CHAPTER 2

THE VIEW OF FEMINIST AND HOUSING THEORY

"Otherwise the first consideration of town planning must be to provide an urban environment and an urban mode of life which will not be hostile to biological survival: rather to create one in which processes of life and growth will be so normal, so visible, that by sympathetic magic it will encourage in women of child-bearing age the impulse to bear and rear children, as an essential attribute of their humanness quite as interesting in all its possibilities as the most glamorous success in an office or factory." (Mumford, 1945 in Roberts, 1991, p.54-55)

ORIGINS AND FOCUS OF FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF URBAN THEORY

Apart from isolated references to the role of gender within the general literature. (for example Berry, 1981, p.9) the discussion of gender has remained within the sphere of feminist theory. Within this sphere, feminist theory does not offer a consolidated position, to the extent that Delmar suggests feminism may be more correctly conceptualised as "feminisms". (Delmar, 1986, p.10). Whilst this lack of cohesion may be viewed in a positive light

..."the challenge for feminism is to be able to include the diversity of human experience: feminism would fail if it imposed a set of restrictions which demanded conformity. That would be but another expression of dominance" (Spender, 1986, p.216)

it has, in fact caused many difficulties in the development and promotion of feminist theory. One of the resulting problems, in the absence of a coherent and comprehensive stand-point, is that women tend to be tacked on as an adjunct to prevailing theory... the 'women and' approach. (Simms, 1984, p.134; Watson, 1986, p.1). This approach allows the ethos of prevailing theory
to remain unchallenged, and the assumption prevails that the main dialectic is between men and women—assuming the limitations of the radical feminist approach. In policy terms it sustains the view that women and other ‘special’ groups should be provided for under ‘special’ programs rather than as part of regular policy sensitised to cater for the diversity of needs of the population. Given the social construction of gender, wider changes are necessary in the way in which social processes and spatial organisation are examined (Bowlby, Foord et al, 1982, p. 714) and the way in which policy recognises differentiation within the community.

Part of the confusion relating to the development of feminist theory has been a product of its simultaneous development across a number of disciplinary boundaries. Within each discipline the attempt has been made to inform mainstream disciplinary theory by grafting feminist theory. It has been argued that, in fact, feminist studies have more in common with feminist studies from other disciplines than with their ‘home’ discipline, suggesting the need (amongst other things) for more integrated academic courses with a feminist focus. (McDowell, 1985, p. 10) McDowell sees further validity in the grouping of feminist study given the necessary concern of feminist analysis with areas of our lives, for example household work, not usually considered relevant to academic analysis.¹

In the 1970's, the deployment of feminist explanation within the context of the urban environment was mainly by sociologists. In the late 1970's and 1980's interest percolated

¹The danger in defining a discipline of feminist or women's studies is, of course 'ghettoization' of women academics in 'female areas' legitimating the absence of women from general academic participation and creating a sexual division of labour within subjects. (Gamson, 1978, p. 350) The corollary of such specialisation would then be the wider lack of influence of feminist theory.
into areas such as geography, economics and architecture. One area in which gender-awareness does not appear to have made a significant impact is in the planning literature. Conversely, Wekerle has commented on the neglect of the organised women's movement in appropriating urban planning as a women's issue. (1980, 212). She expresses the need for input into the planning process to speed up changes and avoid "the high costs of living in an urban environment which is increasingly dysfunctional to...[women's]...needs". (1981, p.10)

Most feminist urban research influencing work in Australia has come from Britain and the United States. In the 'second wave' of feminism since the 1960's, research in Britain has emphasised the development of academic research, based on a Marxist social science tradition. (McRobbie, 1982, p.47-8). As a result, much of the British work has been highly theoretical. The disadvantage of such a structure is that recently declining economic conditions have caused a decline of feminist issues in the academic left. In the context of unemployment, recession and welfare cuts of the 1980's the task of consolidating feminist theory and challenging "the academy, its assumptions and working methods" became both more difficult and to some commentators, less relevant. (McDowell, 1985, p.10)

In the US, feminist research on the urban environment has been more disparate. It has, also been more issue-based, ranging from discussion of the form of the non-sexist city to concerns with transportation and access, and the suitability of urban design, the appropriateness of suburban development and its relationship to consumption, as well as safety and security aspects of urban design.

In Australia, theoretical feminist research has been limited, especially prior to the 1980's. Housing, specifically, has received scant attention, apart from Allport's historical (1983, 1984) and Watson's theoretical (1988, 1986(a), 1985) analyses. This situation persists despite recognition of the
importance of this area of research. (Kilmartin, Thorns and Burke, 1985, p. 189-190)

CRITICISMS OF FEMINIST THEORY

Feminist theory has been subject to many of the criticisms directed at general housing research. One of the main criticisms of both has been the lack of development of comprehensive theoretical basis, developed from empirical analysis. This particular criticism, and a recognition of the need to further 'legitimise' a feminist standpoint, led to repeated calls in the 1980's for the development of a comprehensive, integrated feminist theory.

In addition to the problems generally attributed to housing research\(^2\), two particular problems have plagued the development of feminist theory. The first is the divide between the two roots of feminist analysis—feminist theory and practice. A theoretically derived feminist view has historically been founded on Marxist or socialist doctrine, while radical feminism has political origins. The most fundamental but profound difference between these two perspectives lies in the analysis of the basis of women's oppression. To radical feminists, the main dialectic is between women and men. They see the motive force in history as men striving for power over women. The basic class division is between the sexes, and articulated at the level of the family. Marxist feminists locate women's oppression more firmly in economic structures, specifically in the relation between production and reproduction. The ideology of female domestic responsibility ties women's oppression to the family. The resultant sexual division of labour within the family interacts with and reinforces labour force divisions. The family acts as the agent of the reproduction of labour power and as a site of consumption under capital. The fundamental difference in

\(^2\) in particular divides caused by disciplinary and theoretical intransigence, a need to give greater attention to the social environment and a need for better-articulated and more meticulous underpinnings for theory. (Young, 1985, p.7)
interpretation arising from radical and Marxist feminism engenders major policy and practice implications.

The second problem particular to the development of feminist theory, and deriving partly from the first, is an ambiguity in use of the theoretical feminist underpinnings. This has been especially evident in the use of feminist constructs such as patriarchy (which incidentally is the only construct unique to feminist analysis). Feminists tend to use such terms in widely varying and often ill-defined contexts and at varying levels of abstraction. The same is true of some of the dualisms used loosely by feminists which, as discussed below, have also been criticised as part of a tradition of social science which in itself marginalises women.

Despite a pervasive argument in the 1980's for the need for development of a comprehensive feminist theoretical perspective, (Wekerle, 1980; Watson, 1986(a); Foord and Gregson, 1986, p.186) more recently Watson has argued the advantages of a sociologically-based post-structural approach (Watson, 1988, p.144) which, rather than assuming the possibility of an integrated theory, recognises that "individuals are buffeted by conflicting and often unconscious needs and desires and are situated in the midst of discourses not of their own making." (Watson 1988 p.145) Watson sees the recognition of fragmentation engendered in post-structuralist theory as valuable in avoiding the tendency of "grand theory" to be "mono-cultural in its perspective". (p.146) A monocultural perspective derives from the assumption of modernist theory that an all-embracing theory can be developed for wholesale adoption.

O'Brien argues that planning as an activity is still heavily dominated by modernist thinking, with a much more active filtering of post-modern or post-structuralist theory into fields such as urban geography. (O'Brien, 1992, p.71) The adherence of planning to modernist theory has resulted in an
insensitivity to the diversity of communities and the tendency of planning practice to "universalise the dominant group's experience and culture as the social norm". (Beauregard, 1991 in O'Brien, 1992, p. 72) In the case of housing, the housing needs and circumstances of nuclear families with a male as principal wage-earner been seen as constituting a norm.

CHARACTERISTICS OF GENERAL HOUSING THEORY

Kemeny (in Lea and Cameron, 1992, p. vii) characterises several peculiarities of housing research which differentiate it from other areas of research within the physical and social sciences. Housing research is multidisciplinary, with no common perspective. There is little theoretical research, with most work focused on housing markets and policy issues. Housing research is also highly fragmented with few specialised journals and (as Lea and Cameron point out) there is no specialised course of housing study at a tertiary level in Australia, with housing study subsumed within a range of other disciplines.

Housing and housing-related policy in Australia is also highly fragmented, both functionally and geographically. These characteristics result, in part, from the eclectic nature of housing, and resulting policy aims - for example shelter or social equity - which commandeer housing as either a subject or an object.

These characteristics lead to at times to an awkward coexistence between urban, planning and housing studies and to a lack of coherence within housing theory. Pugh (1986) has argued that the problem is not a general paucity of housing theory, but disciplinary chauvinism, which has resulted in a lack of development of cross-theoretical perspectives, thus acting to the detriment of the development of housing policy. This concurs with the post-structuralist view and with the observation in Chapter 1 that housing analysis needs to be more broadly conceived.
Bassett and Short (1980, p.3-4) draw the simple analogy of housing as "a complex crystal with many faces. When held up to the light a particular pattern of reflected light is seen. Change the orientation of the crystal and a completely different pattern of reflected light is formed. In one sense the different approaches to housing can be seen as the different orientations of this multifaceted object producing different patterns when held up to the explanatory light." Disciplinary bias, and a lack of agreement on the "explanatory light" to be employed, further expands the range of possible interpretations. While this analogy could apply equally to many areas of academic debate, it is especially true for housing studies given the spread of housing studies across academic disciplines. In this case, post-structuralist theory would dispute the notion of a unitary light, perhaps preferring the analogy to extend to a battery of lights each contributing to a more complex and imperceptible reflection.

HOUSING, EQUITY AND SOCIAL GOALS

The characteristics of mainstream urban and housing theory and the issues analyzed by mainstream researchers have had some influence on the development of feminist theory. Of latter years, issues of importance to mainstream analysis have been instrumental in highlighting distributional and equity issues of wider concern to feminists. One of the issues of primary importance in housing research from the mid 1970's and during the 1980's which had important implications for the development of housing policy and feminist analysis in Australia was the analysis of the operation of tenure within the Australian housing market. The burgeoning interest in equity issues during the 1970's can be seen by the number of inquiries and reports addressing tenurial and economic equity, whereas in the post-war period the emphasis had been much more on quantity of housing rather than quality or equity.3

3. In 1972, Jones set the tone by concluding that public housing programs (based on an analysis for the period prior to 1970) did little to help the poor. (Jones, 1972) Reports and initiatives which followed
Equity questions led in 1975 to what has been called the 'great housing debate'. The debate centred on the role of housing in poverty alleviation and discussion of housing policy and mechanisms. Foci of discussion were the role of housing policy vis a vis direct income transfer: planning, housing and building requirements and the role of the state with regard to housing and capital markets. (Carter, 1980, p. 136)

Kemeny took up and further developed many of these issues in a series of publications dating from 1976. His arguments centred on the constructs and ideology of tenure, the politics and economics of tenure and explicitly the concept of tenure-neutrality. He was particularly critical of the structure and ideology of home ownership in Australia. He propounded the view of home ownership as a political choice supported by massive public subsidy, rather than an inevitability. It was argued that any justification of home ownership as helping to alleviate post war housing shortages was an anachronism. (Flood and Yates, 1987, p. 87)

With the onset of less stable economic conditions in the mid-1970's than those sustained post World War II, it became obvious that younger and poorer households would be excluded from loan availability through the principal lending authorities. In the 1970's lending institutions refused borrowers whose initial payments exceeded 25 to 30% of income, which Stretton estimated allowed financing of loans at less than 10% of interest only. (1978) Concurrent with the gradual

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1. Included the 1971 Working Party on Homeless Men and Women; setting up of the Australian Housing Research Council to provide research and information as a basis for public housing policies in 1974; the 1974 Homeless Persons' Assistance Act; the 1975 Priorities Review Staff Report on Housing which found that the overall impact of housing policies led to increased inequalities in access to housing and the 1975 Commission of Inquiry into Poverty (Henderson Report). Amongst other findings Henderson reported that the vast majority of people in public housing had incomes above the poverty line and conversely that most households in poverty were not in public housing. (Fairs and Williams, 1983(a), p. 7)

2. He highlighted the relative increase in poverty for single-parent and single-person households.


4. In fact, the relative public subsidy to home ownership, both direct and indirect, by 1984-85 was $1250 per household, approaching the $1795 per household for public tenants and greatly in excess of less than $100 received by private tenants not receiving help from their employer. (Flood and Yates, 1987)
exclusion of those earning 100 to 130% of average earnings from entry to home ownership was the accrual, with high inflation rates, of capital gain to existing home owners and purchasers. (Carter, 1980) Allied with the implicit public subsidy argued by Kemeny and others it became clear that marginalisation from home ownership represented a major economic disadvantage.

In 1978, the Housing Costs Inquiry, on noting that despite the difficulties the full quota of housing loans had been allocated concluded that, in fact, for many potential home owners conditions had encouraged them to undergo additional hardship before entering the market—taking on a heavy repayment burden which was likely to be supported by two incomes and purchasing lower quality dwellings. This strategy was not possible for lower income groups and single income families with less than 130% of average weekly earnings. These groups were identified by the Housing Costs Inquiry as being particularly disadvantaged. (Carter, 1980, p. 100) As evidence increasingly suggests that maintenance of household incomes during the 1980's relied on the increasing work-force participation of married women, it becomes obvious that one income households will be increasingly disadvantaged.

In combination with the effect of interest rates and land prices, unemployment increased rapidly in mid-1974 and continued at a high level during the 1970's. Unemployment again increased rapidly in 1982-82. The associated increases in unemployment, pension and other beneficiaries in all classes over this period (Flood and Yates, 1987, p. 64) further eroded the population base with ready access to home ownership. The increase in social security recipiency was disproportionately high for women, so that by the 1980's women constituted nearly two-thirds of social security beneficiaries in Australia. (Montague and Stephens, 1985, p. vii) representing in large part the so-called feminisation of poverty. According to Yates, the tenure decision is tied to optimal consumption decisions and
related decisions to save. (Yates, 1982, p. 73) Increasingly, for many groups, the decision to save was not an option.

As introduced in Chapter 1, economic conditions during the 1970's also reduced the options available and attractiveness of alternative tenures. With the demise of the private rental sector came a change in the composition of private rental tenants. The view of private rental as a transitional tenure for young aspirants to home ownership was undermined by the increasing concentration of the long term poor in private rental housing. In fact private tenants were twice as likely to be in serious poverty as other housing groups. (Berry, 1977, p. 54) The increasing concentration of the long term poor in private rental housing occurred despite the argued inability of the tenure to respond flexibly to changing household needs (apart perhaps from locational change).

It is argued that a renewed concern with the gender-neutrality of housing arose as a corollary of the analysis of horizontal and vertical equity in the housing market and consideration of what Ball has called the social relations of tenure. (Ball, 1985) Women were found to be consistently over-represented in marginal households (that is, marginal in terms of housing access) as the feminisation of poverty became more pronounced.

Over the last 5 years a larger amount of both research and policy has focused on the production side of housing rather than the politics of tenure. (Burke and Haywood, 1992, p. 206) This interest has been associated with recent concern about the relationship between urban form and environmental infrastructure and housing costs, as discussed in Chapter 1. It seems evident, though, that a consideration of equity will continue to be one of the central issues both of planning generally and of housing theory and policy given the fact that reliance can no longer be placed on growth to deliver an adequate level of services to individuals. As debate about "user pays" systems of social and physical infrastructure
continues, the issue of intergenerational equity as well as vertical equity takes on increased importance. (Paris,1982,p.279)

In considering the relationship between the development of urban, and particularly housing theory, and feminist theory in Australia it can be seen that the relationship has not been symbiotic. The contribution of feminist theory has not generally been acknowledged by general housing theorists, extending the truth of McDowell's lament of the mid-1980's that "it is questionable whether the fundamental challenge posed by feminist urban research has yet had any affect on the dominant mode of thought."(McDowell,1985,p.10)

While many of the criticisms regarding the development of general housing theory can similarly be attached to developing feminist theory, feminist theory has attempted to look beyond a focus on tenure to the "broader forms of social differentiation sustained in the production, exchange and consumption of housing". (Madigan,Munro and Smith.1990,p.626)

MAIN THEMES/ ISSUES OF FEMINIST URBAN THEORY.

The main themes of feminist theory have evolved over time. Watson, in 1988, categorized five main themes of feminist concern in the previous decade, a time of major importance in the proliferation of a feminist literature. The themes she listed were:

a. 'where' are women?;

b. spatial/ physical dimension;

c. the deconstruction approach;

d. gender, geography and locality studies; and

e. critique of dualisms and dichotomies. (Watson, 1988,p.139-43)
Apart from the addition of the third category, the categorization is similar to that established by McDowell in 1983. (McDowell, 1983, p. 60-61) The categories are not mutually exclusive, much urban research draws from more than one of the categories.

'Where' are women.

Research falling within the first category is symptomatic of much of the early work which aims to rectify the exclusion of women as subjects of urban theory. Although seldom explicitly theoretical, it often fits within the Weberian tradition. (McDowell, 1983, p. 61) It attempts to highlight constraints faced by women in the urban environment, and inequalities in women's access to urban services. The danger of many of these studies is that they focus on women per se rather than a broader context of social or gender relations. Examples of this work include analyses of women's access to housing, mortgage finance, the unmet needs of particular groups such as single mothers, use of transportation facilities and so on.

Spatial/ physical dimensions

The second category subsumes several strands of research, including a feminist critique of the practice and assumptions of architecture and design; the implications of an absence of women from the design professions; and the implications of physical separation between spheres, for example between home and work, in the urban environment. More recent work examines the linkages between social and architectural change.

The built environment under capitalism has been criticised for reification of many of the assumptions surrounding the sexual division of labour in families. The built environment has also been highlighted by the feminist literature as problematic in terms of the inbuilt inertia (urban design and building form), the relationship between design and user needs and the design of public space. Building design and the built environment are
criticised as not relating to women's needs as users, because of the premises of architectural practice and the influence of the built environment in assuming and prescribing the social relations of users.

The critique of architectural practice covers similar ground to recent radical views of planning. Feminists have criticised both the view of architecture as a technical and mystical activity and the tendency for designers to use their own socialisation as a normative value (Boys, 1984, p.27) and to view the built environment as neutral. The lack of (user) participatory design, and neglect in architectural training of teaching designers to talk to users (Matrix, 1984, p.12) is seen as ensuring the continuance of a built environment invested with a traditional set of social relationships and social, economic and political priorities. Architectural practice is also criticised for use of sexist terms such as 'master' bedroom and more widely for perpetuating a built environment which reinforces stereotypic views of women through urban design and graphic design in public space. (Hayden, 1984, p.215-217) Hayden views the culmination of these factors as women's lack of freedom in the city because of considerations of safety and access.

The design of domestic buildings also assumes a stereotypic set of social relations between inhabitants and that the building will be inhabited by a nuclear family. To the latter assumption Roberts attributes blame for the "monotonous, unimaginative" nature of housing stock built for both the public and private sectors in Britain post-War. (Roberts, 1991, p.153) The internal layout of the dwelling including the size of rooms and the design of one purpose spaces, as a physical expression of assumptions about how the space will be used, delimits function and role division. (Rock, Torre and Wright, 1980, p.92) Common examples are the "one-worker" kitchen overlooking the "family room" for supervision of children. A return to "simple planning, spaciousness and ambiguity of use which were once
familiar in the domestic architecture of most cultures" is advocated. (Rabeneck, 1974, p.100)

The tendency of much of the critique of design and the built environment to assume a one-directional linkage between design and the behaviour of inhabitants is somewhat simplistic. Recent work has considered the converse, the effect of social change on the built environment, particularly the impact of women's changing role in society on domestic architecture. An examination of prototypical American house plans for new single family houses for the period 1945 to 1985 suggests an interaction between women's changing roles and internal layout. There is evidence that housing design is providing an increasingly supportive environment for changing social roles. (Hassell and Peatross, 1990, p.22) An examination of model houses in Australia over the last 20 years, however, suggests a reversion to the notion of design as delimiting social relations in suggesting physical separation as a solution to family dysfunction. The advertising of these houses also highlights a persistent sexism. (Dovey, 1992, p.183-4)

Critics have argued for the development of an 'alternative' architecture. They see the present role of architecture as encompassing 'male' values (Fook and Wise, 1985, p.20) and as attuned to the profit motive of capitalism (Matrix, 1984, p.9) rather than people's needs. Such an alternative architecture would seek a balance with 'female' values, including use of round and organic shapes in architecture which have diminished as women became increasingly excluded from building and design (Kennedy, 1981, p.79). Design would proceed from the function of a building and end with its form.

Kennedy proposes a schema of female versus male values in which 'female' values are constructed as user-oriented, ergonomic, functional, flexible, organically ordered, holistic/complex, social and slowly growing. These are opposed to 'male' values of designer-orientation, large scale, formal, fixed,
abstractly-systemised, one dimensional, profit-oriented and quickly constructed. It is claimed that present problems arise from dominance of 'male' values—a balance is required.

Problems inherent in the general use of dualistic systems of classification arise in the classification of male and female principles and the relative positioning of individuals along this continuum. Definitional/functional difficulties arise as a result of the effects of socialisation, experience and biology. Kennedy, for example, suggests that female architects will have undergone male (professional) and female (social) socialisation. (1981, p. 80) Other authors, writing from different perspectives have attempted to avoid problems of biological determinism and recognise the social construction of gender by dealing in the phenomena of a male to female continuum and the notion of fictive men.

The dominance of male values in architecture and design (and, incidentally planning) has been linked to the lack of women employed in these areas and in particular in positions of influence. For example, Perry Berkely has observed that the number of women employed in the field of architecture in the United States increased during World War II, but declined from the 1950's to the 1970's. (1980, p. 211) In Australia, in 1991, the absence of women in the building professional and engineer's occupational category which includes architects was pronounced. They comprised only 4% of that category. (1992(a), p. 212) The danger, however, of assuming a direct correlation between the absence of women and the dominant ideology of architectural practice is that, apart from being simplistic, it assumes an artificial commonality of interest.

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6. Sims suggests that in planning terms a male to female continuum, based on the sexual division of labour will be more appropriate than a dichotomy. The end points of the continuum would be able-bodied males and women engaged full time in child-bearing and rearing. (Sims, 1984, p. 39)

7. Women who, on entering an exclusionary male domain are labelled as men. This notion also implicitly raises the problem of the socialisation of office or position, and the subsequent problems for the aim of affirmative action. (see, for example, Leavitt, 1980(b))
amongst all women regardless of their circumstances and background, that is it focuses on biology not gender.

The third area which has been addressed in recent feminist critiques of architecture has been the design of public space and the physical manifestations of the separation under capitalism of public and private spheres. In this sense, the labels public and private are used in both a physical and value sense. They have been used to represent a simplistic dichotomy between domestic and market labour on the one hand, and public space versus the private or home environment on the other hand. The tendency has existed to polarise these extremes as male:public and female:private. The American literature, in particular, also extends the public/private dichotomy to analysis of the city and suburb. While other researchers have not extended the distinction so directly, they have implicitly linked suburban development to dependence on the sexual division of labour under capitalism, and discussed the disadvantages for women of the physical separation of the private (reproductive/home) and public (work/productive) worlds.

Planners, architects and the State are accused as active practitioners of the separation. (Watson, 1986(a), p.1) They have been aided by improvements in transport technology and planning and finance structures. For example, in Sydney, MSJ Keys Young reported in the mid 1970's that cars and cheap public transport had made the segregation of homes and work possible, and zoning and the structure of home finance, virtually inevitable. (MSJ Keys Young, 1976, p.9, in Forsyth, 1985, p.10)

Saegert, while recognising the artificiality of imagery associated with the urban-suburban dichotomy, also recognises its potency in influencing organisation of time and space. Imagery holds the city to be more "aggressive, assertive, intellectual, powerful, active" and the suburb as "closer to
nature, safe, lacking in seriousness, domestic, a scene of repose."

"The segregation of public and private, male and female domains appears strongest as a guiding fiction, yet one that finds its way into public policy and planning and into women's and men's sense of who they are. This fiction places a burden of a kind of dual reality on many women: double duty at home and work, split loyalties, and too scanty a recognition of achievement in either sphere." (Saegert, 1980, p.111).

A number of examples of housing which seeks to eliminate artificial divides between private and public spheres in both a physical and value sense have been discussed in the feminist literature. The housing models of 19th Century philanthropists and feminists (Hayden, 1978, 1981, 1984; Pearson, 1985) and early 20th Century solutions of the apartment hotel (Ladner Birch, 1985; Gartner, 1986) were pioneering in this regard. Modern examples address the wider role of housing, often considering issues such as economic opportunity, child care and social support and skills development. The role of housing and services as a package is stressed, especially in relation to groups such as single parents. (Leavitt, 1985)

The deconstruction approach.

The third category which Watson distinguishes is the deconstruction approach. This approach "attempts to re-examine traditional concepts and categories from a feminist perspective." (Watson, 1988, p.141) Many authors, for example, have argued that the meaning of the home is different for women than men, based on the home as their work environment under the sexual division of labour under capitalism. For women, the home has meanings for self identity and confidence that are not shared by men. (Saegert and Winkel, 1980) Their greater commitment to household-located activities implies a greater emotional and psychological investment in the meaning of home.
which extends the basic economic and practical elements of housing to an expectation of housing as a locus of safety and financial, emotional, and physical security and security of occupancy. In a practical sense, then, "it is only when secure housing is assured, that women can begin to settle in every sense, making decisions about employment, children’s schools and job training. Only then do they 'put down roots'—to lose a home is extremely painful, especially as women's homes are also their work places." (Barclay et al., 1991 in Cass, 1991, p.4)

Gender, geography and locality studies.

The last two themes listed by Watson—gender, geography and locality studies and a critique of dualisms—derive from a Marxist-feminist tradition and are closely linked. Unlike the work described in the first three categories, the Marxist analysis does not focus on the private sphere of women's lives. It seeks an explanation of "the historical analysis of the origins of women's oppression and the privatisation of family life in capitalist industrialisation" (McDowell, 1983, p.61) and to explain linkages between urban structure and changes in the social organisation of production and reproduction.

Much of the Marxist-feminist debate in urban studies in the last decade had as its origins a need to reconcile the theoretical gulf between the implications of radical and Marxist feminism, which as discussed above have quite different interpretations as to the primacy of patriarchy and capitalism—gender-based and economically-based explanations, and a desire to provide a neat fit between Marxist and feminist theory.

Authors who have asserted the necessity of class-based as well as gender-based analysis include McDowell (1983, p.69), Bowlby et al (1982, p.714) and Leavitt (1985, p.158) "Neither class nor gender should be ignored, but the two integrated in an analysis that has the changing relations between production and reproduction at its heart". (McDowell, 1983, p.69) The interaction of production and reproduction needs to be
considered as part of a single process to allow for change over time in the relations between women's waged and domestic labour.

Critique of dualisms and dichotomies

The need for consideration of production and reproduction as part of a single process is also founded on criticism of the use of dichotomies such as production and reproduction which suggest an independent relation between the two. Within these polarised systems, women are commonly seen as relating to the private/reproductive/home/consumption sphere while men relate to the production/public/work sphere. (Watson, 1988, p.143) Such dualisms, as well as being simplistic, have been jettisoned as being part of an overly rationalistic male model of social science which artificially orders the world to create a false appearance of certainty or unity (O'Brien, 1992, p.65) and imposes a view of one pole as the norm. In this case the norm is set as the male sphere. (Acker, 1989, p.239)

Various studies have attempted to overcome the problems implied by use of dualisms by thinking in terms of a continuum. For example, Watson and Austerberry's study of women's homelessness (1986) conceptualises homelessness as one end point of a home to homelessness continuum. Conceptualisation of polarised values as end points on a continuum assumes inbuilt linkage and allows for movement to any point along the continuum over time (Simms, 1984, p.135-136) In this way, the sociological adoption of a female to male continuum, discussed above, seeks to focus on relationships between men and women, or gender relations, and acknowledge that the meaning of womanhood is culturally and temporally specific. (Delmar, 1986, p.28)

8. Delmar, however, warns of the subversive power of an associated deconstruction in the meaning of womanhood to also dilute political potency (1986, p.28)
"We create the community, so you can create the family."

From: Landcom creating communities advertising campaign.
FEMINIST ANALYSIS OF HOUSING

Feminist analysis of housing has been a relatively recent development, despite evidence of an historical recognition of the importance of housing for the quality of women's lives and access to employment and other opportunities. In 1986, Watson advanced a general feminist analysis of housing in Australia. (1986(a)) She commented on the still-existent need for a "systematic feminist analysis, redefinition and reconstruction" of issues related to gender. Within the housing system she appealed for analysis of the processes operating at an appropriate spatial level which serve to produce and reproduce patriarchal relations. (1986(a), p.1)

Themes developed in the feminist housing literature which will be considered below are housing and the family; housing, the family and the labour market; women and dependency and domestic labour as production and consumption.

Housing and the Family.

The analysis of housing has primarily been based on a Marxist-feminist theoretical interpretation. The central tenet of feminist housing theory is that in Australia, and other advanced capitalist countries, particularly Britain, both housing policy and ideology have been based on an assumption of housing as available through a male wage. For example, housing finance for owner occupation has been calculated on a universal assumption of an equivalent full-time adult male wage, despite differences in earnings between full-time male and female workers which will be discussed in Chapter 5. In essence this assumption marginalises a number of groups as well as women. Young people earning a junior wage will be indirectly discriminated against on the basis of that assumption alone,

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10. Indirect discrimination is defined as arising through imposition of invalid assumptions to a population subgroup, and will be discussed further in relation to the access of divorced women to the housing market in the next chapter.
the unemployed, social security recipients, low income earners and those with any other characteristics or disabilities which affect their labour force participation or income earning potential. With structural change, an unlikely return to 'full' employment, an increasingly complex pattern of labour force participation and the level of social and economic change discussed in the introductory chapter, the assumption of housing as accessible through a full-time male adult wage is increasingly unrealistic.

The thesis of housing as accessible through a male wage, with an associated assumption of his wage as providing for a family household, is founded on analysis of the policy of provision in the public housing sector, policy bias towards nuclear households in provision of statutory loans for owner occupancy in Australia and preferential treatment of traditional households in the private rental sector. Given the high level of real subsidy to owner occupation historically in Australia this implies a major gender as well as class-bias in public spending.

The housing market in Australia is heavily dominated by owner occupied housing. This dominance increased post World War II in association with an emphasis on increasing housing stock. (Flood and Yates, 1987, p.87) The proportion of owner occupied dwellings increased from 53% of occupied private dwellings in 1947 to 70% in 1961, a proportion which has been constant since then. (ABS, 1992(a), p.314)

11. Given links between the male wage, the family and owner occupation discussed below, all of these groups have a reduced level of access to owner occupied housing. The notion of disability is another good example of the operation of dichotomous systems of classification. Ability is established as the norm, and disability, being opposite to the norm, as marginal.
12. where the notion of full employment post-War was defined in relation to male workers only.
13. as it was for the 98,997 women now aged over 55 who didn't marry in the post-War period. (ABS, 1993(a))
14. These points will be argued in Chapter 3 as elements of discrimination affecting the access of divorced women to the housing market.
15. Salty images of young marrieds living in garages in far-flung suburbs such as Punchbowl and Canterbury and scrumping for building materials, which were in short supply to post War, to owner build their homes, have been popularised in recent years through the nostalgic eyes of the next generation - the baby boomers, by Australian authors such as Helen Townsend.
The tenurial domination of owner occupancy has been explicitly linked to the nuclear family composition, both in Australia and elsewhere. In the United States policy originating in the 1940's which favoured home ownership was blatantly racist as well as sexist in specifically excluding white women of all classes, who were expected to gain access to housing through their husbands; white elderly working and lower middle-classes; minority men; minority women of all classes; and minority elderly of all classes. (Hayden, 1984, p.55)

The linkage of owner occupancy to the detached housing form as well as the nuclear family has been widely discussed in the feminist literature and has been an enduring characteristic of the Australian housing market. In 1991, 78% of two parent families and 77% of couples, compared to only 59% of lone person households and 52% of single parent families were owners or purchasers. (1993(a),Table B42) Ninety two per cent of two parent families, 81% of couples, 76% of one parent families and 55% of lone person families lived in detached dwellings. (ABS, 1993(a),Table B44). Almost ninety per cent of owners and 92.5% of purchasers lived in detached dwellings. (ABS, 1992(a), p.315) The strength of this association implies a skewed provision of both explicit and implicit subsidy to the nuclear family through encouragement of owner occupation and through a high level of public subsidy implicit in the development of urban release areas on the urban fringe.

As discussed above, the connection between the detached dwelling and the nuclear family has been analyzed by feminist urban theory as fostering a physical and ideological separation.

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17. enduring because of the historical dominance of the detached dwelling, particularly as the most appropriate form of housing for child-rearing and the limited impact of recent policy measures to encourage a more consolidated urban form. Current estimates indicate that the most optimistic estimates of medium density construction over the next 10 years would result in an overall increase in medium density housing of only 5% above the current level of 30%. (DOE, 1993)
19. as discussed briefly in the introductory chapter of this thesis.
of the spheres of reproduction and production to the economic and psychological disadvantage of women, and inhibiting integration of work force and domestic responsibilities.

The growth of owner occupancy post War was also associated with pro-natal government policy in Australia, a re-assertion of "traditional" values\(^{20}\) and promulgation of a consumption ethos. Women as "homemakers" were responsible for over 80% of consumer spending decisions, (Game and Pringle, 1979, p.9) and were coaxed back to the family by dint of the dangers of "maternal deprivation" and to the kitchen with promises of "fitted kitchens" and modern household appliances, in their dusted off and pseudo-scientific role of home manager. (Hayden, 1984, p.34) The inclusion of more radical items from the reconstruction agenda following World War II was subverted by conservative elements such as the Church. (Allport, 1984, p.7,12)

In the lexicon of advertising of the time, the trim young housewife in the crisp, frilled apron, high heels and carefully waved hair, leaning dreamily on her vacuum cleaner was advised patronally by the Bank of NSW....

"Running a home is no small job, even with the help of modern equipment. That is why so many young wives have a household cheque account...see the Manager of your local branch..." (Australian Homemaker, October 1954, p.73 in Spearitt, 1978, p.102)

The role of owner occupancy as a conservative and stabilizing influence, imbuing individual workers with a work ethic of benefit to capital has been more widely addressed in mainstream Marxist housing theory. (Harvey, 1978, p.15) Ownership encourages the spread of economistic orientations among workers, and functions as a mechanism of social control. (Berry, 1981, p.6; Forrest and Williams, 1984, p.1769) The working class is divided along ownership lines. Debt encumbrance, necessitated by owner

\(^{20}\) although whether these values were traditional, or particular to that period, is open to conjecture, as indicated in the Chapter 1.
occupancy, at a broader scale facilitates separation of the political and economic spheres. (Berry, 1981, p.6)

Conversely, 'the home' has been viewed as an escape from the rigours of capitalist production, as a non-material haven for the male worker and his family. (Hayden, 1984) While home ownership has been seen as a palliative for family dysfunction (Watson, 1988, p.11-12, cited in Chapter 3) and as a facilitator of social stability (Bassett and Short, 1980, p.209-210) paradoxically, changing household structures, in concert with economic conditions and increased rates of unemployment, have been seen as causing a plateauing of owner occupancy rates since the 1960's. (Cass, 1991, p. 10)

The linkage between household composition, the individual dwelling and consumption is still discernible. The consumption ethos, in terms of the energy costs of the detached dwelling form is now only gaining a minority recognition, but the ownership of household appliances still increases with household income (ABS, 1992(b), p.40) and is higher for households in detached housing. (ABS, 1992(a), p.320) Access to a household telephone is considerably higher for couple or nuclear families (around 97%) compared to single person and single parent households, (ABS, 1992(a), p.320) as is access to private transport. Whereas 19.2% of single persons and 35.6% of lone person households (no doubt boosted by the proportion of the elderly in such households) did not own a car, the same was true of only 2.7% of nuclear families and 6.7% of couples. (ABS, 1993(a), p.21)

The dominance of home ownership within the Australian housing market has produced an inflexible system which cannot easily adapt to changing household needs (Watson, 1988, p.75) and which, within the cultural, economic and political context within it operates provides tenure alternatives of considerably less

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21. It is claimed that the growth of owner occupancy post WWII was seen as essential in re-establishing the stability shattered by both the depression and the war. (ABS, 1992(b), p.12)
economic and practical attraction than owner occupation, and little alternative to the detached dwelling. From an economic viewpoint "almost anyone who opts, by choice or necessity, for not being an owner-occupier is almost invariably acting in a way which is demonstrably irrational in terms of his own long-term scope for maximizing real wealth and income." (Patterson, 1975, p.28 in Berry, 1977, p.55, my emphasis)

Unlike some other advanced capitalist countries such as Sweden, where untrammeled movement between tenures traditionally occurred in response to the changing social and economic circumstances of households, (Young, 1986, p.17) in Australia significant cost disincentives, which may differ by State, operate in addition to ideological prejudice. This has commonly resulted in a stereotypic one way housing career (Kendig and Paris with Anderton, 1987 in National Housing Strategy, 1991, p.8) which involves movement from the parental tenure to private rental accommodation and then to owner occupied housing in association with, or in preparation for, child bearing and rearing. The notion of a housing career is, however, increasingly open to challenge because of the changing housing context as discussed in Chapter 1 and a growing number of non-traditional households. While the lack of flexibility in the Australian housing system is commonly attributed to the lack of alternatives in terms of tenure and housing type, the secondary point that flexibility and mobility are also impaired by the cost penalties of geographic movement and movement between tenures is not so widely acknowledged.

The notion of a housing career, with the assumption of owner occupancy as associated with the nuclear family, clearly represents the tendency of modernist theory to universalize a dominant trend. The housing career led to the policy imprimatur that other household forms and tenures were transitory, and therefore did not constitute an important policy focus. In

21. For example, legal costs and stamp duty for owner occupancy and bond and connection costs for private rental.
fact, over a third of households at any point in time, were marginalised by this assumption.

The dominance of home ownership is of particular importance to divorcing women in that it increases the importance of the ideology of family law in distributing an indivisible (unless sold or bought out) asset, which usually constitutes the principle marital asset at divorce. In Britain, the identification of property as a key issue in divorce was associated with rising rates of owner occupancy in the 1980's. (Symon, 1993, p. 159) In Australia, with a much longer tradition of tenure dominance by home ownership, the linkage has been more enduring and of great popular interest. Although it has been popularly assumed that women as the custodians of children after divorce have access to the family home, it is shown in Chapter 4 that this is not necessarily the case. It must be acknowledged that in a post industrial society where career assets are becoming more important than property as an asset, particularly given the decreasing age at divorce, (see Chapter 3), in many ways the distribution of the marital home is of less importance than the ability of husbands to retain the main income-earning assets (see Chapter 5).

Housing, the family and the labour market.

Given a capitalist system of housing provision, with a minimal 5% intervention of a public housing sector, linkages between the housing and labour markets are crucial. Linkages for women are mediated by the still-dominant of female domestic responsibility and the sexual division of labour within marriage, which operates most strongly when children are involved. Domestic responsibility often shapes or usurps women’s role in the labour market, demonstrably to their long term disadvantage on divorce. As discussed in Chapter 5 the most common reason for women leaving the work-force is to undertake additional domestic responsibility, usually child
care. Irregardless of their marital status women spend more time than men on domestic duties. (Cass, 1991, p.3)

Women's independent position in the housing market is linked inexorably to their position in the labour market. It will be shown in Chapter 5 that despite legislation aimed to provide equal pay to men and women, a substantial wage gap still exists. While the usual explanation for women's lower rates of pay is that women are more likely to work part time than men, figures for male and female wages within the same industrial and occupational groupings show considerable disparity. The labour market is also very sex-segregated both industrially and occupationaly, with evidence that the sexual division of labour in the home carries over to the workforce. This allows considerable potential for gender-linked systems of job evaluation and classification, which are bound to become more pronounced with new systems of industrial relations and job evaluation currently being instigated in the labour markets of New South Wales and other States. (Burton, 1988) Given their lower union membership, women are also potentially disadvantaged in systems of negotiation, although it has also been widely claimed that the union movement as a whole has been either neglectful or tardy in recognising the needs of their members and thus of little assistance in improving their situation in the labour market, particularly in advocating child care needs, which usually continue to be the responsibility of the female worker even when she is in paid employment. (O'Donnell, 1983, p.279). These issues will be further explored in Chapter 5, particularly in relation to divorced women.

The sexual division of labour within households forms part of the explanation for the relations between the spheres of production and reproduction. Although the point has been made that women may gain a source of non-material happiness from their participation in the non-market sphere, particularly in relation to child raising (Roberts, 1991,) the penalties are
material when the marriage ends. Satisfying as they may be, the (possibly) on going intangibles accruing from participation in the domestic sphere do not pay the bills! As will be seen from the next chapter, one of the most distressing aspects of women's role as child carers is the chronic under-valuation of their role by both the Family Law system and by the women themselves. Their role as care givers and child minders, and marital/domestic cement within the economy of marriage is generally seen as less worthy a contribution to marriage than participation within the paid labour market. Reform of matrimonial property law could contribute to the improvement of women's status by recognising the value of women's work and the context of their work as an economic and legal system which is unsympathetic to the family and community benefit deriving from their work. (Evatt, 1991, p.1)

Dependency, the family and the labour force.

The dependency of women, implying their access to housing through a male income, was legitimised by labour market law. Until 1966, the Commonwealth Public Service prohibited married women from any permanent employment (Scutt and Graham, 1984, p.93) and not until 1974 was the family wage component discarded from minimum wage calculations and a equal minimum wage provided for men and women under legislation. (Funder, 1993(b), p.21) Despite the dominance of female-headed households as social security recipients, in this area women are also categorized and defined in relation to men, (Turner, 1981, p.176) perpetuating a rhetoric of dependency.

The concept of the family wage, which survived in Australia from 1907 to 1974 was used by employers and trade unionists to marginalise women workers regardless of their circumstances. The concept has been used to argue that that women (especially married women whom it is assumed already have access to a male wage) have a lesser right to employment, that they are "taking jobs away from men". (Roberts, 1991, p.8) This attitude is
subject to sporadic reincarnation, particularly at times of economic hardship, despite the obvious occupational and industrial segregation of the labour force by sex, different patterns of work-force participation and (sometimes) work-force motivations of men and women.

With an increasing instability in traditional family structures, Freeman prescribes the need for women's (and by extension, children's) welfare to be much more closely tied to labour market participation rather than dependency. She views the labour market as "more reliable and accessible than marriage as a means of economic support." (Freeman, 1980, p. 16) Her point is well-taken, with evidence that women who have had continued labour force participation over the life of a marriage fare much better economically on its demise. (see Chapter 5) Conversely, women who have undertaken unpaid work for the collective benefit of the family during marriage are not compensated for the ongoing economic effects of such withdrawal from the work-force by either maintenance payments awarded at distribution or property settlements. (Funder, 1986(b), p. 98, Weitzman, 1980-81)

Housing and domestic labour: production or consumption?

The idea that domestic labour should be viewed as production within the capitalist economy (Vanek, 1974, in Watson, 1986) and allocated a component of the national GDP has been advanced within the feminist literature. Feminists have, however, in discussing the changing relations between production and reproduction implicitly tended to view housing as consumption. It has also been argued in the mainstream housing literature, however, primarily by Pugh (1986, p. 34) that if housing was viewed as production (according to its role in the reproduction of labour) that domestic labour would be accorded greater social and economic recognition. Recognition of domestic

23. The housing as production argument is also mostly lost in general housing research. Hall, for example, considers that for most capital, housing is a cost. (1981, p. 64)
labour as production would likely also result in greater recognition for the role of carers and child minders in the case of marital breakdown.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented elements of feminist and mainstream housing theory which attempt to explain women's place within the urban environment and the housing system. For women, housing access is mediated through a male partner's wage and the primary determinant of women's access owner-occupied housing continues to be the presence of a partner. For men, access is controlled much more directly through the labour-market. (Munro and Smith, 1989, p.6) The absence of children aids young people in attaining owner-occupancy, as does a secure income.

The next chapter will focus on the characteristics of, and responses to divorce which will affect access to both income and housing.