recurring themes were located from repeatedly reading Opportunity 2000 documents, field notes, and interview transcripts. After careful coding, both descriptive and inductive, a display format was created to analyse the reduced data in depth before stacking the case-level displays in a metamatrix that permitted systematic comparison (see Figure 3). For example, the
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wider patriarchal culture was operationalised as occupational choice (agency) and the organizational cultural context as the workplace situation (structure). Occupational choice includes gender role socialization and the rules of a female culture. The organizational cultural context relates to the organizations' rules for subordination in terms of gendered norms influencing behaviour. These relations, then, can be gauged by the secretaries' orientation to work, or adherence to the role of office wife and female forms of resistance, which impact on their work situation in the office. The matrix framework in Figure 3 was then structured by the organizational cases. This matrix shows the methods used in the analysis of patriarchal culture, politics, and paid work across the case study organizations. Appendix G shows this matrix with the case study results, and is referred to in each of the subsequent data analysis chapters.

Within the structure of paid work, themes emerged from the interviews with secretaries and their bosses regarding segregationist practices of control. Exemplifying these themes were comments such as “the organization recruits outsiders” and advancement opportunities “have decreased” or were “up to the individual.” The secretaries described the tacit organizational rule for upward mobility that “long hours and weekends” are required for positions in management, and accounted for their lack of motivation to advance with claims that women in management must “sacrifice” personal lives, and work harder than men in those positions. The concept of balance emerged as significant in terms of secretaries’ career aspirations beyond a pink-collar occupation. The analogous idea of a pink-collar wall comprised of interweaving social structural forces and secretaries' actions clearly emerged.

Themes also emerged around the construct of subordination when examining the case study organizational cultures as they related to the norms of the female culture influencing the secretaries' behaviour as “office wife” or “mother.” These
included the secretaries' forms of resistance to the private segregationist practices of control in their office relations. The stories about office relations between secretaries and their bosses further developed the concept of non-confrontational female forms of resistance such as "cope with it or get a black mark," "get the 'ump'" (i.e. go quiet or offer minimal verbal communication), or "quit." Furthermore, the concept of equal opportunities surrounding Opportunity 2000 emerged as "meaningless" from the interview data with secretaries. Observational analysis of the corporate cultures supported this theme as there were no symbols displaying mission statements, Opportunity 2000 affiliation, nor visible signs of commitment to equality of opportunity. Themes also emerged from the documentary analysis regarding the gendered political nature of Opportunity 2000. The analysis of data suggested that the costs of implementing the European Social Charter for Opportunity 2000 employers, and the fear of over-regulation, were more important to the organizations than addressing the career development issues of pink-collar workers.

The first stage of data analysis consisted of noting repeated themes, coding, and subsequently, comparing and contrasting these through successive replication of cases. Analysis was guided by theory and addressed data from two sources: (a) Secretaries' biographies and accounts, and (b) the organizational structures that shaped job tasks and career development practices. The matrix presentation permitted immediate comparisons both from within and across the case study organizations. It illustrated the recurrence of variables across the cases, hence provided strong leads for theory building. Moreover, if there is a clear theory in advance making a precise prediction, "the fact that a single case falls exactly where it should on the curve is a very strong confirmation, given the unlikelihood that it would do so by chance" (Mitchell, 1983, p. 117). Thus, with replication of cases, I am able to make
generalisable analytic claims about Walby's theory of patriarchy in paid work and extend it.

Conclusion

Within the design of this multiple-case study, specific propositions were created to examine empirically the mechanisms involved in reproducing vertical occupational segregation. It was designed to explore the organizational conditions and unfolding interactions thought to be the basic processes for maintaining occupational segregation in the Opportunity 2000 case study settings. The case study methodology allows for analysis of diverse forms of data that can test the scope and strength of relationships posited by theory.

Many interpretations of this material are possible, but those related to the regularities and patterns of behaviour in this empirical study are more compelling for theoretical reasons. I argue that from replication of the case study evidence, support can be shown for structural theories of patriarchy. Having determined that the case study methodology was an appropriate research design for this study, I collected and analysed the data utilising several methods, which adds to the validity of the results. I gravitated to more fully codified research questions, more standardised data collection procedures, and more systematic devices for analysis than those generically termed field methods.

The methods used in this multiple-case study and the analysis with a replication approach proceeded simultaneously (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 1984; Yin, Bateman, & Moore, 1983). Each of the four Opportunity 2000 case organizations was selected with a prediction of similar results (i.e. literal replication). The non-Opportunity 2000 case was selected with the expectation that it would produce
contrary results, but for predictable reasons (i.e. theoretical replication). Even though concepts, variables, and propositions were conceived in advance, they also emerged from the data, serving to direct subsequent data collection and analysis. A variety of sources were used in this study, adding considerably to the richness of results. Analysing the data through triangulation also contributed to the validity of those results (Denzin, 1978; Fielding & Fielding, 1986; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). In the following chapters, I will show how occupational choice and constraint are interrelated. The secretaries' "office wife" behaviour, their female forms of resistance to private segregationist practices, and their balance-seeking conduct within the context of gendered politics and work environments have specific definite unintended consequences that affect their fate.
CHAPTER IV

Contextual Features of Patriarchal Relations in Politics and Paid Work

"Once it is fully established, bureaucracy is among those social structures which are the hardest to destroy. ... Where the bureaucratization of administration has been completely carried through, a form of power relations is established that is practicably unshatterable."


Before proceeding to the more analytical chapters, I will provide some descriptive information in order to paint a broad picture of the nature of gender relations in the case study organizations. Information is provided on the scope of secretaries' activities and how a series of ideological changes within the political and paid work structures worked their way through the organizations and the practices of people within them. To envision the future of women's work in abstraction from the political and organizational context is impossible. One must look not only at the structure of paid work but also at the political and organizational factors that bear on the women's labour force participation. The theme of this chapter is that the political context which surrounded Opportunity 2000 situates the career development opportunities for secretaries within their respective organizations.

This chapter describes the case study settings showing that they are gendered hierarchical organizations, or traditional bureaucratic institutions that constrain the status of secretaries and their opportunities for advancement.

The results presented in the first section of this chapter relate to documentary data collected between 1991 and 1994. These data include British newspaper articles, along with government, employer, and Opportunity 2000 documents, and documents on European Community integration. The descriptions of the case study settings are
mainly based upon observational data. The examination of these materials and office observations supplements the interviews with secretaries and managers conducted for this study.

The results indicate how employer strategies and the impact of the British government’s actions on their behalf continue to reflect the demand for gendered labour, and how the articulation between the two is instrumental in reproducing vertical job segregation (see Appendix G). Numerous scholars claim that the relations between the structure of paid work and state policies are of prime importance for women’s careers in both their intentional and unintentional aspects (Balbo, 1987; Bellin & Miller, 1990; Halford, 1992; Rubery, et al., 1998; Walby, 1988b, 1990, 1999). These forces can limit or shape occupational choices, making some more likely than others. Opportunity 2000 will be discussed as the outcome of the collective interests of British employers and the systematic bias towards these interests by the British government. The appearance of equal opportunity action by Opportunity 2000 member organizations, combined with the UK government political action of opting out of the European Social Charter in 1991 on behalf of these employers, situates the gendered political and organizational context for secretaries’ behaviour as pink-collar workers.

Further, the symbolic rules of subordination that exist in the case study organizations establish the rules and norms of behaviour that secretaries draw on to act meaningfully. The secretaries’ actions can then be better understood as the outcome of the rules being applied and acknowledged in their relations with others in the office. This chapter focuses on the situated context of secretaries’ activities, whereas Chapter 5 will concentrate on the meaning of career advancement for the case study secretaries.
The Political Context and Equality of Opportunity

In late 1991, the expanding European community demanded a more unified approach not only to political, economic and monetary integration, but also to social integration. The policies outlined in the European Social Charter in 1992 (COM, 1984, 1988, 1990a, 1990c, 1990d, 1990e, 1990f, 1990g) for full European integration indicated that British employers must comply more fully with the social policy directives from the European Parliament. Even though the British government tentatively went along with the directives for political and economic integration at this time, it chose to opt out of the Social Charter. For Britain, this social dimension of integration would have meant compliance with EC directives on gender and employment by both government and employers.

In 1974 the EC called for “action”:

for the purpose of achieving equality between men and women as regards access to employment and vocational training and advancement and as regards working conditions including pay...[and] to ensure that the family responsibilities of all concerned may be reconciled with their job aspirations. (Moss, 1988, p. 1)

The 1989 Council of Europe’s concept of equality was expanded to include both opportunity and outcomes. These aims run parallel to the principles within the Social Charter (COM, 1990g). During the Maastricht summit in late 1991, Britain refused to broaden Articles 117, 118, and 119 of the Treaty of Rome. Article 119, for instance, established the concept of equal value, that women have a right to pay equal to that of men doing work of equal value.

The British government could not accept expanding those articles nor those requiring the EC and member states to improve upon joint objectives toward greater opportunities within paid work, improved living and working conditions, proper
social protection, and increased dialogue between management and labour. The
government’s reluctance to adopt the European Social Charter came from the applied
pressure of employers and a desire to retain the deep tradition of national sovereignty.
The government’s response to EC directives on key issues such as equal treatment
and opportunities of women and men in employment and related areas was that the
cost to employers would be too high. The Department of Trade and Industry stated
that the directives “will have a detrimental effect on business...raise employers’ costs,
make them less competitive, and have a damaging effect on jobs” (1991, p. 84). The
Employment Department’s view was that the social action proposals would add to
“problems of over regulation,” and “increase employers costs” (1991b, p. 24). The
reports from government economists varied in their estimates of the direct cost to
employers that ranged between £1 billion and £3.5 billion (Employment Department,
1991b, p. 32).

Further, to comply with these directives and transfer existing power to the
European Parliament would have also meant subjecting employers to regulation and
control beyond Britain’s own internal policies and legal provisions and thus
compliance was viewed as “too interventionist” (Walby, 1994, p. 70, 1999). One
Member of Parliament stated praise for the government’s opposition to the Social
Charter. “Refusing to accept the Social Charter protects jobs and attracts foreign
investment...the Prime Minister has prevented interference by Brussels’ bureaucrats
into our social policies” (cited in Wilshire, 1991a). British opposition to the Social
Charter existed partly because the directives were viewed as impinging upon national
sovereignty, and partly because they were also seen as a threat to British
employers have relied heavily upon a gender-segregated, part-time, low-skill, low-wage labour force, which reflect gender politics.

Speaking on behalf of British women employees, the Director of Opportunity 2000 stated:

When one looks at the British population irrespective of the recession, we have problems. We are not skilled up the way our major competitors are, namely America. We have got real skill problems. We are desperately short of skills. We have a high participation of women in the workforce comparatively, but most women work part-time in low-pay, low-skill jobs. We have the resources but we are just not using them. We also have evidence that women in low-skill, low-pay jobs are much more qualified than the jobs they’re doing. The time for change in corporations has come. (Opportunity 2000 1992 interviews, p. 4)

However, the Director’s following statement also indicates the political difficulty in changing the status quo:

There is no concept of equality [in Britain]. Inequality is valued. People are raised with the idea that some men are better than their fellow men and automatically better than women. (p. 5)

The chair of Opportunity 2000 was also quoted in The Sunday Times as saying, “The attitude of men is ‘no change please,’ we’re British. We like it the way it is” (“Eurostrategy”, 1991, p. 5). However, the Opportunity 2000 Director stated opposition to the Social Charter as a means to improve the lives of working women:

We don’t want people in Brussels telling us what to do...Britain is a very traditional country and anything that Europe does we don’t want to do. We are an Imperial nation. (Opportunity 2000 1994 interviews, p.2)

These statements indicate that opting out of the EC Social Charter was more in the interest of government politics and the bias towards British employers than of improving women’s employment situation.
Equality legislation in Britain today is a by-product of the political economy under the Thatcher regime during the 1980s. During this period, Britain moved toward a service-based economy depending heavily on a vulnerable workforce—a female labour market with low wages and malleability. Thatcher attacked maternity rights, employment and wage protection, social security benefits, and unions because of her belief that “Britons should support the traditional family, and...mothers should stay at home while their children are young” (Middleton, 1991, p. 10). Her policies have established the political context situating the career activities of secretaries in the paid employment arena.

Thatcher’s 12 years of political conservatism and economic neo-liberalism advocated the mentality that all a successful organization requires is the ability to operate with a clear (i.e. gendered) hierarchy with workers knowing their place, and with managers enjoying the “right to manage” a compliant, low-paid workforce (Cooke & Morgan, 1990). For British employers to take action to balance the needs of the organization along with those of their employees, which has been suggested as action that improves their competitive edge, involves violating practices that once were sacrosanct. As a consequence of the government opting out of the European Social Charter in 1991, British workers—especially women—have been the losers. The pressure applied to the then Prime Minister, John Major, to opt out of the Social Charter on behalf of British employers, left collective social action policies stagnant. For instance, expanding training initiatives in order to achieve equality of outcome for women runs counter to the interests of the majority of male senior executive British business leaders who have a great deal of power and influence. In addition, the European Parliament would monitor closely the inherent action required of businesses for compliance with the directives of the Social Charter.
As a positive action campaign, Opportunity 2000 was launched in late 1991 just six weeks before the Maastricht Treaty was formalised; Britain was the only EC nation to exclude itself. Opting out of the Social Charter under the guise of launching Opportunity 2000 had little manifest connection to action to improve equal opportunity legislation. Opportunity 2000’s appearance of taking action did not alter how the British government monitored equal opportunity policies nor did it encroach on employers’ terrain.

Under the pretext of Opportunity 2000, the issue of equality of outcome was addressed by British businesses through positive action efforts in member organizations. However, the voluntary nature of the Opportunity 2000 campaign did not reach beyond existing equal opportunity legislation to improve employment conditions for all women, only for some working within the participating organizations. The Director General of the Confederation of British Industries (CBI) stated support for the specious Opportunity 2000 initiative when saying,

The CBI fully supports Opportunity 2000’s aim of encouraging employers voluntarily to set themselves objectives to enable the abilities of women to win through—this type of commitment is a vital step forward in releasing the skills on which the profitability of British business depends. (Opportunity 2000, 1991a, p. 1)

The combined statements against the Social Charter and in support of British employers “volunteering” action on behalf of women suggest that while British businesses acknowledged the need for more skilled women in top positions, they also needed women in low-wage, gender-segregated occupations to remain economically competitive.
Opportunity 2000: A Public Relations Medium

The Opportunity 2000 initiative is funded by Business in The Community (BITC) with links to the Confederation of British Industries and the Institute of Directors (IOD). The collective benefits of membership in Opportunity 2000 was stated by BITC that the £1000 membership fee includes “the availability of opportunities to influence key national debates while obtaining publicity resulting from involvement with activities which gain media coverage” (BITC, 1992b, p. 3). The BITC Target Team of senior business leaders who launched the Women’s Economic Development initiative that created Opportunity 2000 also acknowledged the expanding roles of women in the workforce. The explicit BITC message was “to motivate business leaders to develop and implement policies which reflect the needs of women in the workplace, and to highlight how companies can gain greater access to well-educated women through training and family care provision” (BITC, 1992a, p. 15).

Employers belonging to Opportunity 2000 who claim that their actions will increase career opportunities for women working at all levels within their organizations reap the positive public relations benefit of being considered equal opportunity employers. They also benefit from being considered a collective source of power with which to influence political policy on their behalf. Six months after the launch of Opportunity 2000, 110 organizations had joined. These businesses employed over five million people in the UK—at least 20% of the workforce (Opportunity 2000, 1994). By the end of 1994, 290 organizations had joined—almost five times the original number of member organizations.

The initial public relations value of becoming a member of Opportunity 2000 was indicated by a British Museum Library database search of newspaper articles

The idea of Opportunity 2000 initially attracted a lot of attention from the press. In July of 1991, the Opportunity 2000 campaign was prematurely leaked to the press, prior to the official launching in October of that year. The Director of Opportunity 2000 viewed this coverage as positive because the early publicity sparked the public imagination. However, one article written about the Opportunity 2000 launch on 28 October, 1991 was not so favourable (Miles, 1991). It reported that while the Prime Minister, the Rt. Hon. John Major, personally endorsed the aims and objectives of the campaign, no employment minister was present at the launch and that many British women saw John Major’s appearance as an exercise in “damage control” (p. 6). John Major had previously offended women voters by failing to include a woman in his first cabinet.

During the launch year in 1991, five articles were published about Opportunity 2000 in *The Times* and seven in *The Guardian*. These articles described Opportunity 2000 as a progressive equal opportunity campaign whose members promote positive action for their women employees. On 27 October, 1992, *The Guardian* alone published one article about Opportunity 2000’s first year anniversary. It described Opportunity 2000 as a business-led campaign that only benefits a small number of women. *The Times* printed an article on 2 November, 1993, about the passive support for equal opportunities among business leaders. By October 1994, no mention was made in either newspaper of further Opportunity 2000 milestones. Expanding the
database search, one brief article was found in the Financial Times on 10 January 1994. It was written in support of positive discrimination and described Opportunity 2000 as an initiative to fill middle-management vacancies with women targeted for top positions later. The results of the paucity of articles that made “news” about Opportunity 2000 indicate editors’ collective interests, that publishing material about gender issues and equal opportunities wanes over time. Further, these articles suggested that very few women had benefited from Opportunity 2000 employers’ actions.

The mixture between the interests of business and the British government’s bias towards those interests has consequences. It tends to reproduce the features of gendered organizational structures and maintains their segregationist career development practices. For without public knowledge about Opportunity 2000 and opportunities for training and career development, most working women in Britain cannot benefit from employers’ voluntary efforts. Thus, working women remain relegated to pink-collar occupations, without ways to improve their working conditions or develop their career potential if they wished to do so. Opportunity 2000 executive leaders can promote themselves as being “women-friendly” and benefit from publicity, but without necessarily changing any of their existing equal opportunity practices.

Describing the political and organizational context is necessary in order to situate the case study secretaries’ actions and their understanding of advancement within their respective organizations. Chapter 5 will present the Opportunity 2000 goals and action plans of the case study organizations. Here, the focus will be on their senior executive’s stated actions to increase career advancement opportunities for women working at all levels, as contrasted with the subjective experiences of
secretaries and managers. In the following section, I will present results from a reanalysis of the Opportunity 2000 annual organizational summary reports, compiled from information their members submitted on training and career development practices to indicate overall success with these positive actions. These results reinforce the claim that Opportunity 2000 is a medium for good public relations with the added benefit that there are no sanctions for not fulfilling their plans for positive action. The case study settings will then be discussed as traditional gendered organizational cultures.

**Annual Summary Reports**

At the end of 1993, there were 188 Opportunity 2000 member organizations and by October 1994 there were 275. The organizational summaries in Opportunity 2000’s *Third Year Report* (1994) included statistics on their members in the following areas: (a) working arrangements, (b) pay and conditions, (c) training and development, (d) career development, and (e) “family-friendly” initiatives. The statistics are shown in categories of availability and *take-up rates amongst eligible women*. The report defined availability in terms of percentage of organizations making a career advancement practice available to all men and women, to all women, restricted to selected women, or no designation. Their intention of defining availability in this manner was stated as “showing how wide-spread policies are across the organization...and may be taken as an indication of senior management/policy maker commitment to the policy in question” (Opportunity 2000, 1994, p. 32). *Take-up rate* was defined as “showing the approximate percentage of eligible women to whom the policy applies who have used it” (p. 32). If the take-up rate was high, then they wanted the reader to perceive that the practice in question was of value to women and that they have used it.
However, not all organizations responded to the policy and practice questions presented by Opportunity 2000 in order to compile these statistics. Therefore, the responses to any one issue should be interpreted with caution because of the variation in the number of participating members who have responded. The total number of organizations addressing any given topic varied between 100 and 275 but their statistics were based upon the total 275 member organizations. When reanalysing the statistics, a “Rosetta stone” was needed to understand their significance for the lives of working women, particularly secretaries’ opportunities for advancement (see Appendix K). The difficulty in deciphering the data presented by Opportunity 2000 lie in the following:

1. The survey methods and how the questions were phrased or who were considered eligible respondents.

2. The variation in the total number of organizations that answered different questions within the survey.

3. Limited knowledge of how the member organizations defined or measured “availability” or “take-up rates.”

4. Limited knowledge of how Opportunity 2000 or the member organization defined the no response category. It makes a major difference if they are saying that there is no information or if these organizations are not answering specific questions.

5. How the results were presented relative to the significance of coloured shading keys associated with interpreting the statistics.

Opportunity 2000’s Third Year Report (1994) provided a summary of member practices that was directly related to secretaries’ opportunities to advance beyond
pink-collar work. These practices included “training to transfer from staff to line appointments,” “developing training schemes to bridge ‘gaps’ between junior/senior jobs,” and “training to develop paths from ‘non-career’ jobs such as secretarial and clerical” (p. 34) (see Appendix K). Table 3 shows the results from reanalysis of the survey data in Opportunity 2000’s Third Year Report. The results indicate that these practices are not widespread nor are their senior managers committed to increasing opportunities for secretaries. Further, while the percentage of “eligible” women indicates that these practices are indeed valued, they do not have access to these practices. These results suggest that the collective actions of Opportunity 2000 members limit secretaries’ opportunities to move beyond pink-collar work.

**Training to Transfer from Staff to Line**

The Third Year Report (Opportunity 2000, 1994) stated that training to effectuate transfer from a staff to a line appointment was available to all men and women in 33% of the member organizations. This translates to 40 organizations (see Table 3). The total number of organizations responding to questions related to this particular practice was unknown but what is known is that 154 organizations are not providing this type of training. Further, less than 10% of eligible women in 24 organizations have participated in these training opportunities. This suggests that it is difficult for women working at these levels to access the “available” training, thus precluding their career development. The report also indicated that in only five organizations had over 75% of eligible women taken advantage of training opportunities to move from a staff to a line position. This is a significant finding since it reveals that the majority of these women value the opportunity to train for higher
Table 3


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training and development</th>
<th>% of orgs indicating available training to transfer from staff to line appointments</th>
<th>Eligible women taking advantage of practice</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes 33% (40 orgs)</td>
<td>&lt; 10% in 24 orgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NR (154 orgs)</td>
<td>&gt; 75% in 5 orgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of orgs indicating available training schemes to bridge junior/senior jobs</td>
<td>Yes 29% (38 orgs)</td>
<td>&lt; 10% in 21 orgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NR (145 orgs)</td>
<td>&gt; 75% in 6 orgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of orgs indicating available training to develop paths from clerical/secretarial jobs</td>
<td>Yes 31% (41 orgs)</td>
<td>&lt; 10% in 23 orgs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NR (144 orgs)</td>
<td>&gt; 75% in 7 orgs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

paying, higher status positions when this practice is made accessible. However, the overwhelming majority of the Opportunity 2000 organizations were not providing training opportunities for secretaries to transfer from staff to line positions.

**Training to Bridge Junior/Senior Jobs**

The *Third Year Report* also showed that training schemes had been developed to bridge the gaps between junior and senior level jobs in 29% of the member organizations. This translates to 38 out of 275 organizations (see Table 3). In addition, less than 10% of eligible women in 21 organizations participated in these training opportunities. Once again these results indicate that senior managers are not committed to this type of equal opportunity practice and that it is difficult for women working at these levels to access the “available” training schemes. In other words, secretaries’ opportunities to crossover from junior to senior level jobs are restricted. However, the report showed that over 75% of eligible women participated in some kind of training scheme but in only six organizations. While this is a significant finding, since it reveals the majority of these women highly value the opportunity to train for higher paying, higher status positions, these types of training schemes are rare.

**Career Development**

The Opportunity 2000 summary reported an increase in organizational initiatives designed to develop career paths from “non-career” jobs such as secretarial and clerical. The report also stated that career paths from these positions had nearly doubled from 17% to 31% during the years 1993 and 1994 (Opportunity 2000, 1994). What remains undefined is where the path leads? Further, the two years are not comparable because of the fluctuating number of participating and responding
organizations at that time, and the unknown amount of information upon which the comparisons were made. For example, in 1993, Opportunity 2000 only queried its members on the availability of an initiative or if they “planned” to introduce one within a year. An unknown number of responding organizations (but 17%) indicated that they had already made professional paths from non-career jobs available to their staff. By 1994, the report showed that career paths were available to all men and women working at secretarial/clerical levels in 31% of organizations (41 organizations). When comparing the Opportunity 2000 members’ take-up rates in Appendix K to actual numbers as Table 3 illustrates, these results translate to 57% of their 41 organizations having had less than 10% of eligible women participating in this career development practice (i.e. in 23 organizations). Yet the report also showed that more than 75% of eligible women had developed career paths from secretarial/clerical ranks but within only seven organizations. This report indicates that not only is this type of policy or practice not widespread but also, when available, secretaries value the opportunity to develop structured avenues toward career growth and higher status, higher paying positions. What is important to note is that more than half of the Opportunity 2000 member organizations reported that they were not providing opportunities for secretaries to develop career plans beyond pink-collar work.

One could argue that the results from the reanalysis of Opportunity 2000’s data could be indicative of collective patriarchal strategies to maintain gendered and segregated occupational hierarchies. The Opportunity 2000 senior executives are not committed to increasing training or career development practices for secretaries beyond voluntary statements of intended action. The way the Opportunity 2000 report displayed their results is interpreted as an attempt to portray favourable impressions.
This interpretation holds when reanalysing data regarding any practice that is not widespread nor available to women in the majority of the participating organizations. In the next section I will describe the case study settings as representing the features of gendered organizational cultures that situate secretaries’ opportunities for advancement.

**Maintaining Gendered Hierarchies and Patriarchal Social Relations: Dissemination of O2000 and Equal Opportunity Policies**

The drive toward achieving a gender balanced workforce can be seen from the public statements by Opportunity 2000 member executives that they would create goals and action plans in order to gain access to the projected need for female workers aged 25-44. These executive leaders committed themselves voluntarily to changing their corporate cultures by developing and implementing policies, and by improving organizational career development practices. This commitment involved action to implement new training and development practices, new recruitment selection procedures and communication of these changes down through the ranks. The work of Hammond and Holton (1991) and Peters and Waterman (1982), among others, has demonstrated that corporate cultural change occurs only when the vision of change begins with top executives, and that their message gets translated down through the organization so it is “owned” by all employees. According to the U.S. National Survey of Chief Executives, *vision* means wide communication and acceptance of their ideas (Larwood et al., 1995). In related research, much attention has been paid to the growing use of the concept “corporate cultures” and the power relations within them (Epstein, 1990; Ramsay & Parker, 1992; Riley, 1983; Sheppard, 1989; Smircich, 1983a, 1983b, 1985). Smircich (1985) examined organizational power through “webs of meaning, organized in terms of symbols and representations” (p. 63). Ramsay and
Parker viewed these webs of meaning as constructed through the everyday practices of actors. The idea is that patterns of meaning weave human experience together into a coherent whole that, in this case, can either enable or constrain secretaries’ career opportunities.

In changing the culture of any organization, it is not so much the intended vision of those at the top that matters, but how the message is delivered and put into practice. Numerous scholars have suggested that developing improved management practices, and then acting on them, is the way to overcome barriers to equality of opportunity. Kanter’s (1977) work indicated that removing formal barriers to women’s progression was not sufficient to ensure their equal participation at senior levels. Still, equal opportunity documents and mission statements can be used as effective visible symbols conveying executives’ intended action toward enhancing opportunities for all women (Smircich, 1983b). As a sign of intended action to create new organizational cultures and structures, mission statements have also been associated with an organizations’ explicit goal of achieving competitiveness (Bryman, 1988; Drucker, 1992b; Hammond & Holton, 1991; Lawler, 1990; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Schein, 1985). However, companies in Britain typically do not utilise mission statements as a catalyst for defining corporate objectives or as a medium to convey subsequent action (Barsoux & Lawrence, 1990). Thus, the unintended consequence of this action could reproduce patriarchal social relations in the structure of paid employment. The case study organizations did not display any mission statements, and thus established a context for constraining secretaries’ career aspirations.

The case study organizations’ senior executives agreed to communicate publicly their Opportunity 2000 goals and action plans, thereby showing commitment
to increasing opportunities for women working at all levels. The results of my observations and interviews in 1992 and 1994 indicate that these senior executives had not communicated their goals and action plans to their employees. I discovered that none of the secretaries and only three managers had any clear idea about Opportunity 2000 or its significance for their workplace situation. One manager at the BBC thought Opportunity 2000 was about ethnic minorities. One BBC secretary said: “Um, I think I’ve heard about it in conjunction with ‘take our daughters to work’” and then asked, “Is it to do with the office of public management? Or is it something else?” (Hannah, 1994 interviews, p. 17). Needless to say, I told her that Opportunity 2000 was about something else.

During my interviews I not only asked secretaries about their knowledge of Opportunity 2000, but I also asked them about equal opportunity policies and career advancement opportunities within their organizations. It was customary for workers in these organizations to receive documents related to equal opportunity policies but only upon initial recruitment. All of the secretaries interviewed responded similarly about how equal opportunity information was disseminated. The following Unilever secretary’s description was typical:

They give you a little pack that explains everything in that I keep at home. I mean, I read mine through like three or four years ago and haven’t read it since.

I: And they don’t send any kind of memos or anything out?

Not that I’ve seen. No.

I: Updating anything?

No.

(Angela, 1994 interviews, p. 3)

Rank Xerox was the only case study organization that displayed any visible sign of a commitment to equal opportunities for women. This consisted solely of a picture of
the company's managing director and personnel manager holding a "Winner of the First Women in Business Award for its Commitment to Equality of Opportunity" plaque.

In the lobby of the Opportunity 2000 headquarters hung a portrait of the Prince of Wales. What was noticeably absent was a display of their Opportunity 2000 mission statement. During a 1994 interview, the secretary to the Director of Opportunity 2000 told me that this organization did not have an equal opportunity policy. She then said, "some companies use equal opportunity as lip service to draw applicants" (Ruth, 1994 interviews, p. 4). Her statement indicates knowledgeable awareness of organizational cultures that only promote equal opportunities verbally for women, rather than through an explicit medium for displaying action, as one of the features of gendered organizational cultures.

**Features of Gendered Organizational Cultures**

The features of the case study organizational cultures were observed in terms of the rules and resources that constrain the status of secretaries, control their opportunities for advancement, and shape their conduct in their social relations with superiors. The studies by Benet (1972), Ghiloni (1987), Goffman (1963, 1967, 1969, 1971), Henley (1977), Kanter (1977), Ramsey and Parker (1992), and Thorne and Henley (1975) have all called attention to the material elements of organizational cultures as showing the discrepancy between the gendered symbols of hierarchical status. These symbols of status affect the lives of secretaries and other women working in white-collar organizations. The symbols of gendered hierarchical status displayed in terms of the buildings, offices, gendered dress code norms, and the signs and symbols of equal opportunity action comprise the work context and situate secretaries' activities.
Signs and Symbols of Gendered Cultures

Unilever. Unilever's London headquarters are housed in a massive structure on the banks of the river Thames. It was constructed between 1930 and 1932 to represent "boldness and power...a symbol of an epoch exemplifying the theme of controlled energy" (Unilever, 1932, pp. 83, 88). The building itself was referred to as Unilever House, which "is descriptive of its nature and purpose, for here are now centred the administrative staffs" (p. 77). After walking through their bronze gates and into the foyer, one is greeted by a statue of Remington's Bronco Buster—a cowboy on his horse—which embodies the wildness of the American Frontier and the courage of the American "cowboy." While waiting in the lobby for an escort, I observed a large visual display of the history of Unilever and noted that "it appears museumlike—a monument to the old world and its patriarch, Lord Leverhulme" (Unilever fieldnotes, 16 March, 1994). But, there was no visible mission statement confirming this organization as one offering equal opportunity, or as one belonging to Opportunity 2000 (Unilever fieldnotes, 16 March, 1994). The masculine features of the organization were displayed through the dark mahogany panelling and the dominating marble pillars that surround the Remington statue. The building and male décor that predominated in this setting is recognised as a major signal of a gendered organizational culture revealing how their practices relate to its purpose as both Henley (1977) and Kanter (1977) were aware.

The offices that I visited at Unilever were open planned structures for secretaries. Their bosses worked in glass-walled window offices on the periphery of their secretaries' workstations. The secretaries were aware of the differences between their office space and that of their bosses in these settings. Henley (1977) noted that
these type of settings have been seen as “excellent for keeping employees under surveillance” (p. 58). I observed that the office of the Unilever’s UK head of personnel was massive and included a stern mahogany desk. His desk was in front of a large window and faced a large office chair, but he did not have a computer on or near his desk. He displayed a traditional attitude towards the role of secretaries when saying that he was an “old fashioned manager [who] does not worry with personal computers.” He also did not want his young male managers to “hack” on computers or worry with them because he wanted “…to utilise their talents to their best effect. Managers who are in front of personal computers take interesting work away from secretaries” (Unilever fieldnotes, 16 March, 1994). Further, the attitude expressed by this senior executive toward managers’ tasks reinforces gendered assumptions associated with the computer (Walby, 1988a). The consequence of this workplace ideology is that it reinforces secretaries’ low status in organizations, and limits their advancement potential beyond pink-collar work by promoting task specialisation based on gender.

The more feminine features of these offices were displayed in the low warm lighting above the secretaries’ desks that either faced each other or were next to one other. The secretaries’ workstations were surrounded by office technology yet they appeared “cozy, warm, and modern. They all had plants in front of their desks” (Unilever fieldnotes, 16 March, 1994). The interaction between the secretaries could also be described as friendly, caring and informal. “One secretary came round and offered the other secretaries and me a coffee” and “another reminded the secretary I was interviewing that it was time to take her fertility medication” (Unilever fieldnotes, 16 March, 1994). The results stemming from the informal interaction between the secretaries, combined with their working arrangements, symbolically
represent a feminine culture, or community, that exists and is maintained within the context of a rather masculine and gendered organizational culture.

**The BBC.** I conducted interviews and observations in three of the BBC's "tight security" buildings. Finding my way to the appropriate building was a nightmare, as was parking. Obtaining a covered parking space was considered to be a symbol of status reserved only for those in management positions, according to the secretaries with whom I spoke (BBC fieldnotes, 9 September, 1992; 18 March, 1994). Ramsay and Parker (1992) argued that parking areas reinforce assumptions about hierarchical status. Escorts were always provided to those visiting offices within the BBC, but I was allowed to move freely within the same building without an escort to subsequent interviews. The Television Centre building was considered the most prestigious by the employees with whom I came into contact. This building had a dry cleaner on the ground floor just off the lobby, and the executive offices were housed on the sixth floor. It has been previously noted that where workplace structures in which senior executives are located on the upper floor, "tend to exercise a tighter control over the organization, and the hierarchy is usually more rigid" (Korda, 1975 cited in Henley, 1977, p. 58).

All the offices that I visited in this building were behind closed doors, off a main corridor or hallway. The executive managers worked in massive offices on the sixth floor that resembled suites or affluent living rooms. Their office furnishings were complete with television sets, comfortable sofas, coffee tables, conference tables, and in some cases mahogany desks. Desks, space, and dramatic or expensive furniture in the executive offices can symbolically represent power that simultaneously impresses and focuses attention on the status of the executive. What was noticeably absent from these offices were personal computers, on or near the
executives' desks. Once again, this observation indicates that as a gendered material element of organizational culture, computers, like typewriters, are associated with secretarial work. Goffman (1971) also made a connection between territory control and personal space. Large spaces within which to work have been the prerogative of the powerful. Those of higher rank not only have greater territories but they also have greater control beyond their territorial boundaries. Low on the prestige scale, the secretaries' offices were directly outside those of their managers, crowded, and surrounded by office technology such as personal computers, telephones, fax machines, copiers, and typewriters. However, I noted that one secretary's office was “friendly with a picture on a pin board of Nigel Mansell, the race car driver, Ed the duck, and post cards” (BBC fieldnotes, 9 September, 1992). Her desk also had three diaries on it. All of the offices in this building were in stark contrast to those in the oldest BBC building known as Centre House, which was considered by those who worked there to be at the bottom of the prestige hierarchy (BBC fieldnotes, 9 September, 1992; 18 March, 1994).

The BBC's Equal Opportunity Department resided in Centre House. The hallways in Centre House were dark, and their offices very small, cramped quarters. The work of Ghiloni (1987) substantiated the observations I made between these two buildings in terms of their symbols of status. Ghiloni concluded that departments such as personnel and equal opportunity, managed primarily by women, are symbolically much less prestigious than finance or corporate departments managed almost exclusively by men. Benet (1972) also noted that “the higher the concentration of women in a particular area of the office, the lower the standard of décor” (p. 66). Unlike the offices of the senior managers working at Television Centre, the Equal Opportunity director and the other departmental managers had personal computers on
their desks. The interaction between the people in the Equal Opportunity Department was also very different from that observed at Television Centre. People interacted in a livelier, more informal spirit in the Equal Opportunity Department; whereas, people at Television Centre were more formal and reserved in their interactions with one another. For instance, the Director of the Equal Opportunity Department was seen “casually chatting while making a coffee for himself and another staff member sitting at his desk” (BBC fieldnotes, 18 March, 1994). Still, no mission statement relating to equal opportunities or Opportunity 2000 was observed in this or any other BBC building.

**Rank Xerox.** Unlike the other three case study organizations, there were no security guards at the Rank Xerox headquarters. Here, a woman receptionist, who was sitting behind a large desk reading a book, greeted me. Hanging on a wall near her was the picture of the managing director and the woman personnel manager, holding a plaque representing Rank Xerox as “Winner of the First Women in Business Award for its Commitment to Equality of Opportunity.” Yet, as my fieldnotes indicate “there was no evidence of a mission statement describing their business commitment to equal opportunities nor their Opportunity 2000 membership” (Rank Xerox fieldnotes, 21 March, 1994).

The Rank Xerox headquarters comprised two buildings. I noticed that the main building “smelled good, like lemon polish” (Rank Xerox fieldnotes, 21 March, 1994). The main building housed the senior executives and management staff on its fifth floor. The fifth floor décor was symbolic of the executives’ hierarchical status within the company. This working environment was grand. It was two stories tall and spacious, with columns separating sofas and coffee tables in conversation areas. “It had tall ceilings, lovely paintings on the walls, and posh cushy furniture” (Rank
Xerox fieldnotes, 21 March, 1994). Unlike other floors in the main building, the fifth floor had an espresso/cappuccino machine in addition to an ordinary coffee machine. The Managing Director’s secretary told me that it was customary for the executives and their guests to use proper cups and saucers. All the others were to use paper cups when consuming their beverage. However, she also said that since I was a guest visiting an executive secretary, we could have a coffee in a cup and saucer. (Rank Xerox fieldnotes, 21 March, 1994).

While being escorted up the stairwell to the finance director’s office, I was told by my secretarial escort that walking the stairs, rather than taking the lift, was a conventional norm in the main building. We passed several people in the stairwell. I noticed two men dressed in suits standing on the landing between floors with their bodies facing away from others passing by. Their voices were controlled in a “huddle” and the conversation seemed cordial and friendly (Rank Xerox fieldnotes, 21 March, 1994). It seemed that by taking the stairs, these employees were able to stop and talk more directly than the norms of civil inattention would allow in a lift as Goffman (1963, 1971, 1974) has suggested. Goffman observed that when people stand in a lift it is difficult to engage in a focused interaction. The norm of walking the stairs at Rank Xerox could also present an opportunity for political manoeuvring for the rank of managing employees in this building who seek recognition and promotion.

The senior executives in this building have the prestigious corner offices with windows. All the other Rank Xerox managers had the middle offices. Henley (1977) described the power landscaping in offices, with corner offices usually being the more powerful ones. The secretaries’ desks were at opposite ends of the floors in open planned areas. These observations indicate how the everyday signs of gender appropriate behaviour provide the context for secretaries’ behaviour. That executives
work in the corner office, isolated from access by having a secretary situated outside their office prepared to act on their behalf defines the meaning of status, power, and gender appropriate behaviour. Secretaries may work for an audience of fellow workers and superiors where their activities can be monitored easily, but, according to the secretaries with whom I spoke, they liked the open planned offices because of “the human touch” (Rank Xerox fieldnotes, 21 March, 1994).

I also conducted interviews in the Business Services division in the second Rank Xerox building behind the main one. This building was smaller and less prestigious than the main building. The Business Services division was on the ground floor of the second building. Its office space was open-planned and overcrowded with people, desks, and equipment, and made to feel even more crowded by the low ceilings. This work setting was in stark contrast to the offices I visited in the main building that were large, open, and bright. These contrasts of space and décor indicate the executives’ status in the main building and their power relative to those positioned lower down the organizational hierarchy. Interviews with secretaries in this “services” division were conducted in a conference room because there was no room to sit near their workstations without our conversation being overheard by others in the office. While an open-plan design can be viewed as promoting a friendlier, more community-like atmosphere, it can also intrude on privacy and space. I found it necessary to be conscious of this during the interviews with secretaries working in open-plan environments. When necessary, I would control my voice level or position myself so that we could have focused and candid interaction.

**Channel Four.** In 1994 Channel Four moved their headquarters to a brand new building close to St. James’ park in London. I noted:

    Lovely offices. Brand new building constructed in a round.
    Glass—lots—looks like a spaceship. Very modern, glass and
The security in this building was extremely tight. I was given a computer-programmed door card that allowed access only to unrestricted areas, but not without an escort. There were two women receptionists. One receptionist was in a wheelchair and confirmed my appointment. Two men roamed as the security guards. Even though there was no mission statement of Channel Four's commitment to equal opportunity, I saw the visibility of this disabled employee as a symbolic gesture. After exiting the lift, I was escorted down a fairly narrow glass-lined hallway. The secretaries' workstations were open areas against a glass wall and across the hall from their bosses' offices that were behind glass walls. Like the other case study organizations, Channel Four's executives had large open offices with large modern desks and furniture, with conference tables at one end. One executive's office had art pieces that were prominently displayed on an inset, lighted shelf. The presence of space and grand possessions indicates, once again, that these symbolise importance, status, and power, even in newly created organizational cultures. The meaning of an organizational culture and its gendered features can also be observed by the norms of clothing (Gutek, 1989; Kanter, 1977; Sheppard, 1989) and the areas for dining, which can reinforce assumptions about hierarchy and status influencing gendered behaviour (Ramsay & Parker, 1992).

**Cultural Norms: The Rules for Gendered Behaviour**

*Unilever.* Unilever maintained segregated dining rooms for staff and management until 1994 and after that established different mealtimes for staff and management. During my interview with the Director of Personnel, lunch was brought
into his office by his secretary and served on a coffee table. I noticed that the women at Unilever were mainly wearing dresses. I made a comment about this to an escorting secretary who replied: “even though there is not a formal dress code, there is an informal rule” that women wear dresses to work (Unilever fieldnotes, 16 March, 1994). Clothing, one factor in demeanor, has long been a focus of attention on women and their displays of femininity associated with a female culture. Sheppard (1989) observed the importance of dress in that it conveys status related to both women’s gender and to their position within an organization. The prescription for women to wear skirts or dresses, rather than trousers, was observed in all the case study organizations, with slight variation at the BBC.

The BBC. The BBC subsidised the food served in all the buildings’ dining rooms, and the beverages in their two pubs at Television Centre. During observations of the dining room at Television Centre, a secretary told me that the food is less expensive there—where the executive offices are housed—than in other BBC buildings (BBC fieldnotes, 18 March, 1994). Ten minutes after they opened on a Friday evening, the two adjoining pubs at Television Centre were completely full. These pubs had mostly men in them. The men drank pints of beer while standing near the fruit machines or playing on them. The few women that were seen in the pub were having cocktails or wine and were sitting around tables talking, laughing and casually interacting with one another. Television Centre was a no smoking building, but people could smoke, and were smoking, in the pubs.

While watching people in the pub, a question occurred to me about the BBC’s organizational culture that subsidises food and drink for their employees. “Does it keep employees content when things like pensions and job security aren’t available to all?” (BBC fieldnotes, 18 March, 1994). I held informal conversations here with two
men about their 18 years of working in set designs. They said that they started working at the BBC and had remained working there despite organizational restructuring because, “as a BBC employee, mortgages are easier to obtain” (BBC fieldnotes, 18 March, 1994). This statement exemplifies a conclusion drawn by Mills (1951) that workers may be at the bottom of the prestige hierarchy but as white-collar employees, are able to borrow prestige from the firm itself. Still, all the employees that I met with at the BBC vented dissatisfaction with their work situations and the culture of the organization since the BBC restructured under the chief executive, John Birt. The common response to questions about the company’s culture was that “the BBC used to be more family-friendly oriented but not now after Thatcher and Birt” (BBC fieldnotes, 18 March, 1994).

In the BBC buildings I visited, I saw all the women in management positions wearing business dress suits. Gutek (1989) noted that when women wear business suits it reflects a quasi-masculine demeanour and appearance as well as a male-defined definition of organizational success. During observations of the dining rooms and pubs, I noted that the majority of female staff wore trousers or jeans. “Women don’t dress for the next job; they don’t wear make-up; they wear jeans” (BBC fieldnotes, 18 March, 1994). However, one secretary commented that secretaries must dress “smart” when working for senior managers in the Television Centre building. The male secretary that I interviewed wore a business suit. When I asked him about his office attire relative to the other secretaries, he made the following comment: “when I wear suits, I’m often mistaken for management personnel” (BBC fieldnotes, 18 March, 1994). The dress code at the BBC, seen to distinguish management from staff, has consequences for secretaries. The continuity in what people wear to work from day to day and year to year reproduces the gendered inequalities that are so
manifest in organizational cultures. Clothing is a primary indicator of status (Goffman, 1963; Henley, 1977; Sheppard, 1989). Dresses or skirts are also associated with the female culture representing dignified or "ladylike" demeanour. Workers internalise these norms of behaviour from the understanding of, and adhering to, dress code norms. This behaviour serves to reproduce those features of gender-based hierarchies differentiating the status of men, and women in management positions who assimilate to those conventions, from the status of secretaries and other clerical workers.

**Rank Xerox.** Even though Rank Xerox has an integrated dining area for staff and management, it was also the norm in this organization for managers to eat later than staff. The finance manager/chief accountant confirmed this while we walked to the dining room to meet other finance managers for lunch. (Rank Xerox fieldnotes, 21 March, 1994). Just prior to this, as an indicator of his executive power and a sign of dominance, this same manager interrupted my interview with his secretary by abruptly opening the door and boldly walking in to announce that we should eat with his colleagues. It was 1:30pm when this executive and I arrived in the dining room. There were only six other men, all in dark suits, eating at this time. We sat at a table with three other senior managers. They chatted easily about how this finance manager was Cambridge educated, whereas the others had come from "the school of life;" marketing, sales, then finance and accounting (Rank Xerox fieldnotes, 21 March, 1994).

Most of the women at Rank Xerox were wearing dresses. I noted that the secretaries "were all smartly dressed. They wear dresses in the main building, but I saw one woman in slacks in the other one" (Rank Xerox fieldnotes, 21 March, 1994).
Channel Four. All staff ate in Channel Four’s newly constructed restaurant. According to one secretary, “the lunch hour is between one and two. It’s strictly adhered to” (Channel Four fieldnotes, 29 March, 1994). Yet, she and others told me that managers and staff ate their meals at different times. The escorting secretary told me that there was also an informal dress code. Secretaries working near the executives must dress “smart,” because of the visitors they receive, unlike those working in the drama department, who could dress more casually. During my observations of Channel Four, I only saw women wearing dresses and noted: “there is not one woman working in trousers” (Channel Four fieldnotes, 29 March, 1994). One could argue that these are the actions of working women acknowledging and applying the gendered norms of attire.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the political and organizational contexts of secretaries as pink-collar workers. Opportunity 2000 has been shown to be a medium for its members’ public relations, and to be linked to the British government’s action of rejecting the European Social Charter. The initial significance of Opportunity 2000 was its voluntary nature, where the career prospects of women working within the participating organizations stood to be affected. Large numbers of employers voluntarily and publicly agreed to take action to increase employment opportunities for women working at all levels. As a long-term project, Opportunity 2000 was hypothetically designed to demolish the barriers blocking career progression for women. Employers were to establish goals, develop action plans, monitor, and publish their progress. Yet, policies or practices on training and career development for secretaries were not widespread or made accessible within these organizations, despite the way in which the Opportunity 2000 Third Year Report (1994) tried to
present results in their members' favour. Thus, the political and organizational context surrounding Opportunity 2000 can be seen as impacting on secretaries' career options and limiting them to pink-collar work.

This chapter has also described the case study organizations as traditional gendered cultures. Organizational hierarchies are set up for the purpose of coordinating complex activities. Yet, the results from observations of segregated dining times, the large plush offices of senior managers as contrasted with those of secretaries, and gendered attire indicate that these material symbols of status reproduce the structure of traditional organizational cultures and a gendered hierarchical order. Male power was manifest in the decoration of space in the case study organizations. The predominantly male senior executives at Rank Xerox, the BBC, Unilever, and Channel Four organizations worked in large corner offices with windows, while their departmental secretaries worked outside of them. The secretarial workstations in all the case study organizations were small areas surrounded and crowded by personal computers, fax machines, photocopiers, telephones, typewriters, and filing cabinets. Riley (1983) claimed that office size could be recognised as a basic patriarchal practice connecting symbolic significance of legitimate authority to those favoured interests of dominant groups of male managers. The organizational cultures at Unilever, the BBC, Rank Xerox, and Channel Four's can also been seen in terms of reproducing features of patriarchal systems that control secretaries' work situation through norms, signs, and symbols of status. The stark contrast between the large, elegant offices provided to senior management and the small, crowded offices of their secretaries on the periphery is a continually reproduced practice in gendered organizational cultures, situating the activities of secretaries. Within these situated organizational contexts, the rules for subordination that secretaries' follow are shaped,
thus impacting on their career fate beyond a pink-collar occupation. The next chapter takes up this theme by focusing on the case study employers’ Opportunity 2000 goals and action plans juxtaposed with their managers’ and secretaries’ knowledge of career development and equal opportunity practices within their respective organizations.
CHAPTER V
Career Development Practices and Secretaries

"...after you get through reading about all the historical changes that women's work has taken over the years, after you finish paying the necessary homage to all the exceptions and variations and tokens and models, this is what you always find: the vast majority of women getting up in the morning, getting dressed, maybe grabbing a bite, and then going off to work at jobs (either within or without the home) where women form the bulk of the labor force; where pay is usually nil or low (in comparison to what men of the same or lower educational levels are making); where unionization is usually nil or weak; and where equal-pay-for-equal-work laws are of little or no meaning since if women are competing with anyone for these jobs they are competing with other women."

Louise Kapp Howe, 1977, p. 19

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how the case study employers' career development practices impact on secretaries' career ambitions, or their conscious quest for "balance" rather than advancement. For example, the lack of training opportunities and the inflexibility of work hours were powerful factors that imposed limits on secretaries' opportunities that led them to lower their career aspirations. Both these factors maintain patriarchal relations in paid work, and therefore, maintain vertical occupational segregation. The focus in this chapter will be on the link between the gendered organizational context of secretaries' work and the meaning of advancement within their respective organizations. Due to organizational restructuring in all the organizations, the case study secretaries were aware that overall staff reductions, along with rigid appointment practices, shape and influence their behaviour (see Appendix G). Opportunities for a career beyond pink-collar work were thought by secretaries to be negligible, a fact that demonstrates: (a) Secretaries'
knowledge of their organization’s segregationist career development practices, and (b) their knowledge of the tacit “long hours and weekends” rule for promotion, which shape secretaries’ practical choice to remain in a secretarial career. The results from interviews with secretaries who sought advancement beyond pink-collar work, as well as those who pursued careers within secretarial work, also support Jacob’s (1989b) argument that the pressure for women to pursue female-dominated positions is lifelong.

**Career Advancement: “Deeds Not Words”**

The slogan “deeds not words” of the early 20th century feminists called for action rather than rhetoric to overcome the oppression of women in society. According to Walby (1988a, 1990), the main site of women’s oppression in late 20th century society is within the structure of paid employment and can be viewed as occupational segregation. In the case of women in pink-collar occupations, Pringle (1989b) has suggested that “the attitude of organizations to secretaries has become something of a litmus test of their sincerity with regard to affirmative action” (p. 98). In other words, action is necessary from the Opportunity 2000 organizations to improve the work situation of secretaries and increase their opportunities for advancement beyond pink-collar work.

The results from the first published Opportunity 2000 *Summary of Goals and Action Plans* brochure (Opportunity 2000, 1991b) indicated that their member organizations stressed words more than deeds, and statements about positive action, rather than action itself. Positive images or past successes with their women in management were published, rather than concrete plans of action to increase advancement opportunities for women working at all levels, such as secretaries. The
member organizations implied action when using words such as “creating,” “exploring,” “increasing,” “enabling,” “continuing,” “encouraging,” “considering,” and “ensuring” rather than stating how, for example, they are going to increase access to training and career development initiatives. The report also showed that training programmes of any kind were only mentioned by 18% of the 61 original Opportunity 2000 members, and 39% of those explicitly stated that they were solely for “managers” (Opportunity 2000, 1991b). Only 11% of the organizations used target figures as a statistical measure of their actions to increase the percentage of women at management levels. The BBC was one Opportunity 2000 organization that established concrete target goals for increasing the percentage of women in senior management positions. Channel Four was the lone organization to even mention secretaries in their goals and action plans. And, at the time of Opportunity 2000’s first member publication (1991b), Unilever had not published any goals or action plans at all.

**The Case Study Organizations’ Goals and Action Plans**

The following section will describe the case study organizations’ Opportunity 2000 goals and action plans. A comparison profile is given in Table 4 of the case study organizations by the number of employees within each organization, their appointment system, and the gender characteristics of their board members. This profile establishes the gendered organizational culture and the context for advancement within which secretaries’ actions occur. The data across the case study organizations can also be compared in Appendix G.
Table 4
Comparisons of Case-Study Company Profiles: 1992-93

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th># Employees</th>
<th>Appointment practices</th>
<th>Board members</th>
<th>Average Age</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unilever</td>
<td>291,000</td>
<td>Recruit graduates/outside</td>
<td></td>
<td>64</td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rank Xerox</td>
<td>25,000</td>
<td>Recruit graduates/outside</td>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
<td>(21)</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>29,000</td>
<td>Highly competitive/outside</td>
<td></td>
<td>?</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Channel 4</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>Competitive/outside</td>
<td></td>
<td>51</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>345,000</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unilever

Unilever is a public company that came into being in 1930, through an amalgamation of a Dutch-based company and the British-based Lever Brothers company that was founded in 1885. They produce consumer products such as foods, soaps and detergents, and personal products, marketing these worldwide. As of 1993, Unilever had 291,000 employees but no women representatives on their board.

The Unilever Opportunity 2000 representative explained that Unilever joined Opportunity 2000 in 1991 because the company’s senior executive was the deputy chair and marketing director for Business in the Community and an initial member of the Opportunity 2000 team of executives. However, Unilever was not on the list of the 13 founding members (Opportunity 2000, 1991a). The company’s representative stated that participating in Opportunity 2000 was nothing more than a public relations effort. “[Name of executive] is as committed to Opportunity 2000 as he can be, given his age and class background.” She mentioned that he is in his mid-50s and from a privileged upper class background (Unilever representative, 1992 interviews, p. 2). In Opportunity 2000’s first summary publication, their senior executive had not specified a goals or an action plan; instead, the report stated, “Unilever fully supports the initiatives of Opportunity 2000,” and that the company’s goals were “currently being drawn up...which will form the basis of specific improvement programmes” (Opportunity 2000, 1991b, p. 57).

In Opportunity 2000’s second summary report, Unilever supplied an unnumbered, loose page that stated, “work is in progress” (Opportunity 2000, 1992). One statement intending to show progress was the announcement of the appointment of a female manager, who held the responsibility for career development of women in management. One Unilever secretary, in a 1994 interview, however, said that the
woman placed in this position had conducted a meeting with secretaries discussing, "how we all could get on and work together better," but that she said "nothing about Opportunity 2000" (Angela, 1994 interviews, p. 14). Unilever's statement page also indicated working progress in the following areas: (a) An increase from 3% to 5% of women in senior management positions, (b) an increase from 15% to 17% of women in other management positions, and (c) a 50:50 gender split in graduate recruitment profiles. What the report did not say was from which years they had gathered the data, or from where they were recruiting potential managers (i.e. from within the organization as promised by membership in Opportunity 2000).

During an interview with the Unilever's UK Head of Personnel, he said that the company only recruits top university graduates for management positions and "does not promote up from the secretarial staff." But he also stated that "all staff are able to aspire. Career progression is up to the individual and they are supposed to be aware of this" (Graham, 1994 interviews, p. 2). Winstanley (1991) recently argued "that the allocation of jobs and structuring of the employment relationship by the use of the recruitment function is a powerful form of managerial control" (p. 164). Managerial control in this case study organization is maintained by the recruitment of an elite corps of managers. This recruitment strategy could be viewed as a segregationist practice that reproduces the gendered characteristics of the "inner circle" group of leaders within capitalist organizations (Useem, 1984). Using a recruiting practice that narrowly focuses on an elite group of university graduates precludes opportunities for management training for experienced and educated secretaries already working within the organization but at lower levels of the gendered hierarchy.
Unilever's second report demonstrated progress by showing an increase of 5% in female representation at the senior management level, but that still meant 95% of senior managers were men (Opportunity 2000, 1992). In 1994, Unilever's Board of Directors comprised 15 members—none of whom were women. As of the 1994 Opportunity 2000 summary, Unilever still had not framed specific goals or an action plan to increase career advancement opportunities for women working at levels other than management. The results of interviews with Unilever secretaries indicated that they had not received any information about their company’s involvement in Opportunity 2000. The interviews with secretaries also indicated that opportunities for training and career development were either nonexistent or had decreased since the launch of the initiative.

The BBC

The BBC is a public corporation with a private enterprise division. It was originally set up by Royal Charter to provide broadcasting service in the UK and abroad. In 1991, the BBC restructured the organization according to the chief executive’s vision, a programme named “Producer’s Choice.” The data on Producer’s Choice showed that its purpose was to produce a more independent and business-like company by the organization of a reduced number of staff into business units, along with fewer in-house production activities to enhance cost effectiveness. In 1993, the BBC had 29,000 employees, and 25 board members including seven women.

The BBC's 1991 goals and action plan stated an “aim to reflect in its workforce, the composition of the Nation it serves by the year 2000” (Opportunity 2000, 1991b, p. 8). To achieve this they published the following action plan (p. 8):
— Furthering equal opportunities activities to support women with domestic responsibilities.

— Furthering women-only career and personal development training courses.

— Flexible working.

— Setting goal and action targets with a 1996 review of the female to male ratio:

  30:70 at senior executive level
  40:60 at senior management level
  40:60 at management level.

The BBC set targets to increase the number of women in management, but they did not say how or from where they planned to recruit them. In 1993, a BBC equal opportunity representative announced that the organization had achieved their set targets for 1996 (Trynka, 1993). However, Table 5 presents results showing that in order for them to have increased the number of women at senior executive levels, it would have been necessary to hire or promote 52 women to achieve these goals (assuming no change in the total number of senior executive staff). In order for the BBC to meet their goal for increasing the number of women in senior management by 1996, they would have had to hire or promote 348 women. And, in order to increase the number of women at management level, they would have had to hire or promote 716 women. As one BBC manager said, "They've simply moved the goalposts. No one in my [18 years of] experience goes out and creates opportunities for women" (Melanie, 1994 interviews, pp. 3, 7). Another BBC manager said, "It's good to be seen to be doing the right things, but I don't know how they, we, will carry it out. How can you increase targets when in a contracting organization?" (Sue, 1992 interviews, p. 2). When asking this manager about secretaries' opportunities for
Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Actual</th>
<th>Target</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1982</td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior executive</td>
<td>0% 5% 10%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management</td>
<td>7% 11% 16%</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>11% 15% 21%</td>
<td>792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total 1050</td>
<td>Total 2166</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Target set in 1991 for 1996

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N = Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior executive</td>
<td>30:70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management</td>
<td>40:60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>40:60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To achieve by 1996

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>By hire or promotion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior executive</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior management</td>
<td>348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>716</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

advancement as a result of Opportunity 2000, she also stated:

Opportunity 2000 gives people more opportunity, but trouble
is, people don't look far enough down. ...There's never talk
about secretarial level when discussing the future of the
BBC. ...It hasn't happened because they [secretaries]
haven't got to a certain level to be even considered, sadly.
The decision makers are men and no one really thought it
through. (Sue, 1992 interviews, p. 8)

Targeting aimed solely at senior management levels has been shown to be a
strategy for controlling the source of applicants into particular areas (Littler &
Salaman, 1982). The outcome of action to establish targets for women already in
management positions has a mixture of intended and unintended consequences for
secretaries' career opportunities. The statements of the BBC's female employees
indicate their shared understanding that as a result of these types of practices,
secretaries remain relegated to pink-collar work whether they aspired to advance
beyond it or not. Sue's statements that "the decision makers are men and no one really
thought it through," and "people don't look far enough down because secretaries
haven't got to a certain level to even be considered," along with Melanie's statement
that "they've simply moved the goalposts," says a great deal about the interviewees'
awareness of gender relations in paid work. These women were conscious that the
BBC's targeting practices were more likely to be achieved as a result of overall
redundancies, rather than by promoting or hiring more women from within the
organization.

Corporate statements on equal opportunities further demonstrate the BBC's
gendered context that provides the meaning for secretaries' work situation. The
BBC's 1991 document on Opportunity 2000 reported their equal opportunity policy as
"constantly reaffirmed and publicised nationally and regularly reviewed by the BBC's
Board of Governors" (Opportunity 2000, 1991b, p. 8). But by 1995, this predominantly male board criticised managers for failing to cut expenditures associated with equal opportunity spending, and demanded additional staff cuts. One governor quoted in the Sunday Times said, "We made it clear to Mr. Birt that the staff numbers have to be controlled...of course we all support equal opportunities, but the BBC has become a magnet for what the press call ‘do-gooders’" (Hellen, 1995, p. 1). Further, the Board of Governors were quoted as stating that “plans by the equal opportunity department to spend £4 million on publicity and courses were needless, considering women outnumber men in the television division, and targets...had been met five years ahead of schedule” (p. 1). By decreasing money spent on practices to improve women’s opportunities for advancement, the BBC contradicted their proposed Opportunity 2000 goals and action plan. The combined action of setting unrealistic targets solely for women in management, and reducing equal opportunity expenditures, restricts secretaries’ opportunities to train for higher paying, higher status positions, thereby controlling their career fate. In addition, the BBC secretaries had not received any information about the company’s involvement in Opportunity 2000, and they also indicated that opportunities for training and career development had decreased since the launch of the initiative.

**Rank Xerox**

Rank Xerox is an American-based subsidiary in the UK that manufactures and markets a wide-range of products to enhance the production of documents. Like their American parent organization, Rank Xerox restructured their organization with compulsory redundancies in the early 1990s. In 1993, Rank Xerox had 25,000
employees, and their Board of Directors comprised 21 members, but as was the case at Unilever—none were women.

The Rank Xerox corporate equality of opportunity statement was "We only discriminate on ability" (Opportunity 2000, 1991b, p. 44). Their Opportunity 2000 goals and action plan consisted of the following (p. 44):

—Creating an environment where women can aspire to their full potential.

—Exploring child-care support.

—Equal opportunities workshops for all staff to build ownership.

—Setting goal and action targets to increase the percentage of women in management levels from 10% in 1990 to 25% in 1995 subject to review goals for year 2000.

Their goals and action plan did not include any statements of action for increasing career opportunities for women other than for those in management positions. Like the other secretaries in the case study organizations, the Rank Xerox secretaries had not received any information about their company’s involvement in Opportunity 2000. However, these secretaries indicated that opportunities for career development beyond secretarial work were better than in the other case study organizations. Here, there was the possibility of movement by secretaries into a management position, but only within Rank Xerox’s high street copy shops not within Rank Xerox headquarters.

**Channel Four**

Channel Four started in 1981 as a commercial UK broadcast television company that commissions programmes rather than producing them in-house. By 1993, Channel Four employed 500 people and had a total of 14 board members—three of whom were women. However, one woman on the board left the organization in 1994 and was replaced by a man.
In the 1991 Opportunity 2000 member publication, Channel Four stated that since their beginning, the corporate aim has been “appointing individuals on their ability to perform the task they are asked to do, irrespective of sex, race or disability” (Opportunity 2000, 1991b, p. 17). As previously noted, Channel Four was the only campaign member of the original 61 to specifically mention developing the careers of women in secretarial roles in their action plan (p. 17). They presented the following:

---Increase the number of women working in departments where they are underrepresented, paying attention to the status that women achieve.

---Increase the number of women who return after maternity. In 1991 childcare allowances for employees were introduced.

---Enable women returners to re-enter the job market through job sharing.

---Continue the practice of promotion from secretarial and clerical levels.

---Continue running management development courses particularly for women who make the move out of secretarial and clerical jobs.

However, when I asked Channel Four’s Public Relations Director about the numbers of secretaries successful in advancing out of secretarial and clerical jobs since the launch of Opportunity 2000, she told me there were none. She explained, “There are too few posts available for secretaries to advance within the company” (Vickie, 1994 interviews, p. 2). This Director could not mention any secretary who had taken advantage of Channel Four’s management development courses that focused on these women. What she did say was that Channel Four “encourages” secretaries to seek training “to do interesting and extra work [in order] to find other avenues outside the organization, possibly at the BBC or ITV television networks...the good ones we have, we can’t promote internally” because of the limited number of higher level positions (Vickie, 1994 interviews, pp. 2-3). These statements indicate the public relations value of Opportunity 2000 membership because they illustrate that what the
corporation says is not what it actually practices. Channel Four included secretaries in three of their five plans of action, but were able to do so without fear of sanctions for not following through with their plans. In this gendered organizational context, the career opportunities of secretaries are situated and confined to pink-collar work.

When asked about setting target figures to increase the percentage of women in management, the Public Relations Director said: “Channel Four hasn’t had to set targets because the corporate culture has always had about one third of their senior employees as women. There’s no question of a glass ceiling” (Vickie, 1994 interviews, p. 1). One must use caution, however, when interpreting this statement. Channel Four appointed a Public Relations Director as their Opportunity 2000 representative whose responsibility was to promote a positive equal opportunity corporate image, rather than someone whose responsibility is to monitor concrete actions that support their proclaimed commitment to positive action. The statements by this organizational representative that “…the good ones [secretaries] we have, we can’t promote” and “there’s no question of a glass ceiling” send mixed messages and define the meaning of advancement. On the one hand, they indicate that barriers to senior management positions are non-existent; but, on the other hand, secretaries have few, if any, opportunities to move up to those levels of status within the organizational hierarchy. Thus, career development opportunities that enable secretaries to cross-over into management terrain are precluded. In addition, none of the employees I met with formally or informally, barring this representative, had received information on Channel Four’s involvement in Opportunity 2000.

I consider that there are numerous mechanisms involved in maintaining the process of vertical occupational segregation for secretaries within these gendered organizations. These include their recruiting practices, having few women in senior
management or board level positions, controlling secretaries' access to information that could lead to management training, and providing virtually non-existent opportunities for promotion within their organizations. The existence of these collective segregationist practices highlight patriarchal relations in the structure of paid work. These organizations have not only maintained a gendered context for constraining secretaries' career opportunities, but they have also shaped the meaning of advancement for their secretaries.

**The Meaning of Career Advancement for Secretaries**

Table 6 profiles the case study secretaries in terms of age, education, their organizational background, and whether or not they had career aspirations beyond pink-collar work. It should be noted that three of the 18 secretaries interviewed had degrees or postgraduate qualifications. The results of interviews reveal the case study secretaries' knowledge of recruitment and training practices and also their knowledge of the implicit rules for advancement to managerial positions within their organizations that impacted on their ambitions. Only four of nine secretaries who stated having career ambitions had sought advancement beyond their present level of work or to work at a higher level. Yet, past research has shown a correlation between negative mobility perceptions and low aspirations (Kanter, 1977). Research has also shown that perceptions of organizational policies and structures, designed to promote mobility from within, contribute to employee expectations of mobility (Landau & Hammer, 1986; Vardi, 1980). All the interviews with the case study secretaries
### Secretarial Staff Biographical Profiles: Age, Education, Organization Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Time With Firm</th>
<th># of Mgrs</th>
<th>Primary Mgr</th>
<th>Aspire beyond PC Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

#### British Broadcasting Corporation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Mgrs</th>
<th>Mgr Title</th>
<th>PC Aspire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Degree +</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Personnel Mgr</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annette</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Dept Head</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kay</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>O-level</td>
<td>13 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tech Op Mgr</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
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<td>29 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personnel Mgr</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Degree +</td>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Equal Opps</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Postgrad +</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mnging Dir</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Group Head</td>
<td>No</td>
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</table>

#### Unilever

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Mgrs</th>
<th>Mgr Title</th>
<th>PC Aspire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>A-level</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>UK Pers Head</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>O-level +</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ed Liaison Mgr/Peru</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>GCSE</td>
<td>12 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Personnel Mgr</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Rank Xerox

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Mgrs</th>
<th>Mgr Title</th>
<th>PC Aspire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>O-level +</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Bus Serv Mgr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yvonne</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>A-level +</td>
<td>7 years</td>
<td>1+dept</td>
<td>Finance Mgr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katrina</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>A-level +</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>UK Mng Dir</td>
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</table>

#### Channel Four, Opportunity 2000, University Secretaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Mgrs</th>
<th>Mgr Title</th>
<th>PC Aspire</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Hillary</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Postgrad +</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>General Mgr</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>O-level +</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>O2000 Dir</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>A-level +</td>
<td>15 years</td>
<td>1+dept</td>
<td>Dept Head</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>Degree +</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>1+dept</td>
<td>Dept Admin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>A-level +</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>1+dept</td>
<td>Dept Admin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NOTE:** PC = Pink Collar
indicated that opportunities to advance beyond secretarial work have decreased—not increased—in their organizations since the launch of Opportunity 2000.

**Recruitment and Promotion Practices**

The organizational representatives from the BBC, Unilever, and Rank Xerox stated that promoting career opportunities for secretaries was nonessential in the context of Opportunity 2000. One Rank Xerox representative said, “In recessionary times, secretaries are more concerned with keeping their jobs than aspiring to higher positions” (Rank Xerox fieldnotes, 21 March, 1994). During interviews, these representatives stated that their career development practices for secretaries were structured through a system of grades rather than upon a system of merit. But they also said that it was up to the individual to seek out available job vacancies through internal magazines or computerised notice boards. The interviews with secretaries indicated their practical knowledge of recruitment, promotion and career development practices within their organizational cultures that tended to exacerbate negative expectations for advancement. As mentioned previously, none of the secretaries had received any notice of their organizations’ involvement in Opportunity 2000 or about those actions designed to increase their career opportunities.

Dex (1987) noted that promotion is the most important aspect of career advancement for secretaries, because it constitutes the means by which an individual advances her career beyond pink-collar work. Secretarial promotion has been seen to occur in two forms: promotion *within* secretarial work itself to a higher level position or promotion *out of* secretarial work into another occupation (Colwill, 1985; Silverstone, 1974; Vinnicombe, 1980). Although the term *career* is well understood as moving upward in one’s chosen line of work, the concept is a complex one. The
popular meaning of the term “career” implies a succession of related jobs through which a person moves in a predictable and clearly defined sequence arranged in a hierarchy of prestige. For secretaries, this definition would mean that their career is limited to promotion within the secretarial ranks, not necessarily promotion out of secretarial work. Yet, some secretaries in the past have been promoted out of secretarial work, and secretarial work has often been perceived as a stepping stone to other opportunities:

Promotion opportunities for secretaries are legion. The fascinating world of business is alive with endless possibilities for still greater advancement. Secretarial experience is often the “way in” to interesting and highly paid posts in big firms and organizations. Many prominent women in the advertising world started their working lives as secretaries, and the knowledge they gained during those early years led to the wider horizons of advertising.

...Women executives in senior Government positions have graduated from the ranks of secretaries. A large percentage of successful business women also started life this way. (Rowe, cited in McNally, 1979, p. 55)

However, Silverstone (1974) found that most employers did not consider that a secretary could progress from secretarial to executive duties because any such movement would necessitate a specialised form of training to bridge the barrier.

Promotion within secretarial work has generally been in terms of working for a boss of a higher level. Thus, the secretarial hierarchy mirrors the management hierarchy. Mills (1951) observed that bureaucratic hierarchies are comprised of white-collar pyramids with a small point at the top of older men and a wide base at the bottom of traditionally female office workers who are objects of management manipulation. According to Mills, these “white-collar employees are the assistants of authority; the power they exercise is a derived power, but they do exercise it” (p. 78).
Across the case study organizations, the career development and promotion opportunities for secretaries were primarily structured for working within the secretarial occupation. The interviews with secretaries indicated how their career goals were tied to their knowledge of their organizations’ management development training courses that were aimed toward new recruits straight out of university, or toward those recruited from other organizations.

**Unilever.** The Unilever secretaries said that the company’s appointment and career development practices were strictly in terms of recruiting graduates of elite universities and then training them as potential managers. Unilever has structured these practices around the “Management Development Training Scheme.” However, their secretaries with university qualifications or career potential explained that they were excluded from this management training opportunity. A Personnel Manager confirmed this and stated:

There’s no doubt that in this organization some of the better women secretaries would see themselves as having a career beyond where they are at the moment and into management. Unfortunately, it doesn’t happen very often. It does happen a bit, but not very much.

And I suppose it doesn’t happen mainly because we do…probably wrongly create…in a sense, an elite of people who come into the business at the graduate level, and they have a career planned out for them on the management ladder. And we tend to fill the management vacancies through that route almost exclusively. (Roger, 1994 interviews, pp. 1-2)

Mary, a secretary employed for 11 years at Unilever, stated that she had relevant A-level grades to attend Oxford University before she joined the company (but decided not to go to university). When asked about the Management Development Training Scheme and if attending an Open University course and getting a degree could enhance her opportunity to participate, she replied:
I couldn’t do the graduate training scheme. It just doesn’t happen... because of the corporate culture.

There’s nothing or no one to back you or help you or what have you. And as long as there are men like [my manager], it won’t change. (Mary, 1994 interviews, pp. 9, 11)

In addition, she did not expect opportunities for advancement to increase as a result of Unilever’s participation in Opportunity 2000:

There aren’t any opportunities really; I’m not knocking Unilever at all ‘cause I’ve been here for over 11 years and I love it, etc., etc., but there aren’t opportunities for secretaries. They just don’t exist. So, I don’t really expect any sort of changes... I know there are very big barriers. Even if I was desperate to get it, I would be blocking a management position because I wouldn’t be able to go onto the next level or the next level or the next level; it just doesn’t happen. (Mary, 1994 interviews, pp. 2, 6)

Mary’s statements reflect the Unilever secretaries’ shared meaning of career advancement. They did not expect opportunities for advancement because of the Unilever gendered corporate culture with male executives who structure recruitment and training practices. Thus, secretaries felt systematically excluded from acquiring the training needed for promotion beyond secretarial work. However, the Unilever secretaries also accepted their work situation within their organizational culture, as Mary described:

I do understand why, as well, because they take out of universities high-powered managers and they’ll have them as being managers in 2 years, etc., etc., and they’re destined for the top... Either you’re fast track or you’re not.

They constantly train [graduate recruits] for those 2 years and for many years afterwards... There’s no way that I could get that training. And, in a sense, perhaps that is a criticism, maybe I’ve just got too used to it and I’ve got swept up with it and, you know you sort of accept a situation. If a situation goes on long enough, you accept it as being the norm. (Mary, 1994 interviews, pp. 9-10)
One form of compliance with recruitment and promotion practices designed to keep women working within a secretarial role was described in interviews as “going along” with a work situation, or to cope “and make the best of it” rather than to breach the rules of subordination and organizational norms of etiquette. Yet, “coping” (or hiding behind a mask of compliance) can also be viewed as a non-confrontational strategy of resistance to limited opportunities for advancement as Lee-Treweek (1997) and Davies (1992) have suggested. In this context, “coping” underlines service to others and a personal commitment to secretarial tasks. However, the results show an unintended consequence of accepting a work situation as a norm—it tends to reproduce segregationist practices that impact on secretaries’ career fate.

The work of Collinson and Knights (1986) also showed how female clerical workers came to internalise, resign themselves, and ultimately accept their positions and lack of promotional opportunities. They found that clerical workers internalised assumptions to justify gender segregation, hence habituating routine and restriction. Collinson and Knights have claimed that a sense of security and social identity can provoke conservative behavioural tendencies, which prevents female support staff from challenging the restrictive nature of their jobs. Despite initial resistance, clerical workers ultimately acquiesced to the segregationist views of their managers and accepted the lack of promotional opportunities. This same notion held true for the case study secretaries.

BBC. Hannah, a BBC secretary, showed her acceptance of the lack of career opportunities at the BBC when saying, “...the thing is that perhaps you limit yourself and perhaps maybe I’ve internalised the thing with graduate [recruiting]...maybe that is the way of justifying to myself what I’m doing at the moment” (Hannah, 1994 interviews, p. 19). Like Hannah, the other BBC secretaries accepted—but not
necessarily liked—their limited opportunities for advancement brought about through organizational restructuring and Producer's Choice. In 1991, the BBC published documentation on secretarial services. One document produced by the BBC on the role of secretaries indicates an increase in secretaries’ workloads (and a need for secretaries to improve their business and communication skills), but at the same time the BBC would be using more short-term contracts and limiting training and career development to relevant secretarial skills (BBC, 1991b). (See Appendix H). The document in Appendix I on secretarial job content confirms an increase in secretaries’ overall workloads along with direct competition from independent personnel, and a decrease in production assistant opportunities (BBC, 1991b). These documents support the interviews with secretaries that indicated their low expectations for advancement beyond pink-collar work. These documents are in stark contrast to their senior executive’s stated commitment to Opportunity 2000 and increasing career opportunities for women working at all levels. Further, one document on the future of secretarial career paths produced by the BBC Secretarial Study Group and shown in Appendix J explicitly stated that “secretarial staff should be recruited to real support roles which will be the basis of their careers rather than as a means of ‘getting into TV’” (BBC, 1991b, p. 8). The BBC’s future career development plan for secretaries reflected the company’s focus on managing business units, generating income and accounting for costs, but also showed this focus to be at the expense of developing the careers of secretaries.

While BBC secretaries were expected to assume numerous roles and bear the pressure of increased workloads, their career paths beyond pink-collar work were to be reduced significantly. Those career paths, designated “high volume,” were those whose movement was from recruitment to a reserve pool of secretaries or to unit team
assistant (see Appendix J). Career paths designated as "low volume" were those leading to technical posts, senior team assistant, and executive assistant. Career paths leading to production or research posts were not only designated as "occasional" but also "reduced." In other words, most secretaries' training and career development would be limited to a focus on improving skills to remain in a secretarial position. As a means of improving cost effectiveness, the BBC's report *Producer's Choice* explicitly stated that they would be using "more short-term contracts" and "reducing the number of staff and in-house production activities" (BBC, 1991b, p. 4). It stated further that "secretaries will be in competition for any longer term positions...the current career development paths may cease" (p. 5). In addition, training for production assistant recruitment from production secretarial ranks was to be "reduced substantially...ceasing the current career development paths" (p. 8). Hence, as a result of Producer's Choice career advancement opportunities beyond secretarial work were being reduced. For the BBC secretaries, organizational restructuring and Producer's Choice meant an increase in competition with other women for scarce full-time positions because of the decrease in production assistant training attachments. The outcome of this policy mix relegates secretaries to remain in a secretarial role. The secretaries knew that the actions of increasing short-term and temporary contracts and decreasing training and attachment opportunities would increase the competition between women for scarce higher level jobs.

The BBC secretaries were consciously aware of their precarious work situation since the introduction of Producer's Choice and the changes to the organizations' career development practices. Historically, women had been recruited into the BBC as secretaries or clerks. This was stated to be the organizational norm. It was from this starting position that women could obtain apprenticeship training in order to move
beyond secretarial work. The personnel representatives who were interviewed acknowledged that many women joined the BBC as secretaries with the belief that the job would be a "stepping stone" to careers in production or the artistic side of the organization (BBC fieldnotes, 9 September, 1992; 18 March, 1994). One secretary stated her perception that approximately 60% of the existing secretaries joined the company with such aspirations (BBC fieldnotes, 18 March, 1994). The process of moving into production, however, was stated to be a very difficult one, as one secretary who worked at the BBC for 29 years described:

For instance, a lot of secretaries want to go into production and then they'd start off in production. Then they want to be a production assistant and it's very, very difficult. It's very very popular so you'd have to end up being a secretary for quite some time before you get through that next stage, and from that stage hopefully you might be able to fill in for someone on leave, perhaps an assistant producer, but it takes a very long time. (Rose, 1992 interviews, p. 10)

The career story of one woman in management paralleled this process. Melanie accepted a position as a clerk in 1976, and by 1994 her career had progressed to working as an in-house finance consultant. Melanie began her career at the BBC after passing a shorthand test at 100 wpm. She then went on a training attachment and progressed into a production assistant position where she assumed budgeting tasks for the producer. Melanie later completed an assistant producer's training attachment, and subsequently worked as a researcher. In this position she created an employee suggestion scheme for which she was given an award for introducing ideas that impacted on business practices. Melanie's talents were acknowledged and developed by a series editor, who then created a financial management position for her. However, she also said:

There is less and less movement now in terms of secretaries and production assistants because they're bringing in those
trained from outside. ...They're getting away from in-house talent because it's cheaper to bring in people from the outside. (Melanie, 1994 interviews, pp. 3-4)

To Melanie, organizational restructuring meant that recruiting from outside the BBC was more cost efficient. Thus, this type of recruitment became the organizational norm according to secretaries, managers, and documented policy. These normative actions can be seen as segregationist practices because talented secretaries working within the BBC are overlooked and thus remain in pink-collar work.

Yet, all the BBC secretaries recounted the story of Evonne Littlewood—the token legend who began her career as a secretary in the 1960s and retired an executive. The paradox is that those secretaries recognise her name as a successful secretary exemplifying the alleged meritability of progress within this organization. However, they also indicated that opportunities for a career such as Littlewood’s no longer exist, despite Opportunity 2000:

I mean the opportunities I think were here, they're not now. ...I mean the fact that if you, it didn't matter what you were, you know, male or female or whatever, if you were good, and I mean you had to be good, but if you were good you got somewhere. I mean, like, there was Evonne Littlewood. She joined as a drama script typist and left as an executive producer and that was, she was, I think she's about 64 now so I mean it shows that was years ago when there weren't supposed to be any opportunities for women but she managed [to] work from the bottom up.

I think there was more you could do if you wanted to at any level. You knew you could come in at the bottom wherever you were, that the opportunities would be there, the training attachments would be there.

It's practically impossible to do that now because they bring in so many people from outside that, you know, like, with [name of manager] coming in from Granada, and [name of manager] coming in from another independent, there's not the movement, there isn't the opportunity for the attachments, for the training, anything as there was before. Like the fact that my job, they will consider people from outside whereas with that grade of job before that would
never have happened, it would purely have been internal, and they would only have considered external had there been nobody internal that was suitable.

I: And is that only since Producer's Choice has come about?

I don’t know that it’s necessarily just Producer’s Choice; that, I mean, obviously has an effect on it, but it’s just the whole reorganizing of everywhere, the fact that so many managers now from all areas are people brought in from outside. You know, you speak to somebody and they say, “You know, we’ve got a new manager and they’re coming from Marks & Spencer’s or British Telecom.” What the hell do they know about T

V? Whereas before that, to become a manager, you would have had to have probably worked on the studio floor, you know, you would have been promoted into it whereas there’s not that movement anymore, everybody’s getting stuck. (Julia, 1994 interviews, p. 14)

Julia expressed the frustration of all the BBC secretaries over the decrease in training attachment opportunities. Opportunities for advancement from the secretarial ranks were said to have been available in the past, but not available currently, nor are they likely to be there in the future. Despite token role models, the shared experiences and meaning of advancement of the secretaries at the BBC highlighted their low expectations for upward mobility within the organization. The BBC secretaries displayed a conscious awareness in the interviews that as a result of redundancies and scarcity of jobs, their career paths were “made worse because women are pitted against other women” (BBC fieldnotes, 18 March, 1994). The secretaries feared “getting stuck,” as one secretary communicated during field observations in a BBC lunchroom. Based upon her five years with the company, this secretary described her expectations for advancement in the following way:

Once you are a secretary, you stay a secretary. You get labeled and stuck. If you work in production or a technical area, there’s a chance of mobility if you’re a middle-class Black woman or an Oxbridge White woman. It’s about being in the right place at the right time. ... Equal opportunities between men and women are better than outside, but not between women. (BBC fieldnotes, 18 March, 1994)
Even with a university degree, a secretary working in a personnel department, who had ambition to become a personnel manager, indicated her awareness of how the decrease in career opportunities has shaped her career behaviour:

If things hadn’t changed so much and there weren’t so few jobs, so few Personnel Assistant jobs around, then my degree would have put me in a good position, I think, but there just aren’t openings anymore. ...Because so many people are losing their jobs and when a vacancy does come up the number of applicants who have got that kind of experience means that the competition is stiff. (Janet, 1992 interviews, pp. 8-9)

The thing is that, if there is no recruitment of PA’s (production assistants) then the secretaries have nowhere to go and that is what’s been happening. You know, there’s just been no movement. I mean, and that’s been happening everywhere, we haven’t been training for production managers for the last couple of years; except for production assistants, this is the first one in about two and a half years. For floor assistants, for everything! There’s no, no movement...and of those that didn’t get it this time around, they don’t know when they’re gonna get another opportunity. (Janet, 1992 interviews, pp. 14-15)

One senior manager, however, contradicted the above statements when she said, “They can go on any training attachment that they want to” (Joanna, 1994 interviews, p. 1). But she also supported the interviews with the secretaries when asked if the competition for jobs was fierce because of the redundancies and reorganization occurring at the BBC. She replied: “Um. It is now; yeah very, very stiff. I mean we advertised two weeks ago for ‘contestant researchers’ and got 650 replies...we need three or four. It’s for the future. These are for a file to sort of troll for people. It gives us something to fall back on when a new series is dumped on us” (Joanna, 1994 interviews, p. 2). However, the action of advertising for researchers only to have them available for a contingency pool for limited future prospects sends a message of false hope to secretaries seeking advancement within the organization. An interview with
another BBC secretary who had a postgraduate degree indicated that attachments were the only type of advancement practice that could enable a secretary to move beyond pink-collar work. "I mean that's the only movement but then again it's movement back again. ...It has happened that people who have gone on attachments when they come back they don't have a job to come back to...because of the changes in their own department" (Hannah, 1994 interviews, pp. 12, 18).

The secretaries' level of education was found to be relatively insignificant in the promotion process. This result amplifies the work of Swimmer (1990) who found that promotions of female clerical employees were unlikely even when varying levels of education were held constant. Hannah has a postgraduate degree and bilingual skills in German and French. She wanted to work in the BBC World Radio division. However, at the time of interview she said there were no career opportunities in radio, and she was also uncertain of her secretarial career because her contract had not yet been renewed. Dependency, a concept mentioned by Weber (1947) as being important for maintaining power in organizations, is achieved within a context of corporate upheaval. Because of the BBC secretaries' conscious awareness that organizational restructuring and staff reductions meant limited prospects for moving out of secretarial work, they were more likely to accept the BBC's recruitment and promotion practices, rather than to challenge them. Littler and Salaman (1982) have suggested that in uncertain economic times, when alternative employment opportunities and vacancies are scarce, a secretary begins to accept that she can no longer move. They argued this occurs "because resistance in any form is extremely difficult where no alternative employment opportunities exist" (p. 47).

Machung (1992) noted tacit organizational rules for subordination and upward mobility within gendered organizational cultures. The tacit rules for clerical/secretarial
subordination included “hide your talent and hide your ambition.” On the other hand, the tacit organizational rules for upward mobility were to “display your talent and display your ambition.” These tacit rules for behaviour present a workplace dilemma for secretaries as indicated by one senior BBC manager.

It is the person’s responsibility to look for opportunities more than a boss showing you a career path. ...If you have aspirations, you must let them be known. If someone doesn’t assert themselves, initiate things, they probably haven’t got it in them. (Sue, 1992 interviews, p. 22)

However, this manager—then in her 40s and the head of a department—began her career at the BBC on a temporary clerical contract. Sue’s career story also paralleled the BBC’s traditional recruiting, grading and promotion paths. Once hired as full-time secretary, and at the insistence of her manager, Sue applied for a production assistant training attachment. She subsequently became a production assistant and then applied for an assistant producer training attachment after which she became an assistant producer. Sue then left the BBC and joined Channel Four as an assistant producer, but was later rehired at the BBC as a producer. From that position, she went on to become an editor, and then into a career as head of a department. While Sue acknowledged that her career was made possible by a manager who recognised and developed her talents, and then encouraged her to take advantage of the BBC’s training attachment opportunities, she insisted that her secretary had no career ambitions because she did not assert them on her own. Her contradictory statements, “if secretaries do not assert themselves, then they do not have what it takes to progress” followed by “I am surprised where I ended up because I wouldn’t have applied for the [production assistant attachment] position. I didn’t have the drive—never have. I’m not that sort of person. I was shy” (Sue, 1992 interviews, p. 12) indicate the precarious work situation
of secretaries as well as the contradictory relationships between personal ambition and organizational support. Sue’s career progressed because of the encouragement offered by her manager, but paradoxically she felt no obligation to encourage her own secretary’s career development. Instead, she expressed that it was up to secretaries themselves to push for career advancement. Kanter (1977) has suggested that aspirations, work commitment, and a sense of organizational responsibility can be aroused by a significant increase in opportunity. But, as a manager and role model, Sue failed actively to encourage the development of her own secretaries’ talents. Thus, secretaries’ patterns of behaviour can be seen, in part, to be also influenced by the actions of their bosses who may not want to lose the support from “their” secretary.

**Rank Xerox.** One secretary at Rank Xerox who had O-level education and private secretary certificates in Spanish, French, and Italian expressed her desire to work at a higher level, that of bilingual secretary at the company’s international headquarters. However, her opportunities for advancement even within the secretarial realm were hindered by a manager who told her, “you haven’t got the experience, you need the experience, you’re not old enough to be a bilingual secretary, you’ve got the qualifications but you need the experience” (Jane, 1994 interviews, p. 3). The results from interviews at Rank Xerox indicated that opportunities for career advancement beyond secretarial work were slightly higher here than at the other case study organizations. For the most part, however, the career opportunities for these secretaries mirrored Jane’s, who said: “I’m stuck in a normal secretarial role.”

The Rank Xerox secretaries all stated that their career opportunities could involve a move to managing a high street copy shop or to a position in sales. Jane described the secretaries’ career options in the following manner:
A copy centre manager's job is basically a job where you're mainly on your feet. You do the paper work and you have two to three staff under you but you run the whole of that copy centre shop. And there's that possibility...or there's also sales executive, so you could also go into sales, which is completely different from secretarial but I don't fancy either of them. Sales looked very glorified until I actually spoke to a few of them and I can see from here that they are under a lot of pressure to make their targets, and if they don't make their targets, life is made hell for them. And I thought, well, I wouldn't want that pressure. (Jane, 1994 interviews, p. 13)

Another secretary said, "In the seven years I've been here, there have only been two secretaries I've known really to have left secretarial work to have done something else, but I don't know of anyone who's ever achieved management" (Yvonne, 1994 interviews, p. 6). Both of the secretaries that she mentioned had moved into sales.

All the case study interviews indicated that career advancement would be up to the secretaries as individuals to pursue any available opportunities, rather than being informed of them by either their bosses or the organization. The secretaries felt that success in this area depended on them being "pushy" and "aggressive," behaviour that breaches their understanding of tacit organizational rules for women in their position. The secretaries at Rank Xerox also indicated that career advancement meant having to work full time without the possibility of job sharing, unless they used confrontational strategies of resistance that go against the norms of a female culture. Jane told the story of a woman who "pushed" the issue of working part time in a copy centre all the way to the managing director, but did not confront the director directly when she wanted to work as a part time manager.

One of the girls in our copy centres wanted to do part time and they were like quite adamant that she couldn't do it. I can't remember what reason for, and she then wrote to [name of managing director], and as soon as she wrote to [him], she got the job. She got the, like the hours she needed for part time because she had a baby. So it worked, but how many people do that?
She’s still in her job but…it was only like a specialist role in one of the copy centres. She was about 29-30, yeah, still quite young but she’s still there. But there is one other thing I know about this girl, she went in for a position of manager of this particular shop that she was in and they refused her on the fact that a manager has to be there 5 days a week. And they didn’t offer job share or anything. So she wanted to go up the ladder but because she only wanted to do it on a part-time basis, they refused her.

She could have the job as a manager as long as she did five days a week. She was flatly refused for that but I don’t think that she wrote to [name of managing director] on that occasion. [laughs] I don’t know what would have happened but how many people do that? (Jane, 1994 interviews, pp. 16-18)

As Jane’s repeated question points out, not many women are willing to resort to pushy or aggressive behaviour in order to develop their careers in uncertain employment times.

The interviews with secretaries across the case study organizations showed that they were more likely to accept organizational practices and the promotion norms when only a few alternative employment opportunities existed. Career advancement into management positions at Rank Xerox meant working full time; and within the secretarial occupation, it also meant working full time for one of the directors on the fifth floor of the headquarters building. Jane’s story exemplifies the difficulty that many women experience in attempting to shift from working full time to working a job-share post. It also illustrates (through the description of an exception) one style of women’s resistance, which is non-confrontational in the face of conflict, and then laughing about it later. This story also seems to indicate that women in the workplace exercise a kind of micro “realpolitik:” that there are things that can be achieved realistically and that there are actions (e.g. confronting the director) which do not or, at least, are unlikely to, have positive outcomes. Jane’s story indicates a political
astuteness that has been applied to achieve the “best practical outcome” in a situation where options are known, thought about, considered, and weighed against each other. It is possible that the story is an “organizational myth” that, discursively, locates or grounds certain strategies for advancement and the pros and cons of pursuing them. It is possible that there never was such “a girl in one of our copy centres,” but still the story is important in setting the strategic parameters in which individual aspirations for advancement can realistically operate. In turn, pushing at these parameters may lead to new kinds of strategic enterprise designed to reconfigure the field in which strategies for advancement are used.

**Channel Four.** The Channel Four secretary who was interviewed held a postgraduate degree in physics but expressed little desire for a career in management. When Helen commenced work, she did so with “the idea of starting at the bottom and working my way up, but then I found I quite like secretarial work so I stuck with it” (Helen, 1994 interviews, p. 1). She also stated that secretaries’ opportunities for career advancement at Channel Four were “limited” and “dominated by the move” into their new headquarters. The company’s subsequent restructuring efforts thwarted the significance of their Opportunity 2000 goals and action plan for secretaries. This occurred despite a statement made by Channel Four’s organizational representative that they were “faced with a real problem with the majority of their women being low in the hierarchy in low status positions” (Vickie, 1994 interviews, p. 1). When asked about secretaries’ careers, Vickie said:

It’s a slightly strange thing to do [but] we train people so they go. [laughs] It’s a particularly strange thing to do if they’re doing their current job particularly well. There are not a lot of intermediate jobs so most of the emphasis has to be on giving them training to go outside and find a more senior job, which of course gives them the confidence to go
elsewhere because they are all qualified and experienced.
(Vickie, 1994 interviews, p. 3)

Vickie’s previously quoted statement (see p. 195) that “the good ones we have, we can’t promote,” followed by the above one “it’s a slightly strange thing to train people to go...which of course gives them the self-confidence to go elsewhere” justifies the company’s segregationist activities. Her laughter in this case was almost apologetic, but it still shows the irony of this practice, even though she personally supported the idea of increasing the value of secretarial work by focusing on efforts to train secretaries to leave. The practice of training secretaries to leave Channel Four may seem irrational, but it doubly binds secretaries to pink-collar work within the organization. On the other hand, Helen’s interview indicated that her choice to remain in secretarial work stemmed from a desire to achieve balance, but in a contextually defined way.

Long-Hours Ideology and the Quest for Balance

The secretaries’ occupational choices and subsequent activities displayed elements of a female culture, and were focused on supporting others and cultivating human relations in the workplace (see Chapters 6 and 7). Many of the interviews with secretaries indicated that the gendered norm of managers working long hours and weekends contributed to their lack of desire for a career in management. This seems to suggest that management positions are “preoccupations,” a term used by Wheeler (1990) and discussed in Chapter 2, and unlike a secretarial occupation that provides fixed hours and balance between work and out-of-work activities. The shared meaning of advancement among secretaries who worked with women in management also led them to believe that even when women in management sacrificed a balanced life, and
worked harder and longer than men in these positions, their opportunities for further
career advancement still remained limited. In other words, as the secretaries said,
“why bother?” This comment refers both to an awareness of limited opportunities and
a desire for balance.

The basic tendency of bureaucratic rationality has been to extend a gendered
work ethic by its form of control over employees’ working time. According to Gorz
(1994), “the ‘free market economy’ permits economic rationality to make itself
independent of the demands of sociality” (p. 68). Thus, a work ethic that requires long
hours and weekend work can be translated into the belief that free time to engage in
public or private, social or personal activities, is simply inferior time outside that used
for paid work and is not a necessary or major part of life. The secretaries and
managers across the case study organizations oriented to this rule as a norm for
upward mobility. The underlying gender assumptions can be viewed, as Acker (1990)
noted, as an “organizational logic” that reproduces patriarchal and capitalist structures
and practices through the everyday behaviour of actors. Maintaining an ideology that
working long hours is critical for success supports the features of gendered
organizational cultures, and can be seen as a segregationist practice to control
women’s careers. The tacit long hours’ rule for upward mobility assumes a gendered
characteristic because men traditionally have been able to work longer hours because,
unlike women, they are not primary household caregivers. Maintaining this form of
bureaucratic rationality is in the interest of men in senior executive positions because
it controls the number of women who might replace them.

**Unilever.** When discussing the lack of women in senior management positions
at Unilever, one senior male manager said, “It’s not discrimination that women are not
in top positions. It’s biological. Women in their 30s have babies and somebody has to
look after them so they get knocked out in favour of a man in his 30s and 40s” (Ian, 1994 interviews, p. 3). Clearly this statement profoundly reflects a gender discriminatory stance, and his attitude reflects a justification for maintaining a gendered hierarchical order. Collinson, Knights, and Collinson (1990) argued that a masculine ideology exists within white-collar organizations, which have been structured without consideration of the caregiver role. They suggested that a gender-biased ideology has impacted on career development practices, rendering them more supportive of men’s careers, as well as women who are willing to sacrifice family or a social life.

The interviews with secretaries who had witnessed the struggle of women in management indicated that their observations contributed to their lack of ambition for a career in management. One Unilever secretary, who commuted more than five hours a day by public transportation, was asked if she would want to know about the Opportunity 2000 initiatives designed to facilitate advancement to a management position. She replied:

It would be interesting to know, but I mean, I just, I don’t think I want to become like manager material; because, if you do, your job’s your life basically. ‘Cause, like, the managers here are here a lot of the time and they take work home and I don’t get to see my husband very much as it is; so, if I started taking work home, he wouldn’t like it.

‘Cause I mean I leave home at half past six in the morning and I’m not getting in ‘til half seven, eight o’clock in the evening and, with the travelling and such, I couldn’t take any work home. [laughs] I haven’t got time [laughs].

I: Absolutely, and then you go home and...

Cook the dinner. I do in the end, yeah. [laughs] (Angela, 1994 interviews, p. 12)
Her statements that managers take work home whereas she does not and then laughing after saying “I haven’t got time,” and “I don’t get to see my husband very much as it is,” as a result of the time spent at work and travelling to and from it, indicate the value of a secretarial occupation that offers more “balance” between work and out-of-work activities than would a career in management, especially for women in the context of an unequal gender division of labour in the home. In this case, Angela’s laughter both after commenting on time and after saying that she goes home and cooks the dinner also reflects that she has some degree of insight into the social forces that oppress women. Her laughter can be seen as scepticism about “official” views of women in society that is to support and care for loved ones, as well as distancing herself from the prevailing gender ideology in organizations. In other words, Angela displays subtle knowledge that in the context of gendered organizational cultures and gender inequality in the home, secretarial work can support her desire for balance between work and social expectations. This is related to the actions of secretaries who abide by the norms of a female culture that I will analyse in Chapter 6.

The difficulty of combining work and an out-of-work life was made worse at Unilever because there was no option for childcare support for secretaries or managers.

There are no facilities at all be it for managers or secretaries. It must be terribly hard for managers, really women managers because so much is expected in terms of travel, you know, if you sort of make the distinction between “yes, I’m willing to do it then but I’m not willing to do it now” [when one has a family]. It just doesn’t work. I’m sure some people have succeeded, yes, but I imagine they pay a very high price for it at the end of the day. Nannies must be the only way to go. (Mary, 1994 interviews, p. 18)

Mary’s statements suggest that within this gendered organizational culture, balancing work with a family means independently having to pay for quality childcare, which is
beyond the financial reach of most women in pink-collar occupations. Long and irregular time commitments also suit employers more than taking responsibility for their employees’ domestic or family obligations which can be seen as an implicit segregationist practice in the workplace. This practice was shown to impact on secretaries’ desires for career advancement especially when observing the struggle of women in management.

**BBC.** When asking the BBC’s secretaries if they could be groomed for junior management positions, and then whether or not they had that aspiration, Annette said:

> Oh absolutely! One can do it. I just don’t choose to do it. I’m lazy.

I: Oh no. I wouldn’t believe that.

I’m lazy. I can’t be bothered.

I: How would it be for you if you had a job such as your boss?

It wouldn’t affect my social life because I work more or less the same hours that she does. But she takes tons home at the weekend and I don’t. So working hours wouldn’t affect that side of me but I just couldn’t be bothered with the hassle. But I’m not frightened of the responsibility ‘cause if I was frightened of the responsibility I couldn’t do this job. And it’s not even that it can’t be done because [name of boss] proved it. She sits there as living proof that it can be done because she started at the lowest grade in the department; she’s now the highest grade.

I: Do you think that was an anomaly? I mean out of the ordinary?

I think in [name of boss] case, it’s very unusual because she must have had to fight—I should imagine pretty dirty at times to do it. She must, she must have done because, I mean, you often read in the press about the BBC and women. They used to have a very bad name—the BBC and women.

I: Why?

They used to be perceived as a bunch of chauvinist gray suits. I don’t think that’s necessarily true. I should imagine that [my manager] has had to make quite a lot of sacrifices.
Annette’s statements add an interesting twist to Hakim’s (1991) personal preference thesis. While Annette agreed strongly that secretaries could be groomed for management positions, she specifically states “I just don’t choose to do it.” However, her reasons for choosing to remain in secretarial work had little to do with marriage and family, rather, as she says, “I just couldn’t be bothered with the hassle” of having to make sacrifices. During the subsequent 1994 interview with Annette, she told me that over the course of the previous two years she had taken over for her boss when the boss had fallen ill with a burst ulcer due to work-related stress. At that time, she stated that her career choice to remain in a secretarial role, even after proving her level of competency, was because “I’m just happy where I am. There’s more to life than work” (Annette, 1994 interviews, p. 6). Annette’s statement indicates how secretaries are cognisant of the tacit rules for upward mobility that impact on their career choices and the quest for balance. Further, the statement “I can’t be bothered with the hassle” exemplifies the case study secretaries’ shared meaning of advancement, because management responsibilities are perceived to be associated with a one-dimensional life.

In another interview with a BBC secretary, who had worked there for 29 years, I asked about her career, and whether she would like to have her boss’s job, and she replied:

I have done [it] at least twice. Of course, I don’t know that I’d enjoy it but I can do it. [laughs]

I: What would be the natural career path from here?

The next one would be Personnel Assistant which is the attachment I went on about three years ago. I could have been considered because the job was made an officer’s job,
and could have been invited to [it], but I said 'no' that I wanted to come back. Um so I came back.

I: How come?

There were personal reasons at first. Um, I'm very competent...It was just me...It meant taking work home and my husband wasn't that supportive of it. But it wasn't really just that. Um, I used to worry about it and why did I want to start doing all this now? I didn't want the added responsibility. I didn't want to go any higher as a secretary because I didn't want the added worry about anything else. I am happy to stay doing what I was doing.

I: I don't want to pry but I've heard you say that you are quite happy where you are, and that you and your husband don't have any children so what was it about that you didn't want to pursue the officer's job?

Oh right. With this attachment you see where I was taking work home it was affecting my social life...Um, but I don't want to blame this on him 'cause it really was me who wasn't happy that I was spending so much of our time doing work. It was spoiling our social life so that was one of the reasons I was certain that I didn't like it very much. (Rose, 1992 interviews, pp. 7, 14).

Here, Rose is comparing her job to that of women in management when using statements such as "I didn't want the added responsibility," "It was spoiling our social life so it was one of the reasons I was certain that I didn't like it," and "I'm happy to stay doing what I was doing." These statements indicate the practical and rational choices of secretaries that determine, in part, their preference for secretarial work. The collective replies to questions about careers in management also show them to be female forms of resistance to the rules for upward mobility within gendered workplaces. These secretaries indicated resignation to their inevitable career fate, not so much because they feared the tasks associated with management, but more because the demands on their out-of-work time adversely affect their social and/or domestic lives.
The interview with Marc, the male secretary at the BBC, has been included in this discussion because his accounts of the implicit long hours and weekend work rule for career advancement meshed with those of the other secretaries. He will also be shown in Chapter 7 to be abiding by the norms of a female culture, when acting in the role of the office wife. Prior to becoming a secretary, Marc had been a grammar school teacher and a high-ranking manager in an advertising firm. At age 28, he was offered a position on the advertising company's board of directors. He said that he quit the firm shortly thereafter because of the lack of balance he found in this position.

I thought, "Is this the best that creation throughout the universe has to offer?" And I just freaked and resigned. I just couldn't hack it. I thought "I'm 28, I want a life, I'm young, I want to go out and enjoy myself. I don't want to be a 20-hour a day man, 7 days a week, and I want to have a little home and I want to have a little dog and I want to have a little garden"—so I freaked.

I don't have to worry about collecting children at 5:50 before the childminder closes at 6:00, but I am a bachelor; I live alone. I do have my laundry to worry about, you know. I have to worry about changing the sheets. I have to worry about mopping the floor.

And I said, "I don't mind staying until 7:00 at night [but] if it comes to 8:00, then it might make me go, "Oooo" when am I going to actually have time to cook?" I don't come from that "open a tin" mentality or "open a packet" mentality. I do like to cook. (Marc, 1994 interviews, pp. 2, 6, 14)

It is noteworthy that Marc was single and did not have a partner to support his domestic duties (e.g. washing and cooking) and did not have dependent family members. He stated that he left his high-status, high-paying position because the demand for long hours interfered with having a balance between his work and out-of-work activities. Like the other case study secretaries without partners, Marc had to self-provision domestically which takes time, thus the concern for balance can be seen within the framework of the gendered division of domestic labour. Marc's experiences
not only capture those of the other case study secretaries who were not motivated to move beyond secretarial work, but his experiences as a secretary can also challenge studies such as Siltanen's (1994) which measure the importance of a social life in terms of "time for family" and linked to women's employment experiences. Having a preference for pink-collar work over management work could also be interpreted as a rational choice and a form of resistance to the way gendered organizations construct the meaning of advancement that affect one's life, whether or not they have a spouse or dependent children.

The BBC secretaries were found to be consciously aware that long hours, including weekends, were implicitly necessary for careers in management due to the business of producing 24-hour programmes. The BBC has been shown to be a gendered organizational culture where "an element of tradition in working long hours is literally intended to sort out the men from the boys and to prove one's single-minded dedication to the corporation" (McCgwire, 1992, p. 154). Even adhering to this organizational rule for upward mobility, the BBC's women in management have experienced a glass ceiling that limits their career advancement (Clough, 1993; McCgwire, 1992). The BBC secretaries interviewed indicated that, within their male-dominated corporate culture, women in management must prove themselves to be twice as good as men. However, this did not necessarily translate into career advancement. Marc offered the following perspective on the meaning of women's advancement at the BBC:

There is that cultural thing where it is considered very difficult for a woman to succeed and that the women who succeed are "bitches"—just a "hard-nosed, hard-faced bitch," which is not true.

In order to compete in a man's world, a woman not only has to adopt male attitudes, but she has to be twice as
good as a man. And I've been in this company now since the first of November last year. I'm still new; I don't know the half of it, but just from looking around, looking at senior males in this organization, and then looking at my boss—she's 47—she's an assistant managing director, and she's also head [of a department].

If she'd been a man, she'd have got that job 10 years ago. She's head and shoulders above them intelligence wise, presentation wise, mouth wise, and she's effectively doing two full-time jobs, and half of these men can hardly do one full time job. (Marc, 1994 interviews, p. 4)

Sue, a program editor and Head of a Department, stated that female managers must be "very, very determined" to prove they can do as well as male colleagues. She stated that "work has to come first" and that "giving 90% of one's time to the business" was the way to compete with men (Sue, 1992 interviews, p. 10). Further, at 35 years of age, Sue made a conscious decision not to have children, "because I couldn't do both well [work and have children]" (p. 5). As previously discussed, her secretary did not want to pursue a position in management because it meant that work would have to come first in her life.

The female manager at the BBC, who was my personal contact (Melanie), supported the notion that problems such as childcare can be seen as a fundamental structuring principle within gendered organizations and another segregationist practice to control the numbers of women reaching senior management positions. Melanie said that the BBC provided workplace nurseries for their employees, but that gaining access to childcare places has been made very difficult. "One has to be hugely lucky to get in on a childcare opening as they are booked up, and it costs an average of 15% of my salary for one child and 30% for two children...the BBC is not taking on childcare as an issue. ...It's better to make your own arrangements...and it's never going to get flexible outside seven a.m. to seven p.m." (Melanie, 1994 interviews, pp. 3-4). In
1994 the BBC had a 60-place nursery with 200 children on a waiting list; because of the long waiting list and cost, this manager felt forced into locating independent childcare for her two children.

The interviews with secretaries and women managers across the case study organizations described that within these gendered cultures domestic circumstances should not interfere with the top priority of work. Thus, female strategies of resistance in attempts to mitigate the reality of their work situation comprise often conscious mediations of patriarchal relations in the workplace, but these ultimately affect their career fate.

**Rank Xerox.** At age 25, after having had two children, Jane, a Rank Xerox secretary, continued in her secretarial career so that she could balance work and family in a way she observed her female manager could not:

> Women prove themselves more than the men. My boss is actually the only female in first line management here at XBS, and I think that you've always got to try and prove yourself that little bit more, especially when all the others are men and you're the only woman, you'll want to push yourself as much as you can.

> She's always in before me. She comes in at seven. All the first line managers come in after. Which is another thing, that men stroll in at nine, yet she's always in at seven, half seven. And she's always been like that.

> She's very much dedicated to the company and she'll always be in first thing and, nine times out of ten, she'll go home after all the other managers. [laughs] Yeah, so that's another way I think you have to prove yourself—be there before them all and leave after them—all kind of thing.

(Jane, 1994 interviews, pp. 7, 21-22)

When asked whether her boss had to take work home on the weekends, she replied:

> Yep very much. Always working at the weekends. She'll come in on Monday morning and she's got a pile of stuff ready for typing. Yep very much so.

**I:** Is she married?
Yep.

I: Does she have children?

Nope. No. She’s married but has no children, so I suppose a lot of her time revolves around work.

I: So, do you think that being a secretary is a good job for people who want some sort of balance between work and family?

Yes. Yes. I mean at first I used to sort of stay late and it didn’t sort of worry me, whereas now when it comes to half past five, I can just go. (Jane, 1994 interviews, p. 16)

In other words, as a secretary, she is able to leave work on Friday and not think about it again until Monday morning, unlike women in management positions. When asking Jane what she thought of equal opportunities between men and women at Rank Xerox, she said:

Hmm. I don’t know. I don’t think we’ll ever be equal.

I: Why?

I knew you were going to ask me that. [laughs]

Um. I don’t know. Well I look at it from the way my boss has been here about 25 years. And, OK, she started off as a copy centre manager and she worked her way up so she basically has done well for herself, and I think, well, in the whole time that I’ve been here, we’ve gone through four managing directors in this division, and she’s like, she would have been the next person to have gone to it, and she’s never got it. I think she applied a couple of times, but never got it and I think she’s just given up now.

It used to be all these other people, men from different divisions would come in and take on the role, but yet she’s been here so many years, she knew the division inside out, yet they didn’t give it to her. (Jane, 1994 interviews, p. 16)

The everyday worklife in these organizations, as described by Jane, shows a shared meaning of advancement that applies to women in management, as their work
situation reflects the prevailing attitude toward women in gendered organizational cultures.

Channel Four. The Channel Four organizational representative was the only case study representative to describe the corporate culture as inherently “family friendly.” She said:

It’s important that a culture says to men as well as women that, if your child is sick, you don’t have to pretend you’re going to the dentist to take the time off ... I was sitting in a meeting the other night with the director of programmes, and I have a child, and it was going on past six o’clock, and I quite like to get away reasonably promptly. And it got to half past six, and the director started. I was trying hard not to look at my watch and someone else started looking at his watch and someone said, “Oh, are you anxious to get home?” And he said, “Well actually yes, I’ve got a parents meeting at school,” and one of the other men then said, “Well actually, I have too,” and then I said, “Well, actually, I’d like to get home too because my nanny needs to go.” [laughs]

I think that a culture where the men say it as well as the women is tremendously important and that certainly helps at my level, but that helps at the secretarial level where people are more supportive. But that doesn’t help secretaries to get advancement. It helps them in a sense that it won’t be a hindrance in them getting promotion. (Vickie, 1994 interviews, pp. 2-4)

When Vickie said that she was “trying hard not to look at my watch,” presumably because it would indicate that she was preoccupied at the moment with domestic circumstances, she alludes to the gendered “long hours” ideology that also exists in this organizational culture. Her response was to wait until two other men mentioned the time in terms of family responsibilities before saying anything herself. Here, her action indicates that she exists in different “times”—“work” time and “domestic” time and is alluding to the clash between them. While this organizational culture may have been presented as “family-friendly,” by telling this story Vickie actually shows
recognition of the hindrance to women’s career advancement stemming from the
gendered assumptions that are built into segregationist career development practices.

Conclusion

The results presented in this chapter indicate that segregationist career
development practices clearly exist in these organizations. The lack of communication
about vague Opportunity 2000 management goals, along with minimal access to
career development training, severely limits secretaries’ opportunities for
advancement beyond pink-collar work. In the context of this investigation of
secretaries’ opportunities for advancement beyond pink-collar work, Howe’s (1977)
observations in this chapter’s opening quote apply. The proposed changes to career
development practices within these organizations are meaningless, since these
secretaries are competing primarily with other women for scarce jobs and
opportunities. These results provide support for Walby’s (1986, 1989, 1990) theory of
patriarchy that suggested that segregationist practices constrain women’s career
choices and shape their behaviour. The meaning of advancement shared by secretaries
and managers shows how their behaviour has been shaped by gendered organizational
rules for mobility and subordination. As knowledgeable agents, the secretaries show
that their organizations’ training, recruitment, and career development practices
influence their career motivations and their choice to remain in a secretarial role that
offers balance. These results speak of secretaries’ rational choice but in a contextually
defined manner. Statements such as “I can do my boss’s job, but I don’t want the
hassle, because there is more to life than work” sums how the secretaries reconcile the
meaning for advancement beyond pink-collar work.
The secretaries across the case study organizations stated that they are able to do their bosses’ jobs, and periodically have done so, but would not want a position in management. This was because of the tacit organizational rule for upward mobility demanding long hours and weekend work that results in a one-dimensional life. These gendered organizational cultures situate the meaning of advancement for secretaries, thus, in part, influence their low expectations and behaviour. The other aspect would be constraints from women’s domestic roles where husbands/partners/children probably would not accept women working weekends and long hours. Still, the case study secretaries have shown that their work is an occupation that allows for a balanced life, rather than being their life’s preoccupation.

Gorz (1994) argued, “There is a need to imagine a way out of the ‘work-based society’ towards a society in which activities performed for non-economic ends—whether public or private, social or personal—will be preponderant” (p. 99). These secretaries have asserted the benefits of balance that staying within a pink-collar occupation can provide. The implicit rule for highly rewarded work demands that it be a top priority. Historically, organizations have been structured on behalf of the dominant group of senior male managers who had unpaid wives taking care of domestic obligations. However, Marshall, among others, has recognised the need for organizational revision in companies “rooted in male values and based on disguised male psychology” (cited in Beardwell & Holden, 1994, p. 306). Such revisions, however, challenge the thinking behind gendered rules for advancement and in-built segregationist practices. The secretaries in this study have indicated that secretarial work does not demand a one-dimensional life, whereas the work situation for women in management appeared to be at the expense of a balanced life.
To accept secretaries’ attitudes towards advancement at face value can be misleading without considering how gendered organizations structure their work situation. Patriarchal relations are an integral aspect within organizational cultures and establish the rules for subordination through segregationist career development practices. These practices interact in a very influential manner with patterns of gendered expectations in the domestic sphere and priorities that confront women in various occupations. The occupational ambitions of women such as secretaries must be examined within the wider context of restricted opportunities. It is important to examine not only those factors promoting acquiescence, but also those fostering an active posture of resistance regarding subordination.

The case study employers’ present contradictory messages about advancement that illustrate how their secretaries’ opportunities leading to more prestigious and financially lucrative positions are severely restricted. I propose that a mosaic of barriers comprised of individual and organizational actions create a “pink-collar wall” for secretaries, which separates them from even the lower management positions within these organizations. As knowledgeable agents, the secretaries’ minimal career motivation beyond pink-collar work can be seen as the outcome of having partial penetration of the patriarchal relations in organizational cultures and those segregationist practices within them.
CHAPTER VI

Culture and Paid Work: The Status of Secretaries

“...Women participants in the labor force are not really ‘in’ the male world, or better, perhaps, they are not really ‘of’ the male world. ...For women bring their own world with them when they enter the work scene. Or, better, it follows them in. They remain within its boundaries.”

Jessie Bernard, 1981, p. 218

This chapter adds to the discussion about how the process of occupational segregation is continually maintained and reproduced by actors. Structural forces are indeed a factor, but equally valid in any analysis is the everyday behaviour and activities of women who may unintentionally reproduce patriarchal relations in paid work. In Chapter 5, secretaries’ opportunities to advance from this pink-collar occupation were found to be the result of organizational constraint as well as individual choice (linked to their domestic circumstances), although in a partial and contextually confined way. On the whole, the case study secretaries preferred “balance” over advancement in these gendered organizational settings.

The results in this chapter and elaborated in Chapter 7 will provide a closer look at secretaries as knowledgeable agents, whose “office wife” orientation to work reproduces private patriarchal relations in the workplace. The interviews with the case study secretaries indicated that their choice of a secretarial occupation and their role within their organizational cultures came from an applied knowledge of the norms of a female culture in society (see Appendix G). The diversity of socializing agents leading these secretaries toward pink-collar work was not just limited to parents, schools, and peers, but also involved conscious choice and action. The following two chapters will show how secretaries’ orientation to work (i.e. their roles and activities) are related to
gender role socialization, reinforced by secretarial training, job descriptions and titles that reflect the need for an “office wife” which add to a mosaic of barriers for advancement beyond pink-collar work.

**Status and Collective Action**

International secretarial associations have struggled to improve the status of secretaries. One means of accomplishing this goal has been to introduce non-traditional job titles, such as “assistant” or “office manager,” to overcome the historic gendered assumptions about secretarial work (Professional Secretaries International, 1991). In 1955, for example, there was no inherent distinction in titles between an executive secretary and a secretary in a typing “pool,” even though major differences, including skill level requirements, existed between the positions. Assigning the title of “secretary” to all office support staff has shaped these misconceptions. Professional Secretaries International (PSI) explained the trend toward using non-traditional titles as recognizing gender-related inequities in salary and promotional opportunities for secretaries that have stemmed from the stereotype surrounding the occupation. This focus on titles alludes to the issue of “equal value,” otherwise known as “comparable worth,” that women are discriminated against when entire occupations are devalued and paid less because they are done by women and/or involve traditionally female skills. This study examined secretarial titles as an indicator of status stemming from the gendered assumptions and practices within the case study organizations, and within the wider culture of British society.

A survey conducted by the Institute of Qualified Private Secretaries (IQPS) in Britain noted that 64% of their members considered the conventional title of secretary to be appropriate, but 72% also thought it sometimes portrayed the wrong image
members' preferences in using the traditional title of "secretary" as:

The secretary has come to be thought of as a person who can get something done for them in the chairman's absence... a 'true' secretary should be perfectly happy with her title and career supporting a high-status board director because that is where the decisions are made. (IQPS interview, 25 August, 1994)

This statement clearly suggests that the highest level to which secretaries could aspire would be working for a board chair or senior executive, and confirms the secretary as an appendage to the boss, whose organizational status is also dependent upon the boss's rank. In other words, despite nearly three-quarters of IQPS's member's who indicated that the title of "secretary" sometimes portrayed the wrong image, the Director of IQPS concluded there was no reason to challenge the status quo in gendered organizational cultures because secretaries "should" be happy with their status. Yet, the major complaint from the case study secretaries, other than low pay, was their low status by being considered "just a secretary." Across the case study organizations, the job title of "secretary" was the typical one.

Jane, at Rank Xerox, described the inconsistency in salaries for secretaries regardless of title in the following manner:

We are all basically graded the same, but everyone is on different salaries. I mean, we know, obviously, that secretaries in the main building earn more than us. I mean, we don't know why, but obviously that's the way it is. (Jane, 1994 interviews, p. 8)

Her practical awareness that secretaries who work in the main building earn more money indicates that the status and salary of secretaries still depend upon the boss's rank. While Jane may not theoretically understand these practices as patriarchal ones, she resigns herself to the inevitable, or "the way it is." This type of discursive
consciousness was found from all the secretaries who were interviewed. When asking
Annette at the BBC if she could press for a title change to “personal” or
“administrative assistant,” she replied:

At the BBC it would be an impossible task because of the
very, very rigid way the corporate culture is. It just wouldn’t
wash. At the BBC we have a pay and condition system and
everybody is graded a certain way, even though the work
must vary incredibly between us. (Annette, 1992 interviews,
p. 6)

Annette also stated that she could not demand a change in title because “then
everybody would want it. It doesn’t work like that here. It, the corporate culture, is not
that. It would not work.” (p. 7) Mary, at Unilever, also stated her thoughts about the
title of “secretary.”

I suppose it’s not the most complimentary because you know
we ring up people on the outside and they say, “Oh well, I’m
his assistant; I’m his personal assistant”—that sort of thing.
...I think in outside organizations they tend to go more for
nicer titles, but at the end of the day, I’m quite happy to say
I’m a secretary and that’s that....As soon as you say [name
of boss], you sort of survive on his coattails a little bit you
know. (Mary, 1994 interviews, p. 18)

These secretaries have displayed their discursive consciousness that the status of
secretaries depends on the rank of the boss in gendered organizational cultures. The
statements, “you survive on his coattails,” and it would be impossible to change titles
because “everybody would want it” and “it just wouldn’t wash” along with “that’s the
way it is” and “I’m quite happy to say I’m a secretary and that’s that” indicate not only
awareness of patriarchal practices but also resignation. These secretaries resigned
themselves to their low organizational status, but even if they wanted to challenge it,
they also indicated that there was no possibility of doing so, which affects their career
fate.
Winstanley (1991) suggested that subordinates working in non-unionised environments tend to behave in more individualistic ways when resisting organizational practices. The BBC was the only case study organization where secretaries had access to union representation, but no secretary that I interviewed was a union member. At Unilever, Angela said: "I don't think we've got any unions or anything. ...I think everybody should have a union because everybody should be able to voice their opinion without getting into trouble" (Angela, 1994 interviews, p. 16). I then asked her:

I: What would you want to say?

I want my wages risen. [laughs] I want a pay rise and I don't think it's fair to have to move to another manager to make wages go up. You know 'cause if I move from this job, I'd have to teach somebody my role and then learn another role off another secretary, so I'd have to learn a whole new different job. 'Cause even though it's the same company there are different jobs, you're doing different things for the company. So I don't think that's fair.

I: And do you think the job that you do is worth more money?

Yeah. [laughs] I bloody do! [laughs] Yeah 'cause I mean I take more on and more on but I'm, we have like job classes. You can go to the top of your job class, like my wages stop now 'cause I'm at the top of my job class. I can't go any further with my wages. If I need more wages to go up I have to move to a different department in the Company or move to a different job. (pp. 16-17)

In this instance, Angela's laughter both before and after, "I bloody do!" communicates her intensity and sincerity in stating that she feels she deserves more money and recognition considering her complex role. It also indicates her practical awareness of the consequences of rigid grading structures that reinforce gendered organizational practices. Angela, like most of the secretaries I interviewed, enjoyed working with her boss and the others in her department, thus precluding her from independently
pressing for changes or improving her salary. When discussing the lack of union representation at Rank Xerox, Yvonne summed the overall feelings of the secretaries I interviewed.

> When I came here there was no union, no union, none. And that is something that I think is lacking because, to me, you have no third party that you can address your problems to, and because I think you feel that everyone you speak to, they're the Company specifically, so always, and it's quite right, they're first loyalty shall we say, is to the Company itself, whereas I always feel that, in any business, you need somebody there that you can go and speak to who can speak for you. (Yvonne, 1994 interviews, p. 8)

The results from interviews indicate that secretaries' status and concomitant salaries are dependent on the rank of their boss, rather than being based on individual merit, that a union could negotiate.

According to Lockwood (1958), an employee in a rationalised bureaucracy should have the right to dispute the appropriateness of job grading, as well as the right to appeal for revision. "Without these conditions, there would be no safeguard against discrimination..." [italics added] (p. 87). Yet job grades have been historically structured in large formal organizations with the assigned grading and salary based on gendered assumptions. Therefore, those secretaries who belong to a union or professional association could collectively lobby for improved handling of this practice, and try to achieve the title and status that better reflects their expanded roles.

Secretarial associations have drawn attention to the specialised value of secretaries through actions to raise their status and wages. Witz (1992) showed how collective action provides a resource for solidarity, not just in the case of men but also for women. This suggests that secretarial associations and their means for obtaining credentials are not simply strategies of resistance to the practices of dominant groups, but could, in the end, consolidate secretaries' positions in a gendered hierarchy of
closure. These well-intended actions can represent a “catch 22.” While these associations condone career specialisation, their validating actions could unintentionally solidify the gender stereotyping of the secretarial occupation and provide justification for secretaries’ continued segregation within organizations. These associations attempt to improve the recognition of secretaries’ skills rather than to move secretaries into management, as Pringle (1989b) noted. However, secretarial associations do provide an avenue for the revaluation of the secretarial role by collective efforts to increase the awareness, status, and wages of these multi-skilled workers. But collective efforts in the UK, such as Professional Secretaries’ Week, “has not caught on like it has in the United States” according to the Director of IQPS, who said that the UK began this cultural event in 1984 (IQPS telephone interview, 25 August, 1994). None of the interviewed secretaries were aware of Secretaries’ Week, and even though they expressed scepticism, they said that they liked the idea.

**Status and Individual Action**

The secretaries’ profiles in Table 7 provide additional biographical data in terms of their marital status, if they have children, and whether or not their mothers worked in the paid labour force. The data used for analysis in this chapter not only includes these variables but also includes the age and general and professional education levels of secretaries that were profiled in Table 6 (see Chapter 5). For example, the secretaries’ average and median age was 32 years.

Nine secretaries were either married or cohabiting and nine were single. Six secretaries had children and one (Angela) was undergoing fertility treatments at the time of our interview. Only two secretaries had children under 2 years of age—one worked a job share at Rank Xerox (Jane) and the other worked full time at Unilever
Table 7

Secretarial Staff Biographical Profiles: Family Background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Married</th>
<th>Children</th>
<th>Mum Work</th>
<th>Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>British Broadcasting Corporation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Mclass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annette</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>WClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kay</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>WClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rose</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>WClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>WClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marc</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>MClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julia</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>MClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unilever</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>MClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angela</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Trying</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>WClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoe</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>WClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rank Xerox</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>MClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvonne</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Grown</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>MClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrina</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>WClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Channel Four, Opportunity 2000, University Secretaries</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>MClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>MClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>MClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carol</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>MClass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jill</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>MClass</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Mclass = middle class; Wclass = working class.
The eleven secretaries without children stated that they did not plan on having any in the future. A great deal of research attempting to explain occupational segregation has placed emphasis on women's domestic or family responsibilities, or "marriage career" that leads them toward part-time or pink-collar work (Hakim, 1991; Arber & Ginn, 1993). Yet, the career pattern of secretaries in this case study follows that of professional women. At the time of interviews, all but two secretaries worked full time and had worked continuously for an average of eight years in their respective organizations.

Dale and Joshi (1992) showed that professional women with no children, or those nearing the end of their childbearing years, have continuous work-life cycles similar to that of men. While half of this study's sample (9) had domestic partners, 11 were also without children in need of care. The results of this study challenge others that suggest that women's occupational choices have been primarily the result of their domestic/family obligations prohibiting women's own career development. However, the secretaries in this study still chose to work in a pink-collar occupation and, as discussed in Chapter 5, they also chose to remain in a secretarial occupation. The secretaries indicated that they liked secretarial work for a variety of reasons not the least of which it offers "balance." Another reason is related to having been socialized for a pink-collar occupation, as the following section will outline.

**Elements of a Female Culture: Socialized for Secretarial Work**

**Schools, Parents, and Peers**

During the interviews with secretaries, I enquired about their highest level of education (see Table 6 in Chapter 5), secretarial training, and how they chose a secretarial occupation. Within the context of Opportunity 2000, the secretaries' level
of education is significant because of employers' aims to identify and develop the careers of women with A-level education and above who may be working in positions below their potential. All but one of the secretaries had pursued formal education beyond GCSEs/O-levels. Five secretaries had O-level education, seven secretaries had A-level education, and five secretaries had university degrees. Three secretaries also spoke two or more languages in addition to English. These results differ from Truss (1994) who found that 60% of her English secretaries' sample only had O-levels or below. My results could be attributed to the reputations of the BBC, Rank Xerox, Unilever, and Channel Four exemplifying their ability to recruit highly educated secretaries. Still, the secretaries' high levels of education supports studies (England, 1982; England & Herbert, 1993; Walby, 1986, 1990) that refute the human capital theory espousing that women become segregated into specific occupations through their lack of qualifications. Clearly, 12 secretaries with A-levels and university degrees do possess high qualifications, and could have chosen alternative occupations, yet entered and remained in this pink-collar occupation.

In Britain there is a clear separation between academic education and vocational training (Windolf & Wood, 1988). The British education system has been structured by a class-based distinction and divided traditionally between those students designated as "university bound" and all others. But when I asked the secretaries about their class background and their parents' influence on education and career choices, few class-based distinctions emerged. Rather, the secretaries' education, and subsequent career choices, were the result of having been channelled into pink-collar work by the agents of gender role socialization—their parents, their school teachers and curriculum, and their peers.
The results of interviews with secretaries indicate that there was a conscious choice to become a secretary, within limited available options. Their choices were based on the norms of a female culture related to gender expectations that are intricately interwoven into secretarial work. Some of these choices involved that "they didn't know what else to do," "their mothers didn't expect them to work after marriage or having babies," "secretarial work was the easiest thing to get into without a university education," and they could always find work as they followed their husbands' career moves, or dropped in and out of the paid labour force as domestic/personal demands arose. In other words, unlike forms of work considered a "preoccupation" (Coser, 1990), secretarial work was expressed as an occupation that allows for flexibility between work and a personal life, especially when adhering to the norms of a female culture that reinforces subjective identity.

Unless they were "pushed" by their parents into attending a university, all but three secretaries found themselves on a secretarial track in school, lacking the motivation to pursue higher levels of education after leaving school. One university secretary said, "After O-levels, choices for women were restricted to nursing, teaching, or secretarial. ...I had no university aspirations at the time. It wasn't an option. I had no family history so my parents didn't push me" (Martha, 1994 university interviews, p. 1). Another university secretary stated that "a commercial stream [shorthand and typing] was seen as being more useful for girls and a decision that I did not question. ...I was quite happy with it" (Carol, 1994 university interviews, p. 1). Kay, at the BBC also stated: "I didn't know what to do after school. I didn't want to do A-levels. I just couldn't think what to do with my life. It was either secretarial work or work in a shop" (Kay, 1994 interviews, p. 3). When I asked
Hannah at the BBC, who had acquired a university degree, how she made the decision
to go into secretarial work she told the following story:

I think most of my progression in terms of education came
more from my peer group because it was a natural
progression where I was at school for people to go on to
university and that's what I did.

I: Did you go to private school?

No, but I went to school in Ealing so most of my peer group
were from fairly well off backgrounds, not very well off, but
middle class. (Hannah, 1994 interviews, p. 24)

I: How did you get into secretarial work?

Um, I came out of my degree without any sort of clear career
plans and um after about a year I decided that the most
important thing was to find myself a job in the short-term
rather than think about long-term careers. And, I did a post-
graduate diploma that included languages and so that was the
main interest for me that I would be able to do languages. I
did German and French business language and I sort of
studied computers and that sort of thing but it was basically a
secretarial course.

I did spend a year in Vienna at the university
studying German so it was a four-year course altogether. I
decided that I needed to do something vocational in order to
improve my chances of getting a job.

I: So you finished your diploma, the secretarial diploma
course and then what?

Um first off I went to a subsidiary of Renault and was a
bilingual secretary, and then went back to the temp agency
and was told the BBC wanted an extra secretary, and I've
been here ever since [10 months]. (pp. 1-3)

All of the previous statements made by secretaries indicate that a conscious choice of
secretarial work was made, mainly as a result of the influence from parents, peers, and
schools. However, they have also indicated that they did not have “any sort of clear
career plans” therefore did not question these influences, and pursued secretarial
courses that would, in the end, prepare them for appropriate “women's work.”
It is well known that parents are the primary agents of gender role socialization, and schools act as subtle secondary agents. While schools may be set up for the purpose of teaching skills to students, allowing them to acquire new knowledge, or even encouraging advanced levels of education, they may also have consequences that are not so plainly recognised or intended. The school system, as a cultural institution that interacts with the structure of paid employment, tends to reinforce inequalities by constraining girls' options and channelling them toward pink-collar work (Rubery et al., 1998; Walby, 1990). It should be noted, however, that my sample of secretaries were in secondary school in the 1980s or earlier so there may be differences now in the role of schools and the extent to which they influence girls' career choices. The picture that emerged from my comparison of secretaries was one of similarity of attitude and experience among these women, despite the differences in class, education, or employment contexts.

When asking a Unilever secretary about how she chose secretarial work, she replied similarly to the others in that her choice had been influenced by the school curriculum.

Um 'cause I used to enjoy the lessons at school so I took it up at college and got my secretarial exams. ...I did this course on office practice and shorthand and I've stuck with it you know. It's a lot easier to get a secretarial job here than it is to get a shop assistant job or anything. (Angela, 1994 interviews, pp. 3-4)

During this interview, I also learned that Angela's mother, grandmother, and aunt had all worked in the paid labour force. I asked if she had received any career guidance from them to which she responded, "No. No, they just expected the teachers in school to tell you and to help you. You have to make up your own mind" (p. 24). While Angela acknowledges the strong influence of teachers in her career decision, she
displays her reasoning that the final choice was hers alone. Rose, who had worked at
the BBC since she was 19 years of age, also displayed this awareness when I asked her
about her highest level of education and subsequent career choice.

O levels. I left before A-levels...in my last year of school [I
did] some commercial and typing that sort of thing. Um, the
school wanted me to go to university and that was the last
thing I wanted to do. They wanted me to do English. What
did I want to do that for? I don't want to be a teacher, and I
haven't sort of gone beyond that really. I didn't know what
else I wanted to do. So I wanted to earn money and the usual
thing and so I came straight here as a secretary, directly into
Personnel.

I: You said that you had been encouraged to go to university
by the school?

And by my mother...She told me of all the advantages of
being a secretary but she didn't push me [to go to
university]. I think she was worried that it would either make
me or break me and she let me make the decision. I don't
know. I wonder what it would have done. I wonder what it
would have made me. (Rose, 1994 interviews, pp. 13-14)

Rose’s story indicates that her choice of secretarial work had been a choice between
another traditionally women’s occupation, namely teaching. While she acknowledges
that she did not know what else she might have liked to pursue, teaching was not an
option for her. Further, her mother was shown to be the strongest influence in leading
her toward secretarial work. A university secretary, Jill, stated twice, “I did not want
to go to university [and] secretarial work was the easiest thing to get into” (Jill, 1994
university interviews, p. 1). She, too, was aware of her mother’s gendered
expectations when saying, “my mother said I shouldn’t be working when I have kids,
so if I did work, then I could work as a secretary for ‘pin money’” (p. 1).

When describing her mother’s influence on her education and career
aspirations, Annette at the BBC responded:
Oh my mum is one of these people if you’re healthy and happy, she could care less what you’re doing. When I was in school my best friend got eight grade A O-levels, A-levels and I’ve got a mixed bag of O-levels and A-levels, and the teacher used to get cross and say to my mother that Annette could do just as well in school you know? My mother used to say, “Oh leave her, she’s happy.” (Annette, 1992, p. 18)

In other words, the statements by both Jill and Annette indicate that they were knowledgeable and aware of their teachers and mothers’ impact on their choice of a pink-collar career by demonstrating their reasons for choosing secretarial work. In 1994, Annette reiterated her statement about her mother’s influence on her decision to not attend university by saying, “It’s not me. It’s my mother’s fault. We think I have a high IQ. ...She thinks ‘If she’s healthy, happy, leave her alone.’ She didn’t push me” (Annette, 1994 interviews, p. 4). Annette’s repeated statement “oh leave her, she’s happy,” along with the stories from other secretaries about how their mothers didn’t “push” them into pursuing higher levels of education, indicate the internalised messages from a female culture that shapes subjective identity. As girls, it was considered that they need not worry about academic performance or a career path beyond gender-appropriate pink-collar work.

A story told by Katrina, a Rank Xerox secretary, sums the combined influences of parents, schools and peers that shaped the case study secretaries’ occupational choices:

I got in because I guess my mother was a secretary. Yeah, so I suppose it’s what you’re brought up with isn’t it? I sat as a little girl and watched my mother type and thought, “Gosh, I wish I could do that,” and I think I went to a—not that a particular school has anything to do with it—but I went to comprehensive school and almost none of my peer group went to university straight from school. It wasn’t an option for anybody to consider it from my school. (Katrina, 1994 interviews, p. 1)
When asked if her mother had encouraged her to pursue a career beyond secretarial work, she replied:

Probably more my father but mum not particularly. ...You see my mum was married at 21, had me at 26, gave up work 'til I was 16 then went back and she brought me up disbelieving in working mothers. So probably not my mum. (Katrina, 1994 interviews, p. 10)

This statement emphasises how mothers, as gender role models, instilled the values and norms of a female culture that led these secretaries toward pink-collar work. Further, the influence of parents tends to reinforce the gender role ideology that married women, especially those with children, should not be in the paid labour force. However, these secretaries demonstrated their resistance to these gendered expectations.

During an interview with Ruth at the Opportunity 2000 headquarters, she disclosed that after obtaining seven O-levels, she went to work as a clerk in the post office because her parents would not let her go on to art school. She spoke of her parents as having “an old colonial attitude” because her mother never worked in the paid labour force. Ruth stated her awareness of gender role expectations: “they even offered me a salary to stay at home until I got married” (Ruth, 1994 interviews, p. 3). She did not take them up on their offer. She never married and remained in the full-time paid labour force even after having a child on her own.

Mary, from Unilever, also described her awareness of the norms inherent in a female culture when saying “oh my mother assumed that I would get married and life would be wonderful and I wouldn’t have to work at all [laughs]” (Mary, 1994 interviews, p. 13). Goffman (1971) suggested that non-verbal cues such as laughter could expand upon what is said in words. Mary’s laughter expanded upon her
statement and amplified its irony. However, her laughter could also be seen as a mode of reinforcing her conscious choice to adhere to the norms of a female culture: “After A-levels, I was offered a place at Oxford but I fell in love with someone and that was that. [laughs] So, um, you know I didn’t go because I didn’t want to leave him so that was that” (p. 3). In addition, “I’m even more thrilled that I didn’t go to university because [he died] [and] it would have been just about the time that I would have qualified, so I’m thrilled that at least I was there” (p. 15). Her statement, “I fell in love and that was that” followed by “I didn’t want to leave him” conveys a conscious awareness of the female norm to place a premium on loving and supporting others, and then conveys a choice to abide by the ideology that cultivating relationships are women’s primary concerns.

The statements by these secretaries certainly reflect their knowledge of the normative rules for gender-appropriate behaviour stemming from their socialization into a female culture by parents, schools, and peers. Thus, their occupational choices may have been constrained, but these secretaries could have done otherwise and chose not to do so. While their choices might not be typical of all secretaries’ experiences, they are certainly representative of them. The secretaries’ stories and statements have accounted for their motivation, or purposeful choice of a secretarial occupation within a context of constraint. Their accounts come from what they experienced as being part of a female culture. As it is clear here, and elsewhere, these secretaries have considerable insight into gender relations and they are able to express those insights.

It is plausible to infer a general underlying motivational pattern, perhaps partly unconscious, of an attempt to establish modes of conduct which provide some kind of synergy between their subjective and work identities. I suggest that these well-educated secretaries have an imprecise or partial awareness of aspects of the wider
culture that influenced their occupational choice. This has been shown through their
discursive statements, and how they expressed them, about drawing upon the rules of
a female culture and then applying them through purposeful action to become
secretaries. When reporting from a distance of time about the socializing influences
that led these secretaries toward secretarial work, they expressed their practical
choices more discursively, thus demonstrating the development of a practical
consciousness. These secretaries have indicated that their occupational choice
stemmed from the social influences that reinforced gendered subjectivity, and their
orientation to work.

Secretarial Training and Skill Requirements

During the interviews, I asked the secretaries about the specific secretarial
training courses they had attended. While the courses varied widely in nature, they had
all received training that focused mainly upon typing and shorthand dictation, rather
than a wider scope of qualifications in a range of subjects. Yet, the intellectual and
creative skills' required in this occupation have evolved over time since the advent of
computer technology. The skills needed in secretarial work in the early 1990s focused
on proficiency with computers and processing information, and as Jill commented,
"There is far more to learn now than learning to type" (Jill, 1994 interviews, p. 3). The
skill in making numerous copies with carbon paper, and fixing jammed typewriter
keys and carriages is no longer required. The secretaries' indicated that with today's
computer keyboards, they do not have to be as fast or accurate touch typists. When
asking the secretaries if their job had become enskilling (as opposed to deskilling as
Braverman suggested), Rose, a BBC secretary with 29 years of secretarial experience,
stated:
The only thing is now you don’t have to be such an excellent typist. Other than that it’s more multi-skilling isn’t it? I mean you have a computer which we use for general information and we are able to get at, and that’s something that we would never ever would have done at that stage [when using typewriters].

There is a lot more on my word processor to learn than there is when it comes to a typewriter. You just don’t have to be quite so accurate. Well you can be as fast on this but you don’t have to be as fast; you can get away with it. (Rose, 1992 interviews, p. 16)

Hannah, also from the BBC, spoke about computer technology in the way that it has enskilled secretaries, but cautioned that it could increase workloads.

Um I think it has enskilled secretaries, enskilled yeah, you do have to like be more familiar with the computer because you have to problem solve, you know, you have to sort of use your initiative more in finding out how a package works, and like using it to its full advantage. Um it’s probably deskilling in terms of manual dexterity but that’s not really important.

There’s certainly more creativity required in presentation and things like that so that maybe more is required of you than before. Perhaps if typewriters still existed maybe I wouldn’t be a secretary. I don’t know.

The thought of going back to typewriters and shorthand and dictation is like, I think word processors have freed you, but on the other hand maybe it has increased your workload. (Hannah, 1994 interviews, p. 23)

Hannah’s statements reflect that secretarial work today requires intellectual expertise, or “creativity,” “initiative,” and “problem-solving” skills more than manual expertise in typing and shorthand. But she also is aware of the downside to computers, just like Angela at Unilever.

The boss seems to think that computers do everything. You just put everything in and it does everything. ...It’s not like that. You still have to work it you know, still have to tell it what to do. ...We have a lot of conferences and I have to create overheads and type reports and do graphs. (Angela, 1994 interviews, p. 17)
He thinks he's the hands of the puppet and he was pulling the strings just showing me how to do [my job]. ...He doesn't have to do that. I can get on quite well by myself. (p. 18)

Angela's statement about bosses who "think that computers do everything" and that secretaries are "the hands of the puppet" suggests that bosses are able to minimise the mental knowledge that goes into making maximum use of computer systems. This attitude implies that secretaries must not be especially talented; otherwise they would be doing something else. These assumptions maintain private segregationist practices in gendered organizational cultures even though the lines between managers and secretaries may be blurring. In addition, secretarial training that focuses on typing and shorthand also reinforces stereotypical assumptions about the secretarial labour process.

Changes to computer hardware and software over the past 20 years are indicative of the magnitude of recent economic and social transformations in society. However, computers have not necessarily altered private patriarchal relations in the context of gendered organizational cultures. Computers may have reduced the time secretaries spend on "busy" work (Baker, 1992) and work that is generated when assignments with an immediate deadline unexpectedly arrive, but secretaries still have little control over the amount of work, or when it comes in, because of the expectation that with computers everyone can do more work in less time. Hillary, at Channel Four, made a discursive comparison between typewriters and computers in terms of control. She said, "In the old days, with a ball typewriter, where you had to physically cut and paste, a boss would only redo [a document] three times or a secretary would get really pissed off" (Hillary, 1994 interviews, p. 5). The case study secretaries indicated that with computer technology a boss's scope of control is increased because bosses can
expect secretaries to redraft a document any number of times according to their wishes.

Bosses and training courses that continue to associate the skills involved in using computer software with traditional typing skills can be seen as an implicit segregationist practice. It limits, or in the very least minimises, the range of activities and expertise involved in the secretarial labour process, and thus reinforces stereotypical assumptions. The statement made by the senior Unilever manager reflects this notion when he said that he did not like his young male managers to “hack” on computers because “the computer is the tool of the secretary needed to ‘type up’ managers’ ideas” (Graham, 1994 interviews, p. 1). The outcome of intended and unintended action tends to devalue secretaries’ technical and mental skills and maintains the subordinate status of secretaries within established gendered hierarchies.

The vast improvements in communication technologies witnessed in the 1990s challenged the established relations of bureaucratic authority and the legitimacy of that model of control. The patterns of restricted, one-way communication and the monopoly of information are being altered by new technologies. However, the training that these secretaries received combined with the chauvinistic attitudes of bosses tends to override the increasingly complex secretarial skills needed to gain access, manage, and disseminate critically stored information. When asking Angela how people in the office treat her, she illustrated secretaries’ organizational importance and the dialectic of control:

Um I don’t really have much to do with the managers ‘cause if they need to know anything, they will ask [name of boss] and then he will come to me...

I: And ask you?
Yeah, yeah. They go to [him] first and then he comes to me. I keep all the books and all the files with me.

I: You know where to get the information.

Yeah, just know where to get it from, I've got it all. See, he hasn't got enough room in his office for anything. I keep everything out here in my cupboards or on the computer.

(Angela, 1994 interviews, p. 13)

The statement that her boss comes to her for information and she “knows where to get it” or that she’s “got it all” indicates the dialectic of control between bosses and secretaries. This can be taken to mean that power shifts, or is not simply and unilaterally imposed on secretaries; it is a two-way process. Maintaining private patriarchal relations involves both strategies and counter-strategies of power and control. Clearly, saying “they go to him first and then he comes to me” indicates Angela’s power that stems from her access to information that her boss does not have.

Further on in this interview, she reinforced this notion when saying, “If someone rings up and asks [for information] and I tell them wrong, I would get into a lot of trouble ‘cause I should know” (p. 13). I then asked Angela if she would consider secretaries to be the “powerhouse” of the office. She replied forcefully,

Yes! [laughs] We hold it altogether. Of course we do. Yeah [laughs] ‘cause when you get back after a day holiday or day sick, they’re snowed under and they’re going “gaw why did you take the day off?” You know, [they] couldn’t cope.

(p. 13)

Annette at the BBC also responded to the same question forcefully.

Absolutely! Absolutely. I think sometimes it’s a very undervalued profession. People don’t realise how hard it is. My own mother doesn’t realise how hard the job is. She thinks that I come in and type a few letters and go home. And that is just not true. (Annette, 1992 interviews, p. 1)

I am responsible for making sure that everything I have, the tasks I have must be completed. For example, on Friday morning, I phone up and ask where the two
controllers will be and where [the managing director] will be at the weekend, which is to anybody on the outside very trivial little job but it is critical if a member of the royal family dies over the weekend. We've got to know where we can get hold of them to get them back in, and my boss relies on the fact that I'm going to do that...The day that I forget to do it is the day that the royal family will die and I'll have my neck rung. [laughs] (pp. 8-9)

The secretaries’ usage of laughter can certainly indicate irony, but laughter can also be considered a mode of expressing their tacit consciousness of their critically important role in the communication process. Jane at Rank Xerox also described secretaries’ important and pivotal roles in the office.

> My secretarial work involves figure work where at the end of the month we take all the figures from the copy centers and the Facilities Management to see how well they’ve done during the month. Um we type up the report every month, um we liaise very much with all the people in the shops and the FM’s, vacancy lists come from us, um anything that we get sent into us we forward to those people um so that we’re basically like a key...any problems they’ve got, they come to us we’ll sort them out for them. (Jane, 1994 interviews, p.2)

When saying, “I should know,” “it’s critical that I know where they are,” “we’re basically like a key,” and “any problems they’ve got, we’ll sort them out” indicates the dialectic of control that exists between secretaries and bosses. Secretaries control and supervise the document production process, control and manage computer-based files, know how to access critically stored information, and then disseminate it. Thus, secretaries have a modicum of control in their everyday activities and private relations with bosses. These secretaries, as knowledgeable agents, also exercise their resistance to practices of control by finding pleasure in a communication process that uses the human touch more than using the tools of technology that ties them to their desks.
The literature on secretaries has shown how, as part of the formal and informal communication system, secretaries create and use interpersonal networks in organizations, without which the formal bureaucratic structure would come grinding to a halt. Many of today's secretaries access on-line services to produce and disseminate information. However, the interviews with secretaries show that they prefer to use the telephone or deliver information in person, rather than using electronic mail (e-mail). The majority of secretaries in this study disliked using e-mail because it infringed on the human aspects of their job. This action can be seen as a muted form of resistance to impersonal and detached practices within gendered organizational cultures. While discussing e-mail systems, Annette at the BBC described this notion.

It's electronic mail so that I can do a message on my terminal and send it to somebody downstairs. ...I prefer to go down with a note instead of sending because you learn more. See if I sat here all day, I wouldn't know what's going on. It's useful info to have. (Annette, 1992 interviews, p. 3)

In other words, Annette, like most secretaries who are part of the informal "grapevine," can gain more useful information and knowledge when visiting others as opposed to being confined to a desk. A university secretary also expressed dislike of e-mail communication: "Why can't you get up and go down the corridor? I now use the telephone first; I prefer talking, but I use it [e-mail] as a memo—it's quick" (Martha, 1994 university interviews, p. 6). While acknowledging the speed of e-mail communication, Mary at Unilever felt that using the telephone and speaking to someone could better accomplish the same goal:

I prefer to communicate by phone message. If there are questions, it becomes clearer, etc., etc., through discussing it, whereas it wouldn't on the machine. It could go on forever just doing messages leading on one to the other. I think a conversation is better. (Mary, 1994 interviews, p. 16)
These secretaries have indicated that e-mail communication is impersonal. Another way to personalise this process was demonstrated by Mary when she *retyped* her boss's e-mail messages so they are "displayed in a more impressive manner on a page" before delivering them to him (Unilever fieldnotes, 16 March, 1994). Through this action, she puts a human touch on technology. The secretaries' statements about e-mail systems demonstrate the dialectic of control over information. In this way, they can be viewed as very powerful people from the way they go about gaining and using knowledge.

E-mail can be viewed as a medium for patriarchal control in the workplace. Erikson (1990) noted that "automated procedures in general and computerized processes in particular can become an almost perfect instrument of control over persons. ...It makes possible a remarkably efficient system of surveillance" [italics in original] (p. 28). When e-mail is required for corporate communications, it can infringe upon the ability of the secretary to personally interact with others and gain important information through the informal structure of the organization. In addition, once computers are linked, e-mail accounts can be accessed by virtually anyone. Thus, a secretary must be cautious about the content of any message to avoid placing her job in jeopardy. Therefore, one strategy of resistance to this practice of control is for secretaries to communicate in person whether it is by telephone or face-to-face.

Only two secretaries from the case study organizations viewed e-mail as a technological advancement that could develop their communication roles. Those disliking e-mail indicated that secretaries lose the human element of their job and the opportunity to socialise, along with knowledge gained from the informal grapevine. Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939) concluded from the Hawthorne studies that the
informal organization emerges as a natural consequence of employees’ need for social solidarity. The secretaries’ resistance to the practice of using e-mail, which could keep a secretary segregated from others and isolated at her desk, in favour of more personal forms of communication displays the two-way process of control. It should be acknowledged, however, that resistance to using e-mail might have changed since these interviews were conducted.

The status of secretaries as a group could be enhanced by their knowledge of computer systems that reflects their technical ability. Still, the interviews with bosses and personnel officers indicated that secretarial work is associated with “women’s work” when they hired their secretaries primarily by consideration of their typing and shorthand speeds. Truss (1994) concluded that secretarial work in Germany, France and England was mainly associated with typing and face-to-face shorthand dictation. In assessing the gendered nature of secretarial work, Truss, Goffee and Jones (1995) found that secretarial work in those three countries conformed to the stereotypical reference to “women’s work.” Machung (1988) also discovered that employers define secretarial jobs in terms of typing skills and write job descriptions accordingly, but consistently hired secretaries on the basis of personality. She concluded, “the essence of most secretarial work is not typing speed and accuracy, but the ability to interact with a diverse range of people and problems” (p. 66). My results suggest that because of the unclear boundaries of secretarial work, bosses can exercise a great deal of control—but that power does shift between bosses and secretaries.

Job Descriptions: Secretary or Office Wife?
Previous research has shown that secretaries’ job descriptions are more dependent on the relationship between a boss and secretary than on any formal definition of the scope of secretarial work. Pringle (1989b) described the importance of clearly defined duties and tasks in secretarial job descriptions as presenting the benefit of “exposing the assumptions behind existing descriptions” (p.22). None of the secretaries who were interviewed had been provided with formal job descriptions; instead, they received very informal job descriptions supplied by their bosses reflecting the personal requirement of an office wife.

Mary at Unilever secretary wrote:

Apparently, none exist in Unilever House! I have been told that secretarial jobs are verbally described at interviews, rather than being formally typed up. (Mary, personal communication, 25 March, 1994)

The BBC published a document created by an outside consulting firm called the BBC Secretarial Services: Secretarial Team Discussions (BBC, 1991b). This document was discussed in Chapter 5 and outlined the changes in secretaries’ roles and future careers since Producer’s Choice was introduced (see Appendices H, I, and J).

However, the information was intended for and aimed at managers. The explicit message was “to identify the secretarial support requirements of management and production teams... and the most cost-effective means to meet them” (BBC, 1991b, p. 1). Only four technical skills were stated as being required for a secretarial post: word processing, data entry, typing, and spelling. However, there were 10 requirements for a secretarial post related to personal aptitude and interpersonal abilities. These requirements included:

The need to be effective communicators, be willing and cheerful team members, be able to organise their own work and that of others, show initiative, display accuracy and
attention to detail, recognise the importance and rights of internal and external customers, treat all members of staff fairly, be willing to work away from base, be able to work as part of a project team, and be able to deal with people, including TV personalities, who may display anger or aggression. (BBC, 1991a, p. 18)

Clearly “organising the work of others,” “displaying attention to detail,” and “being willing and cheerful” even to those “who may display anger or aggression” indicates secretaries’ diplomatic and social skills, but they also indicate organizational rules for subordination. The rules of subordination include the need to focus on details, do a perfect job, cope with unpleasant situations, and then keep silent about it (Lee-Treweek, 1997; Machung, 1992; Shapiro-Perl, 1984).

When asked, “What is a secretary today?” Janet at the BBC said, “Anything. It just depends on where you work, who you work with, and the culture of the organization” (Janet, 1992 interviews, p. 25). This statement certainly indicates her knowledgeable penetration, albeit partial, of gendered workplace relations. Like the other case study secretaries who displayed this insight, or the ability to see through private patriarchal relations, Janet also describes an “office wife” orientation to work that can lead in the end to entrapment. The following chapter will discuss the day-to-day negotiations of power in workplace sites, and how secretaries, as knowledgeable agents, apply the rules of subordination and resist private segregationist practices that affects their fate.
Conclusion

The mixture of intellectual and emotional skills required in secretarial work is related to and the norms and activities of a female culture and linked to gendered assumptions about secretaries in society’s wider culture. Secretarial training that these secretaries received reflect a focus on typing and shorthand. The typical title assigned to these secretaries was “secretary” and they were shown to be consciously aware that within their gendered organizational cultures, they had no collective support to press for a change that would better reflect their complex roles. No secretary was aware of any secretarial association or collective efforts to enhance their status, and expressed that challenging the usage of the title “secretary” without it could be risky. Further, informal or non-existent job descriptions provide individual bosses with the legitimate authority to define secretaries’ jobs. Thus, bosses have the power to allocate daily work tasks to secretaries in such a manner that reinforces a need for an “office wife,” who has enormous social, emotional, and diplomatic skills.

Game and Pringle (1983) linked the gendering of jobs to the construction of gender identity that is continually reconstituted in paid work. Kanter (1977) argued that secretaries learn the boss and not the job. But knowing the boss is seen as their job, and a significant interpersonal skill that their work demands.

Elements of a female culture and aspects of subordination in gendered organizational cultures are related. The majority of secretaries interviewed were found to accept, rather than challenge the nature of their work and their status within these organizations. However, these secretaries were able to assert their organizational importance by making high-ranking bosses dependent on their them for information in the communication process. They have also demonstrated resistance to control over their activities that would preclude “the human touch.” E-mail was described as
“impersonal,” thus on an individual level the secretaries would use the telephone or visit others in the department rather than stay confined to their workstations. Emphatic statements such as “Yes! We hold it altogether” not only reflect awareness of their organizational role, but also reinforces a subjective identity as a member of the female culture.

These secretaries were shown to be consciously aware of gendered educational institutions and of their gender role socialization that established the normative rules for their behaviour. While the secretaries made a purposeful choice to enter a pink-collar secretarial occupation, with their levels of education, they could have done otherwise. As Siltanen (1994) discovered, patriarchal forces may have influenced the secretaries’ choice of occupation, but staying in it, and acting as an “office wife” relates to balance and pride in emotional/interpersonal tasks.

However, as Kanter (1977), McNally (1979), Pringle (1989b), Truss (1993, 1994), and Truss, Goffee and Jones (1995) have suggested, the work and role of the secretary as “office wife” tends to encourage behaviours that make occupational advancement difficult. The work of Balbo (1987), Witz (1992), Savage (1992), and Hochshild (1983) highlight the minutiae of emotional skills involved in pink-collar occupations. And, like many pink-collar occupations, secretarial work involves a quilt of many jobs. Chapter 7 will take up this theme and discuss the emotion tasks involved in secretarial work and the secretaries’ everyday forms of resistance to segregationist practices in paid work.
CHAPTER VII

Private Patriarchal Relations in Paid Work:
The Secretary as Office Wife

"How interesting and important are the duties devolved on females as WIVES...the counselor and friend of the husband; who takes it her daily study to lighten his cares, to soothe his sorrows, and to augment his joys; who like a guardian angel, watches over his interests [and] ...constantly endeavors to render him more virtuous. ..."

Barbara Welter, 1966, p. 325

This chapter will describe the everyday activities of secretaries that tend to reinforce the rules for subordination within gendered hierarchical organizations, and reinforce stereotypical assumptions about "women's work" that involve emotional tasks and skills. Giddens (1989) wrote, "Roles are socially defined expectations which a person in a given status or social position follows" (p. 53). The "office wife" secretarial role involves service to and concern for the lives of others in order to create a sense of community. Thus, the primary role and activities of secretaries are with a focus on making the boss's life easy; similar to those of traditional wives as Welter's (1966) quote describes. The focus in this chapter will be on how secretaries perform their role as an "office wife" and provide hostess service, face-to-face shorthand dictation, and personal/domestic service for their bosses out of a sense of love and/or duty. Even though the case study secretaries indicated that they liked performing these activities, their jobs lacked the boundaries that a clear job description could supply, and that they worked over-time without compensation to get their jobs done when they spent time on the boss's personal activities, affecting their career fate.
**Performance and Resistance to the Duties of Office Wife**

The secretarial labour process includes intellectual, technical and emotional aspects of the work (see Chapter 2). One private segregationist practice can be identified as that of bosses allocating work tasks by gender (Witz, 1992). The interviews with the case study secretaries indicate an orientation to work as an office wife based upon their descriptions of their roles and their interactions with bosses. Yet, the process of perpetuating the secretary's position as office wife includes the gendered expectations of performing domestic tasks for bosses which are woven into informal job descriptions (Benet, 1972; Golding, 1986; Kanter, 1977; Pringle, 1989a, 1989b; Vinnicombe, 1980).

The behaviour of the office wife displays the emotional elements of a female culture by how secretaries apply the rules of subordination and their strategies of resistance to them. Building on Giddens's (1991) notion of ontological security and practical consciousness, I argue that emotional balance allows secretaries to be tacitly conscious and not unconscious of their actions. Ontological security refers to a comfortable mental state in which actors engage in taken-for-granted activities in familiar surroundings and in the company of unthreatening others. It is a sense of comfort and competence that allows them to proceed with daily life and to minimise their anxieties. The tacit acceptance of gendered expectations' permits the secretary as office wife to carry out daily tasks without suspending other aspects of the self in the process of negotiating power. The outcome of these everyday activities, however, unintentionally reproduces private patriarchal relations in the workplace.
Making the Boss's Life Easy

Two of the most basic dimensions of a female culture are maintaining human relations and creating a sense of community from internalising emotional support to others. This is easily verbalised by the secretary as office wife. Seventeen out of eighteen secretaries agreed that their role was one of an office wife and defined this role as "being bossy." They described their primary job as Mary at Unilever did: "My most important job is making [my boss's] life as easy as possible" (Mary, 1994 interviews, p. 12).

After agreeing that she performs her role as an office wife, Mary said,

Well I suppose on occasions I do get taken for granted but it makes me sound pathetic that I just accept it. Makes me sound as if I've got no sort of backbone at all...it's just the way of the world isn't it? That's it you know. (Mary, 1994 interviews, p. 11)

Here Mary's statement indicates an explicit understanding of the wider patriarchal culture, "it's just the way of the world." She also demonstrates her acceptance by ascribing to herself the emotional qualities of the female culture, and, within a gendered organizational context, it was the rational thing to do. When asking Angela if she would agree that her role was one of an office wife, she responded:

Yeah you do have to look after them a bit, yeah. [laughs]
Yeah, 'cause I mean his wife rings up sometimes and says, "You know, keep an eye on him he's got to put down whatever he's eaten" and sometimes I say, "When you go to lunch, I'm gonna book this for you 'cause you can eat potatoes." But yeah, yeah, I think his wife knows that as well 'cause she always phones up and says, "Would you tell him to do this or ask him to do that." (Angela, 1994 interviews, p. 9)

Mary's previous statement "I do get taken for granted" followed by "that's just the way of the world isn't it?" and then "that's it you know" reflects a complex understanding of private patriarchal relations in the workplace and the basis of bosses'
personal power while directly questioning that power. Angela’s laughter in this instance can also be seen as a mode of expressing the fundamental features of the female culture that her job is to look after the needs of her boss, which reconstitutes those private relations.

The activities involved in solving others’ problems and providing emotional support indicate how the case study secretaries follow internalised norms of the female culture. Surprisingly, when comparing the roles of secretaries in business settings to those in a university setting, few differences emerged. A university secretary said that part of her role was wife or “mother.” “You find yourself taking on that role of solving other people’s problems. It’s in-built you see” (Jill, 1994 interviews, p. 1). When saying, “it’s in-built” conveys Jill’s discursive consciousness that as a member of a female culture she has formulated habits in service to others. Another university secretary shed light on the dialectic of power that exists in both academic and non-academic workplace settings. When asked, “So then everybody’s your boss?” Martha responded,

Yes or the other way around [laughs]. Most things get referred to me because I’m always here. I’m in the know. ...It’s a pivotal role around which things happen. ...And this is where the bossy bit comes in I suspect, ‘cause I can sort them out. I’ll go and do that, so that’s exactly what I do.

I think working in a secretarial role appeals to me because you get to be bossy if you are lucky. I think I’m bossy. I like organizing people and I think that’s one of the reasons for choosing it. (Martha, 1994 interviews, pp. 1-2)

Martha’s statements, “I’m in the know,” “it’s a pivotal role,” “I think I’m bossy,” and “I can sort them out” sum the secretaries’ overall sense of personal satisfaction in their work and the sense of informal power they share in diverse office environments.
Yvonne, a Rank Xerox secretary with 20 years of secretarial experience, told her story of playing a pivotal role in managing, as she said, “twenty troops.”

Any information that needs to be got out to everyone I do that they come to me. Well they come to me for information all the time. [laughs]

I: So you are the departmental secretary. You know how to run the whole show.

That’s right.

I: I know, at the university, if I ever wanted to know anything or get anything done it’s the departmental secretary who knows everything. [laughs]

[laughs]

I: They really and truly run the show.

Yes. Well the thing is if I don’t know, I always know somebody who does. [laughs] (Yvonne, 1994 interviews, p. 3)

I feel sometimes that I’m the agony aunt or um especially up until now we’ve had a lot of young men in the office. We have more men than women in the department or we have up to now and um they’re all, the majority of them are in their 20s and early 30s. Some of the managers are of course older than that but um basically the office is a very young office to me. It’s very young and the majority of them come to me for advice and I suppose I look upon myself in a way as though they all belong to me [laughs] which I find very upsetting when some of them are leaving. I feel as though they are my personal people and they shouldn’t go. But um yes in that respect, yes I do have that sort of relationship. (p. 4)

[Name of boss] and I get on extremely well together because um he treats me as a colleague and never patronises me, he asks my opinion on things. I really feel that there are times when I’m actually helping you know that I really feel sometimes that I’m contributing something. And whatever happens I’m always included and not “just the secretary” so you know it’s always, he makes a point first of all saying “will I be able to go?” to whatever it is before we do anything. I find that well it’s comforting to know that you are valued and I feel that I’m part of the team. I do like that I do like to feel that I’m part of what’s happening. (p. 8)
Yvonne stated that she did not feel “patronised” or “just the secretary.” Yet, she also expressed awareness of her power in her emotional role as an office wife or mother when she said that her boss asked, “will I be able to go?” and then “the majority of them come to me for advice...I feel as though they are my personal people...which I find very upsetting when some of them are leaving.”

The laughter that Annette, Mary, Martha, Yvonne, and myself shared also suggests that we have a common bond as members of a female culture because we can laugh together about the irony of situations where bosses think they are in control. However, laughter has also been seen as “a vocalization with well-known social and political character” (Henley, 1977, p. 71). Henley suggested that laughter is ostensibly an expression of pleasure and relaxation. However, when coming from subordinates, it might belie the true nature of a situation. “It is as if they are exhibited for the purpose of maintaining the myth of pleasant relations and equality between superior and subordinate” (p. 172). Among a wide range of strategies of resistance, laughter has been shown to be one female form of resistance in gendered organizational contexts (Lee-Treweek, 1997). For example, as a subordinate group, secretaries take pride in caring for others, but then may laugh about it later with others. For most subordinate groups who have had little prospect of improving their status, this form of resistance has been one of the only options. As a mode of expressing tacit consciousness, laughter and humour illustrate secretaries’ finely tuned sensitivity to and partial penetration of private patriarchal relations in the workplace. While such a creative everyday form of female resistance is not trivial, it is still unlikely to do more than marginally affect the various private segregationist practices that secretaries confront, proving self-defeating in the end. I will return later to the place of laughter in
secretaries’ accounts of resisting the performance of personal/domestic services for bosses.

The office wife identity can be seen as a way of being special, of mastering a particular niche in the universe as Wheeler (1990) suggested. One’s subjectivity “may be the principal means by which people give expression to the self while doing paid work that provides only limited meaning and shape to their lives” (p. 148). Freidson (1990) used the phrase “labours of love” that describes the type of work which secretaries perform as members of a female culture. Labours of love are equated with those activities of secretaries that “being freely chosen... can be part of the worker’s nature and allow self-fulfillment” (p. 151). When viewing work in a way that can be in itself creative and satisfying, we have a better interpretation of the motives for undertaking secretarial work; better to be an office wife than a computer slave? As products of a female culture, both mothers and traditional wives are allocated considerable informal power in the process of organizing and taking care of others, but they are positioned as subordinates in relation to husbands and bosses. While secretaries take care of others, the problem remains one of the devaluation of emotional skills. As an office wife, meeting the human needs of others in the workplace involves qualities of compassion, empathy, sensitivity, intuition, nurturing, and cooperation. However, these qualities hold low priority in society, thus shaping the relations between men and women, bosses and secretaries. Like most pink-collar occupations, secretarial work has been consistently devalued because of the gendered assumption that emotional skills or labours of love come to women “naturally.”

The qualities of being a good woman in the process of maintaining human relations, and the value placed on it in the workplace, is demonstrated by how the
secretaries use organizational, diplomatic, and intuitive skills. In describing a good secretary, Annette from the BBC said:

I think being a good secretary isn’t just a good education. You’ve got to be able, my job means being able to answer “Yes” to “Have you really? Have you? Did you?” which is true. They say, “have you done this, can you do that?”
(Annette, 1992 interviews, p. 18)

I think, sometimes, it’s a very undervalued profession. People don’t realise how hard it is. My own mother doesn’t realise how hard the job is. She thinks that I come and type a few letters and go home. And that is just not true! ... I am responsible for making sure that I have 28 gentlemen [lowers voice] in the right place at the right time. That’s my main responsibility. Um, I’m terribly nosy so I tend to stick my nose into everything. I know all the staff. Part of my ways is as a troubleshooter. ...It’s part of that role knowing when to keep your mouth shut and when to keep your ears open. ...That’s my motto.

Using the office technology is important to me; I need to perform so to speak. They are not half as important as your relationships. (pp. 1-2)

Annette’s account of her role demonstrates the dimension of the female culture that assumes emotional support and personal responsibility for maintaining human relationships. As an ‘office wife,” she abides by the rules of subordination, cultivates human relationships, and takes responsibility for others by making sure that they are in the right place at the right time. She viewed these aspects of her job as more important than the technical aspects.

The responsibilities of taking care of others as an office wife are linked to the rules of subordination in giving credit upwards and its corollary, assuming the blame for the manager’s mistakes, then keeping silent about it (Machung, 1992). Annette at the BBC described her role further:

I’m terribly nosy, so I tend to stick my nose into everything. I know all the staff. Part of my ways is as a troubleshooter. For example, a member of staff’s contract hadn’t arrived, and he was very upset about it, and people worry about their jobs whatever your organization, and our own manager takes the
blame for it. So I came down and said “What’s wrong with it?” “It’s the contract.” “Well, I’ll see to it.” “He hasn’t got my contract sorted out.” “Oh, well, I know he’s been chasing you” (and it was actually sitting on his desk). So we sorted it out. We got his contract sorted out, and if that had gone wrong, like, the weekend would have been ruined.

It’s part of that role. It’s knowing when to keep your mouth shut and when to keep your ears open. I get on very well with the staff because they appreciate I’m quite good at what I do. And if they ask me a question which I can’t answer, [then it’s] “I don’t know” and they know that I do know. “I don’t know; I don’t know anything count as nothing” and they accept that. But that is my motto.
(Annette, 1992 interviews, p. 12)

These statements exemplify how the rules for subordination are linked to secretaries’ diplomatic and problem-solving skills that can be taken for granted in gendered organizational cultures. This diplomacy requires high-level skills in listening and questioning that often involve a sound knowledge of the organization overall and delicate judgements about political priorities and confidential matters. Elements of the female culture are displayed in Annette’s concern for the lives of other employees when saying, “if it had gone wrong, the employee’s weekend would have been ruined.” Yet, as an agent of her own subordination, Annette knows when to keep her mouth shut and give the credit to her boss for sorting out this employee’s problem. She even goes so far as stating that her role “count[s] as nothing.” However, when looking at her repeated statement of “I’m terribly nosy” it also suggests that she is knowledgeable and understands how to access information and solve problems. If anything, she suggests that her role is just the opposite of “I don’t know anything, count as nothing.”

Nine out of ten managers agreed that the role of their secretary was as an office wife whose efforts make their lives easier. One BBC manager said,

Their job is to make my life as easy as possible in terms of sorting out the diary so that I have not only to go to all the meetings that I have to, but also so that I have time to sit
down and do the work and thinking time. That they are reminding me of what I've got to do, giving me the papers that I need for the meeting so I don't have to think "Oh God, what do I need for that." I mean, just getting my life organized. And obviously the sort of person it is, is pleasant and they get on with people. (Sue, 1992 interviews, pp. 7-8)

A Channel Four manager said that she needed a secretary,

> Who is prepared to be very bossy and tell you what to do and is prepared to organize your life so I suppose, perhaps, I mean, it's not the sort of wife I am with my husband, but it's the sort of wife that my mother was to my father. So perhaps I need an old-fashioned sort of wife who will organize me. That is very important and that is what I look for. The diary gets very complicated. (Vickie, 1994 interviews, p. 8)

Both of these managers stated their need for someone to organize their time. Pringle (1989b) argued that the skills involved in managing a boss's diary involve complex juggling skills, since one cancelled appointment or rescheduled meeting could involve a change in an entire week of carefully organized time. Yet, the great amount of work involving intellectual and creative skills can be taken for granted and easily ignored when requiring a secretary as an office wife, subtly reinforcing secretaries' subordination as a group. Bosses who state that they need a "pleasant" or "bossy" secretary to "just get my life in order" like "an old-fashioned wife" link being a good secretary with being a good woman. A traditional wife's domestic duties have been custodial and supportive, so the secretary's duties as office wife are regarded as revolving not only around technical capabilities, but also involve generally supporting and representing the boss. Thus, the role of the secretary as office wife is to extend the boss's capacity by taking care of the boss's everyday business details and personal matters so they can concentrate directly on a project at hand (Golding, 1986; Kanter, 1977; Pringle, 1989b).
The duties of an office wife are similar to those of the traditional wife and have a strong association with women’s roles in society as caretakers or nurturers. The supportive role of the office wife is seen to mirror the traditional male/female relations in society through the dependency of the secretary’s status on the manager’s. In the context of gendered organizational hierarchies, these activities reinforce gendered stereotypes because the secretary’s job remains defined by its very nature as a feminine role, and the manager’s as masculine, even if the secretary is male and the manager female.

Marc, a secretary to a female manager at the BBC, also exemplified the conventions and values of the female culture through his “office wife” activities.

I mean you don’t even have to like them [your manager]. You just have to respect them. But the fact that I respected her first was my motivation in thinking “well OK this woman has come through a lot, you know, she’s sacrificed, she has sacrificed a family, she has sacrificed relationships. The men don’t.”

On the whole, I think because of the respect I have for [name of boss], and the fact that she is so often the only woman in a room at senior level, that she has to have her facts right. She has to have that piece of paper; she has to have that document, this manifesto, that proposal; they have to be there at her fingers and they have to be perfect. (Marc, 1994 interviews, p. 5)

Marc voiced the experiences of the other secretaries when he told a story about how he and his boss arranged to get an extension on a report, and the responsibility he assumed in the process.

You know [name of boss] goes home. She gets the extension. It’s all very well. It’s all done blah, blah, blah. The fact that she’s been working 24 hours a day for the last week, she’s working all weekend, and she’s just back from holiday and this just landed on her desk when she was on holiday. Um you know I think it just shows remarkable brilliance on the woman’s part. But um there’s still got to be that nagging suspicion of “did Marc do the job properly?” Well yes I did! [laughs]
You know it's like, it's all very well me saying "I'm good at my job" and yet, I am, I mean I'm not particularly arrogant. I'm not particularly vain, but I know. I have a work ethic. If someone asks me to do something I will do it. I don't care even if you don't do things quite as well as you might have done, just something as simple as getting a three day extension on a report. In an organization which sets deadlines that they are then officially broken, and they set a certain deadline, and then send out a memo in the next post saying "you have another two days" then send out another memo in the next post saying "I actually want it a week early" you know, for a very badly run organization for someone to complain over something as petty as that. The fact of the matter is, when they get the report it will be almost flawless. (Marc, 1994 interviews, p. 11)

Marc’s accounts demonstrate how gender expectations are interwoven into the secretarial work role. He showed admiration and respect for his boss, and offered the same kind of loyalty to her that men have been able to receive from their female secretaries. The connection between taking personal responsibility for the boss’s success by performing his job perfectly and then expressing doubt about whether others perceive that he did it "properly" makes clear an orientation to work as an office wife. When adhering to the norms of a female culture, Marc’s laughter after saying “Yes I did!” adds depth to the expressed work ethic and pride in being a good secretary, like a good wife.

The notion of working hard for self and the respect of others highlights the significance of gender in secretarial work. It illustrates the element of self-discipline, or willing involvement in the work behaviour by subordinate groups (Pollert, 1981; Sturdy, 1992; Willis, 1977). The elements of a female culture and aspects of subordination are forged when secretaries efficiently organise their bosses’ diaries to make their daily lives easier, and focus on the details of preparing documents perfectly, but then give credit upwards.
Ruth, from Opportunity 2000, expressed her conscious awareness that her actions reproduce private workplace relations when acting in the role of office wife. “Yes, I do everything: her diary, travel, itinerary, etc. Having things done for her gives her a feeling of importance” (Ruth, 1994 interviews, p. 6). The role of “office wife” has been portrayed as being loyal, trustworthy, and a devoted extension of the boss, but not necessarily being passive or reserved.

The self-described “incredibly old-fashioned” manager from Unilever said that he preferred an archetypal secretary—one “deferent, who does the bosses’ bidding” (Graham, 1994 interviews, p. 3). In describing their typical day in the office, he said that his secretary “comes in and tells me what I’m doing” (Graham, 1994 interviews, p. 3). In this statement he asserts his ascendancy over his secretary, but at the same time he regards her as having informal power by organising his day. His secretary knowingly accepts her place as the subordinate office wife, but is also aware of the two-way nature of power that exists in their personal relationship.

Yes, I wind him up on a Monday morning and then he works through ’til Friday. [laughs] But he’s lovely like that, you see. Even though probably I don’t believe a word of what he says, it just makes the day go by. (Mary, 1994 interviews, pp. 13-14)

I just sort of unlock everything; if his papers have arrived, I take those in, get him a cup of coffee, I open the post, I go in and we sit there for about an hour and answer all the letters. He dictates everything cause that’s what he likes doing, very few people do that now. (p. 13)

In this case Mary’s laughter indicates not only irony but also can be seen as a female form of resistance, or a mode of coping with the reality of her subordinate situation. When asked if her boss would photocopy a document or pick up the phone if she were busy, she replied:

I’d probably go like [rolls eyes] in my mind but because I know him so well and it doesn’t bother me at all. I don’t
think there's anything he could do that would annoy me because I love him so much; I think he's wonderful. [laughs] It doesn't matter. That's why I'm here 'til seven o'clock every evening, because I suppose things do take longer because I do do everything for him. [laughs] (Mary, 1994 interviews, p. 15)

Goffman (1971) argued that non-verbal cues such as rolling the eyes and laughter convey inadvertently that what people say is not quite what they really mean. Mary's combined usage of laughter and rolling of her eyes seems to suggest a tactful ability to give the appearance of comfort with her everyday work situation. As a product of a female culture, Mary's actions also indicate that as an office wife, who is personally responsible for making her boss's life easy, she ends up subordinating her own work activities in the process. Kanter (1977) argued that knowing the boss's needs is the job of the personal secretary, and once these personal relationships have been established, they are cherished and deeply valued. The closer the working relationship, the more it appears as a traditional marriage as indicated by Mary's statement “I don't think there's anything he could do that would annoy me because I love him so much.” The private workplace relations between Mary and her boss clearly demonstrate their working relationship as an office marriage, and the appearance of inequities in power.

Secretaries often talk about "intuiting" the needs of their boss in the process of getting work done. They also learn how to greet visitors, type correspondence, and make a cup of tea or coffee the way the boss likes it, in his style. When asked to describe their typical days in the office, the secretaries were shown to reinforce private relations of control through their own actions. Gilligan (1982) showed that women are socialized to connect family and friends, therefore, the actions of secretaries would be in terms of personal relationships and social obligations. However, these actions enable the principal manager to control the allocation of tasks,
which may be very domestic or private in nature, thus maintaining the subordinate status of the secretary as office wife within a gendered hierarchical order.

Without clear job descriptions, anything can be considered a secretarial responsibility, including personal/domestic services. But, job security, status, and advancement are also related to performing these tasks, which the boss has the power to define and/or manipulate. Since the secretary frequently serves as a status symbol for her boss (Davies, 1975), defining the role of the secretary as an office wife reinforces private segregationist practices wherein the secretary dutifully participates. Still, power imbalance between a boss and secretary is clearly visible by the activities involved in hostess support, face-to-face shorthand dictation, and personal/domestic services.

**Hostess support.** During one of my interviews at Unilever, I made the following observation of the office wife performing hostess service.

> The interview with the Personnel Director at Unilever took place over lunch while sitting on two large sofas. They [Personnel Director and his secretary] interacted like a married couple. While he opened a bottle of wine, she served the food on the coffee table. With his secretary acting as a hostess, I had the feeling of lunch being served in a home. (Unilever fieldnotes, 16 March, 1994)

While making me a coffee for our interview, Annette, from the BBC commented, “I just know when [my boss] needs a coffee or tea without being asked” (BBC fieldnotes, 9 September, 1992). Most of the secretaries considered coffee/tea service as part of their job responsibilities, but the task was usually expressed as being a “polite” humanising gesture in the course of making the lives of others in the office easy and pleasant.

Performing coffee and tea service can be seen as a secretarial activity that creates a sense of community within the workplace. When asked to describe their
typical days in the office, the secretaries were also shown to reinforce private relations of control through their own actions. Angela, at Unilever, described this notion.

I: So when he has meetings are you like the hostess and the wife and make sure that everybody feels at home?

Yeah. Get them sittin down, get ‘em a drink, ask them if they’re OK.

I: And do you think that is part of the job of a secretary?

Um...I’ve always done it I wouldn’t know any different without doing it. It’s nice though if visitors come in you get to know them then instead of just leaving them to go in, you meet them and say hello and have a chat. I’ve made a lot of friends through showing them where to go for lunch. They always say “how are you doing Angela?” or “how are you?” (Angela, 1994 interviews, p. 21)

As an office wife, Angela recognises the importance of her role in making the lives of others pleasant and thereby making herself visible in the process. The following statement by Marc at the BBC on the nature of hostess service was a typical one, even though he said that his female boss would never demand a coffee or tea:

It’s a give and take. I know [my boss] likes Assan tea but she hates messing around with tea. I walked into Sainsbury’s one day and saw “oooo” Assan teabags. I picked her up some tea bags and that wasn’t difficult. I am there to do it.

I am here toservice [my boss], not service as such, but serve [her]. What she wants, I do. Whether I like it or not, if she says, “Will you make me a cup of tea,” I’ll make her a cup of tea. It’s common decency. . . .And, [my boss] would never say to me “just make me a cup of tea” just as a power thing, as a show off thing. She’d never dream of it. She would be mortified if she saw anyone put that on. (Marc, 1994 interview, p. 12)

Throughout the interviews with these secretaries, it became clear that women bosses did not engage in segregationist practices to the same degree as men.

Rose, at the BBC, also supported the idea that the symbolic nature of power in coffee “service,” that was such a divisive issue in the 1970s, has declined over time. She said: “Well, we get that upstairs and we both take it. I mean he gets his own and I get mine. We do it for the office actually. It’s not
just for us two” (Rose, 1992 interviews, p. 5). This was apparent when one of the other secretaries came around and asked us and the others in the office if we would like a coffee (BBC fieldnotes, 9 September, 1992).

Yvonne, at Rank Xerox, also described the declining significance of coffee and tea service by contrasting her work to that in another organization many years before.

We get our coffee from the machine, and when [name of boss] wants coffee he goes round the corner and gets his own coffee. Everybody gets their own coffee or a little group near me...every so often will say to me “would you like a coffee?” and they get for all of us, and they get up. And then I’d go and get a coffee for them. But we have no tradition. It’s everybody for themselves doing that sort of thing. I did we did at the [another organization].

I: How did that differ?

I made coffee for my boss in the office. I had a kettle and coffee and everything. And at certain times of the day, which were laid down because we had a ten minute break, um I used to put the kettle on and make coffee, and if he had visitors of course I always made coffee, brought the coffee in and I washed the cups afterwards.

I’m not saying that I disliked it because I was used to it and that was the way things were. And I always felt that if you were a manager or a director that’s fair enough that you should get the respect that’s due to you [laughs] you know? Um so it was definitely a man’s world, it was a male’s one. (Yvonne, 1994 interviews, p. 7)

In itself, Yvonne’s story of hostess service is unsurprising. What is more interesting in terms of gender is the way in which she resigned herself to the whims and power of her bosses. More importantly, for present purposes, is the extent to which these activities are an attribute of subjective gender identity that reflects conventions in a female culture.

Hillary, at Channel Four, used humour as a mode of expressing her pleasure in resisting the private segregationist practice of tea or coffee service and the association with being considered an office wife.
I do teas and coffee but [name of boss] is aware that I make the most disgusting cup of tea known to man. So he’d have to be absolutely desperate to ask me. [laughs] It’s something I’ve cultivated over the years making the world’s worst cup of tea. [laughs]

I mean I’ll do that because it’s part of the job, but I mean my previous boss learned rather quickly to make his own cup of tea rather than ask me to make it. Equally, he’d get me the occasional tea. It worked both ways and that was quite handy. (Hillary, 1994 interviews, p. 2)

This story was told with enormous pleasure. In this case, the boss gave up asking for hostess service and then it became a mutual gesture of politeness. Asked about her typical day and whether she makes coffee in the morning, Zoe, a Unilever secretary stated: “No. No. I don’t. I don’t. I might say to him ‘do you want a coffee?’ and he’ll say “yes” or he’ll go up the corridor and get his own coffee. He’s very easygoing” (Zoe, 1994 interviews, p. 4).

These explanations seem to indicate that both a dialectic of control and promoting human relations in the office exist in the practice of serving teas and coffees. Yet Pringle (1989b) argued that coffee/tea service “can distinguish the boss-secretary relationship in the classic way of catering to the manager’s personal needs” (p. 25). While there may be an element of truth to this, most of the secretaries responded similarly to the question on providing coffee/tea service as the following excerpt demonstrates:

Not for him, just for the girls. We all make it for each other and he makes his own.

I: Did he ever ask you to make his?

Sometimes he’ll phone up and say “did I hear you say it’s tea time?” and I’ll say “Ok” [voice lowers] but he comes out and says to me “can I make you a coffee?” He offers to make me a coffee.

I: And what do you do then?

I say “no” [laughs] I just say “no thank you”.
I: And you never let him make you a coffee?
He has before a few times but...
I: You don’t feel compelled to jump up and say...
"I’ll get it" no [laughs] no. (Angela, 1994 interviews, p. 7)

Neither Marc nor Angela spoke comfortably about having their boss serve them a cup of tea or coffee. Yvonne’s statements point to existing private relations in serving a boss coffee. The accounts of Marc, Angela, Yvonne, and Hillary all suggest that the practice of serving tea/coffee is a means of reinforcing the boss’s privileges so their bosses “get the respect that’s due” to them in a high status position, but it is changing. Small acts of resistance go on every day between bosses and secretaries as Pringle (1989b) demonstrated. However, it is still not possible to predict if these acts will develop into “something larger” (p. 266). Based on the results from my interviews, however, the action of serving managers and visitors coffee, tea, or lunch under the guise of common decency, unintentionally reproduces private segregationist practices that are both structured in and through workplace relations.

Hostess service performed by an office wife can be seen as an activity with power to transform increasingly dehumanised workplaces. However, when abiding by the rules of subordination, secretaries can also be viewed as active agents who reproduce the process of segregation. This can be shown by the secretaries’ activities that are associated with face-to-face dictation and personal/domestic services and how they resist these segregationist practices.

**Shorthand dictation.** Shorthand dictation captures private forms of power by the immediacy of face-to-face interaction between a boss and secretary. It minimises their spatial distance, and involves daily repetition which symbolises traditional familial relations of authority between a boss and a secretary as office wife. Pringle
(1989b) deemed shorthand as a basis for companionship or for satisfying the boss’s fantasies related to power and domination, rather than being treated as an intellectual skill. "The notion of ‘dictating’ can evoke the boss-secretary as a master-slave relationship" (p. 25). For the secretaries in this study, their relationship with bosses was not presented as a “slave” to the master, but more of a “servant” whose job was to “wait” on the boss.

Henley (1977) has suggested that “waiting” is an element of the female culture and built into women’s roles as subservient providers of service and support for others. Thus, “on the job, women’s time, while far from unoccupied, is at the disposal of (generally male) bosses” (p. 52). She concluded that “women’s time is unimportant...shown by its easy violability” [italics in original] (p. 52). Secretaries’ time is at the disposal of bosses when they require an office wife to perform face-to-face dictation. Bosses have the privilege of interrupting secretaries’ time and taking up as much of it as they wish since they are more powerful in the encounter. Bosses benefit from the established practice of shorthand dictation, which involves the personal service provided by secretaries’ positioned as subordinates within gendered organizational cultures.

In light of modern technology and the availability of audio/dictating machines, I was surprised to find that the typical days for fifteen out of eighteen secretaries included face-to-face shorthand dictation. The secretaries also preferred face-to-face dictation to their managers using a dictaphone. However, the secretaries’ participated in dictation service with male bosses only; female bosses were unlikely to dictate in any fashion. In other words, the three women managers never did dictation versus all the male managers. Clearly, in the context of this study, face-to-face dictation symbolises male power. Even though managers’ expectations may vary, when
secretaries perform this service they operate to inculcate gendered modes of
subjectivity.

For example, even though shorthand was not considered an essential skill at the BBC, secretaries expressed the skill as essential because managers typically did not use audio/dictating machines. As one secretary said, “No one at the BBC does audio; it’s some sort of power thing [not to use it]” (Annette, 1994 interviews, p. 5). Annette decided to take a shorthand course years after starting as a secretary at the BBC because “everyone does it” (Annette, 1994 interviews, p. 4). She expressed the choice in learning shorthand dictation as something that could add to her repertoire of skills and possibly lead to a higher income. This outlook is interesting for two reasons. Firstly, because it reveals her consciousness that shorthand dictation is a means for bosses to assert their power. Secondly, it envisages the role of taking dictation as accepted because it could be of assistance in career development. These two features taken together can explain why the 15 case study secretaries were not aggrieved by face-to-face dictation. Secretaries did not regard it as a waste of time as Pringle (1989b) suggested, rather they indicated feelings of subservience while participating in this communication process.

In 1994, the wording of secretarial requirements in *The Times* and *The Evening Standard*, and in the materials on secretaries from two recruitment agencies were examined. They indicated that shorthand speeds were still one of the most important secretarial skills and that these provided the most lucrative salaries. For example, an advertisement in *The Times* offered a salary of £20,000 for a “first class senior secretary.” The job requirements for this secretarial post in a major international firm included:

- Providing full secretarial support including organising meetings, travel itineraries and liaising with their
international clients. Previous senior level experience, good organisational and administrative skills and the ability to work under pressure are essential, as are fast and accurate shorthand and typing (speeds 60/90). ("Creme de la Creme," 1994)

When questioned about shorthand speeds, a Hobstones recruitment consultant stated that a secretary with “shorthand speeds of 100 wpm and five years experience at Directorate level in the City of London could be offered up to £25,000,” but added that this salary was “rare” (Hobstones telephone interview, 14 September, 1994).

When asked why shorthand was such a highly valued skill considering the existence of dictaphones, she replied, “It’s not the norm in the UK to use a dictaphone. The boss likes to talk while he walks.” This statement presents the stereotypical image of a secretary trailing behind the boss in order to scribe his words and thoughts, thus reinforcing the gendered role of office wife and the tasks to which women are naturally suited.

The interviews with the university secretaries about shorthand dictation differed from those in the case study organizations. They did not provide shorthand dictation service because they work in a university setting where lecturers typically word process their own work. Yet, one secretary described her feelings about having participated in face-to-face dictation when working in the private sector. “It’s demeaning. You’re just writing down, feeling really inferior” (Jill, 1994 interviews, p. 2). The case study secretaries who performed face-to-face dictation service also described feelings of subservience when involved in this practice. These accounts are interesting in terms of secretaries’ frustration with the process of dictation. During this activity, a secretary must present the self in her formal role of office wife and adopt an enthusiastic demeanour when having to go into a boss’ office (Goffman, 1969).
However, the process of face-to-face dictation was also expressed as an opportunity for interpersonal communication or a “staff meeting” where secretaries are active participants, but couched in terms of “minding” the boss’s activities which stretches much further than bosses are prepared to admit. One BBC secretary said,

*I don’t like doing it; I mean I find it, demeaning is too strong, but I don’t like doing it. I kind of think that makes because I’m taking dictation, I’m a secretary, and it’s very symbolic of your subservient position to me and that’s why I don’t like doing it.*

But then I recognize that it’s the quickest way. The quickest way to get ‘round some of the problems. I mean, if [my boss] is dictating it, it’s usually a bit of a joint effort. All this sort of doing-it-between-us. But then, you know, it shouldn’t take two people to draft a letter. (Janet, 1992 interviews, p. 18)

Here, Janet articulates the feelings of subservience in the process of dictation and her resistance to it, but then accepts it to a limited extent. In Goffman’s (1969) terms, meetings of staff that involve face-to-face dictation often create and preserve front-region performances, or a front of harmony. For women, this work also involves managing their emotions and feelings (Hochschild, 1983). Preserving a front of harmony can actually disguise private patriarchal relations in which the secretary is participating. When asked about face-to-face shorthand dictation, Angela at Unilever said:

*I hate it [laughs]; it’s horrible. I don’t, I don’t like it. They think that, if they can dictate, you have to get it back exactly as they’ve said it, and I don’t think that anybody can; I mean, there’s always mistakes. The person I worked for before, if you made a mistake he used to, well, you couldn’t make mistakes, so he always made you feel nervous.* (Angela, 1994 interviews, p. 7)

The self-described, traditional Unilever manager described dictation as a “staff meeting” where “she tells me what I’m doing” (Graham, 1994 interviews, p. 3).
While his statement may concede that he is dependent on his secretary in a limited way, he also implies that the office wife, like the ideal wife, is watching over his interests. Her power is based on her special feminine qualities: to love, to be good, and to serve others, but without a desire for control. Secretaries' "second in command" power is not so much denied in this sense as it is trivialised or minimised. During an interview with his secretary, she described her office wife role. "I go in and we sit there for about an hour and answer all the letters, he dictates everything 'cause that's what he likes doing" (Mary, 1994 interviews, p. 13). This statement lends credence to Henley's (1977) argument that women's time can be considered unimportant when the secretary's time is at the disposal of a boss. While dictation is supposedly a mutual act, the act of deferring time, and hence power to the boss, is reconstituted through the activities of the secretary.

On the other hand, face-to-face dictation can also be viewed as an opportunity for secretaries to assert their power and incorporate their writing skills to guide the flow of text, rather than merely transcribing from audio-tape. Their craft involves intelligence and the ability to actively cultivate relationships between people of divergent status. Katrina, at Rank Xerox, described this notion while simultaneously acknowledging face-to-face dictation as an antiquated labour process that symbolises male power.

I think that once you get to know each other you work, your mind starts thinking the same things and you know you start anticipating what they're going to ask you. (Katrina, 1994 interviews, p.6)

I do face-to-face dictation which is quite old-fashioned really, but I mean it's easier when you get to know them, and you know their language, the sorts of things they will say and they won't say. ...He'll get stuck halfway through something, when you get to know them you know what they are trying to say, and you can interject, and say "what about so and so?" Now that helps. That's not something you can do
mechanically. You know that's two minds working on something, and that's what we tend to do. (p.8)

Rose, at the BBC, also participated in face-to-face dictation. Both Rose and her boss, Tom, described their relationship as a “team.” She stated, “We work together on everything. We've worked with each other for quite a while” (Rose, 1992 interviews, p. 3). When asked about their twice-daily staff meetings, Tom described the importance of having an office wife who can intuit what he is thinking, and be his counsellor and friend.

You know we work very, very closely so she knows how I think and how I'd react to any problem. You know, “Tom would probably do this.” You know, we tend to spend probably at least half an hour in the morning together and half an hour in the afternoon so she knows exactly what I'm doing and what I've got on, what's worrying me and you know, what I'm hiding 'cause I don't how to really deal with it.

Uh and in the same way she says to me, you know, “I've got this this and this” and so that we both, you know, I think that's very important that you're not working in isolation. I kind of look at it really that as there's one kind of job here that we're doing and there are bits of it that each of us kind of take on. There are times when I'll casually say “I'll go down to the post it will be quicker” or “I'll do that bit of photocopying, you need to do that because that's the priority.” (Tom, 1992 interviews, p. 10)

When asked if Rose could communicate her work needs to Tom, she replied, “He normally helps. [laughs] I'll say 'you can do this and I'll do that then.' It's definitely a team” (Rose, 1992 interviews, p. 5). Certainly this working relationship appears reciprocal and they share a perception of equity. But, when Rose stated “he normally helps” and then laughed about it, but went on to tell him what to do, suggests a traditional office marriage and the subordinate place of women within it. She acts in the role of office wife who is the “bossy” one. He may help her with “her” jobs like a husband might help his wife with “her” chores at home—after she tells him what to
do. When secretaries are already positioned as the office wife, the discourse of “reciprocity-equality,” where the boss and secretary operate as a “team,” can actually disguise how their private relations of power are very uni-directional (Pringle, 1989a, p. 171).

Audio=dictating machines can be considered technological, timesaving devices, as well as a medium for liberating secretaries from the control the manager has over secretaries’ activities and time. These tools can enable a secretary to manage her time more efficiently and prioritise tasks more effectively. In the process, secretaries are able to expand their roles in the workplace. Still, as both Rose at the BBC and Mary at Unilever indicated, “dictation” can also be viewed as an example of multi-tasking because during dictation, they are able to discuss schedules, plans, etc. (versus an audio=dictating machine). But, when looking at the time/space continuum and power, Henley (1977) argued that “time is far from a neutral philosophical/physical concept in our society: it is a political weapon” (p. 43). In other words, the personal becomes political in the process of face-to-face dictation.

Of those bosses who required dictation service, only two used dictating equipment; the rest required face-to-face dictation. To spend an hour or more per day on bosses’ personal or business needs imposes on secretaries’ time. As with space, the more powerful boss has the ability to control the length of the dictating session and its nature. They have the privilege of taking up as much of the secretary’s time as they wish. Katrina suggested that, as an office wife, face-to-face dictation also meant that the secretary be in tune with the moods and thought processes of the boss. I did not, however, find secretaries resisting face-to-face dictation by insisting that the boss use audio=dictating equipment to ensure more productive use of their own time. Most secretaries said they preferred face-to-face dictation for two reasons:
1. Managers who use dictating equipment could then dictate at any time, thereby increasing secretarial workloads.

2. The secretaries did not want to feel tied to a transcription machine, which would remove them from the human element of their job.

Transcribing tape-recorded material is also inherently time-consuming as Henley (1977) noted:

Transcribing from written material is faster since the same message may be read silently at a much greater speed than read aloud, and may be rechecked faster than when one must run a recording machine back and forward to find and try to understand some obscure phrase. (p. 52)

The secretaries criticised audio dictation for its lack of the human element, and that it could increase the boss's control over their daily work schedules. Katrina expressed these points.

It's very impersonal. ...When I worked for [another employer], I'd come in the morning and I'd have piles of files on my cabinets. I have, um, different piles of files and on each one there was a tape, and I just put the one down, put it in the machine, put my ear pieces in, and I didn't hear anything else then 'til I'd finished that tape, took it out, and then the next. I mean there's just no personal contact at all and it really is there's no job satisfaction in that at all.

[Name of boss] has never asked me to use an audio so I don't know if he ever has, but I think once you say, “OK we'll use it occasionally, maybe if you're out of the office or whatever”, it's such a convenient tool that they can dictate to you at home, whatever. They will begin to do it all of the time. I honestly don't think it would stay at just when they are not in the office. (Katrina, 1994 interviews, p. 7)

The loss of the human factor, however, was seen as inevitable, therefore the secretaries' preferred face-to-face dictation.

I don't like audio, because of being plugged into something to the exclusion of all else. I like doing shorthand. [laughs] He does draft huge chunks [of] letters; day-to-day he dictates. From his point of view, we can get a whole lot of stuff off his desk quite quickly and I don't think he likes using an audio machine. (Hillary, 1994 interviews, p. 2)
When taken in its overall context, Hillary's laughter communicates sarcasm and irony along with the strong belief that male bosses derive the most benefit from the face-to-face dictation process.

When discussing the dictation process, these secretaries discursively describe their knowledge of private segregationist practices in the workplace. The results from interviews with secretaries have been supported by interviews with recruitment agency representatives, newspaper documents, and materials from the Institute of Qualified Professional Secretaries (IQPS). They all indicate that secretaries are valued and rewarded for their congenial personalities, emotional, typing, and shorthand skills more than for the full scope of their skills and knowledge.

Previous research has shown that skill designations and the distribution of material rewards are not just technically determined; rather they are socially constructed. Within the structure of paid work, patriarchal relations are an integral aspect in this construction (Steinberg, 1990; Wajcman, 1991). Wajcman noted: "Skilled status has thus been traditionally identified with masculinity and as work that women do not do, while women’s skills have been defined as non-technical and hence undervalued" (1991, p. 38). The status of secretaries is, in some part, related to their emotional skills in performing face-to-face dictation, and providing personal/domestic services.

**Domestic Service**

Given that emotional support is so central to secretarial jobs, the secretaries also performed personal/domestic services for bosses. Again, the secretaries indicated that women managers were less likely to expect or allocate personal/domestic tasks then men. As an element of the female culture, providing personal/domestic service as
an office wife can be seen as a part of the process of making a boss's life as easy as possible. In the stories recounted by the secretaries, work tasks of a familial nature were described and included fetching family photographs, and collecting money from automatic teller machines, lunches, dry cleaning, cigarettes, swimming attire, family presents, and families from the train station. In addition, they made personal travel arrangements and coordinated dietary needs for their bosses.

When asked about performing non-work duties for bosses, Annette at the BBC told the following story:

This is funny. This is one of our giggly's here. Um, in my time before the BBC, I had bought swimsuits, bras, picked up husbands from the station, been home to collect the boss when the husband went off with the car keys in his pocket to a conference, and I'm quite happy to do that but I know a helluvalot of people who were mortified.

My old boss was going on holiday and she was extremely busy and I was out at lunch and I saw a swimsuit, and I knew she was looking for a swimsuit and I said "did you get a swimsuit at the weekend?" "No. My husband will kill me." I said I've just seen a swimsuit that I know you would like. I said "do you want me to go and get it for you?" "Would you? Yes." Great, so Annette trots off to go and get the swimsuit. I'm quite happy to do that.

My new boss would never send me out to buy a swimsuit. I used to say to her "I'm going off to John Lewis' tonight. Do you need anything?" And she would go "No" like that. Um I always ask but she never ever wants me to get anything for her. But she knows she can ask. I have no objection if she said to me "Oh, run down and collect my dry cleaning." I'd have absolutely no problem with that. It wouldn't trouble me. (Annette, 1992 interviews, pp. 13-14)

Annette's account supports the notion that secretaries' time is at the disposal of bosses which can be spent on tasks such as running errands that the office wife willingly performs. Yet, providing such service was described as a voluntary polite gesture by secretaries for women in management, rather than
a way to assert dominance. Women in management rarely asked for such services to be performed by their secretary.

Um she was in a meeting one Friday afternoon and she was going away for the weekend. She was going away for a fairly serious party but her little black frock was being dry cleaned downstairs and the dry cleaner closes at half past five or whatever. So I went down and collected that as a gesture. It wasn’t because she asked me to. ... You know she does it herself. But having said that I am quite happy to do that sort of thing. (Marc, 1994 interviews, p. 11)

The following story from Katrina at Rank Xerox describes how male bosses are able to expect personal/domestic service from an office wife.

Yeah he’ll very often say, “Are you going into town?” and I say “Yeah” he’ll say “Oh would you go to the cashpoint for me or would you pick this up?” and that’s fine. Um sometimes he’ll say “Are you going into town?” and if I’m not I’ll say “No but I am tomorrow if I can get you anything then.”

I: Has there been anything that he’s asked you on a personal nature that got your back up a little bit?

Um yeah a little bit. When I first started he asked me to fill out some tax forms which were personal and that got my back up a little bit. And I think once he asked me to go fetch something for his wife and I actually said “no.” I actually said “I’m too busy.”

I: And did he ask you again?

I think you learn if you say “no” then they think “oh that must be cheeky I shouldn’t have asked. I won’t ask it again” and they don’t. (Katrina, 1994 interviews, p. 9)

Katrina’s story not only reflects the gendered expectations in secretarial work, but it also demonstrates that if secretaries’ say “No,” then they call attention to the inappropriateness of bosses’ expecting certain sorts of personal/domestic service at work. Both Marc and Annette, like the majority of the secretaries’ conveyed that they were “quite happy to do that sort of thing.” But, there may be unstated choices and
consequences in the performance of personal/domestic service, as Julia’s story illustrates.

Julia, at the BBC, had worked 5 years as a very senior secretary to a departmental executive. This executive retired and was replaced by another who had been recruited from outside the BBC. Julia’s new boss expected an office wife who would provide domestic service, but providing this service was no guarantee of job security. She said,

I often stayed late. It would be 7:30, 8:00 late regularly if he would be here, and the phones would keep ringing; he’d still be seeing people; sometimes he’d expect me to work through lunch without actually asking me whether I minded. It was just “we will be doing this at lunchtime.” The first day that he got there he actually said “right there’s problems with the roof on my place” so could I get in touch with the landlord; the washing machine wasn’t emptying so could I get in touch with them, and then there’s this problem with the boilers so could I have a word with the gas board.

And could I, would I sort out a day in his diary when they could all come along and he’d take the morning off, and they would all come along and visit. And over the period that I worked for him, I dealt with sorting out his haircuts, the dentist, and his back problem, and various bits and pieces.

When asked why she performed these personal tasks, she responded:

Well the thing is, when you’re on a trial period, and you want to get on with all these hams, and I had actually spoken to his previous PA on several occasions, and she said that this was expected, she wouldn’t do this sort of thing, and you want the job. I liked the rest of the job what I was doing, and got on with it. (Julia, 1994 interviews, pp. 1-2)

Even though Julia performed domestic service as an office wife, the Head of Personnel had given him the authority to dismiss her if he chose to do so, which he did.

He said that my work was fine. …He actually said that I was the most efficient secretary that he’s ever had. He couldn’t fault me on my work but that he worked on his instincts and ultimately he thought that we weren’t going to jell. He said
that if he didn't jell with his secretary, then it just ends up with everybody's life being made a misery and it wouldn't work.

One evening about 8:00, when I'd sort of given him his messages, just half way out the door and he called me in and said that "this isn't going to work and I can't define it."

And the thing is...I mean I had a word with the unions and they said that I could just sit there, "he's got absolutely no grounds whatsoever" and I said "well what about this three month trial was it in writing?" and they said "of course it wasn't they can't do it." Um, but the thing is he's still Head of [the department] and when he came in they had told him that he could do that and that's what he assumed he could do. He never thought for one minute that he couldn't. And the Head of [another department] had told him that when he first started that if I wanted to, I could go and work for him, so he always had in the back of his mind that there was somewhere else that I could go.

He didn't see [dismissing me] as any form of a change in status or anything at all. It was just one secretarial job and "what's the difference whether you're doing one or doing another." He could see no problem really in it at all whether you're doing one or doing another. And I probably I could have made a big fuss about it but if I wanted to stay in the department, there wasn't anything else I could do. And if I, okay, I could have just sat on the job, but then he would have made my life a misery.

And there was no way that I could possibly have stayed in the department after that. I could possibly have left the BBC altogether because he had such power really. At the moment, he's, you know, "flavour of the month."

That job to me had everything. I will be hard pushed to find something that I like as much 'cause I always, right from the word "go," I thought it was a great job. It wasn't the same working today as it had been working for [past boss] 'cause he was just a great bloke to work for, but the actual job itself I got so much out of. (Julia, 1994 interviews, p. 3)

As an office wife, Julia performed personal/domestic tasks for her boss, but still lost the job she liked and the salary that went with this high-status secretarial position because of the power her boss wielded. Julia's statements, such as "flavour of the month," "if he didn't jell with his secretary, it wouldn't work and couldn't define it," and "I could have possibly have left the BBC altogether because he had such power"
indicates a conscious awareness of patriarchal relations in paid work as well as awareness of her subordinate and precarious situation. Julia also describes the strongest female form of resistance, that is, to leave the post under those circumstances: "I could have sat on the job, but then he would have made my life a misery." Her choice was to stay put and cope with a domineering boss or leave, which she did. Julia’s story exemplifies the knowledge secretaries have of private patriarchal relations within gendered organizations and their female strategies of resistance.

Scott (1985) suggested that acts of resistance and thoughts about it (or the meaning of it) were in constant dialogue. Human actors may conceive of a line of action that is, at the moment, either impractical or impossible. He posited that "we cannot understand everyday forms of resistance without reference to the intentions, ideas, and language of those human beings who practice it" (p. 38). However partial or imperfect the understanding of a situation, human actors consciously give meaning to their acts of resistance. Gottfried (1994) and others have argued that women workers’ strategies of resistance on an everyday level will be less readily perceptible than resistance of a more formal nature. Thus, the meaning of secretaries’ strategies of resistance constitute the elements of a female culture and the background for their behaviour. In gendered organizational contexts, open expressions of discontent may be virtually impossible because of the job risks involved.

The manner in which the boss treated his secretary was directly related to the secretaries’ forms of resistance to providing personal service. If they thought well of their boss, then the secretaries were likely to perform personal services without question. If, however, the boss’s tone or demeanour was perceived as rude or domineering, the typical forms of resistance were stated as going quiet (i.e. “get the
"ump") or slowing down their work pace after performing the personal task. Hannah, at the BBC described this female strategy of resistance.

Well I have been in a situation, um not in this job but in my previous one, where I was asked to go over across the road and get someone some cigarettes. But I think it was a deliberate ploy by my boss at the time to see how far you know, how flexible you are and how far he can push you really, and that was just his way. It did really grate on me.

I: Did you do it though?

Uh I think I did it once. And, then I think I let somebody else do it [laughs] somebody who was more willing at the time. ...Um I would probably do it but I'd bear a grudge afterward. [laughs] (Hannah, 1994 interviews, p. 15)

I: Ok what if you didn’t have that person volunteering? Would you have done it right then and there?

I probably would have but I probably would have resented it afterwards.

I: Would you have done a work slow down?

Yeah I think it’s probably cumulative you know you start to become less and less brilliant to do things if you’re treated like that. (Hannah, 1994 interviews, p. 22)

Goffman (1971) might interpret Hannah’s laughter after saying “I would probably do it but bear a grudge afterward” as communicating an attempt to save face during our interaction, but it can also indicate her scepticism over the appropriateness of this service. Her laughter can be a marker of subjectivity in the role of office wife since performing personal services is seen as part of the job. Clearly saying, “you start to become less and less brilliant if you’re treated like that” indicates her practical consciousness of private patriarchal relations in the workplace, as well as indicating some ability to resist private segregationist practices. When Zoe at Unilever was asked how she has handled rude bosses she said, “I suppose you just try and be polite, and take a deep breath, and swear once you put the phone down” [laughs] (Zoe, 1994 interviews, p. 13). Certainly her laughter in this case is used to joke about rude bosses,
but it also conveys a mode of expressing how she copes with domineering behaviour and unpleasant situations. This female strategy of resistance, and the aforementioned others can also be seen as an attempt to ensure job security.

All the secretaries participating in the study were asked about refusing to perform personal services. Angela at Unilever explained the secretaries’ dilemma.

You have to do it; you get no choice really. I’d be seen as the “bad girl” so it would be noted, and it wouldn’t go down very well. They’d know it; they’d see it, and think, “Oh, she doesn’t help out,” probably because the manager is so used to them doing it and think that they can take [secretaries] for granted, that they probably would hold it against them. (Angela, 1994 interviews, p. 15)

Here, Angela clearly indicates a conscious awareness of the consequences involved in resisting prevailing private segregationist practices. Because bosses have been able to allocate gendered tasks in the past, challenging the status quo in the present could threaten a secretary’s job.

At each interview, I recounted my story of working as a secretary at the Marks & Spencer headquarters when a boss said, “Oh, by the way, on your lunch hour would you fetch my holiday pictures at Boots.” The answer he received from me was a very direct “No. I’m sorry I won’t have time to do that today.” I expected the older secretaries to express more resignation and timidity in their responses than younger secretaries to the question of how they would have handled the situation because of what Kanter (1977) had discovered. However, the more mature secretaries—45 years of age or older—said that they too would have been direct in telling the manager “No.” One 51-year-old university secretary told me that she would have said, “Sorry, no; I’m not going to do that.”

Through training in those days, if you were told by a boss to [do] XYZ, you do it. When I was younger, I would have, but not now. Women’s attitudes have changed. I think that, with the realisation that you’re doing a very good job and that
your job is central to what's going on in the organization, that you realise that you are as important as the boss is. You realise that you're an equal and expect to be treated as such. (Martha, 1994 interviews, p. 3)

Another university secretary said:

I did personal things but didn't like it. Things like dry cleaners, getting quotes for haircuts. I was quite submissive 20 years ago. Perhaps I've changed but can't pinpoint the time when my ideas changed. Now I think secretaries are equals in the smooth running of an organization and I would say "no". (Jill, 1994 interviews p. 3)

Both Martha and Jill considered “fetching” a manager’s holiday pictures on their personal time was an unnecessary part of secretaries’ duties unlike in previous years. Their statements suggest that spatial distance, or time and maturity are factors in shaping current attitudes. Since Martha was in her 34th year of secretarial work, she did not fear losing her job by saying “No.” Like the other university secretaries, however, Martha also perceived secretarial work in a university setting was less stressful than in a competitive business setting. These secretaries also said that university lecturers were less inclined to allocate personal/domestic services to secretaries in order to demonstrate their power.

Providing personal or domestic service was related to secretaries’ attempts at ensuring job security but it was also related to the elements of a female culture. These results clearly support those from studies that have examined female strategies of resistance. Female strategies of resistance have been shown to be mainly non-confrontational or non-compliance. They take the form of accepting one’s place, silence or withdrawal, coping with the situation, or laughing about it (Davies, 1992; Lee-Treweek, 1997; Mackay, 1989; Shapiro-Perl, 1984). The results also support research that has examined resistance strategies used by those in powerless positions (Jermier, Knights, & Nord, 1994; Knights & Willmott, 1985; Scott, 1985, 1990). Like
other pink-collar workers, secretaries cope with dilemmas in ways that give their life
its shape and meaning. Secretaries would be more likely to perform personal/domestic
tasks, rather than openly resisting it, out of a sense of love or duty because they value
harmony, perceiving that their actions provide a sense of community (Bernard, 1981).

I asked Mary at Unilever about whether she would say “no” to her boss’s
requests for personal service. After an extended pause she said:

I don’t think so. No. No.

I think I’ve always been brought up to sort of be as
accommodating as possible and, you know, to just do
whatever he says...I think yes. I think I always have, since
childhood, you know sort of, even if you were given
something you didn’t like, to say, “Thank you very much it’s
lovely,” you know. [laughs] I think it’s just an extension of
that, you know? So, no, I wouldn’t say “no.” (Mary, 1994
interviews, p. 14)

Here, Mary speaks discursively about gender role socialization. If secretaries like
their bosses, then they would provide personal services as an office wife without
resistance, not even claiming overtime pay. Mary’s following story illustrates this
point.

Well, bearing in mind that...I don’t know whether he’s told
you but he’s off to watch the cricket in Barbados on
Thursday. The cricket is on there so he’s off for three weeks.
I’ve spent hours booking this holiday because it’s not a
package in terms of booking flights, booking all his internals,
and he’s staying in half a dozen hotels over there, getting his
visas, getting everything. [laughs]

If I work ‘til seven every evening, which I don’t get
paid for so that’s two hours overtime every day, so
presumably I catch up then. [laughs] So then, yeah, I’d
trundle off and go get his brochures for his holidays...’cause
I think he’s wonderful! [laughs] (Mary, 1994 interviews, pp.
6-7)

The basic dimension of personal service to others within the female culture is
expressed by Mary’s laughter. Her laughter reveals how she copes with the irony of
the situation after saying, “If I work ‘til seven every evening, I catch up then.” But her laughter after saying, “I’ve been brought up to be as accommodating as possible” and “I think he’s wonderful!” also reveals the love and/or duty ethos and the sense of personalised support to others that is common in the secretary as office wife. In the female culture, women are socialized for a servile role and trained to “take care of” loved ones. Like the work of housewife, the work of the secretary as office wife is never done. Mary stated admiration for her boss. She coped with her workplace situation and did not claim for overtime—even though she had to work late in order to complete business-related tasks due to the time spent in providing these personal services. The co-mingling of values and action by the secretaries derived from the female culture tends to reverberate back on societies’ assumption of “what good woman could put a ceiling or price on love?” that justifies and reproduces private segregationist practices in paid work.

Collinson and Knights (1986) also found that clerical workers internalised assumptions used to justify gender segregation:

In the context of highly subordinated, poorly paid positions, which provide few opportunities to “advance,” indifference, as a defense mode of managing to retain a measure of dignity in the face of its erosion, is all pervasive within contemporary work situations. (p. 161)

The results from interviews with secretaries indicate that their orientation to work was in terms of an office wife. They suggested that their behaviour was shaped by the mindset of, “go along, to get along.” Located as subordinates in gendered organizations, their forms of resistance are shown to be female strategies waged on an individual, rather than collective level. Coping with any given situation and keeping silent about it was the driving force behind secretaries’ acceptance of the practice of
face-to-face dictation and performing personal/domestic services for individual bosses.

The negotiated relationship between secretaries and their bosses in terms of how the boss treated the secretary was a significant factor in the secretaries’ strategies of resistance to providing personal service. For example, when Zoe at Unilever was asked whether her boss would expect her to fetch his holiday pictures on her lunch break, she replied:

No. Although if he did, I wouldn’t mind because um he’s such an easy going person anyway, you don’t. I wouldn’t mind doing things like that for him. If he was the type of person to be saying “look go out and...” [tone of voice indicating an order] do you know what I mean?, saying that type of thing all the time, then yeah you get a bit more resentful don’t you. And you think “No. I’m not gonna go and do that” but I mean he’s so good anyway and so relaxed then I think the more he’s like that the more you tend to want to do for them so um I mean I wouldn’t mind doing things like that for him at all. (Zoe, 1994 interviews, p. 4)

Hillary, at Channel Four described the precarious nature of office wife behaviour.

I’m not really an office wife. I mean that would be taking it too far. I’ve never been that close to my boss, ever. And I think if you are, it get’s quite dangerous. ...I mean I think if you know someone else’s private life or whatever um well to that extent, I think it’s better to keep work and home reasonably separate and not mix the two too much.

There’s no way I’d go and buy [my boss’ wife] a birthday present, card or whatever which I think is outrageous! Um a job came up last year and they suggested that would be a possibility, and I said “in that case there’s no way” I’m not doing the job because if somebody can’t treat their wife properly then how are they going to treat their secretary? I’m not taking on responsibility that’s not part of the job, of my job specifications as far as I’m concerned. (Hillary, 1994 interviews, p. 3)

While Hillary stated that providing personal services was “not part of the job,” she also said:

Oh I do the occasional personal letter but not much beyond that. ...[Saying no] depends on how busy I was, and if it
means that he could get on with something else, I would do personal stuff, but I'm not desperate to do it. (p. 2)

Depending on the tone of the request, Hillary said that she would fetch her current boss's holiday pictures on her lunch hour—if asked politely—because she likes him.

The secretaries’ willing choice to provide personal/domestic service actively perpetuates private patriarchal relations in the workplace. When secretaries choose an orientation to work as an office wife, and then perform their daily activities centred on their boss's needs, they reproduce conditions for their own subordination. However, the capacity for transforming these relations is also embedded within secretaries’ actions. Providing service in order to make the lives of others' easier makes a valuable contribution in humanising increasingly dehumanised workplaces. It provides a sense of community, or social solidarity. The metaphor of a “crazy quilt” (Balbo, 1987) can be used to describe the patching and piecing activities of secretaries—their organizational, intellectual, technical, and emotional skills—which also makes a valuable contribution to the smooth-running of the organization overall. The activities of these secretaries included “the endless sorting out and putting together of available resources, the minute coping strategies, the overall aim of survival, and the imagination, ingenuity and amount of work that these require” (Balbo, 1987, p. 45). Annette at the BBC said, “I hate it when people treat you like you’re stupid. ...My role is devalued in the organization, but not in my department with my boss” (Annette, 1994 interviews, p. 7). This statement seems to suggest that the work of secretaries is complex and involves privately negotiated emotional service to individual bosses. However, this “crazy quilt” of activities are not acknowledged in gendered organizational cultures nor asserted by the secretaries themselves.
For example, threatening to quit can be used as an effective strategy of resistance to subordination by mid- to senior-level secretaries just like claiming overtime pay for work of a private nature that interfered with or took priority over their work tasks. Yet, Jane, who worked at Rank Xerox for seven years, "never claimed overtime because I'm early...but nine times out of ten my boss will say 'oh, can you do this for me?' and I will do it regardless. But I don't claim overtime for it" (Jane, 1994 interviews, p. 22). While Jane, like most secretaries, did not claim overtime pay for services rendered, she used the power of the threat to quit to make the point about being valuable. After returning from maternity leave, Jane found it "very tough" to move from working full time to working a job share, despite her years of loyalty to the company. A secretarial job-share post had been advertised internally, but a personnel representative said to her, "Oh, it's going to be very difficult, we don't think we can find someone." She then replied, "Oh, in that case, I am not coming back" (Jane, 1994 interviews, p. 4). Two days later, she received a phone call telling her that they had found someone with whom she could job share. None of this should imply that using the threat of the power to quit is particularly popular with secretaries. Indeed it was frequently perceived as a last resort.

Annette, at the BBC, also described using the power of the threat to quit to her advantage, but like Jane, would not claim overtime. "I work very long hours and I don't claim overtime. My husband is getting cross with me [but] I don't believe in making waves unless I have to" (Annette, 1994 interviews, p. 8). In 1992, Annette was asked what she liked least about her job to which she immediately replied: "Where I have to park...I'm arguing about that one now. I travel 110 miles round trip and I think I should be able to park in the multi-story" (Annette, 1992 interviews, p. 14). She felt that she deserved such parking privileges when considering her four
years of service and status as a high-ranking secretary. In 1994, when asked how things had changed over the previous two years, Annette proudly told the story of how she had won her demand for a covered parking space, and said: “I would leave if they didn’t give it to me. It’s the principle of the thing!” (Annette, 1994 interviews, p. 1). She used the power to quit to force the recognition of her valuable service, and obtained a covered parking spot that is symbolic of status.

To resist control (by openly challenging segregationist practices) could be damaging to secretaries’ job security; but, in any case, for most secretaries they did not challenge practices that, although providing “office wife” services, brought them personal satisfaction? The results from interviews with these secretaries indicate that harmony and a sense of community were more important than asserting their role (by refusing to provide services or claiming overtime compensation) and potentially disrupting the smooth running of a department or the organization. As active agents, the secretaries’ female non-confrontational strategies of resistance to private segregationist practices also contributed to their own subordination, which has the unintended consequence of maintaining the gender stereotype surrounding the occupation.

**Conclusion**

The role of the secretary as office wife—subordinate and deferential—was shown to exist within and across the case study organizations. These findings support and go beyond other contemporary studies of secretaries (Pringle, 1989b; Truss, 1994; Truss, et al., 1995) when factoring in their labours of love and the nature of their forms of resistance as office wives. This chapter has shown the “office wife” orientation to work as a normal undramatic feature of secretaries’ everyday work life in these organizations. Performing hostess service, face-to-face shorthand dictation,
and personal/domestic service reveals that secretaries have knowledgeable understanding of the basis of their bosses' personal power in paid work, but also reveals how they actively reinforce that power. Yet, in the context of gendered workplace settings, power is a two-way process. Some secretaries were shown to directly question the boss's personal power through their autonomy of action and individual strategies of resistance to private segregationist practices. The account of secretaries' orientation to work provides the basis for arguing that the unintended and ironical consequence of purposeful action as an office wife is to actively perpetuate the conditions which shape their status and limit their opportunities to move beyond a pink-collar occupation.

Both managers and secretaries express that the key element in secretarial work is to maintain human relations. As an office wife, secretaries' activities focus on supporting, cultivating, and maintaining human relations. In the process, they provide a sense of community that tends to humanise the workplace. But this chapter has also shown how the allocation of gendered work tasks is a segregationist practice that devalues and constrains the status of secretaries. The results suggest that secretaries' emotional labours of love reinforce privately negotiated practices that impinge on the acknowledgement of mental, managerial, and technical skills. New office technology could, however, act as an organizational conduit for improving the status of secretaries. Contemporary secretaries possess creative expertise that involves a complex mixture of technical, as well as emotional skills. Yet, a strong theme of private patriarchal relations within the structure of paid employment was captured in the construct of the secretary as office wife.

For secretaries to define themselves and be defined by others in terms of an "office wife," who assumes responsibility for the boss's personal life, sets up and
maintains private patriarchal relations in the workplace. On the other hand, managing the office and "being bossy" to the boss also indicates a dialectic of control where secretaries are able to make higher-ranking managers dependent upon them. In this way, sociologists can view patriarchal relations as both enabling and constraining. The secretaries' actions in providing hostess services, face-to-face shorthand dictation, and personal/domestic services reflect an adaptation to subordination, yet also reflect a willing choice in the work effort; and thereby, paradoxically, actively reproduces the conditions of that subordination. Career opportunities gained from mastering communication technology are overlooked when performing the role as subordinate, stereotypical office wife whose forms of resistance are waged on an individual level. As a consequence, private patriarchal relations within the structure of paid employment are reproduced and maintained by bosses and secretaries.

The secretaries' own actions have shown how they actively construct their subjective identities and working lives within a gendered context of organizational constraint. While the activities of secretaries may reinforce their subjective identity, their actions also reinforce the assumption that one of the secretary's roles is that of an office wife and an "appendage" to the boss (Golding, 1986; Truss et al., 1995). In other words, as knowledgeable agents, the secretaries' activities reinforce the gender stereotype surrounding the occupation. When secretaries abide by the rules of subordination within gendered organizational hierarchies that serve the interests of bosses, it captures the day-to-day negotiation and production of power. That is, it captures both private and public patriarchal relations in the structure of paid work.

Weber (1968) suggested that a rational bureaucracy could encroach on individual freedoms through the means of exercising authority over human beings that could lead to the dehumanisation of modern society. In gendered organizational
hierarchies, the value of the secretary as office wife lies in the ability to provide a sense of community, while performing works of service in an effort to make the lives of others easier. Their acts of kindness, compassion, intuition, and service tends to humanise the overall work environment. However, when secretarial work continues to be associated with women’s “natural” work it devalues the intellectual and emotional skills needed in this occupation.
CHAPTER VIII

Conclusions

"That we should set aside all previous habits of thought, see through and break down the mental barriers which these habits have set along the horizons of our thinking, and in full intellectual freedom proceed to lay hold on those genuine philosophical problems still awaiting completely fresh formulation which the liberated horizons on all sides disclose to us. These are hard demands. Yet nothing less is required."

Edmund Husserl, 1958, p. 43

The goal of this study is to explicate how the process of vertical occupational segregation by sex is maintained. The focus has been on secretaries; their opportunities for advancement beyond pink-collar work and their role within organizations. A theme has been to what extent two dominant paradigms within the sociology of occupational segregation—the dual-systems model and human capital/socialization perspectives—each explain the phenomenon. The dual-systems model views occupational segregation as an articulation between capitalism and patriarchy and the pattern of women’s labour force participation as the result of material constraints, whereas the human capital/socialization theorists view occupational segregation as the result of women’s personal preferences for undemanding “jobs” due to a central focus on marriage and family.

The debate over choice versus constraint has been ongoing for many years in sociology. But economic and social forces do not work alone to determine how women have been confined to pink-collar occupations. Political factors also have an impact on the structuring of the sexual division of labour and influence women’s occupational choices. We cannot, however, eliminate individual choice from the picture no matter how much organizational, political, and ideological forces impact on
behaviour. Exploration of how occupational segregation is maintained is more nuanced than an “either/or” analysis. It raises theoretical, methodological, and substantive issues. The relationship between the underlying occupational structures and the intentional conduct of individuals' form a meaningful duality. In other words, structures of domination are not only the medium, but also the outcome of active agents who produce and reproduce patriarchal relations in structures of paid employment. How the process of vertical occupational segregation is maintained within organizations cannot be grasped fully unless the interdependence of structural constraints and agency (i.e. individual actions) is taken as a starting point, and is followed up with theoretically informed case studies.

In presenting the results from this case study of Opportunity 2000 organizations, I discussed in general the political and organizational context to show how the case study employers' career development practices impact on secretaries' opportunities and desires for advancement. I turned more specifically to Walby's (1986, 1989, 1990) theory of occupational segregation to show how gender politics and the unique characteristics of segregationist practices within and across the case study organizations not only determine opportunities for advancement, but continue to shape a gendered structure of paid employment. I then used Acker (1990), Epstein (1990), Ramsay and Parker (1992), and Witz and Savage's (1992) description of gendered organizational cultures as “webs of meaning” to further explain the connection between the structure of formal organizations and gendered hierarchies that situate secretaries' activities in the office. What this study suggests is that the role of culture (i.e. organizational culture and society's wider normative cultural environment) should be weighed more heavily in understanding occupational segregation than is presented by Walby. If the historic, socially accepted norms and
rules of behaviour within gendered organizational hierarchies begin to change for secretaries, then structural change at the very foundation of equal opportunity organizations is possible. But in conducting this multiple-case study, I have shown that secretaries adhere to the tacit organizational rules of subordination and perform their role as an “office wife” which represents their membership in a female culture. I have argued that private patriarchal relations exist in workplaces between secretaries and bosses, and when combined with public patriarchal relations, or collective segregationist practices, result in a “pink-collar wall” to secretarial advancement. The metaphor of a pink-collar wall far more accurately describes the barriers that secretaries continue to face than the metaphor of a glass ceiling because for secretaries, this wall of opportunity is so virtually impenetrable that it constitutes a mosaic of barriers. Even if secretaries wanted to train for a position in management, their opportunities are restricted by stereotypical assumptions about secretaries, segregationist career development practices within organizations, and the actions of secretaries themselves.

While Walby’s (1986, 1989, 1990) theory is useful, the broader implications of this study suggest that we must take into account the experiences and actions of women from their own perspective and not just consider the material circumstances within which they are embedded. Labour market outcomes must be regarded as being shaped by both choice and constraint (Crompton, 1996, 1997; Crompton & Harris, 1998a; Crompton & LeFeuvre, 1992; Crompton & Sanderson, 1990). Unless we do this, sociological theory runs the risk of being deterministic and of viewing women as victims at the mercy of social forces. The cross-national work on secretaries conducted by Truss (1994) and Truss, Goffee and Jones (1995) points to both national institutions and cultural variations in the role and activities of secretaries in paid work.
environments. While they too discovered that promotion out of secretarial work was rare, their evidence from France, Germany and England also points to the role of the secretary as agent, and that when combined with influences of national institutions, shapes aggregate patterns of women’s employment.

I contribute further to the discussion of why some secretaries prefer secretarial work to moving beyond this pink-collar occupation. Questions of “would you agree that you are an office wife” and “could you do your boss’s job” had astonishing analytic power. Here, I was able to further develop Hakim’s (1991, 1995) preference theory to explain the secretaries’ rationale for choosing work that can provide a balance between the work life and the out-of-work life. I have expanded this perspective by showing that the main reason that secretaries in this study remain in a secretarial occupation on a full-time basis is only partly to do with marriage and family being their central life focus. Instead, what emerged from the data was the notion of “balance,” that is that secretarial work is perceived to be more of an occupation than a life’s preoccupation compared with the secretaries’ perceptions of careers in management.

Thus, occupational segregation is both a career phenomenon and, in a somewhat different way, a working life phenomenon: “career” and “work” are contingently, rather than necessarily related. To understand the ongoing process of occupational segregation requires an appreciation of both the connections and the disconnections between these two dimensions of the employment relation. I have shown that Bernard’s (1981) description of a female culture and her concept of pink-collar workers, together with Pringle’s (1989b) concept of the “office wife,” further explains the connection. As office wives, the case study secretaries’ orientation to work is to meet human needs that stem from their membership in a female culture. It
is important to recognise and value the importance of the female culture because “servicing” in the form of providing emotional and managerial support humanises dehumanised workplaces, and as Balbo (1987) noted, holds modern society together by building community. My work has revealed that there is something more important in secretaries’ actions than career advancement or the conditions of work.

Walby (1986, 1989, 1990, 1997) has expanded sociological knowledge about occupational segregation because she theorises more than one causal base. Her theory outlines six autonomous, yet interacting structures and the patriarchal relations among and between them that act to constrain women’s occupational choices. She argues that this process has led to aggregate labour force patterns of occupational segregation. However, her theory of patriarchy mostly omits the recognition that women possess the capacity to perpetuate and/or transform patriarchal relations in paid work. I have used Walby’s theory as a framework in designing this study but also included the implications of Giddens’ (1976, 1979, 1984) structuration theory. This study therefore examines those patriarchal relations within paid work sites from the perspective of secretaries, observations of their workplace environments, and documents related to their structured opportunities for career advancement.

The case study approach was used to infer broader conceptual and theoretical statements in analysing these relations using three methods of research. I have used this methodology to examine patriarchal relations in paid work sites (comprised of human interactions) and how these relations interact with and influence individual secretaries’ rational behaviour within the political and organizational context of Opportunity 2000. Thus, this study reveals the deep realities of social life and adds meaning to the “choice versus constraint” debates. It provides insight into women’s
practical engagement in maintaining the process of occupational segregation while being concurrently sensitive to the constraints placed on their lives.

In the following sections I will present a review of this study’s main findings and argue that secretaries are conscious, reflexive actors whose behaviour tends to reproduce conditions of subordination. Even though public patriarchal relations are structured in paid work and private patriarchal relations structured within the case study organizations, these secretaries have shown their agency in maintaining these relations. First, while their choice of secretarial work was between limited possibilities, many had alternative options and still chose a pink-collar occupation. Second, these secretaries also derive pleasurable elements from their “office wife” role—no matter how those choices, activities, situations, or conditions may be objectively described or criticised. For example, secretaries who perform their role as an office wife, such as Mary from Unilever, Yvonne from Rank Xerox, and Annette from the BBC, describe their knowledge of patriarchal relations and their participatory actions in the circuit of reproduction of segregationist practices. Even Hillary from Channel Four who disagreed that her role was that of an office wife, said that she would willingly fetch her managers’ holiday photographs on her lunch hour, because she “liked” him. The personal may be political as the radical feminists claim, however this secretary among others has indicated pleasure in her form of resistance to private segregationist practices such as making the “worst cup of tea” so that her boss would not expect this hostess service of her in the future. Still, the most common form of resistance to the allocation of hostess/domestic tasks was described as “getting the ‘ump,” or quiet, non-confrontational withdrawal which unintentionally reproduces patriarchal practices. Thus, the results of this study are compelling for theoretical reasons and useful in the extension of Walby’s rather deterministic view and Hakim’s
essentialist view of occupational segregation. This study can help to solidify an understanding of the duality of structure as proposed by Giddens that captures the combination of structure and agency for an analysis of how vertical occupational segregation is maintained.

Figure 4 provides a graphic presentation of the case study results. It illustrates my conceptual framework showing how structural constraints and individual actions are contingently related in the creation of a "pink-collar wall" for secretarial advancement. For pink-collar workers, the gendered structures of culture, politics, and paid work constitute a mosaic of barriers composed of interweaving social forces and human action. The career boundaries or barriers may be relatively impermeable, but the work boundaries or barriers are of different thicknesses and strengths and need to be patched, repaired, moved or shattered in order to live a working life. Thus, gendered hierarchical organizations, and gendered politics, are not solely the culprits. Vertical segregation within organizations also involves the active, knowledgeable choices and everyday behaviour of women as agents, as well as structural or ideological constraints that reproduce the features of public and private patriarchal relations in paid employment.
Figure 4. Conceptual framework showing how structure and agency are contingently related in the creation of a pink-collar wall for secretarial advancement, thereby maintaining vertical occupational segregation.
The Interaction Between Structure and Agency

Gendered Politics

The actions of the British government to opt out of the Social Charter for European integration in late 1991 and instead to endorse Opportunity 2000 represent the political and organizational context of this study. Gender politics and the collective interests of employers govern secretaries' opportunities for advancement beyond pink-collar work. Rubery and Fagan (1995), Rubery et al. (1998), Walby (1997), and Bellin and Miller's (1990) work reminds us that political institutions exert an autonomous influence on work structures. This notion is consistent with Balbo (1987) who argues that social policies have a major impact on women's lives. Therefore, we must view work as part of a broader ensemble of social relations that help account for secretaries experience of their jobs, their work situation, and economic opportunities. The case study employers are some of Britain’s largest and they could have a major impact on labour practices. However, the relationship between the financial cost to employers and the government’s support of the interests of Opportunity 2000 employers affects the training and career development practices offered to secretaries. Opportunity 2000 has little manifest connection to equal opportunity employment policies. But the hypothetical equality of outcome generated by Opportunity 2000 suggests that advancement into better paying jobs is available to secretaries working in these organizations.

In 1992 Britain was the only nation of the European Community that opposed the Social Charter on the grounds of the “estimated” cost to employers and a desire to maintain their national sovereignty. When the British government’s opposition to the Social Charter combines with the failure of a majority of Opportunity 2000 organizations to provide training and career development opportunities for secretaries,
the result has been a severe restriction on women's opportunities to move beyond pink-collar work. The gendered political context surrounding Opportunity 2000 also reinforces society's cultural assumptions that women should opt for pink-collar work. To avoid the possibility of increased costs that might stem from the European Social Charter has a peculiar kind of economic logic at the expense of British workers—especially women. On the one hand, very few of the benefits introduced under the Social Charter would have affected the case study companies, but on the other hand, a full implementation of the aims of Opportunity 2000 would have had more major repercussions. Thus, the voluntary, self-monitoring nature of the Opportunity 2000 initiative placated the projected labour force concerns of employers, while establishing these member organizations as equal opportunity employers. But, the public relations rhetoric surrounding Opportunity 2000 only pays "lip service" to the barriers that the majority of working women face.

In Chapter 4 the data shows that the collective members of Opportunity 2000 do not address secretaries' issues surrounding training and career development practices. The results from reanalysis of Opportunity 2000's third-year statistical report (Opportunity 2000, 1994) reveal that organizational career development practices contradict their members' stated objectives to create a more participatory and productive work environment for women by increasing their opportunities for advancement from all levels. For instance, the data indicates that more than half of the 275 Opportunity 2000 member firms did not even respond to the question of whether or not they provide opportunities for secretaries to develop career paths beyond secretarial work. Further, the use of graphics in the report was designed cleverly to show favourable results when members' practices were not widespread or only made accessible to "eligible" women. For example, of those 41 organizations that did
respond to the question on career development practices for secretaries, in 23 organizations less than 10% of women took advantage of this opportunity. The report also indicates that 75% of women had developed career paths from secretarial ranks, but within only seven organizations. This data raises concerns that the manner in which these member organizations control the dissemination of information on Opportunity 2000 reflects a relative lack of action to increase "eligible" women's career opportunities.

The interview data with secretaries and managers at the BBC, Rank Xerox, Unilever and Channel Four also indicates that Opportunity 2000 is primarily a public relations effort. None of the secretaries and only two managers had any knowledge about Opportunity 2000 or their organization's involvement in it. The statements of intended action made by the case study senior executives toward enhancing career advancement opportunities for all women do not match the experiences of their secretaries and managers, especially in the context of organizational restructuring and compulsory redundancies (see the following section). As Sue at the BBC said, "How can you increase targets when in a contracting organization?" The observational data in Chapter 4 also describes the features of the case study organizational cultures in terms of gendered signs and symbols that comprise the work context and the rules for gendered behaviour that secretaries employ in their interactions with managers and others. There were no mission statements or signs of these organizations being equal opportunity employers. There were distinct differences in the size, décor, and space of work areas for bosses and secretaries. Gendered dress codes and segregated dining times add to the observations and interpretations that the organizational cultures within Unilever, the BBC, Rank Xerox and Channel Four can be seen to be reproducing features of patriarchal systems that situate the activities of secretaries.
Lastly, policies or practices on training and career development were not widespread and thus limited secretaries' career options to pink-collar work.

**Paid Work Practices**

The gendered organizational cultures within and across the case study organizations are structured towards maintaining the dominant hierarchical positions of male managers, regardless of their Opportunity 2000 rhetoric. As a positive action initiative, Opportunity 2000 provides the senior executives across the case-study organizations with the collective power to facilitate career advancement opportunities for their mid- to senior-level secretaries. However, as shown in Chapter 5, this power has not been invoked; rather, these executives have used their participation as a public relations medium while maintaining traditional (i.e. segregationist) practices of recruitment, promotion, and training. For example, as a result of Producer's Choice and organizational restructuring, the BBC has focused on ways to decrease secretaries' opportunities for advancement as well as recruiting potential managers from outside the organization, rather than developing talent from within the organization. There was no Unilever Opportunity 2000 goals or action plan, and they stated that they recruited potential managers from a pool of graduates from elite universities. This organization provided secretaries with no opportunities to advance their careers beyond pink-collar work as they are virtually excluded from participating in the Management Development Training Scheme. Rank Xerox offers the most opportunities for secretaries to move beyond secretarial work, but these are limited to managing a high street copy shop, rather than moving into the management cadre.

The case study senior executives were shown to control effectively the dissemination of Opportunity 2000 information, and because they had the power to
monitor their own goals and actions, set targets and training for women already in full-time management positions. Even Channel Four, who specified secretaries in their goals and action plans, compiled no statistics on their secretaries' career development activities, nor could they provide any examples of secretaries who were able to move up within this organizational hierarchy. As a result of pressure from the Board of Governors, the BBC decreased financial budgets that had been designated to promote equal opportunity. Further, as a result of organizational restructuring in all the case study organizations, competition had increased among secretaries for scarce job opportunities to advance beyond secretarial work. Within these gendered organizational cultures, segregationist practices continued to deny secretaries access to higher paying, higher status positions.

However, as active and knowledgeable agents, secretaries also minimised the strain occasioned by the perceived disparagement of their status. Statements such as: “It’s the corporate culture and as long as there are men like my manager, it won’t change” or “It’s just the way of the world isn’t it?” indicate this minimising strategy. These secretaries evolved a number of meanings for upward mobility to mitigate the prevailing rules of subordination. They indicated a preference for secretarial work because of the implicit demands of long hours and weekend work that was seen as interfering with balancing work and their personal lives. Thus, as Annette at the BBC said: “There’s more to life than work,” and this shared sentiment was also a way to rationalise their choice to remain in a secretarial role.

The dominant activity at the BBC, Unilever, Rank Xerox, and Channel Four organizations was shown to be a response to competitive problems and “doing the old better” (Lawler, 1990, p. 73). The traditional top-down bureaucratic approach popular in the 1950s is clearly evident within the case study organizations. Because of this
approach, little is done to change the basic way organizations are managed—by men
who have the authority to structure career development practices. As Gross (1968)
might suggest, the more things change, the more they stay the same. The case study
senior executives seem to be paying more attention to the cost effectiveness of their
companies than increasing career development opportunities for women working at all
levels within the organization. Arguably paying attention to costs is their job.
However, because these employers are so large and influential, they set the tone for
human resources practices in other British organizations. Cost reduction efforts, such
as those at the BBC, focus on restructuring bureaucracies perceived as having too
many levels of management and too many support staff. The typical response to a cost
effectiveness problem across the case study organizations was to cut massive numbers
of employees and apply pressure on the remaining secretaries throughout their
organizations to accept more responsibility, but without providing career development
opportunities.

The outcome of efforts to maintain traditionally structured corporate cultures
and traditional career development practices is a lack of questioning of the
fundamental nature of gendered bureaucracies. If anything, the manner in which cost
reductions are handled reinforces traditional segregationist practices. Documentation
from the BBC, for instance, clearly stated an intention to cut career paths that would
enable secretaries to move beyond pink-collar work. With the bureaucratic focus on
cost reductions, rather than on improving equal opportunities, top managers gain more
effective control over female labour from their dependency and confinement to
secretarial work.

However, developing the career potential of women as skilled mental workers
is forecast as crucial in the 21st century (Drucker, 1992a, 1992b; Hammond & Holton,
Women are seen to possess in greater abundance than men qualities necessary in an increasingly service-based economy. In many organizations today, the role of the secretary is one of a multi-skilled worker who very often holds a tacit position of power through association with bosses in powerful positions. The job of the secretary is now very mentally labour intensive, utilising emotional, technical, and managerial skills that are indispensable in this age of information (Caissey, 1990). The secretarial labour process involves unravelling computer software complexities, and accessing and managing important records and information. Secretaries' familiarity with key people within an organization makes them "a repository of organizational knowledge and expertise" (Webster, 1990, p. 66). As multi-skilled workers, secretaries are assuming more of the responsibilities traditionally reserved for managers, yet they are overlooked when it comes to career development practices. If knowledge is power, then restricting access to information about Opportunity 2000 effectively controls secretaries' ability to wield it should they choose to do so. Rather, efforts focus on increasing specialisation within the secretarial role.

Across the case study organizations, the secretaries' job descriptions were vague, outdated, or even non-existent. In-house career-development practices, such as training to transfer from a staff to a line appointment, or to develop a unique career path beyond pink-collar work, was also virtually non-existent. Hence, the results are consistent with Balbo's (1987) notion that a "crazy quilt" of emotional and managerial skills exists in secretarial work, but within these gendered case study organizations these skills are not fully recognised—except by individual bosses. The value of secretarial skills and their role within organizations remains shaped and confounded by gender, as the "office wife" orientation to work clearly demonstrates.
The Secretary as Agent

By focusing on the patriarchal relations of politics, paid work, and culture to enhance understanding of how vertical occupational segregation is maintained, this study on secretaries indicates a combination of constraint and choice. The focus on culture is more important in theorising occupational segregation than is suggested by Walby's analysis (1986, 1989, 1990). Thus, in Chapter 6, I have refocused Walby's perspective by examining the career choices of secretaries stemming from the process of gender role socialization empowered by parents, peers, and gender based educational institutions which shaped and prepared the case study secretaries for subordinate roles as pink-collar workers. However, many secretaries who had alternative choices still chose a secretarial occupation. Staying within secretarial work was related to time for personal lives as Siltanen (1994) also found, and because they took pride in performing technical and emotional/interpersonal tasks.

Chapters 6 and 7 show that the choices and actions of the case study and university secretaries reflect the norms of a female culture in society's wider cultural environment. This study is consistent with Benet's (1972) early work on secretaries and Pringle's (1989b) later work which both suggest that the more elevated the executive, the more closely his or her secretary approximated the role of a wife. The characteristic duties of the secretary as "office wife" include performing hostess services, being caring and supportive, and providing personal/domestic services. These are also the tacit organizational rules for subordination. Thus, the rules for being a good secretary, like a good woman or wife, include focusing on the details, doing them perfectly, giving credit upwards, and keeping quiet about it. Consciously articulated, the "office wife" is both a label that these secretaries use to organise their
day-to-day interactions with and activities for bosses, and one they apply to themselves as a way of making sense of their activities. But, when adhering to private segregationist practices, secretaries undermine collective efforts to improve the status of secretaries. Neither the university secretaries nor the case study secretaries, however, were aware of any secretarial associations or of collective efforts to enhance their status as a group. These secretaries mostly work in non-unionised environments where access to information about secretarial associations is limited, and as Collinson and Knights (1986) suggest, when this is combined with a preoccupation with individual security, collective strategies of resistance are precluded.

In the role of “office wife,” the case study secretaries willingly provide personal services for bosses out of a sense of love and/or duty. They display the elements of a female culture, which is consistent with Bernard’s (1981) and Howe’s (1977) characterisation of pink-collar workers. Both the case study secretaries and the university secretaries consider their actions to be in the interest of cultivating human relations and providing a sense of community in office environments. However, operating in the role of “office wife” serves to maintain the gendered identity of secretaries as a group. According to the love and/or duty ethos, the qualities of a “good woman” are encapsulated in the secretarial role, reflecting the gender stereotyping of this pink-collar occupation. However, it must be considered that the structure of organizations plays a powerful role in shaping the behaviour of secretaries in the workplace. As Wharton (1991) suggests, workplace relations are both a motivator of individual action and a property of structural position.

In the absence of written job descriptions, the informal job description of any given secretary across the case-study organizations is largely a product of the individual relationship between a boss and secretary, just as the “job description” for a
marriage is personally negotiated. The fluid boundaries of secretarial work reinforce
the power and control available to individual bosses and are legitimated by their
position in gendered organizational hierarchies. Julia's story at the BBC drives this
point home (see Chapter 7). Despite being described as the most efficient secretary he
ever had, Julia's new boss had the final authority to dismiss her, and as she said, he
could do so because "he's flavour of the month."

Men managers, more than women, assigned personal/domestic tasks to
secretaries which can be characterised as a mix of intended and unintended action to
maintain their privileged position. In this study, the private patriarchal relations of the
boss-secretary relationship is presented as an archetype of traditional workplace
relations and a means of reinforcing private segregationist practices that control
female labour in the structure of paid employment. The case-study organizations are
structured to provide managers with the power to determine secretaries' individual job
requirements, which are demarcated by gender. The private workplace relationship
between a manager and a secretary is negotiated in a gendered organizational context
in which bosses historically have been able to allocate tasks of a personal/domestic
nature. However, this negotiation is also indicative of the dialectic of control. Even
though the secretaries' non-confrontational strategies of resistance are waged on an
individual basis, for example "going quiet" or making the worst cup of coffee or tea
and then laughing about it later, they still counter the conventional assumption that
secretaries are merely appendages, unskilled, and of little overall value to the
organization or boss. But, these female strategies of resistance also work against
collective struggles for secretarial recognition, such that their status is not as high as
the responsibilities of their position generally warrant. Consequently, opportunities for
career advancement beyond secretarial work are limited by a combination of both
public and private segregationist workplace practices and by the actions of the secretaries themselves. The workplace behaviour of secretaries and their female forms of resistance to tacit organizational rules for subordination could also be seen as the outcome of adhering to these rules within gendered organizational cultures. The reality of redundancies due to organizational restructuring compounds the forms of resistance secretaries are willing to practice. Too much resistance, of course, could be risky for job security and career advancement. As Kanter (1977) previously noted,

Women in low-mobility organizational situations develop attitudes and orientations that are sometimes said to be characteristic of those people as individuals or “women as a group,” but that can more profitably be viewed as more universal human responses to blocked opportunities [italics in original]. (p. 159)

Secretarial responsibilities, defined in terms of an “office wife,” are shaped by gender role socialization, and reinforced by secretarial training, that is reflected in care-taking, nurturing, and supporting behaviours in the office. Still, claims related to what constitutes skill have become a routine debate. The training that these secretaries received, which mainly focused on developing their shorthand and typing skills, established a link between skill, gender, and patriarchal relations in society’s wider culture. When bosses speak in terms of needing an “old-fashioned office wife,” they place primacy on secretaries’ social, emotional, and domestic skills that have been assumed to come naturally to women. But, without clear job descriptions, or collective action from unions or active secretarial associations, or the willingness to speak out on their own behalf, for instance by claiming overtime pay, these secretaries place primacy on establishing, cultivating, and maintaining human relationships in the office. The emotional skills of the “office wife,” whose focus on “making the boss’s life easy,” clearly were acquired by these secretaries through gender role socialization
and secretarial training. The majority of the secretaries did not want to develop their skills in order to move beyond pink-collar work. Further, their behaviour and actions display self-effacing but strong identities, yet when adhering to the norms of a female culture, their actions unintentionally reproduce stereotypical assumptions about secretaries and what constitutes skilled and valued work.

The private workplace relations between a boss and a secretary are strong determinants of the individual power of one person over another and the substance of daily experience. For example, Pringle (1989b), among others has characterised face-to-face dictation as symbolic of a master/servant relationship. However, we can also see that power is a negotiated two-way process. While face-to-face dictation was described as an “old-fashioned” labour process, the case study secretaries participated in and preferred this activity because they felt more important and part of a team, whereas if their bosses were to use a dictaphone, they would then be tied to a transcription machine to the exclusion of human activities in the office. When examining the allocation of gendered tasks by bosses and the secretaries’ forms of resistance to them, in this empirical research, bosses and secretaries are viewed as defenders of the status quo.

The empirical data from interviews and observations within and across the case study organizations show how the everyday activities of secretaries in the role of “office wife,” that reflect a private form of patriarchal relations, produce and reproduce patriarchal relations in the structure of paid work. I have explored the specific problems of secretaries working in particular organizations and expanded sociological theories of occupational segregation and knowledge about “work” and “careers” in the 1990s. The results of this study are consistent with Ames (1996), Benet (1972), McNally (1979), Pringle (1989b), Truss (1993, 1994) and Truss, Goffee
and Jones (1995) that show a link between secretaries’ gendered activities as office wives and the structure of opportunities, that when combined, limit career advancement beyond pink-collar work. The results are also consistent with Davies (1992), Lee-Treweek (1997), Shapiro-Perl (1984) and Machung (1992) on female strategies of resistance to subordination. As members of a female culture, the secretaries’ love and/or duty ethos subsumed under the emotional skills involved in providing personal service to bosses and providing a sense of community to others in the office is linked to their choice of secretarial work. But, when they abide by the organizational rules of subordination and demonstrate non-confrontational forms of resistance to gendered tasks, this also restricts secretaries’ opportunities to move beyond a pink-collar occupation if they wanted to do so.

The results show that these secretaries are conscious and aware of their low status in organizational hierarchies, but they also expressed satisfaction with their orientation to work as an “office wife” because they can be “bossy.” In other words, though their power may be limited to caring for and organizing the lives of others, they nonetheless have informal power. This is a type of power contingent on highly personalised agreements and negotiations. Bosses are dependent on secretaries’ managerial, technical, emotional, and communications skills. If secretaries do not like their work situation, they can exercise their power of the threat to quit, once the value of their services has been established in their own minds, as the interviews with Jane, Annette, and the older secretaries indicate (see Chapter 7). Still, the most frequently cited form of resistance to private segregationist practices was going quiet, or engaging in minimal conversation to get their point across. When the secretaries describe their fears of being made redundant or vulnerable to having no job, they also
show that their self-conscious monitoring of their work place situation that impacts on their behaviour and strategies of resistance.

**Societal Consequences of Patriarchal Relations in Paid Work**

Within the organizational and political context of Opportunity 2000, the results from this study demonstrate how features of gendered organizational cultures establish the rules that secretaries draw on and meaningfully apply in their interactions with others. Secretaries' conscious behaviour and forms of resistance reproduce private and public patriarchal relations of control and thus affect their own career fate. While these secretaries do not join in collective efforts by secretarial associations to improve their organizational status, they have shown their capacity to transform human relations in workplaces. They de-identify with women in management and consciously choose not to assimilate or adhere to the masculine workplace conventions that are inherent in management positions. They resist the tacit “long hours” ideology that lead workers in a direction where work becomes a major life’s preoccupation and choose to remain in secretarial work that affords “balance.” These results are consistent with both Coser (1990) and Wheeler (1990) which claim that the nature of work is changing in that people are more likely to detach themselves from their jobs. This study, however, goes beyond those in terms of linking the elements of a female culture to the secretaries’ orientation to their work as an office wife. The secretaries’ emotional skills and “labours of love” show the variety of ways of maintaining individuality and distinctiveness through actions that allow them to develop a special niche in increasingly dehumanised workplaces. The personal service orientation of secretaries as office wives, adds variety and warmth to the work life
while creating a sense of community. Their behaviour not only benefits the organization but also works to hold together modern society.

Women’s labour force participation rates are projected to rise in the 21st century. In the growing high technology and service-based economy, the demand has increased for women with a service orientation toward work. Therefore, employers should maximise the potential of women with relatively high levels of education and technical experience, such as the case study secretaries. The attitude that she’s “just a secretary” with all its historic gendered assumptions will be inappropriate when recruiting tomorrow’s managers. In addition, the lives of women working in pink-collar occupations merit equal research attention to women working in management, especially in answering questions of how the phenomenon of vertical occupational segregation is maintained within industries, organizations, professions, and occupations. Secretaries may indeed reproduce private segregationist practices, but they also challenge traditional patriarchal relations of authority and control and the rationality of a long-hours ideology. In other words, it may be better to be an “office wife” than a computer slave or manager subject to the tyranny of the clock in the increasingly service-based economy and the global age of information.

The jagged effects of time can be seen everywhere. Too many people feel there are never enough minutes in the day, that they are somehow always behind. Some, like managers, turn to personal planners to help them manage their own time. For many, technological innovation has brought great improvements in quality of life. But, as we enter this new millennium, there are those like the case study and university secretaries, who believe that managers sacrifice their souls in the temple of paid work. The tools of technology and the organizational culture own them. Managers end up spending evenings and weekends working. Imagine if workers did not have to choose
between work and personal/social lives. As Gorz (1994) argues, there is a need to imagine a way out of the "work-based society" towards a society in which private or social activities will be of greater moral or intellectual weight.

The broader implications of this study publicise and politicise a number of issues that directly affect secretaries: notably stereotyping and the lack of recognition of emotional, managerial, and technical skills. While these issues reflect the specific problems of secretaries working in particular organizations, they are relevant to secretaries as a whole. This is not to suggest that secretaries are a homogeneous group; but as in Crompton and LeFeurve (1992), the picture that emerged from comparison (i.e. comparing the four case study, male, and university secretaries) was one of underlying similarity. This study calls for a re-evaluation of women’s skills and challenges those existing segregationist practices in paid work environments. It is hoped that this thesis makes a contribution to knowledge about the lives of ordinary women workers and how structural constraints in employment are interwoven with women’s choices and behaviour in maintaining the process of vertical occupational segregation.

**The Link Between Present and Future Research**

The interpretations of the regularities and patterns of behaviour of secretaries in this study contribute to theoretical understanding. This study extends Walby’s (1986, 1989, 1990) deterministic view of occupational segregation and Hakim’s (1991, 1995) essentialist view. It adds the element of women’s choices and subsequent behaviour in the negotiation and reproduction of power relations. At the methodological level, I sought to use an interpretative sociology through a multiple-case study approach to patriarchal relations that stem from the intentional activity of
human actors. Care was also taken to acknowledge the importance of social structures in shaping human conduct. Walby's dual-systems theory, which adopts a structural position, is effectively expanded by this study. I suggest that a future analysis of how vertical occupational segregation is maintained include an understanding of self-reflexive human actors who may reproduce patriarchal relations within the structure of paid work. By focusing on secretaries' "office wife" behaviour, the results from this study point to the existence of private patriarchal relations within the structure of paid employment. This helps to solidify an understanding of the recursive duality of structure as proposed by Giddens (1976, 1979, 1984); that is that patriarchal constraints and individual actions are contingently related in terms of control and resistance.

Intriguing empirical questions still loom on the horizon regarding vertical occupational segregation. Further, the organizational role of secretaries in the case study firms was constructed in terms of an office wife. Therefore, conducting subsequent case study research in additional Opportunity 2000 organizations would perhaps discover the extent of replication and change over time (now versus 1992/1994). A future study is also needed to compare the results in other UK organizations and comparable organizations in America.

This research has theoretical and practical implications about the stability of occupational segregation within large organizations that profess to be equal opportunity employers. This study examined institutionalised sexual discrimination and segregationist practices within the structure of paid employment and the devaluation of "female" positions and skills along with a lack of comparable worth. Despite equal opportunity legislation and equality of outcome programmes like Opportunity 2000, many multi-skilled and well-educated women such as the
secretaries in this study remain segregated into a few occupations at the lower levels of organizational hierarchies with little opportunity for advancement. This study reflects ongoing problems of gender inequality in paid employment that awaits new research in order to understand how the phenomenon of vertical occupational segregation is maintained in the 21st century.
Notes to Introduction

1 The terms “sex” and “gender” will be used interchangeably in this thesis even though it can be argued that gender is the social construction of sex-based differences. The terms “gender” and gender roles are used more typically in the United States, whereas “sex” and sex roles are used more typically in Britain.

2 Opportunity 2000 is a positive action equal opportunity initiative launched by 61 major UK employers in 1991. These companies voluntarily set their own goals and action plans for increasing opportunities for women in all areas and at all levels.

3 Concepts of patriarchy denote relations of authority, power and control, whatever definition is being used.

4 See Hakim (1988) and Lopata et al. (1986) for a detailed and wide-ranging review of social science literature on women’s employment.

5 In looking at the consequences of occupational closure and income, Weeden (1998) discovered a negative net return for the nurturing skills involved in secretarial work and eleven other occupations implying that there is a double penalty associated with occupations that require “women’s” skills. Likewise, Horrell, Rubery and Burchell (1990) proposed that women’s low pay could be explained by the low valuation of the skills used in “women’s” jobs.

6 For instance, despite accounting for 43% of the UK workforce, only 4% of women are involved at senior and middle management levels with a mere 1-2% at the senior executive level (Hirsh and Jackson, 1990). For studies of women in corporate management, and those that make reference to the glass ceiling, emphasizing that systemic barriers separate women from top positions with genuine authority traditionally held by men, see Catalyst (1990, 1991), Firth-Cozens and West (1991), Reskin and Ross (1992), Roos and Reskin (1984), and the United States Department of Labor, Women’s Bureau (1991).

7 According to Katzenstein (1987), in no country in Western Europe is there as strong a politically organized women’s movement as in the United States nor a national organization analogous to the National Organization for Women (NOW).

8 In Britain, A-level schooling is advanced education pursued beyond the school-leaving age of 16, and past the typical education known as O-levels. A-level education involves concentration on several subjects concurrently, typically as preparation for university education.

9 For example, between 1989 and 1990, women accounted for 53% of those pursuing further or higher education in England (Statistical Bulletin, June, 1991).

10 The term boss is interesting and indicates a changed usage of the term. The boss was originally the owner, with the power to hire and fire. As companies grew and diversified, their administrative structures became larger and more complex and new categories of middle management emerged, almost entirely male. Considering that the majority of studies on clerical and secretarial work have used the term “boss,” I will use this term more than manager or supervisor.
Notes to Chapter 1

1 For an account of the domestic labour debate, see Barrett (1980), and for discussions regarding the significance of labour market segmentation, or dual labour market theory, see Barron and Norris (1976) and Dex (1985). Many of the existing debates on women’s employment both within neo-Marxian and neo-classical economics focus on the question of whether women constitute a reserve army of labour as a result of natural biological differences between men and women. Drawing on Marx’s analysis of the industrial reserve army of labour, some of these scholars presume that the overriding importance of capital and family structure will lead to women being used this way. Marxist feminists have also focused on the reserve army theory suggesting that capitalism needs a reserve army of unemployed women to draw on in times of economic growth, but this view has been widely challenged. It fails to address the sexual division of labour because jobs and the labour market are sex segregated, therefore women act as a reserve army in relation to women’s jobs, not the employment needs of capitalism, and it fails again to answer why it should be women in the reserve army. Walby (1985) also argues that the reserve army of labour thesis neglects the importance of patriarchal forces, both from trade unions and the state.

2 See Zimmeck (1986) and Barrett and McIntosh (1980) for historical accounts of the effects of the marriage bar and the family wage that policed the notion that women’s primary duty was to marry and have children.

3 From her own research and other time-use studies, Arlie Hochschild (1989) calculated that women working full time do fifteen more hours of work a week than their husbands do. This adds up to an extra month of twenty-four hour days each year. A ‘second shift’ has also been found in Britain. While women are taking on more paid work, men are making only a slight increase in their contribution to unpaid domestic work, so that in dual-earner households, women have a longer total working week than men (Oakley, 1974; Rubery et al., 1998; Wajcman, 1996).

4 Treiman and Hartmann (1981) argued that the main source of wage differentials is job segregation by sex.

5 Hakim (1991, 1995) argued that working women may be classified into two qualitatively different and polarised types; the committed and uncommitted to full-time work careers. These two types are described as adaptive or work-centred (career only) and home-centred (marriage and family career), even though Hakim (1998) claimed she was providing a three-fold typology other than two-fold.


7 Collinson and Knights (1986) defined security as a concern to secure the self through gaining social confirmation or personal identity. They argue “it is this preoccupation with individual security, which militates against fully collective strategies of resistance...” (p. 145).

8 Ever since its revival in Braverman (1974), labour process theory has been characterised as being concerned with the erosion of workers’ skills through
management control, and with the resistance of labour to such de-skilling. These issues are related to gender and subjectivity in labour process studies that overcome the neglect of subjective experience of work and subordination (Knights, 1990; Knights and Willmott, 1985, 1986; Sturdy, 1992; Willmott, 1990).

Notes to Chapter 2

1 The term “information age” is used to denote a stage in the development of computer technology. Globalisation captures an ongoing process in the information age whose essence is the compression of time and space. Distances seem shorter because of instantaneous communication of text and images. Time tends to invade our space and the pace of our existence both at work and outside working hours. For instance, the common feeling that “there just is not enough time” to accomplish daily goals, or that with the computer, more work can be and should be done in less time.

2 Braverman (1974) reported no data at all on the way workers, men or women feel about work, how they experience it, or what it does to them.

3 For contemporary reviews of studies on men in nontraditional occupations that show men more than women in these occupations tend to benefit from the attention and privilege from their tokenism, and from limited opportunities for advancement and pay, see Williams (1993, 1995) and Wright (1997).

4 The changes to computer hardware and software over the past twenty years are also indicative of the magnitude of recent economic and social transformations. Computers, once large mainframes, are today a tiny fraction of the size of their predecessors, yet, are more powerful instruments of computation and processing. In place of yesterday’s cumbersome computers we have today’s laptops. They are even more robust because they can do millions instead of thousands of computations per second. High speed computers, information technologies, and telecommunications all affect the managing of the organization, the structure of the enterprise and workplace relations.

5 Even Mills (1951) noted that the production of information is as important as “arteries through which life blood flows” (p. 190). Frenkel et al. (1995) and Zuboff (1988) among others write about the emergence of new forms of work as a result of major changes in technology and the growth of a service-based economy.

6 American business professor, Peter Drucker, suggests that the competitive advantage in world markets lies in making those with long years of schooling in white-collar work more productive (Menkus, 1988). A report from the U.S. Commerce Department noted that, during the 1980s, industrial productivity grew 90% while office productivity improved by only 4%. Additionally, support staffs consume half of all corporate budgets (Myers, 1990). These developments made it important that the employers’ return on capital investment in the typical office worker was as profitable as possible.
Notes to Chapter 3

1 Thanks are due to Martin O'Brien, my supervisor, for helping me with this.

Notes to Chapter 4

1 The British government accepted the Social Charter in 1994.

2 Thatcher, however, enjoyed an elite position, able to afford full-time, live-in nannies to care for her twins while pursuing a career as a barrister ("Mother knows best," 1990).

3 For studies that discuss the link between organizations' meeting the needs of diverse groups of workers and achieving competitiveness, see Barsoux and Lawrence (1991), Beardwell and Holden (1994), Drucker (1992), Hammond and Holton (1990), Fishman and Cherniss (1990), Lawler (1990), O'Doherty (1994), Schuler (1991), and Taylor and Van Every (1993).

4 The Rosetta stone was found in 1799 and celebrated for having furnished the first clue in deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics.

Notes to Chapter 6

1 More than 40,000 secretaries have joined Professional Secretaries International (PSI). Since its inception in 1946, this organization has developed 750 chapters worldwide (Gittler, 1990; Sabo, 1992). They conduct annual conferences and offer 2-day examinations for secretaries to achieve the designation of Certified Professional Secretary. The examination consists of six parts: behavioural science in business, business law, economics and management, accounting, office administration and communications, and office technology. Over 30,000 members of PSI have achieved this certification. PSI also recognises that a secretary's position of trust imposes unique ethical obligations. They recently published a Code of Ethics to guide related behaviour and embody the ethical ideals of the profession (Professional Secretaries International, 1996).

2 Comparable worth advocates counter employer practices that claim wages have been based on market rates. Women, according to Paula England (1992), should not have to change jobs to get a wage not affected by gender bias. Comparable worth is the practice of basing wages for a job category on the amount of skill, effort, responsibility, and risk the job entails to offset inequalities based on the sex or race of incumbents. However, Pringle (1989b) found that the issue of comparable worth was a contentious one in the Australian context because most unions were reluctant to "upset the applecart" by challenging state and federal wage structures. Further, outside the public sector, secretaries are isolated, and mostly work in non-unionised settings with little sense of collective purpose, thus access to research and information is limited.

3 Research has shown class based differences and how the transmission of values through socialization channels children into the same kinds of occupations as their parents (Kohn, 1959; Kohn and Schooler, 1983). In general, however, girls are still
being trained to do “women’s work” whether around the home or in paid employment (Parcel and Menaghan, 1994).

Notes to Chapter 7

1 In interviews with secretaries (age 45+) who had performed dictation service for women, they suggested that the process was an attempt to bolster women in management’s position of authority at a time when they were struggling to compete with men, hence these women in management assimilated to traditional practices. Rose, a secretary from the BBC describes this:

Years ago I worked for a lovely lady now retired and she drove me bananas at work. For instance, I was taking dictation and the phone would ring on her desk and she would pick it up in one hand, switch it to her other hand to give it to me, and wave her other hand as though to say “oh no I don’t want to speak to them.” She used to dictate at tremendous speed and I’d be sort of about a sentence behind when she did that so I’d have to stop to take the phone. I think in those days perhaps women thought that to get where they were they actually had to be like that. I don’t know. I was a lot younger then and she was quite mature. It would never happen today” (Rose, 1992 interviews, p. 13).

2 According to the representative from the Institute of Qualified Professional Secretaries, the 1994 secretarial salaries were based on a market rate of pay and the average top salary for a senior secretary in England was between £17–18,000. The average 1994 salary for mid- to senior-level secretaries in the case-study organizations was £16,000 which included the salary for a secretary with 20 years experience. However, the salary paid to the solitary male secretary at the BBC was £24,000 and he had the least experience. While only one male secretary was interviewed, this finding supports other research conducted on men in nontraditional occupations. England and Herbert (1993) and Pringle (1993) found that men receive higher levels of compensation in female-dominated occupations than do women.
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365


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Appendix A

Opportunity 2000 Campaign Members
Appendix A


| Abbey National | Digital | National Westminster Bank* |
| Allied Dunbar | Employment Department Group | |
| Ashridge Management College | Glaxo | |
| Avon Cosmetics | Grand Metropolitan | |
| Bank of England | Hawker Siddeley | |
| Bank of Scotland | Henry Ansbacher | |
| Barclays Bank | HM Customs and Excise | |
| BBC* | IBM (UK) | |
| Boots the Chemists | ICI* | |
| BP Oil | Inland Revenue | |
| British Airways* | Kingfisher* | |
| British Gas | Legal & General* | |
| British Rail | The Littlewoods Organisation | |
| BT | The London Business School | |
| Cabinet Office (OMCS) | London Weekend Television | |
| Cadogan Management Ltd | Lucas Industries* | |
| Channel 4 | Marks & Spencer | |
| Chartered Institute of Management Accountants | Metropolitan Police | |
| The Co-Operative Bank* | Midland Bank* | |
| Coopers & Lybrand Deloitte | National Health Service | |
| | | |

* Indicates Founder Member

Opportunity 2000 is a Business in the Community Initiative
Appendix B

Automation History
# Automation History

A look back at some of the technological advancements that have revolutionized the workplace.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Developments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>Telephone • Typewriter • Carbon paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>Comptometer calculating machine • Mimeograph machine • Cash register • Adding machine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>Dictating and stenographic machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>Loose-leaf ledger sheets • Multigraph • Two-color typewriter ribbon • Hollerith machines • Addressograph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>Power statistical accounting machines • Bookkeeping and billing machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Addressograph/multigraph with automatic feed • Adding/subtracting calculating machine • Ditto machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>Command language concept for bank check sorting/proofing machines • Dial telephones • Electric typewriters—earliest versions • Machine accounting systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>Mechanical listing printing calculators, 4 functions • Punched card systems (payroll) • Dictaphone/stenographic machines with plastic bells</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Electronic digital computers (transistors) • Electronic digital computers (vacuum tubes) • Data processing—paper tape or cards • Xerographic duplication • Data processing—telewriters • Data processing—computers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>Magnetic tape “selectric” typewriters • Microchip computers • Magnetic tape (replacing punched cards) • Magnetic ink character recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>Microcomputers • Optical scanning and recognition equipment • Video display terminals for data/text editing • Facsimile transmission • Electronic calculating machines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Local area networks, integrated systems • Non-impact printers • Software for microcomputers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Desktop publishing—text and graphics • Sophisticated software including spreadsheets • Laptops</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C

Interview Guideline—Managers
INTERVIEW GUIDELINE—Managers

Introduce myself and shake hands. Thank them for their time and willingness to participate in my study. Let them know that the interview should not take much longer than 30 minutes. Ask if it would be all right to record our conversation so we can just talk without me having to write lots of notes. Assure them of confidentiality.

I. Tell them about the twofold nature of research: A) Opportunity 2000 is seen as symbolic of a corporate cultural trend toward linking the needs of workers with the needs of the organization. Opportunity 2000 was about “maximising potential of women, stemming the tide of lost talent, increasing opportunities for women at all levels, by demolishing stereotypes and other barriers which block progression.” B) That the role/value of secretary in the 1990s can give rise to corporate mobility.

II. Before I came here, what did you know about Opportunity 2000? Do you see your company as “caring” about its women workers? What is your perception of promotion prospects for secretaries?

What is your ideal secretary? Would you consider your secretary to be an “office wife?”

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to participate in my research. May I phone you if I have any further questions?
Appendix D

Interview Guideline—BBC Secretaries:

Pilot Study 1992
Appendix D

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE—Secretaries
PILOT STUDY

Introduce myself. Thank them for their time and willingness to participate in my study. Ask if it would be all right to record our conversation so we can just talk without me having to write lots of notes. Assured them of confidentiality.

I. Tell about myself (temping in UK, student, etc). Share my experiences as a secretary/receptionist and that I had never been told to “fetch” anything like I had at Marks & Spencers, which is why I am here.

II. Tell them about the twofold nature of research: A) Opportunity 2000 seen as symbolic of corporate cultural trend towards linking the needs of workers with the needs of the organization and B) Role/value of secretary in the 1990s approaching the end of the century (producer or processor) giving rise to corporate mobility.

III. And that I want her experiences as a pink-collar worker because I think secretaries are undervalued.

1. Before I came here, what did you know about Opportunity 2000? Do you see your company as “caring” about its women workers? What is your perception of promotion prospects for women “at all levels”?

2. What is an ideal secretary today? Describe your main duties: what do you like best vs. least?

- What is an ideal boss? Describe your relationship with your boss (would your boss help you to advance in your career?) Does he/she expect you to take dictation, bring them coffee/tea, ever asked you to do personal things for them?

- Would you say that you are an “office wife/mother”, “team”?

- What are your career aspirations? Can a secretary do her boss’ job? Is there a career path leading into management in this organization?
Do you think that technology has "enskilled" or "deskilled" the secretary?

- Do you use Email? What do you think about it?

IV. Obtain her vital statistics (married, children, education, age, income, secretarial qualifications).

V. Woman's movement affected women's role in society/secretarial image?

VI. Did your mother & grandmother work? Any advice?

Lastly, are there any questions you'd like to ask me?

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to participate in my research. May I phone you if I have any further questions?
Appendix E

Interview Guideline—BBC, Rank Xerox, Unilever, Channel Four Secretaries:

Main Study 1994
Appendix E

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE—Secretaries
MAIN STUDY

Introduce myself and shake hands. Thank you for your time and willingness to participate in my study. Ask if it would be all right to record our conversation so we could talk and I did not have to keep writing. Assure them of confidentiality.

I. Tell about myself (temping in UK, student, etc) and why I’m here. Tell them that I started doing this research a couple of years ago right after Opportunity 2000 was launched, and that their company was one of the original ones starting it.

II. Tell them about the twofold nature of the research: A) Their companies’ corporate culture was to break down the barriers to progression. So I’m here to see what’s happening for you because Opportunity 2000 was about “maximising potential of women, stemming the tide of lost talent, increasing opportunities for women at all levels, by demolishing stereotypes and other barriers which block progression.” B) And seeing that the majority of women who work in corporations work in pink-collar or secretarial positions plus having been a secretary myself I thought let’s see how some of these equal opportunity initiatives are going to affect them.

III. Before we get into all of that...

1. Tell me your story. How did you choose secretarial work? What was told to you at school? What did you do after you left school? What’s your history with the Company. Where do you see yourself going with this company?
   - What is your most important role as a secretary?
   - Would you agree that you are an “office wife” or mother to your boss?
   - Do you see yourself as an equal in the smooth running of the organization? Could you do your boss’s job?

2. How about personal services? When I was a temp working at Marks & Spencer’s I was told by a male boss to “fetch” his holiday pictures on my lunch break and I told him “No, I couldn’t.” How would you have handled it?
   - Have you ever been asked/told to do something you thought inappropriate?
   - How do you handle rude bosses? Describe your relationship with your current boss? Any male or female differences?

(Do you use Email?)
IV. Before I came on the scene, what did you know about O2000? Had you received any corporate message or Email about it? How do people get into management positions?

- Are equal opportunities fair between men and women? Women and women?

V. Did your mother/grandmother work? Any advice on work?

Lastly, are there any questions you’d like to ask me or are there any comments you’d like to make?

Have you heard about Professional Secretaries International? They’re an association with a London chapter dedicated to increasing the professional status of secretaries.

Thank you very much for your time in participating in my study.
Appendix F

Interview Guideline—University Secretaries
Appendix F

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE—University Secretaries

I did not need to introduce myself because these women have known me for at least five years. However, I did explain why I was doing this research and appreciated their assistance with it.

The questions to ask:

1. Tell me your story. How did you get into secretarial work? How long have you been a secretary.

2. What’s your educational background? Secretarial college, etc? What’s your salary range now?

3. Have you worked in the private sector? Any differences between your experiences? Have you worked with women bosses? Any preferences?

4. What is your most important role as a secretary? Would you agree with a secretary being an “office wife” or mother? Have you ever been asked to perform personal services? Tell them my “fetching” story and ask how they would have handled it. How do you handle rude bosses?

5. What’s the highest level a secretary can aspire to? Could she go onto becoming a Company Secretary or management?

6. What do you think of the title of “secretary” versus “administrative assistant” or “PA”?

7. Do you use Email? What do you think about it?

8. Did your mother work? Any advice on working?

Lastly, are there any questions you’d like to ask me?

Thank you very much for your time and willingness to participate in my research.
Appendix G

Data Analysis Summary Matrix
## APPENDIX G

Analytic Summary: An Interaction Between Structure and Agency, or Private and Public Forms of Patriarchal Relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POLITICS</th>
<th>CULTURE</th>
<th>PAID WORK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Political Context</td>
<td>Organization Culture</td>
<td>Occupational Choice Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collective Interests</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender Politics of 02000</td>
<td>Rules for Subordination</td>
<td>Gender Role Socialization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC Social Charter Equal Opportunity</td>
<td>Work Situation</td>
<td>Orientation to Work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>S - No 02000 Info.</td>
<td>B - By Dept [\neq ] Diff's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OBS - Space: Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OBS - Corp Culture: No DOC Equal Opp/02000 signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNILEVER</td>
<td>S - No 02000 Info.</td>
<td>B - Privileges Diff's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OBS - Space: Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td>OBS - Corp Culture: No DOC Equal Opp/02000 signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RANK XEROX</td>
<td>S - No 02000 Info.</td>
<td>B - Privileges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OBS - Space: Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OBS - Corp Culture: No DOC Equal Opp/02000 signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHANNEL FOUR</td>
<td>S - No 02000 Info.</td>
<td>B - Privileges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OBS - Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>OBS - Corp Culture: No DOC Equal Opp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O2000</td>
<td>DOC - No to EC Policies</td>
<td>S - Yes Personnel Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes UK Employer</td>
<td>B - Privileged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Widespread Action</td>
<td>OHS - Corp Culture: No DOC Equal Opp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIVERSITY</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>S - No 1 to 1 Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>S - No Stress of Corporate Culture</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NOTE: (S)ecretaries (DOC)uments O2000 - Opportunity 2000
(B)osses (OBS)ervations N/A - Not Applicable
Appendix H

Impact of Producer's Choice on Secretarial Roles
## Appendix II

**Impact of Producer's Choice on Secretarial Role** (BBC, 1991b, p. 13)

### Diagram 1.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY ISSUES</th>
<th>WORKLOAD/ROLE</th>
<th>DISTRIBUTION OF STAFF</th>
<th>SKILLS</th>
<th>MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>DEMAND FOR COVER</th>
<th>SUPPLY OF COVERAGE</th>
<th>TRAINING CAREER DEVELOPMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task forces strategy Review</td>
<td>Organised into business units</td>
<td>Emphasis on contracting out/buying in</td>
<td>Emphasis on flexibility</td>
<td>Managers may have role conflict-being asked to be good employers while also injecting commercial realities of supply and demand.</td>
<td>Review database of expertise</td>
<td>Need to train in relevant skills</td>
<td>Produces a possible commercial career path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(task forces timescales may fall in longer term)</td>
<td>Expected to maintain commercial budgets</td>
<td>Number and distribution likely to be subjected to market forces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Producer's choice</td>
<td>Project oriented work to meet demand variations</td>
<td>Pressure on numbers of staff in non-production areas (seen as overheads)</td>
<td>Producers may seek secretaries/support staff with previous independent contacts</td>
<td>All managers will seek cuts in overheads</td>
<td>Possible demand for production skills plus multi-skilling</td>
<td>Reduced production and increased commercial management/business skills</td>
<td>Needs to address relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

bmm043
Appendix I

Impact of Producer's Choice on Secretaries Career Development
**Appendix I**

Impact of Producer's Choice on Secretarial Job Content (BBC, 1991b, p. 12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY ISSUES</th>
<th>WORKLOAD/ROLE</th>
<th>DISTRIBUTION OF STAFF</th>
<th>SKILLS</th>
<th>MANAGEMENT</th>
<th>DEMAND FOR COVER</th>
<th>SUPPLY OF COVER</th>
<th>TRAINING</th>
<th>CAREER DEVELOPMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multiskilling (currently limited to tech/production skills)</td>
<td>Move to administrative &amp; casings work/systems</td>
<td>Flatter hierarchies</td>
<td>Greater range of IT skills including data prep &amp; input</td>
<td>Less delineation between functions</td>
<td>Need multi-skilled cover</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increase in overall workload</td>
<td></td>
<td>Finance skills required</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Need to understand greater number of roles/functions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing use of independents (current quota 25%)</td>
<td>Continuity issues for organisation and dept: what is role of secretaries</td>
<td>Reduced headcounts</td>
<td>Commissioning and casting skills</td>
<td>External views on ways of operating</td>
<td>Overall reduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More commercially oriented interface with independents</td>
<td>Fewer in-house production teams and production assistant/production secretary opportunities</td>
<td>Potential drain of production talent from mgm and secretaries</td>
<td>Introduction of business managers</td>
<td>Commissioning/casting skills required</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Constraints</td>
<td>Possible motivation of filling staff vacancies</td>
<td>Cuts in non-programme areas</td>
<td>All changes will need to be proven cost/effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased work on devolved functions</td>
<td>Squeeze on investments</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Cost savings assisted by team working</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Appendix J

BBC Secretarial Study Group
Appendix J

Impact of Producer's Choice on Future Secretarial Career Paths (BBC, 1991b, p. 9)

BBC SECRETARIAL STUDY GROUP
PROPOSED JOB FUNCTIONS AND FUTURE CAREER PATHS

[Diagram showing career paths from Reserve, Unit/Team Assistant, Technical Posts, Senior Team Assistant, Executive Assistant, Selection for Production Support Posts, and Leave BBC.]

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- Occasional paths
- Established low volume path
- Established high volume paths
- Reduced future demand
Appendix K

Statistics from Opportunity 2000, 1994 on Actions of Member Organizations
Appendix K

Key to Organizational Practices (Opportunity 2000, 1994, p. 32)

**Availability**

- Available to all men and women %
- Available to all women %
- Restricted to selected women %
- No Response %

In some cases figures do not add up to 100 - this is due to rounding.

**Take-up Rate**

- Less than 10%
- 10-25%
- 26-49%
- 50-74%
- More than 75%

---

1. Working Arrangements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Take-up Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible hours</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time work</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evening shifts</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contracts for annual hours</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School term work contracts</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homeworking</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job share</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N.B. = No Response
### Training and Development Practices

#### Appendix K

**SUMMARY OF POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training and Development Cont.</th>
<th>Availability</th>
<th>Take-up Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>work shadowing</strong></td>
<td>24 / 9</td>
<td>74 / 31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>job rotation</strong></td>
<td>27 / 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>training for non-traditional work</strong></td>
<td>15 / 1</td>
<td>57 / 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>training to transfer from staff to line appointments</strong></td>
<td>33 / 1</td>
<td>59 / 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| schemes to bridge 'gaps' between junior/senior jobs | 29 / 6 | 59 / 6 |
| developing paths from 'non-career' jobs eg. sec/ker | 31 / 6 | 59 / 35 |
| equal opportunity awareness training | 59 / 6 | 83 / 54 |
| women only training programmes | 17 / 17 | 31 / 7 |
| men and women working together course | 64 / 15 | 62 / 12 |
| training to counter sexual harassment | 6 / 17 | 16 / 8 |

| schemes to bridge 'gaps' between junior/senior jobs | 24 / 13 | 57 / 13 |
| developing paths from 'non-career' jobs eg. sec/ker | 59 / 13 | 44 / 5 |
| equal opportunity awareness training | 59 / 13 | 42 / 8 |
| women only training programmes | 42 / 7 | 37 / 15 |
| men and women working together course | 57 / 8 | 29 / 15 |
| training to counter sexual harassment | 13 / 3 | 16 / 9 |

*Note: N.R. numbers are placeholders for actual numbers.*