“Sex on the Hustings”: Labor and the construction of ‘the woman voter’ in two federal elections (1983, 1993)

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis is the result of original research and has not been submitted for a higher degree at any other university institution.
Synopsis

The basic aim of this thesis is to describe and analyse how ‘the woman voter’ was constructed within Labor discourse during the Hawke/Keating years. My domain of investigation is electoral politics, in particular the federal election campaigns of 1983 and 1993. These elections flank the beginning and the end of the Labor decade, a period of great significance to both the development of Labor politics specifically and Australian politics in general. The elections of 1983 and 1993 were campaigns in which the Party made a concerted effort to attract women’s votes. Through a reading of the various texts associated with these two campaigns, I explore the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as a ‘new’ political subject position within Labor discourse.

The dominant influences on the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as a new subject position were Labor discourse and feminism, or more precisely Labor discourse affected by the incursion of feminism from the 1970s onwards. This thesis describes and analyses how this subject position has been produced and reproduced within Labor discourse. The gender gap research developed for the 1983 federal election constitutes one of the more important technologies that work to construct ‘the woman voter’ within Labor discourse. A reading of the texts associated with the 1983 campaign reveals the character of ‘the woman voter’ as a caring figure. However, as the Labor decade progressed, ‘the woman voter’ is articulated in Labor discourse as a more complex figure, focused on her responsibilities both in the home and at paid work. A reading of various texts associated with the 1993 election campaign shows that ‘the woman voter’ is constructed as a carer-worker; this subject position is broadly consonant with the objectives liberal, economic government. Certain modifications within this basic subject position can be observed in Labor’s anti-GST campaign materials, which made an appeal to the woman voter as consumer.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table of Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements and declaration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synopsis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materials, theories and methodologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defining Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firm allies and natural enemies: the relationship between Labor and the feminist movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counting on women: gender gap research and the 1983 federal election</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The woman voter’ as carer-worker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The woman voter’ as consumer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

Three weeks before the 1983 federal election, journalist Douglas Wilkie wrote an opinion piece in Sydney’s *Sun Herald* newspaper entitled “Sex on the Hustings”. In this piece, he marvelled at the growing number of newspaper reports on the personality and sex appeal of the newly elected Labor leader Bob Hawke and his Liberal Party opponent Malcolm Fraser.¹ He saw this as a clear sign that both parties were attempting to woo the women’s vote: “who’d have thought that sex-appeal would run away with the votes?”, Wilkie wrote (1983: 9). This emphasis on the sex appeal and personality of the two candidates signals a belief on the part of the media and the major parties that the votes of Australian women would have a significant influence on the result of the 1983 federal election.

The federal election of 1983 saw Bob Hawke elected Prime Minister and marked the beginning of what commentators term “the Labor decade”. It also marked the beginning of what I see as modern Labor’s interest in women voters and women’s issues. This interest would continue, albeit with different levels of intensity, throughout the Labor decade. By the term “Labor decade”, I refer to the era beginning with Bob Hawke’s 1983 election victory and ending with Paul Keating’s first and last election victory in 1993. The significance of this period - both to the Labor Party and to Australian politics in general - should not be underestimated. It was during the Labor decade that the Party:

... won five successive federal elections and presided over a substantial restructuring of the Australian economy toward deregulation and privatisation, and of the Australian state toward a peculiar combination of
nationalist republicanism and the articulation into the political system of new social movement interests such as feminism, multiculturalism and environmentalism (Burgmann & Milner, 1997: 53).

The inclusion of ‘feminism’ amongst the other new social movements that intersected with Labor during this period is important to this thesis. In the early 1970s, the Labor Party recognised that the rising feminist movement could become a potential source of new votes. The prospect that an emerging ‘woman’s vote’ might advantage Labor was a catalyst for Labor’s engagement with the organised feminist movement. During the Hawke-Keating years, the Labor Party formed important relationships with sections of the organised feminist movement, particularly groups like the Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL). In addition, this period saw an increase in the numbers of feminists within the Party and the growth of the femocracy. It was these women – feminist activists from groups like WEL, Labor feminists and the femocrats - who were able to inform policy and develop campaign strategies for the Party throughout the Labor decade, but particularly for the elections of 1983 and 1993. Despite these productive relationships between Labor and parts of the feminist movement, it was never simply an easy movement of feminist ideas, however moderate, into Labor politics. Rather there was a process of translation, in which feminist demands were shaped to synthesise with the Labor politics at that particular moment. Hence, certain feminist ideas were absorbed and rearticulated within the confines of Labor discourse.

In this thesis, I show how the subject position of ‘the woman voter’ was shaped by Labor discourse during this crucial period in the Party’s history. One of the more important shifts within Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating years was the strategic connection with new social movements such as feminism. Thus, ‘the
woman voter’ emerges as a new subject position shaped mostly by Labor discourse, but also influenced by a particular kind of feminist agenda.

**Aims of the thesis**

The basic aim of this thesis is to describe and analyse how the new subject position of ‘the woman voter’ was constructed within Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating years. My domain of investigation is “the electoral competition of political parties” during federal election campaigns (Rose, 1996b: 145). The federal elections of 1983 and 1993 are the major campaigns of interest. These elections flank the beginning and the end of the Labor decade. They were also elections in which the Party made a concerted effort to attract women’s votes. Through a reading of the various texts associated with these two campaigns, I explore the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as a ‘new’ political subject, or more precisely, a new subject position within Labor discourse.

Implicit in my analysis is the recognition that ‘women’ are not a stable or easily definable category of persons. As Mueller comments, it was the dream of the suffragists, in the United States, Britain and Australia, that women would vote as a bloc and thus introduce “new issues, new candidates, and new directions” into mainstream politics (1988: 25). This notion of a “women’s voting bloc” depends largely on a vision of women as a “unitary and natural category” of persons with shared and specific experiences and interests (O’Connor, 1999: 34; Mueller, 1988: 26). The suffrage movement attempted to mobilise women voters based on this group identification (Mueller, 1988: 264). However, women have never voted as a
“sex class” (Nash, 1998: 101). Indeed, the idea that ‘women’ are an easily discernable and definable societal group is unsustainable. Both supporters and critics of women’s enhanced political identification have attacked the idea that ‘women’ are a unified and stable group of persons. Rather, the category ‘women’ is fractured along the lines of class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and countless other trajectories of identity.

The most thoroughgoing critique of this notion of ‘women as category’ has emerged out of the work of feminists and other commentators who draw on post-structuralism, critical race studies and post-modernist theory. Indeed, there is an extensive and well-established feminist project contesting “the eternal natural object ‘woman’ or ‘women’” (Morris, 1988: 54). Furthermore, theorists like Nikolas Rose, building on the work of Michel Foucault, have focused on how subjects are constructed in multiple and shifting ways across different discursive contexts. Rose argues that:

Human beings are not the unified subjects of some coherent regime of government that produces persons in the form in which it dreams. On the contrary, they live their lives in a constant movement across different practices that subjectify them in different ways. Within these different practices, persons are addressed as different sorts of human being, presupposed to be different sorts of human being, acted upon as if they were different sorts of human being (1996: 35).

If we accept that ‘women’ does not correspond to “any unified and unifying essence”, then a key issue becomes how ‘women’ are constructed as a category of persons within different discursive contexts (Mouffe, 1992: 373). Instead of
positioning ‘women’ as a “natural”, “predetermined” and unvaried category of persons (Pettman, 1992: 2), this thesis looks at the ways in which ‘women’ are differentially positioned as subjects in discourse, often in “contradictory and irrational” ways (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 54). Fundamentally, I am interested in how subject positions are constructed by “certain discursive deployments” (Prado, 1995: 116). Such an approach requires a practical and technical kind of analysis. Hence, this thesis will focus directly on the practices that situate women in particular “regimes of the person” (Rose, 1996: 25), practices that circulate within various political, electoral, policy and governmental discourses.

Hence, the work of post-structural and Foucauldian theorists are an important influence on my analysis. Equally, however, I utilise the work of various feminists working within a number of theoretical traditions. Indeed, whilst my theoretical and methodological framework is largely influenced by Foucault and Rose, I have adopted a more pluralist approach to utilizing secondary materials. For example, in Chapters 2 and 3, I make extensive use of the work of many commentators on the Labor Party, party politics and gender politics in Australia whose theoretical approaches are distinctly un-Foucauldian. This work provides some important insights in relation to questions of gender and electoral politics, questions that have oftentimes been ignored in work utilising theories of governmentality. Thus, my use of poststructuralist theory is complemented by broader feminist accounts of the State, party politics, new social movements and so forth.
Chapter summaries

In my first chapter, “Materials, theories and methodologies”, I set down the terms and conditions of my analysis. First of all, I define ‘the Australian Labor Party’ and ‘a federal election campaign’. In addition, I provide some background on the 1983 and 1993 elections. I then explore the various theoretical concepts that frame my thesis. In my analysis, I draw heavily upon the work of Michel Foucault, Nikolas Rose and other theorists inspired by their work, such as Mitchell Dean. The kinds of theoretical concepts coming out of Foucauldian analysis that are relevant to my thesis include ‘discourse analysis’, ‘subject-constitution’, ‘governmentality’, ‘liberalism’ and ‘economic government’; these concepts are described and some analysis is given. I also introduce other analytical concepts that may not be in the Foucauldian tradition but are important to feminist theory, in particular the dichotomies of sameness/difference, public/private, class/gender and production/consumption.

Adopting a discursive analysis requires a certain methodological approach to my empirical materials. This chapter addresses how I obtained certain primary materials and how these primary materials are treated in my analysis. Furthermore, on the question of methodology, I explore my unique position as critic of Labor discourse, a participant in Labor culture and an active Labor feminist. Hence, this chapter provides the theoretical and methodological framework for my investigation of the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as a new political subject position within Labor discourse.

My second chapter, entitled “Defining Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating years”, is an exploration of the shape and content of Labor discourse. I offer a description and critique of Labor politics in its general form in preparation for an
analysis of Labor discourse as it emerged during the Hawke-Keating years, a seminal period for the Party's politics and culture. Within the context of my discussion of the Party under Hawke and Keating, I explore Labor's relationship with new social movements, the articulation of consensus politics and the distinctions between and continuities with the Whitlam period of government. More generally, I explore the various definitions of 'liberalism', as a political ideology but more importantly as form and mentality of government (Dean, 1999: 51). I continue to draw on Foucauldian theories of 'governmentality', canvassed in Chapter 1, in a discussion of Labor discourse as an ethics of government. Such an analysis is essential to my exploration of how the new subject position of 'the woman voter' emerged within Labor discourse.

Chapter 3, entitled “Firm allies and natural enemies: the relationship between Labor and the feminist movement”, extends my discussion of the shape and content of Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating years. A key feature of Labor politics is its masculinism; this is not addressed in Chapter 2 but it is a central aspect of my analysis in Chapter 3. Here I discuss the ethos of 'mateship' and 'egalitarianism' as it circulates within Labor discourse. The firmly entrenched nature of Labor's masculinism has meant that the Party's relationship with the feminist movement has been a precarious one. However, during the Labor decade the Party did enjoy a tentative relationship with sections of the organised feminist movement, a relationship forged in the process of developing both government and Party policy on women's issues. In this chapter, I attempt to define the modern feminist movement in Australia and its attitude to mainstream political parties like Labor. I focus on two debates that I argue structured feminist attitudes and involvement with Labor, namely, the class/gender divide and the question of feminist methods. I explore
these debates with reference to the (supposed) divisions within the feminist movement, specifically between the Women's Electoral Lobby and the broader women's liberation movement of the time. Finally, the femocracy is defined and analysed in the context of Labor's influence on both its emergence and its development. The position and role of Labor feminists is also touched upon, in preparation for a more extensive discussion in Chapter 4. Both the femocrats and Labor feminists occupied a vital position - situated between government, Party and the feminist movement - in terms of developing women's policy and advocating a kind of feminist reform from within government. An understanding of all these issues provides an important backdrop to my exploration of how a certain feminist politics influenced Labor discourse generally and the construction of ‘the woman voter’ specifically.

Thus, in the first three chapters of this thesis I attempt to describe and analyse the dominant discursive influences on the construction of ‘the woman voter’, namely through the incursion of feminism into Labor discourse. In Chapter 4, entitled “Counting on women: gender gap research in the 1983 federal election”, I describe and analyse how this subject position has been produced and reproduced within Labor discourse. Here I focus on the technical and the practical, the ways in which ‘the woman voter’ is rendered into discourse as a visible and calculable subject position. In the context of my discussion here, the gender gap research developed for the 1983 federal election constitutes one of the more important technologies that works to construct ‘the woman voter’ within Labor discourse. This gender gap research combines both political numbers and experiential knowledge produced largely by Labor feminists. As a foundation for this analysis of the gender gap as a technology, I explore the sameness/difference divide and its impact on the
conventional construction of ‘the woman voter’ before the development and deployment of gender gap research in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The conventional view of ‘the woman voter’ as apolitical and conservative posed a real problem for Labor feminists who were pushing for internal reform in the Party. I will show how Labor feminists used gender gap research as a persuasive tool in their attempts to convince the Party leadership that women voters were worth targeting in election campaigns. Thus, Chapter 4, with its focus on certain technologies of subjection, provides the technical basis for an exploration, in the final two chapters, of the content of ‘the woman voter’ as a new political subject position within Labor discourse.

In Chapter 5, my primary focus is on the nature of ‘the woman voter’ as a new subject position within Labor discourse and her emerging character during the Labor decade. Entitled “‘The woman voter’ as carer-worker”, this chapter illustrates how ‘the woman voter’ was articulated and rearticulated in various ways throughout the Labor decade. In the 1983 election campaign, ‘the woman voter’ was constructed and addressed largely as a caring figure, concerned with the security and prosperity of her home and family; a reading of the 1983 gender gap research reflects this. However, there were significant shifts within this subject position as the Labor decade progressed. By the 1993 federal election, ‘the woman voter’ emerged as a carer and a worker, or more precisely, a ‘carer-worker’; a reading of various policy texts produced at this time (including the second National Agenda for Women, the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ report Women in Australia and Labor’s child care policy) illustrates this. I explore the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker with reference to the public/private divide, namely how this divide has informed articulations and interpretations of the needs and desires of ‘the woman voter’.
voter’. This modification within the subject position of ‘the woman voter’ – from simply ‘carer’ to ‘carer-worker’ - is broadly consonant with the political rationalities of Labor discourse as a form of advanced liberal, economic government. One of the often stated objectives of the Party, as explored in Chapter 2, has been to encourage social justice for disadvantaged groups whilst ensuring economic prosperity for the nation. In their role as carer-workers, women were able to contribute to the market whilst maintaining their private responsibilities in the home. In this way, the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker did not substantially disrupt the working lives of men or the gendered division of labour.

In the final chapter, I extend my discussion of ‘the woman voter’ as a new subject position within Labor discourse, this time with an exclusive focus on the 1993 election campaign. Entitled “The woman voter’ as consumer”, this chapter shows how the Labor Party sought to appeal to the ‘the woman voter’ as consumer. The construction of ‘the woman voter’ as consumer can be viewed as a modification within the more established subject position of carer-worker. This innovation is consistent with Labor’s sponsorship of “co-operative capitalism” (Johnson, 2000: 30), which is itself broadly consonant with Labor discourse as form of liberal, economic government. In this chapter, I also explore Labor’s 1993 election campaign. This was Paul Keating’s first campaign as Prime Minister and I discuss how it was necessary that he undergo a particular transformation to distance himself from his persona as Treasurer. I then engage in a reading of Labor’s anti-GST campaign and how ‘the woman voter’ was constructed as consumer. I provide some background about the gendered character of consumption and the various connections between women, practices of consumption and sites of consumption. It is largely through these practices and places of consumption that ‘the woman voter’ as consumer is
constituted. I argue that one of the ways in which this subject-constitution took place was through the use of images of “ordinary women” and images of “everyday life” in Labor’s anti-GST campaign.

In sum, this thesis utilises certain analytical concepts (such as Labor discourse, feminism and liberalism) and certain conceptual dichotomies (specifically sameness/difference and public/private) in its analysis of how the ‘new’ political subject position of ‘the woman voter’ is constructed within Labor discourse during a certain time (the Hawke-Keating years) and within a certain discursive context (the federal election campaigns of 1983 and 1993). It focuses on particular technologies and regimes of subjection, how new subject positions (such as ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker and consumer) are formulated in ways that are consistent with the precepts and operations of liberal, economic government.

1 Such stories included “Sexy Bob mobbed by two faithfuls” and “Sexy Mal a hit with the girls” (Michelle Marr (1983) Daily Telegraph, 17 February 1983, 3).
2 Writing within the American context, Mueller comments that the bulk of social and political science research into women’s voting patterns confirms that we are “not a homogenous bloc” and our political orientation varies “depending on age, marital status, and workforce participation” (1988: 51). Similarly, Susan Ryan stated on numerous occasions that “women are not a homogenous group in electoral terms” (1982a: 24).
3 In his memoirs, Peter Walsh states that “the assertion that Australian women are ‘unanimous’ about anything is patently ridiculous” (1996: 250).
Chapter 1

Materials, theories and methodologies

This chapter will explore the questions of definition, methodology and theory that frame this thesis. It will define two key terms: ‘the Australian Labor Party’, emphasizing its organizational complexity; and ‘a federal election campaign’, including background on the 1983 and 1993 elections. The chapter will then explain why discourse analysis and associated concepts such as ‘subject-constitution’ are helpful theoretical tools for exploring and analysing Labor discourse. Adopting a discursive analysis involves taking up a certain methodological approach; this approach will be outlined. On the methodological side, this chapter will also address the question of my simultaneous positions as critic of the Labor Party, Labor feminist and Labor Party member. Finally, the chapter outlines the challenges and the potential of adopting certain Foucauldian theories and concepts, including those related to governmentality, liberalism and economic government, in a study of Labor politics. In addition to theoretical materials that draw upon Foucault, I also introduce analytical concepts of relevance to my argument such as the dichotomies of sameness/difference, public/private, class/gender and production/consumption. The limits and intentions of this study will be outlined, with the complexities of the various substantive issues drawn out in the chapters that follow.
The question of ‘how to write’ is an urgent one for me. I am undertaking an academic analysis of a political organization in which I am intimately involved. I have been a member of the Labor Party since 1992. I have held positions at the branch level. I am a member of a State policy committee and I am formally a member of the NSW Socialist Left. For three years I held a position on the National Committee of an affiliated organization, EMILY’s List. I am currently a member of the Party’s National Policy Committee. In light of this involvement, the issue of ‘loyalty’ to the Party is crucial to my position as a critic of the Party. On the one hand, my connection to Party officials has assisted me in gaining access to primary materials. My familiarity with Labor culture enhances my ability to detail and critique the various nuances of Labor discourse. However, loyalty is a condition of Party membership. For example, the Party’s rules restrict members from a range of activities considered ‘disloyal’, including joining or applying to join other political parties and actively opposing the Party or the Party’s official candidate during an election.1 The principle of loyalty is explicitly enshrined in the Party rules.2 As well as having this formal status, loyalty is the organizing principle of the Party’s more informal networks of power. The comments of federal parliamentarian and prominent right-winger3 Leo McLeay confirm how loyalty is central to the proper operations of power in the Party:

You got in the queue and you got rewarded. And that’s how they kept the unions together, that’s how they kept the political party together, and that’s how they kept the organisational party together. Everyone knew where they stood in the show and if you paid your dues, you got promoted. And loyalty was the name of the game (Cumming, 1991: 242).
McLeay describes the internal workings of the Party as a “system of burying your own dead, of loyalty given and loyalty expected” (Cumming, 1991: 242).

Clearly there is much at stake personally in my choice to critically examine an institution to which I have pledged loyalty of this exclusive kind. This involves more than my concern about appearing disloyal. It also involves my desire to defend an institution that I care about deeply. My position as a Party member is further complicated by my identification as a Labor feminist. Labor feminism is a facet of Labor politics as a whole. The effects of this distinct form of Labor thinking are various and shifting. Labor feminism works to challenge, modify, consolidate and support Labor politics. It is also informed by other ‘exterior’ forms of politics besides feminism, including anti-racism, environmentalism and peace activism. It is helpful to view Labor feminism, not necessarily as a discourse of its own, but as “a strategy, a local, specific, concrete, intervention with definite political, even if provisional, aims and goals” (Gross, 1986: 196). As a Labor feminist, I have a personal commitment to strengthening the position of feminists and feminism within the Party. My commitment to Labor feminism, as a politics that regularly challenges Labor politics and its masculine bias, has ensured that I am mostly comfortable with the position of sceptical critic.

What does it then mean to belong to the Labor Party? What does this sense of belonging, of loyalty and familiarity, mean when you undertake an academic analysis of such an institution? Probyn suggests that the concept of belonging:
... is situated as threshold: both public and private, personal and common, this entails a very powerful mode of subjectification. It designates a profoundly affective manner of being, always performed with the experience of being within and in-between sets of social relations (1996: 12-13).

I take this to mean that belonging - in my case to a political party but also to a social and professional network of friends, colleagues and employers - is never simply a question of being inside or outside one particular set of relations. As Probyn comments, ‘belonging’ cannot be understood by reference to an “underlying structuring principle” or a “stable and guaranteeing referent” (1996: 34). Rather, my Party membership, my identification as a Labor feminist and my role as a sceptical critic of Labor politics combine to position me both inside and outside a shifting network of alliances, attractions and responsibilities. Such marginality, a position on the edges of competing and often antagonistic discursive contexts, is capable of producing a unique view of the Party.

Adopting a discursive analysis has been helpful in coming to terms with this ‘compromised’ position. I will explore the question of discourse later in this chapter; at this point I simply want to note how discourse analysis relates to the question of ‘belonging’ and my position as both a critic of, and a participant in Labor culture. First of all, by adopting discourse analysis as my interpretive mode I do not seek to draw conclusions about whether the Party was sincere in its attempts to capture the women’s vote during the Labor decade. So much political commentary is focused on what Kendall and Wickham call “second-order judgments”, judgments that assume “that there is something there, something hidden” beneath the surface of discourse (1999: 14, 16). I am attempting to write a history without such judgments, focusing instead on the surface where discursive formations emerge, shift and disappear.
(Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 12). My analysis will, as Morris describes, “insist upon the mask” (1998: 176) in its approach to the rituals of party politics, rejecting a view of discourse as “the result of mute processes or the expression of a silent consciousness” (Foucault, 1991: 70). In other words, I am not interested in the ‘real’ motives of Party officials or the ‘true’ intentions of prime ministers, but rather in the “management or administration” of the images and utterances of these figures (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 141). In taking such a perspective, I resist passing judgment on the Party and its leaders in the usual way that such judgments are passed, for example in journalism and some political commentary.

Questioning my own “locatedness” (my relationship to my object of study) raises a number of broad theoretical as well as methodological issues (Skeggs, 1997: 17). Is it possible to maintain an objective stance in relation to my object of study? Many would argue that ‘objectivity’, as conventionally defined, is an impossible goal to begin with. For example, Flax comments that postmodernism has systematically attacked “the belief (or hope) that there is some form of innocent knowledge to be had” (1992: 447). The fantasy that there is a clean place outside power from which to consider social and political questions needs to be jettisoned in favour of a methodological and theoretical approach that accepts a priori the specificity of one’s own position. As well as being ultimately unachievable, seeking to detach or deny my own position ignores the potentially productive effects of my connection to my object of study. Indeed, as Flax argues, it is a necessary part of any research process to interrogate one’s “own desire and place within particular social locations and discourse” (1992: 458).
Feelings of desire are thus part of the analytical process. For instance, in her essay ‘Ecstasy and Economics’, Morris acknowledges simultaneously her intense attraction to Paul Keating and her opposition to many of his policies. She has always been “ecstatic” in her response to the Keating persona (1998: 161). She “always wanted to believe what he said ... [and] usually ... did” (1998: 161). Yet her “attitude to most of [Keating’s] policies wavered from hostile to ambivalent” (1998: 161). Neither Morris’ fascination for Keating nor her desire for a continuous Labor government seriously limit her ability to construct a sceptical analysis of the Labor leader as media image(s). Hence, as Skeggs points out, it is possible to claim a position of vigilance without having to deny our feelings of desire (1997: 30). For Skeggs, it is possible to analyse “something close to the heart, something [you] value” whilst still coming up with a critical account (1997: 33).

My connection to my object of study thus raises the question of the relationship between ‘theory’ and ‘practice’. I might attempt to circumvent the need to take into account my position as a Party member by trying to maintain a distinction between ‘doing theory’ (within the university) and ‘practicing politics’ (within the Party). However this distinction between theory and practice, so prevalent in structuralist theories, is largely unsustainable. As Deleuze argues, the relationship between theory and practice is “partial and fragmentary” (1977: 205). Foucault agrees, stating that “theory does not express, translate, or serve to apply practice; it is practice” (1977: 208). Post-modern feminists have also questioned the validity of the division between theory and practice. As Probyn observes, “there is no line of demarcation between an academic self and a personal one” (1993: 117). The personal can constitute “both a practical and political mode of interpretation” (Probyn, 1993: 117). Hence, my position as both a feminist and a member of the
Labor Party informs the entire range of decisions made in the process of researching and writing. The need to research and write with a continual awareness of these tensions and the partiality of my own knowledge productions will always be a pressing concern (Skeggs, 1997: 39).

The concept of ‘discourse’ can play an important role in addressing these concerns, particularly in negotiating the largely unstable divide between theory and practice. Nash argues that the flaws in the assumed dichotomy between theoretical ideas and practical politics can be exposed through a focus on ‘discourse’. She suggests that there needs to be a paradigmatic shift “to a model which sees ideas and practices as more closely tied together in a theory of discourse” (Nash, 1998: 14). Taking a discursive approach to reading texts of all types thus implies not just a particular theoretical perspective but also a certain methodological approach. Before embarking upon a more detailed discussion of the general theoretical and methodological basis of my analysis, it is helpful to define what I mean by ‘the Australian Labor Party’ and a ‘federal election campaign’. Defining these two sites of enquiry also entails a description of the kinds of primary materials used in this thesis and how these materials have been obtained.

The Australian Labor Party: definitions and materials

Defining ‘the Australian Labor Party’

The Australian Labor Party is generally seen to occupy a position on the moderate Left of Australian politics, in between the far Left (for example the Australian
Communist Party) and the moderate to extreme Right (in particular the Liberal and National parties) (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 40). Whilst the Party’s Platform professes that it is an institution committed to the democratic socialisation of industry, production, distribution and exchange, Labor politics cannot be said to be circumscribed by the ideology of democratic socialism. Despite this, and despite changes to the class dynamics within the Party itself (a result of increasing numbers of ‘middle class’ people entering both the rank and file and leadership positions from the 1970s onwards), Labor is “still identified in the public mind as a working-class party” (Wark, 1999: 42). Indeed, the language, culture and iconography of the Party continue to rely heavily on invocations of ‘the working class’ and ‘working class values’.

The Party is one of Australia’s oldest and largest political institutions. It is a remarkably diverse institution with many interrelated parts. As Parkin comments, the Labor Party:

... embraces a number of relatively autonomous State and Territory branches, as well as a national body which carries authority as the supreme body in the party, but which is, in reality, the precarious product, or aggregation, of the constituent branches. The structure and processes internal to each branch form another dimension of the party’s organizational complexity (1983: 15).

In addition to the organizational wing of the Labor Party, there are the various State and Federal parliamentary caucuses, associated organizations like Young Labor, affiliated trade unions that send delegates to National and State Conferences, as well as State and Federal administrative, policy and machinery committees (Parkin, 1983: 23). In addition to this organizational diversity, the Party is also fractured by a
number of disparate, often antagonistic traditions, “from religious to secular, from Catholic to Protestant, from trade unionists to middle-class professional” (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 37). More recently, the Party has become increasingly divided along factional lines, which vary from State to State and are connected nationally in complex and shifting ways. Factions are formal divisions or sub-groupings within the Party, broadly defined as Left or Right. These factions often contain numerous internal splits or ‘fractions’. Some commentators have argued that factions today are “less sophisticated ideological associations, formed from a mélange of influences: family background, life experiences, personal friendships [and] political persuasion” (Parkin, 1983: 23). As such, the influence of factions on the internal workings of the Party has lead some commentators to describe Labor culture as “tribal”, a “landscape [in which] the ruling tribal groups resides and rules, occasionally permitting certain outsiders the pleasure of being accepted” (Reynolds, 1995: 131). Finally, after unions, caucuses and factions there are those members of the Party’s rank and file who are also:

... closely involved in municipal politics, ... loyal to particular leaders or committed to certain policy stances, ... closely associated outside the party with churches, clubs, ethnic associations, political interest groups or even (illegally under [Party] rules) other political parties (Parkin, 1983: 23).

There is also the position of federal Labor parliamentarians to consider. As Parkin comments, “in the history, ethos and formal rules of the [Party], it is the extra-parliamentary wing which claims supreme and ongoing authority” (1983: 17). In theory, parliamentarians are “the products and instruments of the Party organization” rather than autonomous political actors (Parkin, 1983: 17). However, the Labor decade saw more and more authority in the area of policy formation and
decision-making accorded to members of the federal parliamentary caucus. In the current political scene, “politicians dominate more than ever before in terms of [Labor’s] public image and culture” (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 31). This is not a surprising development, considering the importance the Labor Party places on parliamentary processes (Johnson, 1989: 5). Consequently, the expressions and activities of federal Labor politicians constitute an important part of any discussion of Labor politics.

While the parliamentary wing has risen in importance in recent decades, “Labor’s parliamentary leader has always loomed large from the beginning of the Party’s history” (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 34). Lawrence points out that there has been a growing emphasis in modern election campaigning on the personality of the parliamentary leader.

As election campaigns have become more centralised and media driven, the public image of the leader has been assumed to exert considerable influence on the voters’ decisions ... Opinion pollsters clearly believe that leaders’ images are important since they regularly assess voters’ approval of the leaders of the major parties and their comparisons of the incumbent leader with the Opposition leader (2000: 217).

The leader becomes all-important in a political contest because he (and it has always been he) is seen to “embody the public image of the party” at the time (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 33). As Parkin and Warhurst state, “the agenda, personality and image of the leader and the character of the party” are so intertwined that Labor governments are named and remembered after their leaders (2000: 36). (In an interesting variant of this trend, the Labor decade is often described as ‘the Hawke-
Keating years’ in acknowledgement of Paul Keating’s influence as Treasurer. Hence, the personality, image and statements of the leader can become a crucial site of investigation, a site often ignored in mainstream political analysis. As Johnson points out, those interested in analysing Labor in government:

... have tended to pay relatively little attention to the codes, images, meanings and concepts of personal identity evoked by Australian Labor rhetoric. That is, they have not examined the leaders’ own projections of personal identity, or the (often related) forms of personal identity they appealed to among the electorate. Yet, this is an important area if one wishes to understand some of the ways in which individuals can relate to, and identify with, public political discourse (1997: 37).

Johnson argues that the leader’s persona and its relationship to Labor rhetoric and imagery is “a crucial area of political legitimation” (1997: 37). It is “a sphere in which everyday life meets the discourse of party politics; where people can find that government rhetoric melds with personal experience” (Johnson, 1997: 37). This thesis will therefore include as part of its pool of primary materials the various texts associated with the leader, including public speeches and appearances, media reports, essays and articles as well as biographical accounts. In Chapter 6, I focus particularly on Paul Keating’s “projection of personal identity” (Johnson, 1997: 37) and its connection with the Party’s 1993 election campaign.

The interaction between all these facets of the Party - members, branches, parliamentarians, committees, caucuses, cabinets and leaders - is not easy to track. As Parkin comments, the Labor Party is not a “perfect hierarchy”; rather it is a dynamic institution, a “jumble of levels, lines and linkages” (1983: 23). Clearly it is
not the unitary, internally coherent organization implied in Party documents and rhetoric.\textsuperscript{12} Despite all attempts to create a unitary organisational structure, generating official policy through democratic procedures, the Party is far from coherent, either ideologically or culturally. Rather, it is a “complex set of interrelated but distinct institutions, relations, hierarchies, discourses, interests and players” (Watson, 1990: 10).\textsuperscript{13} In addition, the Party itself, through its policies and its personae, projects a variety of (often contradictory) messages to the voting public.
Primary materials and the research process

The scope and diversity of the Party’s organizational structure means that there are many possible sources of primary material. State and Territory branches, for example, possess large amounts of material related to federal election campaigns. However, the bulk of the primary material obtained for this thesis comes from the files of the Party’s National Secretariat, the organizing body for federal election campaigns. Established on a permanent basis in 1962, the National Secretariat is directly responsible to the Party’s National Executive, which exercises a broad supervision of its activities (Lloyd, 1983: 283). During the 1970s, both the Executive and the Secretariat became increasingly engaged in the direction of federal election campaigns, particularly in pre-campaign research, the development of campaign themes, coordination of itineraries, preparation of advertising and development and dissemination of promotional material (Lloyd, 1983: 236-241). In addition to the National Secretariat and National Executive, there are two other national bodies of significance to this study. First, there is the National Campaign Committee, which develops and supervises all the details of a federal election campaign. The members of this committee include the federal leader and deputy leader, the federal secretary and assistant secretary, the federal president, and the six State secretaries (Lloyd, 1983: 241). Representatives of the Party’s advertising agency and public opinion research agency are also included in Committee meetings (Lloyd, 1983: 241). Secondly, there are the State and Territory Secretaries who, since the early 1970s, have held regular meetings to ensure information is disseminated as widely as possible throughout the Party and to assist campaign coordination within the national machinery (Lloyd, 1983: 241). Correspondence, minutes, discussion papers and general material related to both the National
Campaign Committee and the State and Territory Secretaries meetings are used in this thesis.

The National Secretariat files of relevance to this thesis are located at two sites. Materials relating to the 1993 federal election campaign are located at the National Secretariat in Canberra. With permission from the Party’s Assistant Secretary, I was able to spend time in the Secretariat files collecting and photocopying relevant information about this campaign. All materials dating before the 1993 federal election are located in the National Library Archives in Canberra. In order to gain access to this material, I had to obtain permission in writing from the National Secretariat. In total, the Party’s National Secretariat Papers of relevance to this study are contained in approximately twenty-five boxes of material; however many more boxes were examined. A number of boxes, archived under the title ‘Women’, contained large amounts of material relating to campaign tactics aimed at attracting women’s votes. In addition to these specific files, other boxes relating generally to the 1983 election and to government policy contained useful material. These National Archive papers and the files in the National Secretariat office have been chosen as the primary site for empirical research due to the central role the National Secretariat plays in federal election campaign strategy and coordination.

I conducted my empirical research in the National Secretariat office and the National Library archives armed with a set of broad criteria. First, I looked for any mention of ‘women’ in the various kinds of papers, memos, reports, minutes of meetings, press releases and correspondence that makes up these two collections. Second, I was interested in any campaign tactics aimed at voters generally, especially swinging voters. The materials I uncovered in the archives and at the National Secretariat are
diverse; they have emerged from different sources at particular historical moments, are authored by different individuals and organizations and are intended for different audiences.

In terms of general primary material related to the Labor Party, there are two kinds used in this study. They can roughly be described as ‘internal’ and ‘external’. By ‘external’, I refer to the whole range of documents associated with election campaigns and public policy-making.¹⁸ This material can be described loosely as documents of “public culture”, “media, governmental, and corporate images of policy” (Morris, 1998: 24). They are documents of public persuasion, intended to project an image of the Party that is attractive to voters. Documents of this ‘external’ kind include policy documents and discussion papers; Labor publications; the Party platform and its amendments; Party conference papers and resolutions; election material and Party promotional material. Some of this material is available through open access library collections. In terms of ‘internal’ documents, I refer to the confidential documents only supposed to be available to and used by Party officials, such as campaign notes, election manuals, contemporaneous notes, polling and gender gap research, correspondence and minutes from Party meetings and committees. This material has been obtained through my empirical research at the National Secretariat and in the National Library archives. Both internal and external Party materials are used in this thesis.

This utilitarian division of materials into two categories should not be taken to suggest that the internal material somehow reflects the Party’s ‘real’ intentions, with the external documents being mere propaganda. There is a belief, commonplace in both journalistic and academic accounts of party politics, that politicians’ public
statements are somehow suspect, whereas confidential, internal party materials reflect the true Party position. Johnson argues that “politicians' statements are influenced by tactical and electoral considerations” and therefore in her own work she makes the decision to focus not on “public statements” but “on a detailed study of private papers and other confidential documents” (1989: 3). For Johnson, these ‘internal’ documents are a “useful indication of basic beliefs” (1989: 3).¹⁹ Building on Johnson’s approach to documents here, I focus on both confidential documents and public documents and subject both to a discursive reading, an interrogation of their surface meaning.

**Federal election campaigns**

**Defining ‘a federal election campaign’**

On some level, political parties are always campaigning. The achievements of a political party when in government provide the basis for its campaign for re-election. This is part of what Bennett calls the “extended campaign”, which includes “all the long-term preparation and planning” for an election (1996: 105-6). This thesis will concentrate primarily on what Bennett terms the “formal campaign”, the period “beginning when the Prime Minister announces the election date and ending at the day of polling” (1996: 109). It is this “formal campaign” that is “most visible to voters, as parties make formal policy addresses, issues are pushed with vigour and leaders criss-cross the country” (Bennett, 1996: 105). Whilst the materials of the formal campaign are prioritised in this thesis, documents generated by the Labor
government, especially those released during or before the election period, are also relevant.20

Norris describes modern election campaigns as “constantly evolving and interactive information environments” (1997: 78). A federal election campaign roughly comprises two levels of activity. On one level there is the nationwide, leader-focused campaign, which is geared towards the attention of the mass media. As described above, the National Secretariat is primarily concerned with this national campaign. On another level there is the grassroots, local, electorate-based campaign, which involves the volunteer work of branch members. Local Party branches, Party units such as Federal Electorate Councils (FECs) and individual candidates are involved in the running of the election campaign at this local level.21 In her journalistic account of the 1983 election, Anne Summers describes the two levels of an election campaign:

An election victory is in fact composed of a multitude of small parts each of which makes an intrinsic contribution to the ultimate result. As soon as the election is announced, thousands of people in party branches and organizations around the country mobilise, take time off from their jobs and face the prospect of several weeks without enough sleep as they join with their party to do all the menial tasks of electioneering. Media attention is directed towards the leaders, the glamorous candidates, the party splits, the directing of preferences, the major issues. Yet it is the backroom work which is the underbelly of the campaign. Without hundreds of volunteers to do mailings, organise leaflets, doorknock, post campaign material, plaster electorates with posters, answer telephones and do whatever else may be required by hassled campaign directors, the successful party leader would
not be able to face the television cameras on election night with that mixture of exultation and relief which marks the end of the race (1983: 67).

Certainly, the two levels of campaign activity are connected and sometimes they intersect, for example, when the leader decides to visit a particular electorate. Materials from both the nationwide media campaign as well as materials from various local campaigns are analysed in this thesis.

The federal election campaigns of 1983 and 1993

The 1983 and 1993 federal elections provide the empirical focus of this study. These two elections have been chosen because they are situated on either side of the Labor decade, a time of “profound change” for both Australia and the Party (Taylor, 1993: 3). Parkin comments that this was probably the Party’s “most successful decade in its history”; as late as February 1992, Labor was in office nationally and in all States except New South Wales (1983: 22). Commentators also single out this decade as “a flashpoint” in the development of Labor politics in Australia (Beilharz, 1994: 2), a time in which the Party radically transformed its image, policies and organizational structure in the pursuit of electoral success. Generally, ‘the Labor decade’ is defined as a self-contained period, specifically the years between 1983 and 1993 when Labor was in power at a federal level. Despite the fact that Labor, lead by Keating, continued in government until it contested and lost the 1996 federal election, most commentators identify the period from 1983 to 1993 as the seminal years of Labor rule. As Beilharz rightly points out, the Labor decade is “most accurately viewed as symbolically closed, whatever the subsequent
electoral fortunes of Labor” into the nineties (1994: 4). Hence, we can view Keating’s victory in 1993 as both the vindication and the decline of Labor hegemony.

More importantly, the federal elections of 1983 (with Bob Hawke as leader) and 1993 (with Paul Keating as leader) have been singled out in this thesis because both campaigns saw women voters targeted, women’s policy prioritised and a number of Labor women enter federal Parliament. The 1983 federal election can be described as the most significant campaign of the Labor decade in terms of the Party’s attempts to win over ‘the woman voter’.24 The Party went into the 1983 election “with a more comprehensive policy on the status of women than any party had ever campaigned on in Australia” (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 209). The Party generated an official document dedicated to women’s policy, the first of its kind, entitled *The ALP and Women: Towards Equality*. Women’s issues featured in their own right in the Party’s policy launch and in Hawke’s campaign speeches. A record number of Labor women candidates contested seats in this election, with a number of new Labor women elected to federal Parliament and the first Labor woman, Susan Ryan, appointed a Cabinet Minister.25 It was also the first time the Party had commissioned and used research into women’s voting preferences in their overall campaign strategy. Moreover, there was a perception that the Party won this election partially because it managed to attract women voters.26 As Reynolds comments, “for the first time, the women’s vote was acknowledged as having been influential in Labor’s victory” (1995: 89). The 1983 election provides the focus for my analysis in Chapter 4, in particular, the gender gap research generated for the campaign. Some materials from the 1983 campaign are also included in Chapter 5.
In 1993, after a recession and a debilitating leadership struggle, many (including some in Labor’s leadership) believed the Party could not win a fifth election. Having exhausted preference votes from that other great ‘new’ social movement, the environment movement, the Party was looking for a new source of swingers. Women voters were again prioritised as a group that might respond favourably to Labor’s message. Anne Summers was invited back from the United States (where she was editor of *Ms Magazine*), to act as Keating’s personal advisor on women’s issues. Labor’s anti-GST campaign was aimed largely at women, as consumers and household managers as well as carers and workers. All in all, Labor projected an image throughout the 1993 campaign that women’s votes mattered and would play a crucial role in securing the Party an historic fifth election victory. The lead up to the 1993 campaign also saw the Labor government make a specific appeal to women. In 1992 and 1993, the Office of the Status of Women as well as other public bodies generated a number of important policy and law reform documents relating to women. Materials from the 1993 campaign, as well as some of these important government policy documents, are analysed in Chapters 5 and 6.

**The media and election campaigns**

The role of the media in a modern election campaign is worthy of some comment here. As Bennett states, “election campaigning involves communication between politician and voter, and it is the mass media which is the primary medium through which politicians attempt to communicate with the electorate” (1996: 133). Although radio and newspapers continue to be used by parties, since the 1980s television has become the most important vehicle for political communication. As Lumby
comments, television does not simply influence election campaigns but “in many
cases it had become identical with the campaign itself” (1999: 156). The rising
importance of the mass media has “transformed” election campaigning and given
rise to a new political class of “professional campaign directors, media advisers, ‘spin
doctors’, opinion pollsters, focus-groups interpreters, direct-marketing wizards, and
other information managers”, placing them at the centre of “any successful
campaign strategy” (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 46). Hence, this study will include an
analysis of images of Labor policy across a variety of different media sites, including
television, newspapers, radio news and talk-back, current affairs and women’s
magazines.

This increasing reliance upon television is also relevant to the focus on ‘the woman
voter’ in this thesis. Lumby argues that market research indicates “women prefer
different sources of information to help them in reaching decisions about how to
vote” (1999: 156). Where men are more likely to rely on newspapers for their
information, women are “more likely to nominate TV current affairs … as sources of
information during the election campaign” (Lumby, 1999: 156). There is evidence
that the Party viewed certain media forms as more effective in communicating with
women. For example, an internal Party document located in the National Archives,
entitled “Women – How Can We Get Our Message Across?”, states that “women’s
most effective communications channels” are personal contact, daytime television,
women’s magazines, and daytime, talkback and music radio (3). In this document
it states that due to their domestic responsibilities women voters:

... read less than average (except for magazines), watch less television than
average (except during the day), listen to less radio (except during the day),
sleep less (so tired and stressed), spend less time relaxing and talk much
more than average (including phone) (2).³¹

Thus, within the context of a modern election campaign, Labor’s ability to work with
the media, especially in its electronic form, is seen to be crucial. The Party’s
electoral successes in the 1980s were in large part attributed to the telegenic
qualities of Bob Hawke³², the close relationship between Paul Keating and the
Canberra Press gallery³³, and the talents of media aware speech-writers and national
secretaries (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 46).

It is also important to note that this thesis is concerned primarily with party and
electoral politics, usually seen to be well within the traditional definition of ‘the
political’. As Richards comments, politics is conventionally defined as “those formal
and structured political processes which move between parliament and the ballot
box” (1994: 436). Within this context, political behaviour includes voting, lobbying
and interest group activity as well as involvement in legislatures and established
political parties. Such a restrictive definition of ‘the political’ is, however, troubling
for a feminist analysis. Feminist historians and political scientists have argued that
because of women’s exclusion and alienation from mainstream politics, they have
concentrated their efforts on “informal and non-traditional politics”, for example
grass-roots radical movements based around the environment, disarmament and
feminism (Sawer & Simms, 1993: xi). Indeed, for these groups, the non-party
approach has been “a key mode of doing politics” (Lake, 1999: 13).³⁴ Therefore, my
analysis of traditional electoral politics must at the outset acknowledge the
importance of “an expanded sense of the political” (Sawicki, 1991: 8) and the
substantial effort made by feminists to document the various ways in which women
have been active politically “in non-party women’s groups outside Parliament” (Clarke & White, 1983: 9). Although I adopt a narrower definition of ‘the political’, I am interested in how the non-party political activities of the broader feminist movement influenced a traditional political party like the Labor Party.

In the process of setting down the definitional parameters of ‘the Australian Labor Party’ and ‘a federal election campaign’, I have sought to provide a rationale and a context for the primary materials I utilize in my analysis. I will now move on to explore the kinds of theoretical ideas that shape this analysis. Specifically, I will define and discuss key concepts such as ‘discourse’ and ‘subject-constitution’. I will also introduce the concepts of ‘liberalism’ and ‘economic government’. These are the concepts that inform my argument throughout this thesis.

**Theoretical frameworks and methods of analysis**

**Discourse**

In my discussion of ‘how to write’ at the beginning of this chapter, I emphasized the importance of discourse analysis to my thesis argument. Taking a discursive approach is not without its difficulties. Even defining ‘discourse’ poses its own problems. As Johnson comments, “discourse is a term that has been popularised by linguists and by postmodernist and poststructuralists writing in a range of fields” and as such has been “used notoriously loosely and often without an adequate definition being given” (2000: 15). In seeking to give a precise definition of discourse in Foucauldian terms, we encounter the problem, diagnosed by Dreyfus and Rabinow,
that “Foucault never posited a universal theory of discourse, but rather sought to describe the historical forms taken by discursive practices” (1983: xi-xii). Similarly, Bové argues that Foucault’s idea of discourse constitutes such a profound challenge to the ways in which we think about language, meaning, truth and power that “we can no longer easily ask such questions, as what is discourse or what does discourse mean?” (1995: 2)

Whilst these problems cannot be ignored, it is possible to offer a working definition of Foucault’s approach to discourse and his method of discourse analysis (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 34). Discourse can be said to be made up of “a corpus of ‘statements’ whose organization is regular and systematic” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 42). It is a limited practical domain with historically specific boundaries, rules of formation and conditions of existence (Foucault, 1991: 61). By ‘statements’, I mean both “the sayable and the visible” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 37). As Mason states, within Foucault’s concept of discourse analysis:

… a statement ... is not simply a word, phrase or sentence. It refers to the clusters, groupings and regularities of language and action that form around particular objects (2002: 31).

Thus, discourse is “never a question of language alone” (Mason, 2002: 32). Rather, discourse operates across a variety of texts, “verbal, bodily, visual, and spatial” (Threadgold, 1994: 325). Threadgold describes Foucault’s notion of discourse as concerned with “the operation of those rules and membership and meanings which constitute the visible practices and articulated beliefs of institutions [and] their members” (1994: 325). Taking up Threadgold’s description, I take the position in this thesis that Labor politics operates as a discourse in its own right, with its own
logics, traumas and trajectories designated by both its “rules and membership” but also its narratives and myths. Indeed, I believe that Labor politics is best analysed as a discourse rather than a coherent ideology.

The above description hints at what discourse analysis might entail. Kendall and Wickham set out a more detailed process required for such analysis. The first step is, as stated above, to identify discourse as a body of ‘statements’, organized in a regular and systematic way. It then seeks to identify “the rules that create the spaces in which new statements can be made” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 42). In other words, discourse analysis looks for new statements, categories, representations and subject positions and seeks to define the conditions of their emergence. This search for discursive modification and innovation is, I believe, the most difficult aspect of discourse analysis. Consistent with this approach, I will aim to describe “the surface linkages between power, knowledge, institutions, ... and the modern state as these intersect” within Labor discourse (Bové, 1995: 54-55). In other words, I will explore the shape and content of Labor discourse during the Labor decade, to ascertain the particular rules for the formation of relevant objects, operations, subject positions, concepts and theoretical options within this discursive field. Finally, I will seek to identify the significant innovations and modifications within Labor discourse generally and the characterization of ‘the woman voter’ within Labor discourse specifically.
In this thesis, I will treat the “emergence” of ‘the woman voter’ as a new political subject within Labor discourse as “a discursive event” (Scott, 1991: 792). As such, I am interested in the process by which subjects are constructed or constituted within discourse. ‘Women’ are “not a natural political constituency” (Lake, 1999: 16). ‘Women’, as a political class and category of voters, must be constructed within Labor discourse. In this way, ‘the woman voter’ is not a fixed or unitary figure, a “pregiven individual” (Butler, 1995: 230) or “an entity within a history” (Rose, 1996: 37). Rather, ‘the woman voter’ is a subject, or more precisely a subject position, that appears, shifts and transforms itself on the surface of “an organization of techniques and statements” that is Labor discourse (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 36).

Thus, as part of my engagement with discourse analysis, I am interested in “subject-constitution” (Butler, 1995: 233), the creation of new subject positions within discourse. As such, and in keeping with the precepts of discourse analysis, I am interested in the technical and the practical ways in which subject positions are put into place, articulated and rearticulated. Hence, my analysis:

... focuses directly on the practices that locate human beings in particular ‘regimes of the person’. It does not write a continuous history of the self, but rather accounts for the diversity of languages of ‘personhood’ that have taken shape - character, personality, identity, reputation, honor, citizen, individual, normal, lunatic, patient, client, husband, mother, daughter - and the norms, techniques, and relations of authority within which these have circulated in legal, domestic, industrial, and other practices for acting upon the conduct of persons (Rose, 1996: 25).
Taking up Rose’s insights here, I am looking at the ways in which certain knowledges and technologies not only locate ‘the woman voter’ as a subject position within Labor discourse but actually shape her character in specific ways, for instance, as carer/worker (as discussed in Chapter 5) and as consumer (as discussed in Chapter 6). I am not simply arguing that the construction of ‘the woman voter’ presupposed her mobilization as part of Labor’s electoral majority. Rather, I agree with Butler that the processes of construction and mobilization occur simultaneously. To elaborate, Butler names the Foucauldian process by which subjects are made, “the principle of regulation according to which a subject is formulated or produced”, as “subjection” (1995: 229). She argues that subjection “denotes the becoming of the subject, but also the process of subjection” (1995: 229). In this way, “subjection is installed in the very formation of the subject” (Butler, 1995: 233). Butler asserts that subjection is:

... a kind of power that not only unilaterally acts on a given individual as a form of domination, but also activates or forms the subject. Hence, subjection is neither simply the domination of a subject nor its production, but designates a certain kind of restriction in production (1995: 230).

For Butler, it is clear that “the subject produced and the subject regulated or subordinated are one” (1995: 230). This process of subjection is not a one-off occurrence, with the “the subject who is produced through subjection” created “at an instant in its totality” (Butler, 1995: 237). Rather, the subject is produced again and again, “repeatedly constituted in subjection” (Butler, 1995: 237). This is not to say that the subject is remade anew each time, rather that the subject must be rearticulated within discourse, remaining a subject only through “a reiteration or re-
articulation of itself as a subject” (Butler, 1995: 237, 239). In this way, the Foucauldian subject is never closed or frozen, “never fully constituted in subjection” (Butler, 1995: 239). It is a constantly shifting position within discourse. Drawing on this account of subjection, my analysis will explore the process by which ‘the woman voter’ is articulated and rearticulated with Labor discourse across different texts, at different historical moments and via different technologies.

In my analysis of the construction of ‘the woman voter’, I am not seeking to draw any conclusions about whether ‘real’ women occupied the position designated for them within Labor discourse, whether they actually identified with the role of carer-worker or the role of consumer offered to them. As Butler comments, it must be emphasized that the ‘forming’ of subject positions within discourse is not the same as “causing” or “determining” the behaviours of individuals or groups (1995: 229). Issues of causation are not relevant to my analysis. As Mason comments, “when we ask causation questions we assume that we can establish a direct relationship between causes and their effects, a relationship which depends upon our ability to know the ‘real motives’ of individuals” (2002: 32). As indicated above, I am not interested in the motives or intentions of those subjects or institutions incorporated within Labor discourse. Instead, I am simply seeking to analyse how the subject position of ‘the woman voter’ was put into place, maintained and rearticulated within and through Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating years.
Power and truth

Undertaking discourse analysis also raises the question of the dynamic between feminism and Foucauldian theory. My thesis investigates a form of Left politics through the use of Foucauldian-inspired theory, both feminist and ‘non-feminist’. Such an approach is coloured by the fact that the relationship between feminism and Foucault has not been an easy one. Indeed, Foucault’s “staunch anti-humanism” has been particularly troubling for those feminists who have argued vigorously for women to be accorded status as fully human (Probyn, 1993: 113). As Probyn comments, Foucault is not interested in people per se, nor in exploring concepts of power in which individuals “resist” oppressive regimes (1993: 114). For a certain understanding of feminism, which is “overly and self-consciously political”, committed to the “innocence” of truth and profoundly humanist (Flax, 1992: 455), Foucault’s theories are unsettling, even dangerous (Probyn, 1993: 113). He is not, as Morris puts it, “a ladies man” (1988: 55). Furthermore, using Foucault’s theories in an analysis of government policy or party politics poses its own unique challenge. For a theory that attempts nothing less than the “undermining of the foundations of Western thought”, Foucault’s work is disruptive to the articulated foundations of Labor politics (Flax, 1992: 451). Accordingly, it is helpful at this point to consider exactly how Foucault’s ideas impact on my analysis of party politics, how they inform discourse analysis and how they contrast with traditional, humanist notions of power and truth.

The Labor Party’s organizational culture privileges certain, largely conventional, notions of truth and power. Party politics is a domain that is abundant with ‘truth’ claims (i.e. we are telling voters the truth, our opponents are lying). In contrast,
implicit in Foucault’s theories is a thoroughgoing scepticism about the existence of absolute truth (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: viii). This scepticism is particularly evident in his theory of discourse. Discourse analysis focuses on the surface, the terrain where representations “coexist, reside and disappear” (Foucault, 1991: 60). Statements or representations are not viewed within discourse analysis as the direct or deliberate product of “a thought, mind or subject that engendered” them (Foucault, 1991: 61). Such analysis does not search for “silently intended” or “concealed” meanings” but instead interrogates the fact and the conditions of manifest appearances and their effects (Foucault, 1991: 60). In line with Foucault’s notions of truth, this thesis rejects the conventional view of a modern election campaign as a site for the suppression of truth or the circulation of propaganda. The search for ‘true’ intentions is rejected in favour of an account that does not look beneath the surface of statements and representations for ‘true’ meanings and motives; rather my account dwells on the surface, there and only there.

The question of power is also integral to discourse analysis. Within the Labor Party, power is seen to be hierarchically organized, with those at the top (parliamentarians, party officials, union secretaries) having more power than those at the bottom (branch members). There is the almost uncontested notion within the Party that power is the exclusive possession of a small group of influential individuals. In this way, power is a possession, to be given, taken, struggled over and used for a good or bad purpose. To this way of thinking, power operates as “something hidden in the background doing [the] dirty work” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 48). Power within the Party is normally perceived to operate in this way. As Parkin and Warhurst acknowledge, when observers have talked about power in the Labor Party, “they are often suggesting something secretive, or unaccountable, or ominous, or
sinister” (2000: 30). Consider Parkin’s various definitions of ‘machine politics’, a term often used to describe the internal workings of the Party. He argues that ‘machine politics’ can be understood as referring to the top level of the organizational hierarchy of the party, the extra-parliamentary leadership clique (1983: 17; see also 21-23). Such a definition emphasizes a notion of power as concentrated and structured in a hierarchical manner as well as the possession of an elite political class. Parkin also defines ‘machine politics’ as a particular operating style focused on “the manipulation of rewards as a means of acquiring and maintaining power” (1983: 17; see also Parkin, 1983: 25-26). This definition emphasizes a notion of power as an object that can be consciously used by this power elite, who can also control its effects for their own exclusive benefit.

Rather than seeing power as a possession, a one-way force, Foucauldian analyses sees power is “a strategy ... that maintains a relation between the sayable and the visible” (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 49). This power relation operates, for example, between discourse and certain institutions and practices. Furthermore, power is neither an attribute nor the prerogative of ‘masters'; rather it is an “exercise”, one that “passes through every force" (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 50). Put simply, power is anonymous (Kendall & Wickham, 1999: 51). In this way, discourse analysis is “a theory of what is said, regardless of who said it” (Hacking, 1991: 191). Building on this perspective, Deleuze makes the polemical argument that “there is no qualitative difference between the power wielded by the policeman and the prime minister” (1977: 215). This means that the exercise and effects of power are not confined to “the acts, events and processes within political and public life” but rather, are everywhere, in the relationships and alignments between institutions, forms of knowledge and the practices of individuals and groups (Gross, 1986: 203).
In keeping with this Foucauldian perspective on power, this thesis views power, its operations and productions, as decentred instead of concentrated, productive rather than repressive, anonymous rather than personalized, particular as opposed to homogenous, heterogeneous rather than singular, and shifting instead of fixed. Taking a discursive approach to analysing texts such as government reports and campaign policy documents involves the acceptance of the “impossibility of closure” and the inevitability of intra-textual contradictions (Yeatman, 1990: 167). Government and party political documents attempt to be “the most closed of texts”, denying the possibility of contested meaning (Yeatman, 1990: 167, 160). For instance, Labor discourse is full of claims about the unity of the Party as an organization and about the coherence of its political platforms and promises. Arguments about the coherence and unity of any entity - be it an institution, a philosophy, a political agenda, a period of history, or a subject - are viewed by Foucauldians as suspicious and as an “effect of domination [and] repression” (Flax, 1992: 454). When confronting the question of who speaks and who acts, it is apparent that there are a multitude of meanings, even within certain speaking and acting subject positions. Every utterance, every event should therefore be analysed in relation to the various processes that constitute it. Furthermore, these various and varied meanings within a given text may be inconsistent with each other and with associated texts within a discursive field. Each text must be analysed for its internal differences, contradictions, irregularities and transformations as much as for its patterns and consistencies. A discursive approach to analysing the kinds of primary materials used in this thesis thus ensures that “discontinuities” will be stressed along with patterns and consistencies (Foucault, 1991: 57; Skeggs, 1997: 22). Such a reading of Labor discourse produces a “more complex” and sometimes
“less hopeful” story about the relationships between power, truth and subjectivity (Flax, 1992: 451). The challenge of using Foucault’s notions of truth and power in this way is worth confronting because it will eventually result in a unique analysis of Labor politics.

**Governmentality, liberalism and economic government**

Having explored the challenge and the potential posed by a Foucauldian analysis, especially in relation to the concepts of discourse and subject-constitution, I want to now introduce some other key theoretical concepts used in this thesis. In particular, I want to discuss the notion of governmentality, as articulated by Foucault but also by Rose and Dean. Although the term can imply a focus on the operations of government and the State, a Foucauldian interpretation of governmentality is not restricted to these sites. As Foucault states, “to govern … means to govern things” - whether it be a household, a family, a State or a political institution - via specific practices, forms of management and institutional structures (1991b: 94). Governmentality is thus relevant to an analysis of the activities of party politics. Such an approach to electoral politics is unusual; indeed, as Johnson comments, “party electoral strategies tend to be neglected by governmentality approaches” (2000: 102).

Foucault defines ‘governmentality’ as “the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex form of power, which has as its target population, as its principle form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential
technical means apparatuses of security” (1991b: 102). This definition of
governmentality implicates the Foucauldian concepts of power and discourse
described above. As Dean explains, within the theory of governmentality, power is
not a one-way force, “a zero-sum game”, but “mobile and open”, the result of “loose
and changing assemblage of governmental techniques, practices and rationalities”
(1999: 9). Furthermore, the focus on “institutions, procedures, calculations and
tactics” indicates that an analysis drawing on theories of governmentality requires a
discursive approach.

It has been suggested that the notion of ‘liberal government’ as a political economy
of knowledge is at the heart of Foucault’s theory of governmentality. Dean makes
this clear when he states that governmentality “seeks to distinguish the particular
mentalities, arts and regimes of government and administration that have emerged
since ‘early modern’ Europe” (1999: 2). Within the Australian context, this ‘art and
regime of government’ has been liberal government. Within theories of
governmentality, the use of the term ‘liberal’ does not denote liberalism as a
coherent ideology as expressed “through the canonical texts of liberal political
philosophy” (Nash, 1998: 8). Rather, ‘liberalism’ presents itself as “an analytics of
government” that takes as its starting point a “concrete analysis” of day-to-day
practices (Dean, 1999: 131). Such an analysis of liberal government is “materialist”
in that it places certain regimes of practices “at the centre of analysis and seeks to
discover the logic of such practices” (Dean, 1999: 30). It interrogates how regimes
of practices within liberal government operate and the kinds of subject positions they
produce (Dean, 1999: 23)
The idea that Labor discourse incorporates notions of liberal government is explored further in the following chapter. At this point however it is important to note how essential ‘the economic’ is to liberal rationalities of government. Fundamentally, liberalism is a form of ‘economic government’. There is a double-sided aspect to the term ‘economic’ in this context. Government of this type is conducted in a way that is both economic (via the economic register) and economical (calculated and limited). Liberalism, as the “dominant contemporary rationality of government”, operates “through ... the economy” (Dean, 1999: 132, 114), with economic rationality becoming a “refined and specialized form of governmental thought” (Hindess, 1997: 23). The logic of the market is extended beyond the conventional sphere of the economic to cover all aspects of society impacted on by government. As Hindess argues, within liberal forms of government:

... [the] distinction between the economy and other parts of the national society now appears considerably less secure and what had once been seen as non-economic spheres (whose activities are to be funded by the economy) are increasingly regarded as sources of economic inefficiency whose performance leaves room for improvement. In the competition for national economic efficiency, all elements of society are now called upon to play their part (1997: 24-26).

Hindess is arguing that the extension of ‘the economic’ to all aspects of the subjects and practices of government has destabilized traditional boundaries between the social, the cultural, the economic and the political. Similarly Dean argues that social democratic parties like the Labor Party, when in control of national government, “undertake activist policies to coordinate and facilitate the institutions and agencies necessary for the operation of the market and the production of types of subjects
required by it” (1999: 141). The extension of the rationality of the market to all elements of society is just one way in which liberal government is ‘economic‘. In addition to this, liberal government is ‘economic’ in that it is restrained, reflecting a cautious approach to State intervention. The significance of such an approach, an approach that sees Labor discourse incorporating the precepts of liberal, economic government, will be explored in greater depth in the following chapter.

Using Foucault’s theories of discourse and governmentality in an analysis of Labor politics is not without its precedents. Although “Australian political science ... has only occasionally drawn on theoretical and analytical debates about ... discourse” (Johnson, 2000: 8), there have been a few commentators that have adopted discursive approaches in their analysis of Labor politics (Yeatman, 1990: 158). This material acknowledges that Labor politics is distinct from both liberalism and socialism. It is this kind of theoretical work that has made my work possible. For example, Carol Johnson, Peter Beilharz, Rob Watts and Meaghan Morris have shown that Labor discourse is a collection of powerful ideologies, including neo-liberalism, working class solidarity, egalitarianism, nationalism, fraternity and corporatism. They have been particularly interested in the transformations within Labor politics during the Hawke-Keating years. Their work provides the theoretical foundations for my analysis of Labor discourse in the following chapter. In addition, I am guided by various discursive approaches to reading government policy taken by, for example, Elspeth Probyn (in her reading of the Québec Human Rights Commission report on discrimination against gays and lesbians in Outside Belongings) and Carol Johnson (in her reading of various government documents in Governing Change: Keating to Howard). Anna Yeatman’s feminist reading of government policies “as texts” has also influenced my approach (Yeatman, 1990: 160).
There is also an extensive and well-established body of work on the development of Australian feminism during the late 1970s and 1980s. This work concentrates on feminism's engagement with the State, the rise of the femocracy and the internal divisions within the feminist movement. For example, in their work on the directions of Australian feminism during the years of Labor hegemony, Pringle and Watson adopt a deconstructionist approach in their focus on the surface effects of mechanisms of power rather than on “abstract theory or underlying structures” (Watson, 1990: 5). This kind of material provides some of the theoretical impetus for my investigation of the relationship between Labor and the feminist movement in my third chapter.

In addition, I also make use of feminist work that analyses and critiques the operations and effects of various analytical dichotomies, including class/gender, sameness/difference, public/private and production/consumption. It can hardly be doubted that “dualisms are very common motifs in western social and political thought” (Thiele, 1992: 31). I draw upon this material not because I believe that the “dichotomous conceptualism” (Gross, 1986: 202) inherent in their construction is either valid or sustainable; indeed dichotomies of this kind are deeply problematic from a Foucauldian perspective. Rather, I draw upon these dichotomies because Labor discourse itself maintains and mobilizes them again and again. Indeed, as Beilharz comments, “the problem of binaries or dualism is ... one which nevertheless remains significant, for the language which animates social policy often relies on it” (1987, 391). In particular, the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as a particular subject position within Labor discourse reflects the operations of these dichotomies. For instance, it is difficult to fully grasp the tenor and effects of ‘mateship’ within
Labor politics unless you understand the class/gender distinction. The conventional characterization of ‘the woman voter’ as conservative and apolitical is further illuminated by an appreciation of the status and effect of the sameness/difference divide.

Hence, while I neither support nor critique the validity or relevance of these dichotomies, my analysis acknowledges that they exist and operate within various discourses focused on in this thesis. The feminist work on these dichotomies is thus relevant to my analysis. The content of these dichotomies will be described in the chapters that focus on their operation; I will discuss class/gender in Chapters 3 and 4, sameness/difference in Chapter 4, public/private in Chapter 5 and production/consumption in Chapter 6. By bringing together all this material in the first part of my thesis, I attempt to show how shifts within Labor politics and feminist politics, occurring roughly concurrently, have connected with and diverged from each other. This lays the foundation for an analysis of how ‘the woman voter’ emerges as a new subject position within Labor discourse, a discourse that has been informed (indirectly through the input of Labor feminists and femocrats and the Party’s strategic alliance with parts of the feminist movement) by a certain feminist politics.

As noted above, various kind of feminist work on new social movements, the State, party politics and analytical dichotomies such as public/private and sameness/difference are crucial to my analysis in this thesis. This work has addressed questions at the heart of my project, namely how gender positions and female citizen-subjects are constructed within certain contexts such as government policy and democratic politics. However, this work does not generally draw upon poststructural theories about discourse, subject constitution and governmentality,
theories that provide the overall theoretical and methodological framework of this thesis. Contradictions are evident, and problematic, when a ‘realist’ epistemology that unpins this kind of work is employed in conjunction with discourse analysis. However, I have felt compelled to adopt a more pluralist approach to secondary materials because this ‘realist’ work provides important information and insights that I believe strengthen my account of the construction of ‘the woman voter’ within Labor discourse. In this way, I attempt to complement my largely poststructural approach to materials and analysis with broader feminist accounts of gender and politics.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to define the terms and conditions of this thesis, both methodological and theoretical. My analysis will recognize my position as a member of the Labor Party, a Labor feminist and a critic of Labor politics. Adopting a discursive analysis will assist me in reconciling my position as both critic of and participant in Labor politics as well as circumventing (to some degree) potential disloyalty to the Party. My thesis will employ a Foucauldian method of discourse analysis, concentrating on constructions and effects instead of truth and intentions. It will look at the operation of rules and meanings that constitute the visible practices and beliefs of Labor discourse as articulated through its members, its structures and its texts, both internal and external (Threadgold, 1994: 325). As mentioned above, the following two chapters will explore in greater depth the boundaries and operations of Labor politics as a distinct discursive field, with direct reference to these Foucauldian theories and concepts. This will provide a foundation for the
analysis of the construction of ‘the woman voter’ within Labor discourse as a particular subject position, one that required articulation and re-articulation throughout the Labor decade. As a consequence of taking up Foucault’s notion of discourse, this thesis will also utilize his theoretical work (and the work of those drawing from his insights) on governmentality. It will take up his understanding of liberal, economic government in an analysis of Labor discourse. In addition to theoretical material drawing from the work of Foucault, I will utilize other kinds of feminist work, particular that which investigates the various dichotomies mentioned above.

1 “It is a condition of Party membership that a member must not: (i) stand for public office, or nominate another person for public office, against an officially selected Party candidate ... (iii) actively opposed the Party or the party's official candidate during an election ... (iv) join, or apply to join, another political party or one of its affiliated organizations” (Rule A.10 (a)).
2 Specifically Rule A.10 (c) of the ALP (NSW Branch) rules states that: Any member who has been charged with: disruptive tactics, disloyal or unworthy conduct, action or conduct contrary to the principles and solidarity of the Party; which causes immediate electoral damage to the Party may be suspended by the Party Officers pending charges being referred to the Administrative Committee.
Furthermore, as Parkin and Warhurst state, “candidates endorsed by the party for parliamentary contests continue to sign the famous parliamentary office pledge to vote unanimously in Parliament as determined by a majority in the parliamentary Caucus” (2000: 28). Thus, loyalty is a binding principle at the parliamentary level as well. On the ‘tradition of loyalty’ to the Party’s leader, see Parkin, 1983: 34.
3 The term ‘right-winger’ refers to a member of the Party’s right wing faction. As Jaensch and Teichmann point out, “the Party has always been divided between left, centre and right factions, with different ‘balances’ in different state branches” (1992: 17). In New South Wales, the Right wing has always dominated both the organisational and the parliamentary party. For a history of the New South Wales branch, see generally Freudenburg, 1991.
4 Morris admits that what she would like is “an endless Labor government – an undemocratic and utterly impractical wish” (1998: 200).
5 In the same vein Gross argues that feminist theory is in fact “theoretical practice” as well as “practical theory” (1986: 202). Likewise, Morris argues that there is no “easy split” between feminist practice and “the relentless but specialized struggles of feminist theory” (1998: xv). She suggests that the distinction between activists and academics is a manifestation of the theory/practice divide and equally problematic (1998: xv). Morris also questions the idea that practice should somehow conform to theory, that we should demand a “consistency between living and writing, acting and thinking, life, art, and labor” (1998: xviii). On the question of the theory/practice division, see generally Morris, 1988.
6 Morris describes these antagonistic traditions as “dialectical struggles that over a century formed the Labor Party” (1998: 210). She singles out the conflicts of “capital vs. labor” and “Catholicism vs. communism” (1998: 210).
7 Indeed, as Parkin comments, this definition is very broad; “an ideological spectrum from Left to Right might be observable, and the factional alignment might correspond” (1983: 23, emphasis added). On factions, see Parkin, 1983: 37-39.
8 On the increasing importance of politicians within the Labor Party, see Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 31-33.
9 This is Parkin and Warhurst’s point, namely that some observers’ insistence that the Labor government of the 1980s is better described as the ‘Hawke-Keating’ government in fact “reinforces the general argument about the significance of leadership” (2000: 36). However, as Morris points out, the Leader and the Treasurer are in no way similarly situated in terms of symbolic and cultural power:

… the Treasurer is not ‘a Leader’. ... [It] is certainly a powerful office, symbolically as well as politically; his actions massively impact on the lives of ordinary citizens, and thus the fate of governments. ... But ... no Treasurer is capable of effecting, as Lacoue-Labarthe puts it, a “fusion of community (in festival or war)”. Representing work and the management of economic inequality rather than festival or war, the Treasurer differentiates a community likely to find “fusion” only in a consensus to blame him for those disasters (droughts, other people’s wars, commodity price fluctuations) everyone knows he can’t control (1998: 163).

10 Johnson approaches an analysis of the leader’s persona “in terms of fragmented subjectivities” (1997: 38). Similarly, in her essay on Paul Keating, Morris is interested not in the ‘real Paul Keating behind the mask’ etc but in “the Keating semantic field”, Keating as media image(s) (1998: 159). She identifies as her object of analysis the “relational play of identity that I, as an addressee, a consumer, and a citizen-referent of media discourse on the nation, have been calling ‘Paul Keating’” (1998: 166). She takes such an approach because she questions the division between ‘performance’ and ‘policy’ “when speech is action in the media” (1998: 160).

11 On the importance of the leader in election campaigns, see Bennett, 1996: 114-116.
12 Wark goes further than this to argue that the Labor Party is “just a dream, a fantasy that creates desires – but no less real for that” (1999: 327-328).
13 Here I am using Watson’s definition of the State to describe the Labor Party. There are some striking similarities between the ways in which the State is conventionally described (as unitary, coherent, an actor) and the ways in which the Labor Party is described. Consequently, Watson’s critique of the State speaks to a different perspective on the internal workings of the Labor Party.
14 This “organizational complexity” (Parkin, 1983: 15) also means that it is often difficult to identify who is speaking on behalf of ‘the Labor Party’ at any given moment. In her work on the ideology of Labor governments, Johnson’s response to this problem of ‘who is speaking’ is to declare that she is concerned only with “the dominant premises underlying government policies” (1989: 3). The ‘lesser’, more diverse views of members of the Party, dissenting Ministers and other Labor parliamentarians are not analysed in depth (1989: 3). There are, however, other ways to treat the various ruptures and contingencies within Labor discourse. In this thesis, I attempt to construct what Kendall and Wickham describe as a “general history”, which concentrates more on describing “differences, transformations, continuities, [and] mutations” (1999: 24). Within the context of a general history, any discussion of what ‘the Labor Party’ declares and how it acts exists in tension with the knowledge that Labor discourse is neither self-contained nor necessarily consistent across sites.

15 This distinction between State bodies and national bodies of the Labor Party is a significant one. As Lloyd states:

Federal politics generally lags behind State and local politics in the priorities of the [Party]. Unless there is a national event of unchallenged significance on the horizon – a Federal election, a National Conference, a meeting of the National Executive – it is not easy for the State parties to switch their emphasis to Federal politics. ... The organs that make up the Federal party (with the partial exception of the Federal parliamentary caucus) come together irregularly. ... Membership of the Federal administrative bodies has
been much smaller, more stable and more predictable over time. Federal Labor Governments have not been frequent and political rewards have mostly derived from State and local government (1983: 230). Despite its “sovereign power” on paper, the national bodies of the Party have not enjoyed a history of supreme influence within the Party (Lloyd, 1983: 230). Indeed, as Lloyd comments, the national machinery has been “largely a rudimentary and improvisatory accommodation to the realities of Australian federalism” (1983: 230).

16 As Parkin comments, it is only relatively recently that the Party has “built up a National Secretariat of any ongoing significance” (1983: 45). It seems that the establishment of the National Secretariat was an acknowledgement that with the growing reach and influence of the mass, electronic media, campaigns needed to be coordinated by a central and national organizing body.

17 On campaign organization generally, see Bennett, 1996: 109-112.

18 To a certain extent, the documents associated with the Party’s national conference are also ‘external’ since the conference was made open to observers and the media in the late sixties (Lloyd, 1983: 231).

19 As Johnson notes, even these confidential documents “sometimes need to be treated with caution as archival records are often incomplete” (1989: 3). Undoubtedly, the materials I draw upon in this thesis, which are primarily taken from the National Archives, are ‘incomplete’. However, I have not sought to complete them through extra research, rather I have taken the collection as I have found it.

20 For example, although the second National Agenda for Women was produced as a government document, it was launched by Prime Minister Keating during the 1993 election campaign and formed the basis of the Party’s policy on women in that campaign. For a detailed reading of the second Agenda, see Chapter 5.

21 In recent times, in very marginal, need-to-win seats, the National Secretariat has become increasingly involved and may seek now to control what happens in those seats. As Parkin and Warhurst comment:

Labor’s so-called ‘marginal seat strategy’, in which candidates in marginal seats have been carefully selected, with some national office advice, and have been nurtured by strong national-level party support, seemed particularly successful [in the 1980s] (2000: 46).

22 On local campaigning, see Bennett, 1996: 120-121, 125-132.

23 Although the 1983 and 1993 federal elections are the primary objects of study, I have also looked at materials dating from before and after these two election periods. I have, however, not looked at much primary material dating before 1980 or after 1993. The three federal elections in between these two, namely 1984, 1987, and 1990, will also be referred to when relevant. Labor’s association with the environment movement dominated the elections of 1987 and 1990. Despite the Party’s uneven attempts at closing the gender gap throughout the Hawke-Keating years, it is important to note that every campaign during this period targeted women voters, primarily through social policy initiatives.

24 Although there were some attempts at attracting women’s votes in the 1977 and 1980 federal elections, the Party made its first concerted attempt to close the gender gap in the 1983 campaign. As Susan Ryan comments, in the 1977 and 1980 federal election campaigns, “ad hoc committees aimed at increasing Labor’s vote among women were established” (1982a: 21). Furthermore, White comments that during the 1980 election “the major parties - responding at last to the influence of pressure groups such as WEL - made some attempt to sell themselves to the average Australian woman voter with policy packages on women’s issues” (1981: 29).

25 As Simms points out, at the 1983 federal election Labor increased its number of women candidates to thirty. She suggests that:

... this was largely achieved through an increase in the ranks of women candidates for the Senate which jumped from four to ten. The [Party's] internal affirmative action campaign was undoubtedly one factor in this improvement (1991: 44).
This perception existed within the Liberal Party as well. In an opinion piece in The Australian, Liberal Senator Kathy Martin from Queensland argued that the Liberals lost the election because it had lost women’s support for its policies (1983: 9).

As Bean comments, “the environment played a much smaller role in the 1993 election than it had in 1990” (1994: 4). For further discussion, see generally Papadakis, 1993.

In 1992 and 1993, the federal government released sixteen different reports and documents on women, covering a range of issues including domestic violence, the environment, law reform, the media, housing, enterprise bargaining and paid maternity leave. See Sawer & Groves, 1994b: 98.

Indeed, during the Labor decade the Party became increasingly aware that television was becoming the public’s main source of information during election periods. A discussion paper on Labor’s 1983 campaign launch reflects the importance of television as the preferred medium for projecting political messages to the public.

Apart from the general media reporting, primary public awareness of the launch will be through the TV broadcast. As much as an event in itself, the launch would be approached as a TV production – a TV show capable of holding its audience … The profile or image of the programme will consciously or unconsciously affect the viewer's perception of the [Party] and its campaign. The programme should project the same qualities that the electorate would associate with the party and leaders they want to govern Australia. So the programme should be forthright and stimulating while at the same time, professional and conventional (1983a: 2).

Hence, it was through television that the Party would project “a winning look” (Pryor, 1983: 5).

Labor women also argued that television and radio were the best media for communicating with women. In their submission to the Party’s 1979 Inquiry, Anne Field and Ros Kelly state that “women are more accessible through TV and radio” (1978, 6).

Sources of information deemed “non applicable to women” in this text include “newspapers, evening television and radio, workplace and unions” (3). What is notable here is that ‘average’ is in fact the masculine norm, in other words, women read less than men, watch less evening television than men. The tendency to evaluate women in relation to the masculine norm is discussed in Chapter 6. In relation to British women’s consumption of evening television news, consider the following comment by Swindells and Jardine:

Bea Campbell, watching the news, observes that the woman at the ironing board misses the news, and that “it had nothing to do with her anyway”. … For the woman at the ironing board to vote Labour … she would need, in the first place, to believe that she was entitled to the leisure to watch the television (1990: x).

Television was, as Summers puts it, “Hawke’s medium” (1983: 76). In his account of the 1983 federal election, McGregor describes Bob Hawke as Australia’s first “post-McLuhan politician … one of the first to realize that it is in the electronic media that a great deal of the passion play of contemporary politics is enacted” (1983: 13). Television enhanced Bob Hawke’s celebrity and his popular appeal and was seen to have contributed, “though in an intangible and immeasurable way”, to Labor’s victory (Wark, 1999: 179). Hawke would use television appearances to great effect during the early years of his Prime Ministership. He made a guest appearance on the popular music show Countdown, with the host Molly Meldrum making “a big show of symbolically giving Bob Hawke [a hat]” (Wark, 1999: 117). Hawke also made a guest appearance on the television drama series A Country Practice. On that show, aired on 23 July 1986, the Prime Minister:

... addressed [the Wandin Valley] crowd to talk about the threat of nuclear war during the International Year of Peace, assuring them that “I love this planet too” and that “anything I can possibly do to help remove this threat, anything within my power that I can do to enable you, the kids of today, the adults of the future, to grow up with a long and peaceful future stretching out in front of you, I will do (Muecke, 1988: 55).
Muecke argues that at this moment, “Hawke was able to realize his simulation in media as a public figure, both ‘political’ and ‘popular’, real and fictional – not unlike Reagan” (1988: 54). There can be no doubt that Hawke’s appearance on a television drama to talk about peace issues was an appeal to women voters, considering their traditional support for the peace and anti-nuclear weapons movements. See also Morris (1987) “Hawke and the culture vultures”.

33 As Morris points out, “Paul Keating aroused intensive media interest in his person” (1998: 262). Keating himself recognized his status as “an object of media desire” (Morris, 1998: 174). At the Walkley Awards in 1992, he addressed a crowd of journalists and media professionals with the jesting remark: “I think it must be a kind of cultural attraction that you have for me” (Keating, 1992: 203). The close relationship between Keating and the press has been well documented. Melleuish comments that it was mostly because of Keating that “the press largely adopted Labor’s cultural agenda” (1998: 71). Some of Keating’s colleagues found his close relationship with the press distasteful. Peter Walsh describes the Canberra Press Gallery and the ABC’s response to Keating as “sycophantic” (1996: 285).

With a handful of exceptions about half the Press Gallery was in love with Keating. The other half was intimidated by him (1996: 286).

34 Lake is emphatic in her conclusion that “the non-party strategy was integral to the feminist political philosophy and vision” before the second wave (1999: 143). However, by no means should it be suggested that Australian women have only chosen the non-party way. Indeed Lake states that although Labor women concentrated on activities within the Party they frequently co-operated with women’s groups in particular campaigns (1999: 143). On the history of the relationship between non-party and Labor women, see Lake, 1999: 44, 72-76, 97-103, and 210.

35 On the relationship between Foucault and feminism, see generally Ramazanoglu, 1993.

36 This is not to argue that adopting a Foucauldian approach produces an entirely pessimistic reading of politics. Probyn argues that Foucault’s anti-humanism actually provides “a theoretical impetus to political action” (1993: 113).

37 Connected to this notion of ‘economic government’ is the idea of ‘contractualism’ as “an autonomous rationality of government” (Hindess, 1997: 18). The reliance of governments on markets and the “reach of contracting into the everyday business of government” is by no means a new innovation (Davis, 1997: 226-227). What is a relatively unique development however is the use of contract to characterise the relationship between government and the governed, what Hindess describes as “a more general way of thinking about government ... [as] an implied contract involving individual members of the governed population on the one hand and their government ... on the other” (1997: 14). In this way, contractual relations become the model for the relationship between government and governed, with the State and the citizen assuming positions of equal partners in a contract for services.

38 For Yeatman, policy documents are like any other text in their tendency “to conform to generic conventions” (1990: 160).

39 Bulbeck states that a history of the feminist movement “written from archives and remembrances is now a flourishing sub-industry in academic feminism” (1997: 19). Despite the proliferation of stories about Australian feminism’s second wave, Bulbeck argues that: ... we are still apt to hear some feminist stories more often than others. Our understanding of the women’s liberation movement has largely come to us through the women who ‘made’ it happen. ... Women’s liberation spawned femocracy and academic feminism; its denizens have not been tardy in telling their stories (1997: 2).
Chapter 2

Defining Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating years

Since the Party’s formation in the late 1890s, various factions within Labor ranks have struggled over the question of ‘what it means to be Labor’ (Easson, 1990: 71). The Party’s Left wing has traditionally argued that Labor should adhere to the dictates of democratic socialism, as expressed in the Party’s platform. For the Left, Labor politics should operate according to a consistent ideology. In contrast, Labor’s Right wing has argued that Labor politics is, and has been, changing and changeable. Key right-wing figures such as Paul Keating and Bob Carr have argued that the Labor Party has practiced an undoctrinaire and flexible mode of politics since its beginnings. In this debate about Labor values, history has provided the vehicle through which “particular Labor leaders defend their fidelity to Labor tradition” (Macintyre, 1995: 163). Arguments over history have become the site on which battles for current political power and legitimacy are fought. In recent times, this debate about the authentic Labor tradition has focused on the Hawke-Keating years. For the Left, this period constitutes a betrayal of the legacy of former Labor governments under Whitlam, Chifley and Curtin, a fundamental break with Labor tradition. For the Right, the government of Hawke-Keating was a continuation or a modernisation of this tradition; in their view, the Hawke-Keating years saw a refinement of Labor politics to fit the particular circumstances of the 1980s.

Instead of viewing Labor politics in terms of a ‘tradition’, a linear history or a coherent platform, I argue that it is best analysed as a discourse. Such an approach is an important move away from the frustrating and circular arguments about the
‘true’ Labor tradition, premised as they are on a realist epistemology. An approach that sees Labor politics as a discourse is not interested in what the true Labor tradition is or should be but rather how Labor politics operates and how it produces certain subject positions. Within this view of Labor politics as a discourse, ‘the Labor tradition’ and ‘the Hawke-Keating era’ become contested discursive objects that operate to mark out certain speaking positions within Labor discourse more broadly, positions within which the numerous factions can operate.

Furthermore, I am interested in the way in which Labor discourse is informed by liberalism as a form of economic government (Dean, 1999: 51). I am particularly interested in how Labor discourse altered during the Hawke-Keating years in ways that are consistent with the precepts of liberal, economic government, as defined by Foucault and Rose. It was during this time that Labor attempted to establish itself as a party of stable government and efficient economic management. Labor under the leadership of Hawke-Keating also sought to project an image of itself as a party of consensus and reconciliation, consulting with and bringing together different groups and interests in society. During this time, Labor went about “composing a new majority” of the centre, based around the dual goals of economic prosperity and social harmony (Wark, 1999: 127). Both traditional Labor objectives (like social justice and equality) and more contemporary goals (like international competitiveness and the move towards a republic) were connected with Labor’s primary goal of securing economic growth.

This chapter is an investigation of the shape and content of Labor discourse during a crucial period in the Party’s recent history. Such an investigation is an essential prelude to my broader objective in this thesis, namely to analyse the ways in which
Labor discourse worked to construct the new political subject position of ‘the woman voter’ during the Hawke-Keating era. In this chapter I will continue to draw on Foucauldian theories of governmentality, already introduced in the previous chapter, in a discussion of the complexities of liberalism and the notion of ‘economic government’. In my investigation of the debates about the Labor tradition, I also utilise work from commentators such as Peter Beilharz, Tim Battin and Stuart Macintyre who take a more conventional approach to analysing Labor politics.

**Arguing with History: debates over the Labor tradition**

As stated above, arguments over about what constitutes the ‘true’ Labor tradition have persisted within Party circles since its inception. However, these debates have intensified at certain moments, particularly when the Party is undergoing structural or policy reform or when its electoral fortunes are waning. The Hawke-Keating era was such a period. During the time, both the Party’s internal and external critics questioned the government’s fidelity to the Labor tradition. Numerous books were published during the tail end of the Labor decade dealing with this very question, including Dean Jaensch’s *The Hawke-Keating Hijack* and Graham Maddox’s *The Hawke Government and the Labor Tradition*. As Wark comments, these books:

> ... chose to judge the Hawke government, and Keating as its economic prime-mover, by the standards and values of the Labor culture of the past, although the authors are not agreed on exactly which values in Labor’s past are its true essence (1999: 210).
These (mainly) Left critics were highly sceptical of Hawke’s commitment to basic Labor principles. They saw Labor under Hawke, with its emphasis on consensus politics, economic rationalism and public sector restraint, as “moderate, un-reformist [and] anti-ideological”, both uninterested and unable to “change the essentially conservative structure of Australian society” (McGregor, 1983: 11). As Johnson comments, for these Left critics, the Hawke-Keating years represent a “right-wing aberration” and a betrayal of “the legacy of previous Labor governments” (1989: 92). Even for those Left critics who accept that the Party has never been conventionally socialist in its structures or its policies, the Hawke-Keating years still constitute a shift away from working class politics towards a more middle-of-the-road agenda. Some critics have gone further to argue that the Labor Party under Hawke-Keating became “apolitical” (Yeatman, 1990: ix), a kind of hollow vessel into which Party leaders poured the more electorally popular ideas of the day. It was particularly common during the Hawke-Keating years to argue that “economic rationalism” had “reconstructed ‘Labor’ as an ideologically empty identity” (Morris, 1998: 171). For example, Beilharz asserts that the 1980s saw the “emptying out the labour tradition” in the federal government’s pursuit of proper managerial credentials (1994: 4). Whether impliedly or expressly, Beilharz and critics likes him present Labor’s lack of (consistent) ideology as a problem, as evidence that the Party is somehow lacking in comparison with other ‘true’ socialist organizations.

Conversely, defenders of the Hawke-Keating years have vigorously argued that this era of government represents a modernization of the Labor tradition, necessitated by changes in the global economy and by various societal trends eroding the Party’s popular base, the working class. They assert that the Hawke-Keating government “merely [drew] on Labor traditions while developing policies to meet the
circumstances” of the 1980s (Johnson, 1989: 92). Labor leaders such as Bob Carr⁴, Paul Keating⁵ and Neville Wran⁶ took the opportunities afforded by the Party’s numerous annual public lectures and publishing efforts to defend the government’s adherence to the Labor tradition. For these men, presenting a particular version of the Party’s historical record was a way to prove that Labor has been “meliorist, practical and undoctrinaire from the very beginning” (Macintyre, 1995: 163). For these Labor politicians, the undoctrinaire quality of Labor politics is a strength rather than a liability. They argue that Labor has been at its most powerful when it has rejected “the purity of impotence” in opposition in favour of “the central relevance of power” in government (Macintyre, 1995: 162).

Such a pragmatic approach to Labor politics is typified by the sentiments of the New South Wales Right Wing faction contained in Fia Cumming’s oral history *Mates*. Cummings describes the Labor Right as “a feudal system in which looking after the working class is both the *raison d’être* and the only doctrine necessary” (1991: 241). For federal parliamentarian Leo Macleay⁷ one of the Party’s most important goals is to provide an avenue for the generational advancement of the working class. He asserts that Labor politics is “best summed up by what my father said to me, which was, you have got to do better than I have” (Cumming, 1991: 241). In a similar fashion, Paul Keating (whom McGregor describes as personifying the “anti-doctrinaire strand in the Labor movement” (1983: 124)) asserts that Labor philosophy is all about “looking after the battlers [and] the small people” (Cumming, 1991: 245). As Farrell comments, even early Labor heroes like Ben Chifley have come to personify this practical approach to politics. Farrell describes how Chifley maintained an attitude to Labor politics:
... in keeping with the general spirit of egalitarianism and democratic values which has always characterized Labor politicians and their attitude to theory. It was, in Chifley's day, as in earlier times, a party led by practical politicians dedicated to immediate reforms in a secular democratic and 'self-evident' society ... [T]he uplift of the more unfortunate providing the [Party] with both its raison d'être and continuing relevance as a movement of reform (1989: 50).

For those opposed to a view that the Party requires one guiding political philosophy, the politics of Labor are best described in cultural and organizational terms, by reference to the "feelings that structure Labor culture" (Wark, 1999: 181). Within this view, Labor politics is not about correct socialist praxis but rather about mateship, 'the battlers' and a 'fair go'.

Indeed, these Right wing figures have vigorously argued that the Party has never been influenced by any single ideology. For example, in a contribution to an essay collection, Paul Keating seeks to distinguish the Australian Labor Party from European democratic socialist parties by stating that the former is:

... older [and] not motivated by any rigid ideology and has a philosophy which has developed in response to the social needs of the Australian working class. The [Party] owes little or nothing to external influences, be they social democratic, Marxist or whatever (1987: 175).

Whether or not we agree with this characterisation of Labor politics as practical and anti-doctrinal, it is clear that the Party cannot be described as 'socialist' in any orthodox sense. Even a cursory review of the Party's platform, the text that
contains Labor’s guiding principles and official policy, reveals that the Labor Party is a political organization “disunited about its own objectives” (McGregor, 1983: 124). While at the outset the Platform declares the Party to be “democratic socialist”, closer examination of its contents reveals it to be a politically fractured document, “riddled with internal inconsistencies” (Lloyd, 1983: 244). Instead of presenting one coherent ideological position, Farrell argues that Labor’s platform reflects a kind of “‘fix-it’ style of practical social reform” (1989: 60). Similarly, the description of Labor politics provided by Brian and Renate Howe (the former a Hawke-Keating Minister, the later a feminist academic) reinforces this view of the Party as practical and meliorist. They argue that the “dominant ideological focus” of Australian Labor has been a kind of “socialisme sans doctrines”, which combines a “strong class memory” with a “fierce commitment to equality” (1984: 171).

The debates about the Labor tradition, as canvassed above, invite a consideration of the role of history-telling in Labor culture and politics. In a memorial lecture to the Party’s 1994 National Conference, entitled ‘Who are the True Believers?’, labour historian Stuart Macintyre explores this very issue. Macintyre argues that unlike the conservatives, the labour movement has an interest in history “amounting almost to an obsession” (1995: 155). He argues that the movement has supported a “distinctive form of labour history”, written mainly by and for labour people and as an “integral part” of the movement’s self-definition (1995: 157). As a consequence, the insights of historians like Manning Clark and Stuart Macintyre have some currency within Labor circles because they reflect a certain “feel for the psychology of the Labor Party” (Carr, 1988: 97). Moreover, the Party’s fascination with history-telling illustrates the centrality of “words, images, customs and festivals” to the operations of Labor culture and politics (Macintyre, 1995: 156). As Beilharz
comments, the artefacts and icons of the labour movement are “the remembrances of things past that show labour what it is, what it has been, and therefore what it could again be” (1994: 23). Similarly, Evans comments that:

... the heart and soul of a political party is always found in its past. As [Paul] Keating had told me in his city office, “parties need to have a past to have a future” (2001: 27).

In the main, this interest in the past has in fact been an interest in arguing over history, in particular over the ‘true’ Labor tradition (as canvassed above). Arguing over history has always served an immediate political purpose for those engaged in these debates. Such arguments serve to:

... mark out alternative positions in the Party, alternative renditions of what Labor stands for. They have become an important site of the contest for political legitimacy (Macintyre, 1995: 158).

In this way various groups within the labour movement use “history as a weapon”, to attack opponents and to fend off critics, at the same time using appeals to “tradition” as both a guide and a justification of present political action (Macintyre, 1995: 158). Debates over history thus become the vehicle through which the identity of different Party factions and figures, their current course and future direction, is forged. In this way, constructions and contestations of Labor’s past provide “vital sources of political idiom and rhetoric” in the present (Beilharz, 1994: 24). Indeed, we can view the debate over the Hawke-Keating era as:
... an attempt by politicians to discursively capture both the future and the past and to construct historical narratives accordingly. It was fascinating how a government that projected itself as being pragmatic attempted to mobilize past and future imaginaries as a party electoral strategy (2000: 30).

In this view, the intense interest of these Party leaders with telling-history is in fact a conscious and collective effort to mobilize historical narratives in the service of a contemporary political agenda. Hence, questions about history provide the vehicle through which particular Labor leaders or factions defend their current actions and consolidate their position within the Party.

Questions of ‘history’, as framed in the debate over ‘the Labor tradition’, have been consistently problematized within post-structural analyses. Foucault eschewed traditional ways of telling history that relied on ‘realist’ epistemologies or that saw history as a linear progression of events. He questioned the validity of history-telling in terms of “tradition and invention, of the old and the new, of the dead and the living, of the closed and the open, of the static and the dynamic” (Foucault, 1991a: 62). Foucault’s rejection of conventional modes of history-telling is in line with his sceptical approach to truth, as canvassed in Chapter 1.

Hence, if we accept as Foucault does “the impossibility of defending ‘truth’ in any metaphysical way” (Bové, 1995: 55), then debates about the authentic Labor tradition are unhelpful as a guide to understanding how Labor politics operates. This is because underlying these debates is the assumption that there is an objective, ‘true’ standard, either historical or ideological, by which Labor governments can be judged. Rather, the true Labor tradition cannot be objectively defined or proven because such ‘tradition’ is a “form of strained continuity”, implying historical
consistency, progression and unity (Foucault, 1991a: 56). Instead of viewing Labor politics in terms of a ‘tradition’ or a ‘linear history’, I argue that it is best analysed as a discourse. Such an approach to Labor politics is a crucial break from the frustrating and circular arguments about the ‘true’ Labor tradition.

How then should we view these debates about the Labor tradition? I argue that these debates are significant in terms of their position and operation within Labor discourse. On of the effects of this on-going historical debate is the formation of certain discursive objects, in particular ‘the Labor tradition’ and ‘the Hawke-Keating era’. These objects are the subject of contestation, particularly when other shifts in Labor discourse are occurring, such as changes to its policies, institutional structures or electoral fortunes. This process of contestation creates particular speaking positions – taken up by different factional figures and Labor leaders - within Labor discourse as a whole. Within the terms of this debate, Labor’s Left faction is aligned with previous Labor governments and ‘the Whitlam legacy’, Labor’s Right faction with ‘the Hawke-Keating era’. In this way “intradiscursive dependencies” (Foucault, 1991a: 58) are forged between these discursive objects (‘the Labor tradition’ or ‘the Hawke-Keating government’) and speaking-positions within the discourse (Left faction or Right faction). In other words, each discursive formation consolidates the existence and operations of the other. In this way, ‘the Labor tradition’ as a discursive object operates to mark out and reinforce certain speaking positions within the broader discourse, positions within which the numerous factions (Left or Right) can function. In addition, these speaking positions (Left and Right) are further consolidated in the on-going debate about what constitutes the true Labor tradition.
Labor politics as discourse

In view of the inadequacy of the above debates in terms of understanding Labor politics, I argue that this form of politics should be viewed as a discourse. Indeed Labor discourse has its own specific regulations, “rational and irrational thoughts and acceptable and unacceptable behaviours” (Eisenstein, 1988: 43). It is articulated through various institutional sites: local Party branches with their own “regional and colonial inflexions”, state and federal branches, caucuses, cabinets and leadership groups (Beilharz, 1994: 38). Each location produces a particular inflection of Labor values; each “speaks a different dialect” (Beilharz, 1994: 38). Consequently, the form and content of Labor discourse is unstable, dependent upon the various sites that structure and contain it.

If we view Labor politics as a discourse, then we necessarily reject the notion that there is or can be any “unity of its object [or] its formal structure”, any coherence to its “conceptual architecture” or “fundamental philosophical choices” (Foucault, 1991a: 54). Labor discourse cannot be understood by reference to any “sort of grand underlying theory” such as democratic socialism (Foucault, 1991a: 55). However, the question of the relationship between Labor discourse and liberalism is worth investigating in this context. Within Labor discourse, the vocabulary of egalitarianism is given some emphasis. As Thompson comments, within Australian political culture egalitarianism and liberalism have been closely connected and “called up in all sorts of combinations” (1994: 25). The fact that the rhetoric of egalitarianism is so prevalent in Labor discourse has lead many commentators to conclude that the Party is more indebted to the politics of liberalism than it is to its professed ideological foundations in democratic socialism.¹⁷
Liberalism

Liberalism, as a political philosophy, can be defined in a variety of ways. As Dean points out:

... considered as a political philosophy there is not one but several, if not many, liberalisms: classical liberalism, economic liberalism, social liberalism, welfare liberalism, neo-liberalism (itself taking several versions) (1999: 51).

All forms of liberal thought however include some commitment to the ‘rule of law’ and the protection of individual rights and freedom against illegitimate interference from the State (Dean, 1999: 49). As Nash comments, “liberalism always validates its conclusions with reference to the universal principles of liberty and equality” (1998: 66); hence, the connection with egalitarianism and its valorisation of equality and ‘a fair go for all’. This means that liberal thought is “always concerned with the individual” and “always opposes the public and the private” spheres (Nash, 1998: 66).

Labor politics has been described by many as falling within the “social liberal” tradition. For example, Sawer argues that social liberalism has been a strong influence in the development of Australia’s national institutions and consequently has always been a major element in Labor ideology (1993: 7). The Party has also been described as “social democratic” in practice. Beilharz argues that a detailed examination of the content of the Platform “suggests a party within the broad social democratic tradition” (1994: 40). Naturally there are competing definitions of what
constitutes “social democracy” in this context. Johnson provides a good working definition of “social democracy” in its Australian form. She states that it is a mode of governance focused on “social harmony” and aimed at creating “a humanised capitalist society [for] the benefit of all, including both wage earners and business” (1989: 1). (Note that the question of social harmony or consensus is discussed later in this chapter).

The influence of this social (interventionist and democratic) form of liberalism can be seen as reflected in one particular aspect of the Labor tradition – the importance accorded to the role of the State (Sawer, 1993: 7). Sawer argues that the influence of social liberalism on the “Australian nation-building period” has ensured that our own political and social movements, even those of a radical bent, have been accustomed to looking to the State to meet their demands (1993: 2). Again, this “statist orientation” further distances Labor politics from conventional socialist politics (Yeatman, 1990: ix). There is a traditional suspicion within socialism of “both corporate and state power”, along with the conviction that left values can only be effectively achieved through the fundamental societal changes required by socialist theory (Sawer, 1993: 47). Conversely, social liberal theory sees the State as playing a central role by acting on behalf of its citizens to protect them against market forces and to “provide the conditions of positive liberty” (Sawer, 1993: 8). As Sawer comments, within this particular notion of liberal government “the State [is] to have an ethical role as the vehicle for social justice, in particular wage justice” (1993: 2). Thus, the central focus of social liberal theory is not “the abstract, rights-bearing individual” (as in the United States) but the dutiful, interventionist State, charged with the task of civilizing capitalism (Sawer, 1993: 7-8). It is easy to see how such a conception of the role of the State provides a strong basis for what Wark describes
as the “old form” of the Labor tradition, with its notions of “communality, the welfare state, social reform, and promoting the interests of ordinary working people” (1999: 39-40). However, it must also be pointed out that Labor’s traditional commitment to an active public sector came under “solid attack” during the Hawke-Keating years (Simms, 1986: 32). Although the debate about the role of the State continues to structure the division between Labor and Liberal (as political parties) in the public mind, in practicality characterizing Labor as unreservedly ‘statist’ is an oversimplification, at least within the more recent context.

As discussed in the previous chapter, there is another way of defining ‘liberalism’, a way which owes more to the thinking of Foucault and Rose than it does to the writings of Smith, Hobbes and Locke. In exploring the relationship between Labor politics and liberalism, I have used the latter term to denote a particular “juridical philosophy of individual freedom” (Barry et al, 1996: 21). However, the term ‘liberalism’ is used in Foucauldian theory not in reference to a coherent ideology but to a certain mode of government. By mode of government I do not mean “any particular set of politics adopted by a government” but rather “a particular way in which the activity of government has been made both thinkable and practicable as an art” (Barry et al, 1996: 21). As Barry, Osborne and Rose comment:

> It is clear that Foucault means something rather different by liberalism than do political philosophers. ... From Foucault’s perspective, liberalism is more like an ethos of government. Liberalism is understood not so much as a substantive doctrine or practice of government in itself, but as a restless and dissatisfied ethos of recurrent critique of State reason and politics (1996: 8).
In taking up Foucault’s notion of liberalism, I am not denying that the shape of Labor discourse has been influenced by conventional liberal thought. Rather, I believe, as Barry, Osborne and Rose do, that “the death of State socialism as a viable political doctrine” has not seen the rise of a pure and uncontested form of “liberal democracy and free-market individualism” but instead a “proliferation of political doctrines and programmes that are unstable and difficult to classify in conventional terms” (1996: 1). In this way liberalism “displays a remarkable degree of political invention and self-renewal” in its capacity to regulate the play of the forces between the market, the State, political parties, corporate entities, individuals, families, communities and the general population (Dean, 1999: 51). Hence, an interrogation of the contours of Labor discourse is, in my view, best approached from a perspective that considers liberalism as “an art and rationality of government” as opposed to a coherent political philosophy (Dean, 1999: 51). Such a perspective requires a focus on the ethical, technical and every-day operations of liberalism rather than on the general ideology of parties and their policies (Barry et al, 1996: 11). This perspective also requires an investigation into the ways in which political parties govern, their economical and modest approach to “the problem of government” (Barry et al, 1996: 8). (This idea of ‘economic government’ is explored in greater depth later in this chapter.) A critique of Labor discourse that takes up this notion of liberalism is in keeping with the general theoretical framework of this thesis, as articulated in the previous chapter, with its focus on the operation of the rules and meanings that constitute the visible practices and articulated beliefs of Labor discourse.

In sum, I argue that understanding liberalism or socialism as political ideologies is not the only way to analyse the politics of Labor. Rather, I argue for an analysis of Labor politics as a unique and multifarious discourse, to be approached here from a
perspective that takes up Foucault’s notion of ‘liberal government’. In addition, an appreciation of the shape and content of Labor discourse must be firmly located in the relevant historical context. In this regard, the Hawke-Keating era is of particular interest because shifts within Labor discourse during this crucial period in the Party’s history informed developments within the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as a new political subject position.

**Characterising the Hawke-Keating years**

In attempting to characterise discourse during the Hawke-Keating years, we are faced again with debates about ‘the Labor tradition’. As mentioned above, it was during this period, a time when the Party was in the process of reforming its image, structure, policies and campaign tactics, that debates about Labor values and the authentic Labor tradition intensified. Consequently, these debates inform how we might describe and analyse Labor discourse during this period. There are at least three elements to the established characterisation of the Hawke-Keating government that are relevant to this thesis, namely its relation to the previous government of Gough Whitlam, its strategic partnership with new social movements and its re-articulation of consensus politics. In descriptions of the Hawke-Keating government’s differences and similarities to the government of Gough Whitlam, questions of history and tradition are implicated. Arguments about the ‘true’ Labor tradition also inform constructions and interpretations of the Hawke-Keating governments’ engagement with new social movements and consensus politics, however they are also related to the issue of ‘economic government’ and will also be discussed in that context.
Whitlam and Hawke: in contrast and continuum

Connections and comparisons, both favourable and unfavourable, are often made between the election of the Whitlam government in 1972 and the election of the Hawke government in 1983. These two elections (arguably the most important victories in Labor’s recent history) saw the Party come to power, seemingly out of the wilderness, after years of Liberal Party rule at the federal level. Both Hawke and Whitlam were charismatic figures, in different ways atypical Labor leaders with middle of the road political agendas. Both were unlike the “old men with red faces in navy suits” normally associated with the Party leadership (Ryan, 1999: 139). Both Whitlam and Hawke came to power after the Party had undergone reforms in relation to its internal structure, policy and public image. After years of commentary and critique about these two significant periods of Labor rule, an interesting dynamic has emerged between the two. Morris states that by the middle of the Labor decade:

... a sense of sharp distinction between ‘the seventies’ and ‘the eighties’ had been widely expressed for years in many areas of Australian cultural and political life. In the media, momentous debates about the future of the nation were packaged, using charismatic Prime Ministerial names, as “Hawke” (1980s) versus “Whitlam” (1970s) (1998: xiv).

Morris concludes that this opposition, organized around the call signs ‘Whitlam’ and ‘Hawke’, positions the 1970s in opposition to the 1980s, setting up various dualisms such as “radicalism versus pragmatism, confrontational politics versus corporatism
and social consensus; ideological passion versus cool, competent professionalism” (1998: 235). In this way ‘the Hawke-Keating era’ and ‘the Whitlam government’ operate in a similar way to ‘the Labor tradition’, as described above. They become contested discursive objects that symbolize certain political and governmental qualities and ideals. They also operate to mark out certain speaking positions for different factions and personnel within Labor discourse a whole.

Whilst I agree with Morris’ comments above, I would add that it is not simply the case that these two Labor eras have been placed in opposition. Rather, these two have been constructed both in terms of disjuncture and continuity. This disjuncture has centred on the issue of economic management, with the Hawke-Keating government in its early years seeking to distance itself from the fiscal failures of its predecessor. As Rowe comments, the 1983 election saw the federal Labor Party “anxious to display its conversion to free market economics” (1998: 74). In an interview for the television series Labor in Power, Hawke states that as Prime Minister he was determined to “avoid the pattern of the past” in which Labor governments scraped into power federally only to be voted out at the next election for being “economically inept”. Hawke saw the Whitlam government as one of “disarray”, arguing that “whatever [Labor governments] do in the field of social reform will count for nothing if the economy is not right”. Indeed, this was the lesson federal Labor learned from the Whitlam ‘failure’, namely that future Labor governments must prove their capacity to manage the economy (Morris, 1998: 199). Hawke ministers who argued in Cabinet meetings for increased funding for social welfare programs found themselves being abused by some of their colleagues for being “unreconstructed Whitlamites” (Walsh, 1996: 102). Such a distancing from what the Whitlam government came to symbolize in the public mind was
necessary in order for Labor under the leadership of Hawke-Keating to establish its credentials as sound economic managers.

At the same time as the Hawke-Keating government tried to distinguish itself from the Whitlam experience, there was a real attempt to connect the two in terms of a commitment to social justice and to reforming the Party's structure and image. In the debates within the Party about the Labor tradition, there has been a desire, especially amongst the Labor Right, to make a strategic connection between the Whitlam and the Hawke-Keating governments. In yet another memorial lecture, Bob Carr argues that Whitlam’s greatest achievement was to provide a foundation for the emergence of the most successful Labor government ever – that of Bob Hawke. He goes on to assert that:

Whitlam swept away the decrepit, madcap era of Evatt and Calwell. He was good at killing off the myths. ... He killed off the myth that opposition to state aid was an inviolable [Party] principle and white Australia a touchstone of Labor faith. He killed off the myth ... that the Labor Party should stay pure in opposition ... (1988: 93).

In praising the leadership of the past, Carr is attempting to defend the leadership of the present, particularly from accusations that the Hawke-Keating government had sold out the Labor tradition. He goes on to argue that it is a “myth” that the Whitlam government is the “benchmark for all Labor governments” and that it is a “shoddy exercise” to use the Whitlam legacy to attack the Hawke government for betraying Labor principles (1988: 93-94).
In sum, the construction of these two Labor governments, whether in terms of contrast or continuum, served to establish Labor under the leadership of Hawke-Keating as remaining committed to traditional concerns such as social justice and consensus politics but within a broader framework of economic government. The relationship that developed between Labor and the new social movements, instigated in its modern form by Whitlam, reflects the powerful convergence of these concerns. In turn, any consideration of consensus politics and economic government must incorporate an analysis of the Party's relationship with the new social movements.

The new social movements

Commentators from a diversity of disciplines and political standpoints tell a remarkably similar story about the changes to Australian society during the 1970s and 1980s and their impact on the Labor Party. Firstly, there is a widespread belief that from the mid 1970s onwards “traditional allegiances and processes of political identification” started to erode, particularly along the lines of class (Melleuish, 1998: 61). As Melleuish argues, up until the 1960s “for most Australians, politics could be defined in terms of identification with, and support of either the Labor or non-Labor side of politics” (1998: 62). However at the beginning of the 1970s there were a number of political and economic changes that impacted radically on the question of political identification, including the decline of the rural workforce and blue-collar industries, the rise of white-collar and service industries, suburbanisation and the growth of female participation in waged work. In addition there were various social and cultural happenings, in particular the rise of new social movements. These new movements advocated the “politics of identity”, claiming “special rights” on the basis
of race, ethnicity, sex and sexual orientation (Melleuish, 1998: 67). Melleuish argues that these groups sought to challenge “both the explanatory power of class as an analytical concept and the importance of class-based forces in effecting social change” (1998: 48). For commentators like Melleuish these transformations worked to undermine traditional party allegiances and changed the nature of political identification. No longer could it be said with quite the same certainty that working-class people preferred to vote Labor and middle-class people preferred to vote Liberal.  

Within the terms of this analysis, the rise of new social movements (like the environment and feminist movements) had a profound impact on the two parties by forcing both to address “post-materialist” concerns (Watts, 1996: 42; Melleuish, 1998: 63). In consideration of this breakdown of class identification Labor began to focus its election campaigns on those voters interested in “post-material” politics, who were characterized as “swinging voters” from the burgeoning middle class (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 36-37). For a party traditionally concerned with class and economic issues, this was a significant shift. Although a broad based party like Labor could never wholly satisfy the claims of movements built around race, gender, sexuality or the environment, it was nevertheless able to “build alliances” with these movements and “to become their major party of preference” (Watts, 1996: 42). From the Whitlam period onward Labor policies began to reflect some of the concerns of these social movements. By the mid-1980s, Labor became particularly adept at reconciling the “new diversity and pluralism” fostered by these social movements with more traditional notions of “the national interest” (Melleuish, 1998: 63). Labor’s alliance with the environmental cause in the late 1980s became the paradigm for the Party’s engagement with new social movements. As Melleuish
states this alliance “indicated the extent to which Labor was willing to deal with interest groups in order to stay in power” (1998: 69).  

The theory that Labor’s interest in the new social movements was precipitated by changes in class and class identification in Australia is itself linked to theories about the middle-classing of the Party during the Hawke-Keating years. The basic assumption here is that the new social movements have primarily been middle-class movements, both in terms of membership but also in terms of their advocacy of ‘post-material’ politics. The conclusion is that the Party’s engagement with these movements transformed Labor from a working class party into a party of the centre, aimed at attracting sections of the middle class. Interestingly, this view is advanced, with significant variations, from both the far left and far right of Labor politics. On the more conservative side, some senior members of the Hawke-Keating government believed that this engagement with the new social movements had “a detrimental effect on Labor’s capacity to pursue not only the national interest but also the interests of its traditional working-class supporters” (Melleuish, 1998: 69). In his interview for Labor in Power, former Minister Peter Walsh was particularly critical of what he characterized as Labor’s sell-out of the working class in favour of “middle class trendoids from the eastern suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne”. In his autobiography, Walsh argues that both the Whitlam and the Hawke-Keating governments’ approval of the “bourgeois left/new class/Balmain Basket Weavers agenda” alienated Labor’s heartland, its “oldest and most natural constituency, blue collar workers” (1996: 286, 283). For Walsh, this new agenda was “anathema to the Labor tradition” (1996: 286-287). The empirical work of both Ian Ward\(^3\) and Ernest Healy\(^4\) has tended to bolster these views.
Arguing from a Left position, Verity Burgmann asserts that during the Hawke-Keating era "blue-collar workers in Party branches become an endangered species", replaced by "teachers and public servants, semi-retired from [1970s] single-issue politics" (1993: 272). She states that an antipathy on behalf of many blue-collar workers towards the social movements developed at this time (1993: 271). Burgmann sympathizes with this antipathy because in her view it did seem as if the Hawke government was becoming involved with a "new political elite representing the views of the new social movements" to the detriment of Labor’s traditional base (1993: 271). She argues that:

... traditional Labor members feel ill at ease in a Party whose cultural values are now those of the new class, with privileges denied the old working class and with values derived in part from the old middle class and in part from the new social movements. The outcome is that blue-collar working-class Labor voters feel the Labor Party no longer represents their interests, that it pursues instead the aims of the new social movements (1993: 272).

However, Burgmann is quick to point out that the disaffection amongst traditional Labor supporters towards the new politics has been misplaced. For Burgmann, the "peculiar achievement of Hawke Labor" was to make real the superficial tensions between the working class and the new social movements (1993: 275). In the end, Labor colluded with employer interests against the working class rather than with the new social movements (1993: 275).35

These debates about Labor’s transformation during the Hawke-Keating years provide an important framework for discussions about Labor discourse during this period. They entrench the traditional oppositions between ‘materialism’ and ‘post-
materialism’, class and gender, class and race and so on. More importantly, however, these ideas contribute to a characterization of Labor politics under the leadership of Hawke-Keating as focused on the politics of the middle, of social harmony and consensus as opposed to traditional left, class-based politics premised on the fundamentally irreconcilable conflict between labour and capital. Indeed, the notion of consensus has been seen as one of the defining aspects of Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating era.

Labor’s ‘new’ consensus

The Hawke government came to power with the intention of introducing consensus into political leadership. In a speech to the National Press Club a few weeks before the 1983 election, Hawke described a future Australia united by the ideal of consensus:

I believe that our future rests upon a coalition of hope; Australians working with Australians, an Australian national government working with other governments, and working with all sections of the community, bringing Australia together in a grand coalition of hope, so that we can make a fresh start ... (Summers, 1983: 171).

Hawke promised his government would end “the divisiveness that had characterized Liberal rule” and work on the basis of “class co-operation” (Johnson, 1990: 97). As Pemberton and Davis state, “the rhetoric of consensus was, in part, the outcome of a need for a new language to justify a Labor government” (1986: 56). Emphasizing the need for harmony between different social classes enabled the Party to help
defend itself against the “inevitable charges of irresponsibility and sectionalism” (Pemberton & Davis, 1986: 56). Furthermore, Hawke’s use of the rhetoric of consensus was part of his “familiar” persona as “the great mediator, the seeker of compromise”, a leader who could speak for all Australians (Pemberton & Davis, 1986: 55-56). Hawke was a public figure who projected a “ populist aura and readiness to compromise” (McGregor, 1983: 12). With “his business suits, careful grooming and sober, responsible image”, Hawke presented an image of a moderate leader of the political middle ground (Wark, 1999: 43). Rod Cameron’s research amongst swinging voters prior to the 1983 election showed that Hawke was “seen as a unifier and a bridge-builder” (Summers, 1983: 70). Through his work as a trade union leader, he had shown remarkable skill as a mediator between business and union interests. Indeed, many commentators have remarked that Bob Hawke himself personified Labor’s consensus ethic. Johnson states that implicit in Hawke’s own personal story was a tale about the country, and the transformation it was required to make during the Labor decade. Hawke was the “reformed womanising and drunken larrikin who could bring Australian business and labour mates together to rebuild a prosperous Australian capitalism” (Johnson, 2000: 6). Similarly, Labor under Hawke was a transformed and modernized Party, aimed at reconstructing the country’s economic and social fabric in a way that reconciled old enemies (labor and capital) and included new friends (new social movements). Hawke’s persona was thus remarkably consonant with the message of his government, one that emphasized economic reconstruction along with social reconciliation.

Although clearly fundamental to the operations of Labor discourse under Hawke-Keating, many argue that consensus has always been part of the Labor tradition. Johnson states that “social harmony perspectives” - with their emphasis on
universalism and reconciliation between different groups in society - “have a long tradition in both left and right sections of the [Party] and labour movement” (1989: 14). Party leaders like Paul Keating have also advanced the idea that consensus politics is at the core of the Labor tradition. In his book article, Keating asserts that:

While dialogue and consensus may be the watchwords of the Hawke Government, in practice, they have been the basis of Labor’s traditional appeal to the public. As a consequence the major achievements of the [Party] since its beginnings late last century have always come when Labor most effectively identified with the objectives and aspirations of the Australian people as a whole. The Party’s major failures have occurred when it has sought to disregard the genuine aspirations of the community ... [and] to pursue goals beyond the normal aspirations of Australians (1987: 175).

In this way, consensus politics is at odds with class based politics (not to mention socialism) in that it “stresses the shared interest of all social groups in reform” as opposed to the basic differences between labour and capital (Johnson, 1989: 68-69). Such an approach “denies that politics involves a conflict of interest” between different social classes (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 36). Hence, Labor’s consensus was premised on a compromise, brokered by the government, between capital and labour for the benefit of the nation. This consensus approach was consolidated through Labor’s “politics of summitry” (Erika, 1986: 86) and typified by the Accord with the trade union movement.

However, Labor’s consensus politics was not simply part of an economic pact between different social classes. It was extended to cover the relationship between the government and other communities congregated around the politics of race,
ethnicity, and gender. On the face of it, Labor’s support for consensus seemed to be
at odds with its engagement with new social movements; the former relies to some
extent on notions of ‘unity’ and ‘sameness’, the latter on questions of personal
identity and difference. Nevertheless, structured consultation with the new social
movements through their associated interest groups and peak bodies allowed Labor
to present its policies as “a synthesis of community views” (Pemberton & Davis,
1986: 55). Labor’s relationship with the new social movements worked to cement
this form of social and cultural consensus; perhaps this link was easier to establish
because the notion of decision-making through consensus had long been a central
feature of the culture of new social movements like the feminist movement.
Difference was acknowledged, even encouraged, but all were finally brought
together by Labor as citizens of the Australian nation state. One of Labor’s more
ambitious goals was thus to make consensus politics and the ‘post-material’ politics
of the new social movements work together and operate as mutually reinforcing
projects.

There are various ways to critique this notion of consensus, what Morris describes as
“a fantasy of Australia transformed into One Big Union” (1989: 186). From a post-
modern vantage point, it is clear that “no operative consensus concerning the
ultimate or transcendental grounds” of identity, truth or justice can exist (Yeatman,
1994: 106). From a feminist viewpoint, some have pointed to the purely
masculinist orientations of Labor’s particular form of consensus. Cox argues that
‘consensus’ under Labor “appeared to be a collective noun referring to businessmen,
trade unionists and politicians – as in ‘a consensus got on the booze last night’”
(Sawer, 1986: 538). Even those who acknowledge Labor’s attempts to integrate
women into “conceptions of social harmony and consensus” argue that this
integration often worked to marginalize or misconstrue their interests (Johnson, 1990: 85, 90).\(^4\) Johnson argues that the ‘social harmony’ aspects of Labor discourse under Hawke-Keating ended up imposing:

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\text{... grave restrictions upon the articulation of feminist demands. The politics of ‘consensus’ and ‘national reconciliation’ tend to be class based and therefore exclude direct consideration of gender, while the emphasis upon mediation and compromise tends to act against the realisation that there is anything inherently wrong with existing social relations (1985: 148).}
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Underpinning this persistent criticism of Labor’s consensus and its embrace of the new politics has been a more general critique of Labor’s ‘corporatism’. Many critics of consensus have argued that the new social movements were incorporated into Labor’s national community on the basis that they conformed to the government’s economic agenda. For example Burgmann and Milner suggest that during the Labor decade “the political logic” of the new social movements ran “increasingly with, rather than against, capitalist rationality” (1997: 50). They assert that the movements’ leaders were “bought” by Labor “on terms strikingly consonant with the rationality of the market” (1997: 54).\(^4\) When Labor responded to the demands of the new social movements, it was generally in a way that protected “corporate interests” and benefited “the relatively privileged amongst the disadvantaged” (Burgmann, 1993: 272). This process of incorporation and commodification of the new social movements and their demands always served to bolster “the imperatives of capitalist rationality” privileged by Labor (Burgmann, 1993: 275).

These arguments raise the question of the interaction between consensus politics and the market economy within Labor discourse. Consensus informs the operations
of the dual “public spheres of economic and political life” (Johnson, 1990: 86). More than this however, the concept of consensus implies “a broader philosophic position”, one that integrates the cultural, the social and economic (Pemberton & Davis, 1986: 55). Consensus politics of this type made “Hawke’s leadership seem different from that of a mere economic manager” (Pemberton & Davis, 1986: 55). This insight highlights the role of ‘the economic’ under Labor. Battin comments that at the centre of contemporary debates about Labor values during the Hawke-Keating years lies the question of the Party’s “attachment to economic rationalism” (2000: 38). During the 1980s, the Hawke-Keating government presided over a significant restructuring of the economy toward deregulation and privatisation. Economic management became Labor’s greatest priority; as noted above, the Hawke-Keating government worked hard to convince both business and the general community that it would break the Labor mould in this respect. However it was not simply that the economy was important to government but also that the logic of the market became all-important to governance, even in relation to issues formerly deemed to be ‘social’ or ‘cultural’.

To Govern Economically

As noted in the previous chapter, Labor discourse has always privileged ‘the economic’. Hall argues that the British Labor Party has been “profoundly ‘economistic’ in outlook and ideology” (1984: 33). Within the Australian context, Beilharz asserts that the limits of Labor discourse have “historically been governed and circumscribed by economics” (1994: 39). Labor leaders have also emphasized the centrality of economic concerns to Labor politics. In the debates about the Labor
tradition, Paul Keating urged the Party faithful not to feel “any unease” about the
fact that “the recovery of profitability” is a basic Labor objective “in its own right”
(1987: 182). Similarly, Neville Wran argued that:

... at this critical period in our country's history [i.e. the 1980s], economic
reform has become the reform of all reform. It is not something marginal to
the real goals and objectives of the Labor movement. It is fundamental to
their achievement (1986: 10).

Labor's intention was thus to 'govern economically’. Such a mode of rule denotes
government that is both of the economy, namely via the economic register, and
economical, in other words limited and cautious. To understand the full implications
of this requires a return to the definition of liberal government as outlined above and
introduced in Chapter 1. As previously stated, ‘the economic’ is central to the
definition of liberalism as a thinkable and practical discourse of government. As
Dean comments, liberal government is ‘economical’ in two ways. In order “to govern
properly, to ensure the happiness and prosperity of the population, it is necessary to
govern through a particular register, that of the economy” (Dean, 1999: 19). In
addition, “government itself must be economical, both fiscally and in the use of
power” (Dean, 1999: 19). In other words, it must be limited, rational and
rationalized. Herein lies part of the impetus for Labor’s embrace of deregulation and
privatisation policies during the Labor decade. Unlike its predecessors, the Hawke-
Keating Labor government operated on the basis “that economic management might
require, not more government involvement, but less” (Melleuish, 1998: 65).
However such a perspective did not lead to an unfettered form of capitalism.
Rather, Labor recognized that although some matters could be given over to market
control, there was always a role for government in managing “a disciplined economy

It is also important to recognize that economic government as practiced by Labor was aimed as much at the social and the cultural as it was at the industrial and the financial. As Dean comments, modern forms of liberal government have such “confidence in market rationality” that they believe it can be extended to make sense of all sorts of policy areas that are “neither exclusively, nor even primarily, concerned with economics, such as the family, the birth rate, delinquency and crime” (1999: 57). Certainly during the Labor decade, the logic of the market was extended and applied throughout all areas of government policy, including “telecommunications, transport, health and education” (Johnson, 2000: 26). The market became “the sole criterion of The Good Life”, its logic becoming the basis of “a new kind of popular common sense” (Hall, 1984: 31-32). At the rhetorical level, the logic of the market was linked with two profound social and cultural issues sponsored heavily by Labor: the pursuit of social justice and the question of national identity. This complex connection between the economic, the social and the national in many ways constitutes a re-articulation of Labor’s more conventional goal, namely the pursuit of social justice within the parameters of market capitalism.
The economy, social justice and national identity

In his article on the moral limits of markets, Raymond Plant argues that markets have to operate with “some constraint on self-interest” and with “some wider appreciation of [the need for] moral integrity” (1992: 88-89). He suggests that:

Without some sense of civic virtue, or orientation to values that are not of a self-regarding kind, market behaviour will require growing regulation in the interests of the market itself. Such regulation, in turn, may become increasingly problematic if there is not some more general concern to cultivate a sense of social and civic responsibility ... (1992: 89). 46

For Plant, the State must manage the “purely self-interested” impulse of the market for the benefit of both the integrity of the market (recognizing that such an impulse could actually damage market operations) as well as for the benefit of the “fairness and justice in the society as a whole” (1992: 89-90). Such a theory brings a new twist to the notion of ‘economic government’. Whilst Labor ‘governed economically’, it never denied the need for the State to “properly manage” the economy, especially in relation to issues of social justice (Dean, 1999: 16). Indeed, from the early days of the Hawke-Keating government, Labor leaders sought to position the Party’s twin goals of economic progress and social justice as inter-related and interdependent. More precisely, they argued that the latter was not possible in any real sense without the former. For example, Neville Wran emphasized that “structural reform of the Australian economy is ... the reform upon which all hope of real Labor reform - our most deeply held aspirations for justice and equality – ultimately depend” (1986: 12). 47 In the same vein, Paul Keating argued that the private sector reforms of his government were all:
... a vital and logical consequence of Labor's mainstream commitment to a viable, growing mixed economy in the service of a decent Australian way of life. Moreover, apart from their own direct contribution to a fairer, more fully employed and prosperous society, [such reforms] contribute to the capacity of the economy to support the social reform programme (1987: 185).

For Keating and Wran, economic growth and development are both a precondition for and an independent source of “the dignity and self respect of Australian individuals and families” (Keating, 1987: 174). In this way, market economics and social justice were not “opponents but partners working together towards a common goal” (Melleuish, 1998: 69). Linking social justice and economic growth is an attempt to “make the market moral”, to update Labor’s more traditional aim of “civilizing capitalism”. Hence, within Labor discourse there was an attempt to connect “responsible economic management” with “a recognition that matters of justice and culture are fundamental to all human beings”, whilst always privileging of the former objective (Melleuish, 1998: 70).

In the same way as the social and the economic became tied together in Labor’s grand pursuit of economic prosperity, national identity and the market became similarly linked. Under Paul Keating’s prime-ministership in particular the management of the economy and the development and consolidation of the Australian nation state were constructed as connected and mutually reinforcing projects. Linking the economy with the nation state was not in itself a remarkable move. As Johnson comments, both the Labor and Liberal parties have used “the category of the economic as an overarching common interest” through which they can construct an “imagined” nation state (1996: 37-38). However Labor in the early
1990s sought to intensify this familiar alliance between the economy and the nation. Consistently during his time as leader, Keating placed debates about national identity at the centre of “Labor’s plans for Australian social and economic reconstruction” (Johnson, 1996: 26). The public and political debates he initiated about Australia’s identity - as part of the Asia-Pacific economic community and a possible republic - became linked in specific ways to the priorities of national profitability and international competitiveness. For example, Keating made several public statements that Australia's international image as a macho nation of yobs around the barbie needed to be transformed “in order for us to succeed in the world market and become an international tourist destination” (Johnson, 1997: 46-47). In his “True Believers” speech on election night in 1993, Keating managed to link together international competitiveness, Asia-Australia relations and the spirit of consensus in an image of Australia’s near future. In this speech, he states that in the coming years:

We will see ourselves as a sophisticated trading country in Asia and we've got to do it in a way where everybody's got a part in it, where everyone's in it.

Questions of national identity, normally designated as cultural, thus played an integral role in Labor’s reconstruction of our nation’s economic profile. As Morris comments, the Keating government “attempted to fuse a cultural politics of national identity promotion with an economic policy of internationalism” (1998: 13-14).

Furthermore, commentators have argued that identity politics, as advocated by the new social movements, served to bolster this kind of “corporatist nationalism” (Melleuish, 1998: 53). As Melleuish describes, Labor under Keating in particular
worked towards creating a national consensus that “transformed ‘the people’, as part of a multicultural nation, into a nationalist political subject, with, not against, the logic of multinational corporate capitalism” (1998: 53). In this way, social diversity and multiculturalism were linked with economic internationalism. As Johnson states:

... multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism and republicanism have become indivisibly bound up with debates over deregulation, opening up the economy to foreign competition, and developing links with Asian economies. These far from inevitable linkages ... were forged quite explicitly in Labor economic discourse (2000: 4).

The new subjects of the multicultural, internationally competitive nation were called upon to play an important role in the creation of an Australian ‘republic’, the refashioning of our shared culture and the restructuring of our economy (Johnson, 1997: 46; Curthoys & Muecke, 1993: 181). The role of the new social movements thus became vital to the relationship between economic prosperity and social justice.

**Conclusions**

Labor discourse operates in ways that intertwine “the culture of the economy” and “the economy of culture” (Rowe, 1998: 71). It is a contemporary political language where “the boundaries between the economic and the cultural, the material and the ideal, dissolve or fold back onto each other” (Rowe, 1998: 72). Shifts within Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating further entrenched this deep connection between the economic and the cultural. The various objectives of the Labor Party during this period - national prosperity, international competitiveness, the creation of
a social and cultural consensus through relationships with the new social movements and the consolidation of Labor’s position as the “party of social progress, creative nationalism, and historical consciousness” (Morris, 1998: 13) – were constructed as interrelated and interdependent, albeit with a strong emphasis on ‘the economic’.

This chapter has attempted to provide a rough sketch of Labor discourse and innovations and shifts within that discourse during the Hawke-Keating years. I have not dealt in any detail with the construction of ‘women’ within Labor discourse or the influence of feminism on Labor discourse. Women have occupied an important position within Labor’s narratives and constructions of history, progress, consensus, national identity and the market. Moreover, the Australian feminist movement is implicated in the debates about Labor’s engagement with new social movements. The relationship between the feminist movement and the Labor Party will be fully explored in the next chapter. My discussion in this chapter provides the foundations for an investigation into how the subject position of ‘the woman voter’ was shaped by Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating era.

2 Whilst most commentators recognise that the influence of socialism on Party policy, culture and organisational structure has been at best uneven, others, such as Carol Johnson, argue that Labor governments have in truth never believed in socialist ideals (1989: 2).
3 Arguments about Labor’s supposed transition from a working-class politics to left-of-centre politics have been paralleled in debates about how the Party has developed as an organization. In simplified terms, there has been disagreement about whether the modern Party is truly a “mass party”, representing a particular social base such as the working class, or a “catch-all party”, geared towards winning elections by building a coalition of centre and left-Left interests (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 36). Historically, the internal structure of the Party has been seen to follow the mass party model. A mass party attempts to exploit organizational structure, broad-based membership and “internal discipline” in order to counter the financial and social power of its conservative opponents (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 26). The Labor Party follows the mass party model to the extent that it is made up of individual members belonging to local branches that are part of larger State or Territory branches, which also include affiliated trade unions. Under party rules, policy is determined by National, State and Territory Conferences, constituted as they are by representatives of local branches and trade unions. In theory, Party policy is made via resolutions from the rank
and file, amended by Conference. Labor governments must honour this process by making Party policy government policy. Also, in theory, the Party's rank and file is made up of primarily working class members, and thus Party policy should reflect working class interests.

This view of the Party as a mass party organization operating in the interests of the working class is contrasted with the view of the Party as controlled by an elite group of machinists and policy makers, with the pre-eminent goal of ensuring electoral success. Some commentators argue that in actuality Labor is now a “catch-all” party, motivated by “electorally geared pragmatism” instead of any consistent ideological agenda in defence of workers’ interests (Lloyd, 1983: 245). This shift has been necessitated, so it is argued, by various social and economic changes, the decline of traditional working class occupations (in primary industries for example), the rise of ‘white-collar’ industries, and the concomitant fracturing of social classes (Parkin, 1983: 25). As a result, even if a definable working class did exist in the midst of all these changes, then it would not be large enough to deliver victory to Labor at election times. As Parkin comments, if Labor were to rely mainly on “the votes of traditional blue-collar voters, it would be destined to remain permanently in the minority” (1983: 25). Hence, a “catch-all” party uses the devices of mass communication to appeal to swinging voters with an image of “a moderate party under a unified leadership” (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 36).

4 In an essay for the collection Whitlam, Wran and the Labor Tradition Bob Carr opens with the assertion that even though the socialist objective has been in the Platform since 1921, it has been neither “a practical guide to the action of Labor governments” nor the inspiration for the Labor tradition (1988: 94). For Carr it is a “myth” that the Labor Party has been “a radical or socialist movement” (1988: 93). Rather he defines the Labor tradition as “social democratic, populist, laborist [and] reformist” (1988: 94). Undercutting the influence of socialist thinking on Labor politics is a crucial step towards Carr’s main objective in this piece - to defend the Hawke-Keating government against its Left detractors.

5 In an essay for the collection Traditions for Reform in New South Wales Paul Keating takes time to “consider in a more reflective way” the course of the Hawke government (1987: 172). He declares himself a “keen student” of Labor history and then embarks upon an evaluation of the Curtin/Chifley years (1987: 172). Keating argues that these governments were “characterised by common-sense practical applications to the principles upon which the Party was founded” (1987: 172). He sees these principles in terms of making Australia “a fairer and more effective society” through creating economic growth and employment (1987: 172). Like Wran and Carr, Keating is establishing a notion of the Labor tradition in order to shift to a spirited defence of the Hawke government. A particular view of history is used to shore up both these arguments. For example, Keating maintains that:

... today in continuing to pursue this growth objective, the Hawke Labor Government is operating completely in concert with the tradition of the Labor movement. In essence, in adopting practical, pragmatic measures to create growth and jobs, the Labor Party is doing nothing out of the ordinary from what the Labor Party in government has sought to do throughout its long history. Those who allege that the current administration has questionable Labor credentials fail to understand the very essence of the Labor tradition and have been misled into thinking that the views and objectives that developed in the Party’s aberrant period of the 1950s and 1960s more correctly reflect the Party’s true direction (1987: 179).

For Keating, a review of Labor’s history, especially its actions when in government, proves that the Party is moderate, reformist, “progressive rather than radical” and “firmly in the mainstream of Australian political life” (1987: 174).

6 In the 1986 Curtin Memorial Lecture, entitled “The Great Tradition: Labor Reform from Curtin to Hawke”, Neville Wran gives a detailed description of John Curtin’s career. He then seeks to place Curtin’s work “firmly in the context of 1986” and the task that confronts Curtin’s successor, Hawke, namely to modernize the Labor Party (1986: 5). Wran argues that:

... the example of Curtin can leave no doubt [that] there are times when the greatest but hardest service a Labor leader must render the Party and the
nation is to challenge and, if necessary, to change the Party's perceptions and assumptions (1986: 5).

Wran makes a distinction between “attitudes” and “assumptions” and fundamental Labor goals and ideals (1986: 5). For example, he sees former Labor policies such as conscription in war-time, White Australia and the State Aid to Catholic schools as simply assumptions “waiting to be swept aside by the inevitable tide of history” - despite the fact that at the time they were seen to be an integral part of the Labor tradition (1986: 5). These “assumptions” stand in stark contrast to Labor’s “higher goals and values”, namely to lead reforming Labor governments who create sustained growth and jobs at the same time as ensuring social justice and equality (1986: 7). “This is the authentic tradition of Labor reform” (Wran, 1986: 7). For Wran, these basic Labor goals cannot be achieved without “leaders and governments with the foresight, wisdom and courage to challenge even the most cherished assumptions and attitudes” of the Party (1986: 6). Of course, the efforts of the Hawke Government clearly meet these Labor standards as defined by Wran. Here is a Labor Government “not only in the true tradition; it is a government restoring and renewing, strengthening and entrenching the best traditions of Labor reform” (1986: 15).

7 Leo Macleay is one of the five Labor Right men interviewed by Cumming; the other four are Graham Richardson, Paul Keating, Bob Carr and Kerry Sibraa.

8 The importance of these uniquely Australian cultural values to Labor’s electoral politics cannot be denied. Consider the following excerpt from a paper by Clem Lloyd on strategy for the 1983 election campaign, for circulation and discussion at the State Secretaries meeting on the 14 September 1982. Lloyd argues that Labor’s campaign should be “designed to demonstrate national vision, economic competence, restoration of national prosperity” as well as “Labor fair play/fair go/fair dinkum” (1982: 1). He argues that the campaign should focus on Fraser’s un-Australian behaviours in government:

All of the evils [of the Fraser government] can be painted as un-Australian, as totally opposed to our national traditions, our long-accepted notions of patriotism. Of dinkum, dinky-di Australian conduct. Fraser and his government could be branded as not fair dinkum, as un-Australian, as not doing things the Australian way ... [as] roting the system ... in a way that is totally alien to the Australian tradition of fair-play. ... There is no evidence that the wide appeal of Australian nationalism and nostalgia has gone away; quite the contrary. Would the Anzacs or the Man from Snowy River or Don Bradman or Phar Lap have rooted their taxes through bottom of the harbour schemes? (1982: 4).

9 There is also an international perception that the Party is a socialist party. In the preface to her book, Fire With Fire, popular American feminist Naomi Wolf refers to Paul Keating as the “socialist Prime Minister” of Australia (1993: xiv). Perhaps within the North American context, Labor comes close to being a socialist party, however it is more likely that Wolf was prone to take the ‘socialist objective’ at face value.

10 As Dean comments, “certain forms of thought [like] party political platforms seek to unify and rationalize the techniques and practices [of government] in relation to particular sets of objectives, diagnoses of existing ills, schemata of evaluation and so on” (1999: 29). The desire for a precise and automatic correlation between political objectives and government action has always been part of the internal logic of the Labor Party.

11 The exact wording of the socialist objective is as follows: “The Australian Labor Party is a democratic socialist party and has the objective of the democratic socialization of industry, distribution, production and exchange to the extent necessary to eliminate exploitation and other anti-social features in these fields”. The socialist objective “emerged in something like its current form” from the 1921 National Conference (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 40). At the 1982 National Conference, all delegates agreed that the objective should be maintained. However there was factional disagreement over the phrase ‘to the extent necessary’ (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 40). In the end, the Conference reaffirmed the objective’s position in the Platform, while “expanding upon its more benign meaning in practice” (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 40). The socialist objective is still contained in the Party’s official platform. Lloyd argues that debates over the socialist objective are more about factional manoeuvring than
they are about “fundamental ideology” (1983: 245). Similarly, Wark argues that socialist philosophy was “taken seriously by those on the left of the party and opposed by those on the right” (1999: 39-40). At the time of writing, leading figures in both the Left and the Right factions of the Party are calling for the socialist objective to be taken out of the platform and replaced with a more modern and straight-forward expression of Labor’s political philosophy. On the socialist objective, see Jaensch & Teichmann, 1992: 194.

12 Howe and Howe’s definition comes from Andre Métin’s late nineteenth century categorization of the Australian labour movement in his book Socialisme Sans Doctrine. In his study of Australian politics and society, Métin argued that the Labor Party only assumes the appearance of a “class party leading the struggle against the bourgeoisie” (1977, 51). In practice, Labor accepts “private ownership and the wages system, seeking simply to ensure good working conditions in the world as it is” (1977, 51). Hence, Métin’s analysis consolidates the view that the Party’s primary objective is to ensure social justice for workers within the confines of market capitalism.

13 There are numerous (and increasing) opportunities for Labor practitioners to talk about history and reflect on the direction of the Party. The Party and associated organizations sponsor various memorial lectures, books, and public conferences.

14 Wark puts this notion more emphatically when he states that “the past weighs like a migraine on the minds of the Labor Party” (1999: 326).

15 Indeed, highlighting the past achievements of women in the Party has been a priority for many Labor feminists for this very reason. In The Last Bastion, former senator Margaret Reynolds attempts to write the lost history of the Party’s women pioneers. The achievements of these women, according to Reynolds, have been “downplayed or ignored” in assessments of Australian political life (1995: xv, xix). Considering the crucial role ‘history’ plays in Labor discourse, the omission of women’s achievements from the story poses a real problem. Reynolds states that:

After [reading] the publication of Ross McMullin’s The Light on the Hill: The Australian Labor Party 1891-1991, the official centenary history, I realised how fragmented was the story of Australian Labor women. ... [McMullin] attempts to identify those women who have made a contribution to the [Party’s] history. Yet these references merely serve to reinforce the need for more detailed research and analysis of the interaction between women and men during the century in which the labour movement developed to so influence Australian society (1995: 4-5).

For Reynolds, the struggle to establish women’s place in the official histories of the Party is a vital part of the various institutional struggles to establish women’s place in positions of political power. When Labor men have spoken about women’s contribution to the Party, they too have tended to utilize history. In a speech in 1991, the then Party President Bob Hogg chose to approach the subject of women in politics “by reflecting upon the history of the Australian Labor Party” (1991: 1).

16 The power of history within the Party was proved again during the leadership struggle between Hawke and Keating in the early 1990s. When the tension between the two men about the leadership changeover finally came to a head, it manifested itself in a debate over history. The confrontation was precipitated by an off-the-record speech given by Keating at the National Press Club, in which he declared Australia has never had any great political leaders. He dismissed John Curtin, a Labor hero and generally regarded as the Party’s greatest leader, as “a trier” (Wark, 1999: 207). Hawke then argued that he could not possibly hand over leadership of the Parliamentary Party to a man with such a wrong view of history. In the television series Labor in Power, Hawke argued that “the mouth was the mouth of Paul Keating but the words were the words of Jack Lang”, former Premier of New South Wales and opponent of Curtin. In a fight over power in the present, Hawke and Keating resurrected the political conflicts of the past. Keating saw this disagreement over history as an excuse for Hawke not to give him the leadership of the Party as he had promised. Wark believes that Hawke was indeed truly “offended by Keating’s lack of respect for Labor saints” (1999: 208).
Carr quotes Lenin himself, who recognised that “the Australian Labor Party does not even claim to be a socialist party [rather] ... it is a liberal-bourgeois party” (1988: 93).

On the question of whether the Party is social democratic, see Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 40-42.

There is evidence that those within the Party, especially those within the Right wing, were never particularly concerned about naming Labor ideology. For example, Leo Macleay comments in Mates: “I was never sure whether you were supposed to be a social democrat or a democratic socialist – one was bad, the one was good” (Cumming, 1991: 242).

Indeed, Johnson’s argument in The Labor Legacy: Curtin, Chifley, Whitlam, Hawke is that despite the desire of some commentators to emphasise the differences between the governments of Curtin and Chifley, Whitlam and Hawke, the Labor tradition is fundamentally consistent across time periods. Johnson argues that Labor governments have never been truly socialist; rather that Labor in government has aimed at achieving reform within the constraints of a capitalist economy (1989: 1). Differences between various Labor governments have been at the level of rhetoric and emphasis, according to historical setting.

In his book Civilising Capitalism, Bede Nairn argues that the Labor Party has always been “a pragmatic and non-ideological party” (Evans, 2001: 20). For this reason, Evans argues that this book is “the touchstone history for the NSW Right” (2001: 20).

As Susan Ryan comments in her autobiography, this “childhood image of the Labor Party” leadership was “erased by Whitlam’s light burning brightly on the hill” (1999: 139).

The Whitlam years are consistently described as a moment of radical transformation for the Party as well as for Australian society. Work states that when Whitlam won office “it felt a bit like Australia was finally catching up with the world, and that the radical optimism of the 1960s had finally reached the colonies (1999: 13). Similarly, Morris describes the election of the Whitlam government in 1972 as:

... a symbolic threshold year in modern Australian history. The first Labor government since 1949 was elected in a climate of euphoric political radicalism and desire for social change, but also in the last year when it was easy to assume that economic prosperity was ‘natural’ to Australia (1998: 8).

Keating differentiates the two governments by stating emphatically that “the one area where the Whitlam and Hawke Governments have a different perspective is on economy policy” (1987: 177). On this issue, see Steketee, 2001: 142-143.

Morris argues that Labor’s second lesson was that “no future Australian government could risk offending the United States in defence or foreign policy” (1998: 199).

In Labor in Power, Susan Ryan states that “it became a fad amongst ministers to attack anything that smacked of Whitlamism”. Ryan herself was declared an “unreconstructed Whitlamite” by Peter Walsh for her alleged “refusal to accept any responsibility for ... the fiscal targets agreed by Cabinet” as well as her persistent refusals to “make any contribution to corporate objectives” or to “play a team game on expenditure restraint” (Walsh, 1996: 102, 123, 172).

The Labor Left has also made this connection. For example, Howe and Howe argue that the Whitlam years marked the beginning of the Party’s move away from socialism towards democratic socialism (1984: 170). It was Labor under Whitlam rather than Labor under Hawke that saw the Party reject class based politics in favour of a ‘new’ politics of the centre. In this way, the “Labor hegemony” associated with the Hawke-Keating era was in fact “inaugurated in 1972”, even if it was only “fully functional from 1983” (Burgmann & Milner, 1997: 53).

In a similar fashion, Paul Keating asserts that the “greatest achievement” of the Whitlam government was to modernize the Party, to make it relevant and pull it back from the “phoney ideological posturing” of Evatt and Calwell (1987: 175-176).

Keating makes a similar point, arguing that Whitlam loyalists are confused when they describe that government as anything other than “in the mainstream of the Labor tradition” (1987: 179). For Keating, the Whitlam government set the style for the Hawke government, providing “the bridge” between the Curtin/Chifley years and the contemporary Labor Party (1987: 177).
Bean argues that “there was a time when, if we knew, for example, that a voter was a blue-collar worker, a member of a trade union, employed in the public rather than private sector, of the Roman Catholic rather than Protestant faith, a man rather than a woman, then there was more than a good chance that he would be a Labor voter” (2000: 74). Bean asserts that with so many shifts in society since the 1960s, the question “who votes Labor now?” is far harder to answer (2000: 74).

As Burgmann comments, Labor’s electoral successes in the 1980s were in part due to the Party’s capacity to secure a new support base of white-collar working class voters “strategically situated in vital, swinging seat[s]” (1993: 272). The needs of this new class of Labor voters superseded the needs of more loyal voters in safe seats (1993: 272).

Labor’s sudden commitment to the environmental cause was, as Graham Richardson describes in Labor in Power, a “happy mixture of good politics with what was right”.


See Healy, 1993. Healy argues that during the Hawke-Keating years Labor appeared to have abandoned class or citizenship inspired forms of party identity in favour of “a form of liberal pluralism” incorporating “minority group interests” (1993: 37-40). Healy also argues that under Hawke-Keating “issues of culture and ethnicity” (as defined by “the migrant intelligentsia”) became more relevant than class questions (1993: 37).

For an argument similar to Burgmann’s see Scott, 1991. Scott asserts that Labor during the 1980s took on a more middle class membership and orientation. However, unlike Walsh et al, he states that in order for Labor to become a working-class Party again it must “in fact become much less male-dominated, by recruiting from the sales, personal service and clerical fields in which women predominantly work; and much more multicultural, by involving many more migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds who work in blue-collar jobs” (1991: 49-50). Thus Scott sees the so-called new left political agenda as consistent with, instead of opposed to, the traditional Labor agenda.

Note that Pemberton and Davis argue that Labor’s interest in consensus waned after 1983 (1986: 56).

It can also be said that these social harmony perspectives are in keeping with the stable nature of Australian politics. Melleuish argues that the our two-party system has been successful in “containing and expressing conflict”, especially class conflict, “within a political culture that place[s] a lot of emphasis on homogeneity and social harmony” (1998: 62). Morris makes a related point, arguing that “all that talk of revolution” in the 1970s took place within the context of “a political settlement of immense and dazing stability and in an ideological climate of seemingly endless fatalism” (1999: 199). In this respect, Labor’s values of reconciliation and consensus are supported by Australia’s broader political culture.

Again using history to justify the Party’s current position, Keating looks at Labor’s past record in government to prove that “dialogue and the search for consensus have been a tradition of the Australian Labor movement” and the technique by which the Party has wooed and educated the populous to its view (1987: 175).

The formal series of Accords, struck in the 1980s and 1990s between the Hawke-Keating Labor governments and the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU), in many ways gave ‘consensus’ an explicit policy content. On the politics of the Accord, see Stewart, 1993: 89-93. Stewart describes the Accord as a “mature political instrument” that was “acceptable to both the ‘scientist’ and the ‘populist’” in its attempts to “balance macroeconomic management, industrial reform, micro improvement and mateship” (1993: 90). The Accord was successful politically because it managed to resonate “with a national culture that celebrates the underdog and reaching consensus for its own sake” (1993: 90). On consensus, see also Jaensch & Teichmann, 1992: 57.

Yeatman argues that the rhetoric of national consensus fails once it is acknowledged that that legitimate differences of opinion exist within society. She argues that consensus politics is thus “supplanted by a rhetoric of negotiated needs settlement” (1994: 107).

On the position of women in Labor’s consensus, see Johnson, 1990. Johnson’s argument is that women were incorporated into Labor’s consensus either in a marginal way as wives, mothers and daughters or as “honorary male employees” (1990: 90, 98).
Burgmann argues that the new social movements were “drawn into this corporatist web of politics [where] peak bodies such as the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Women’s Electoral Lobby are consulted while working-class Labor voters are ignored” (1993: 275). Despite what seems to be a privileged position in terms of access to government, Burgmann argues that the demands of the new social movements were in fact always “contained” and “sanitised for purposes of general political consumption” and certainly made “employer safe (1993: 275).

As Johnson states, “the decade of Labor rule ... saw a shift in the site of Labor hopes from big government and a significantly regulated market to a deregulated market and small government characterized by narrow targeting benefits, privatisation, deregulation and corporatisation” (2000: 26).

Even a cultural studies theorist like Meaghan Morris, when defining Labor politics, offers a largely economic description. For Morris, Labor politics is “a social contract upheld in various forms since 1904” that “exchanged trade protection and currency controls for a state-regulated wage-fixing system and compulsory arbitration; as a capital/labor deal for redistributing national income primarily between white men, laborism was sustained by a massive immigration policy legitimated and administered on racist principles until the 1960s, but by versions of multiculturalism thereafter” (1998: 178). In its more modern form Morris describes Labor politics as combining “neo-liberal economic beliefs” with the “historic myths of Labor as the party of social progress, creative nationalism, and historical consciousness” (1998: 13).

Melleuish argues that the privileging of the economic is as much an Australian as it is a Labor trait. He asserts that:

> The developments of the 1980s seemed to confirm the continuing importance of economics in Australian politics and culture. Australians may not have many common festivals but the 1980s demonstrated that budget night and the regular government release of economic statistics had a strong claim to be placed amongst them (1998: 64).

Plant also makes the point that although market relations “undoubtedly rest upon self-interest” they also rest upon contractual relations based upon “a set of indispensable moral attitudes of trust, promise-keeping, truth-telling and taking-one’s-word-as one’s-bond” (1992: 86). The popular argument that the market is amoral is refuted by an appreciation of the need to maintain “some sense of civic virtue and social obligation” for the market’s own benefit (1992: 89).

Wran goes on to assert that:

> ... if we were to leave a declining economic structure in place, we would not be able to support social and environmental change. ... The only change for the people whom Labor most claims to represent is to tackle the major economic problems, and to establish the conditions for sustained, non-inflationary growth (1986: 10).

For Wran, Labor’s social justice objectives are entirely dependent on fixing the economy.

The notion of Australia’s role in the global economy gathered momentum through the Labor decade and intensified during Keating’s time as leader (Rowe, 1998: 69). As Rowe comments each document in the 1993 election campaign was:

> ... aggressive in its pursuit of ‘international competitiveness’, with Keating’s courting of republicanism and overt alignment of Australian with Japanese rather than American interests offering significant extensions of Hawke’s emphasis on national assertiveness in the Asia-Pacific (1998: 70).

Morris describes this reworking of our national mythology as a shift from a “working man’s paradise” to a “free trade tourist heaven” (1998: 9). Interestingly, Keating managed to weave the issue of gender into this debate by asserting that Australia needed to change its image in respect to women. See generally Chapter 6.

This is an important rhetorical step if we consider the strength of those conventional oppositions between the material and the symbolic, the cultural and the political. This phenomenon has thrilled some cultural studies scholars, who have argued “the medium
through which economic or political change or negotiation takes place is always partly
cultural" (Wark, 1999: 337).
Firm allies and natural enemies: the relationship between Labor and the feminist movement

In his speech to launch the second *National Agenda for Women* during the 1993 federal election campaign, Paul Keating attributed the achievements of Labor in government in the area of women’s issues to “a unique partnership between the women’s movement and the Labor Government” (1993a: 4). This was a partnership, Keating added, of which “both can be proud” (1993a: 4). He acknowledged not only the important role played by Labor women and the femocrats¹ in formulating women’s policy but also the contributions of the organized feminist movement to the policy successes of the Labor decade (1993a: 4).² Despite Keating’s celebration of the relationship between Labor and the Australian feminist movement, the two “have not always been close, nor are they necessarily natural allies” (Simms, 1991: 43). Nevertheless, at particular moments it has been politically beneficial for the Party to work with the organized feminist movement and take on some of its more concrete demands. It was around the election of the Whitlam government in 1972 that a new political partnership between Labor and the feminist movement was inaugurated. As Lake states, at this time “feminism became more closely identified with Labor and Labor with feminism than had ever been the case” (1999: 239). This identification was consolidated during the Hawke-Keating years and provided the conditions for the establishment and growth of the femocracy and the increasing number and status of Labor feminists. However, it would be misleading to imply that Labor was in partnership with the feminist movement as a whole. Rather, the Party dealt more readily with organized and ‘reasonable’ feminist groups (the Women’s Electoral
Lobby being the best example) rather than with the more dispersed and radical feminist groups (with origins in the women's liberation movement). The fact that Labor interacted with some parts of the feminist movement and not others is significant because Labor’s engagement with feminist ideas (and consequently its adoption of those ideas into policies and campaigns) was largely mediated through its relationship with these particular sections of the feminist movement.

In this chapter, I offer a broad description of the modern feminist movement in Australia. Resisting any single, rigid definition, I opt instead to tease out the various conflicts and debates that occupied the movement during the 1970s and 1980s that are of particular concern to this thesis. Specifically, I concentrate on two feminist debates that I believe structured feminist reactions and interactions with Labor, namely, the class/gender divide and the question of feminist methods (that is, how you practice your feminist politics). I explore these debates with reference to the (supposed) divisions and differences between the Women’s Electoral Lobby and the broader women’s liberation movement of the time. In the preceding chapter I examined the shape and content of Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating years. However, a defining feature of Labor discourse in both its general and specific forms was left largely untouched, namely its masculinism. In this chapter, I explore the core of Labor’s masculinism through a discussion of the ethos of ‘mateship’ and ‘egalitarianism’. An appreciation of the gendered dimensions of Labor discourse is essential to a fuller understanding of how the Party engaged with the feminist movement and its politics and conversely, how the movement reacted to the culture and politics of the Labor Party. Finally, the femocrat project is analysed in the context of Labor’s influence on both its emergence and its development. The position and role of Labor women, especially Labor feminists, is also touched upon.
Both femocrats and Labor feminists occupied a liminal position, between government, Party and feminist movement, carrying the burden of policy formation and advocacy, open to criticism and attack from both sides. Taken as a whole, these issues are key to understanding how feminism informed the construction of ‘the woman voter’ within Labor discourse. Even more so than the previous chapter, this chapter utilises the work of commentators who do not take a post-structural approach to theory. Rather I have made extensive use in this chapter of work that focuses on Australian feminism, egalitarianism, and the femocracy.

**Defining Australian Feminism**

Feminism is “never One”

In attempting to describe ‘Australian feminism’, I come up immediately against the problem of multiple definitions. In the most general terms, Australian feminism is a broad ranging social movement, a political lobby group, an academic tradition and a mode of politics. Attempts at definition are complicated by the fact that each aspect of feminism is itself divided and unstable. Despite repeated attempts at formulating a definite history of both the movement and its politics, feminism is, as Morris states, “never One” (1988: 54). As a social movement and a political lobby group it is “many-sided” (Sawer, 1993: 18), containing a variety of different, even competing, factions. As an academic and political tradition, feminism is equally as complex and fractured. Morris rejects attempts to construct feminism as “an unbroken story”, informed by “heroic progress narratives” (1998: xi-xiv). Instead, she sees feminism as a series of “sporadic bursts of energy, interrupted projects, blocked paths,
stretches of lassitude, and invaluable prolonged digressions” (1998: xi). Similarly, Yeatman argues that we should view feminism as “flexible networks of language games” rather than “a precisely bounded, historically integrated organizational presence” (1994 114). Feminism is thus an unstable entity “subject to an internal politics of multiple and conflicting representations” of why it exists, what it should do, and how it should operate (Yeatman, 1994: 114).

Whilst I agree with those who question the conventional ways in which feminism has been described, there are nevertheless distinct tensions and on-going debates that have structured the emergence and development of the Australian feminist movement that are pertinent to this thesis. In particular, various schisms within feminism, as a politics and a movement, are of direct relevance. One of the more significant “bursts of energy” has been triggered by the question of feminist methods, or ‘how you do your politics’. The question of ‘proper’ feminist methods includes debates about the nature and effects of power and the relevance of mainstream politics to the pursuit of a radical social agenda. The Australian feminist movement has often been characterised as “decisively split” between its anarchistic and its organised factions over these very issues (Kaplan, 1996: 36). Whereas groups like the Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL) have sought to exercise power within mainstream political circles, other parts of the feminist movement have rejected these forms and structures altogether. These divisions, however overdrawn and contestable⁹, have shaped debates about the development of the movement from the 1970s onwards.¹⁰ Furthermore, they have profoundly influenced the ways that different parts of the feminist movement have interacted with mainstream political institutions like the Labor Party. It is therefore helpful to consider how the divide
between WEL and the women’s liberation movement in general has been constructed before we go on to analyse feminist relations with the Labor Party.

Lobby or liberation?: defining feminism’s factions

From its emergence in the early 1970s, the Women’s Electoral Lobby (WEL) exhibited a desire to become directly and publicly involved in the political process. In its promotional literature, WEL states that it was founded “to ensure that ... women have ... an equal say in determining [society’s] future course of development” (McCarron Benson, 1991: 8). This ‘equal say’ was to be secured via a “direct emphasis on attempting to achieve change through pressure on the existing political parties” (Curthoys, 1996: 141). For WEL, giving women a voice meant “making their votes felt” in elections (McCarron Benson, 1991: 8). Indeed, WEL’s first act as an organization was to intervene in the 1972 federal election. This intervention has been described by Kaplan as “one of the most effective national political campaigns feminists ever carried out” in Australia (1996: 36). Inspired by the National Women’s Political Caucus’ rating of American presidential candidates, WEL set about the unprecedented task of sending a specially formulated questionnaire to all federal candidates (Ryan, 1999: 123). The questionnaire was “lengthy and comprehensive” and included forty-six questions about issues such as childcare, contraception and sex education (Ryan, 1999: 123). Each candidate was “assessed regardless of party” and solely on the basis of where they stood on certain “women’s issues” (McCarron Benson, 1991: 8). The responses formed the basis of a WEL form guide on candidates, which was released to the media and circulated in every electorate along with How-to-Vote cards (McCarron Benson, 1991: 8). The slogan,
‘Think WEL before you vote’ “spearheaded” the campaign (Kaplan, 1996: 36). This message reflected WEL’s belief that it could force politicians to take note of women’s issues or risk losing women’s votes (McCarron Benson, 1991: 22).

This first (and many say most successful) of WEL’s campaigns marked the organization as one aimed at influencing the mainstream of politics and attaining some form of conventional political power. Beatrice Faust, the founder of the organization in Melbourne, describes WEL as a group that appealed mainly to “women who knew the system, wanted change, but did not object to structure” (Lake, 1999: 238). Participants largely measured their success by the extent to which government, parties and politicians responded to their demands. They believed they had been successful in “dramatically changing the nature of public debate by and about women” (McCarron Benson, 1991: 72). It was this desire to be (and the belief that it was possible to be) part of the political mainstream that allowed WEL to be tagged as ‘middle-class’ (McCarron Benson, 1991: 22). The organization has been described in various ways that emphasize this class characterisation: pragmatic, atheoretical, apolitical, conservative, liberal, and reformist. (Note that there are parallels here with the ways Labor, particularly under the leadership of Hawke-Keating, has been described by its left wing critics.) Lyndsay Connors describes the members of WEL themselves as “respectable enough” (McCarron Benson, 1991: 22). Their “moderate appearance, language and politics” (especially in comparison to women’s liberationists) made it easier for government and the mainstream media to relate to them (Lake, 1999: 238). Here were women who “looked familiar and sounded reasonable” (Lake, 1999: 238).

Overall, WEL members were comfortable with taking up, albeit in a modified form, conventional political methods and styles in seeking to bring about feminist change.
As a consequence, some WEL members insisted on maintaining a critical distance between their organization and the more radical sections of the broader women's liberation movement, even going as far as eschewing the name 'women's liberationist'.

Whereas WEL as an organization can be clearly described, the term 'women's liberation' is not so easy to define. The term covers a range of feminist “theories, activities and campaigns” in Australia in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Caine, 1998: 524). As a movement it was organic and varied, focused on working in and through small consciousness raising groups and local, often urban organizations like women's refuges and health centres (Caine, 1998: 524). Women's liberation was “collectivist” in its celebration of sex solidarity and the “power of sisterhood” (Lake, 1999: 141). It was also collectivist in its emphasis on decision-making via group discussion aimed at consensus. As Sawer and Simms comment, the women's liberation movement and other radical movements, focused on peace, resident action, consumer and environment issues and “employed informal, participatory and consensual organizational styles rather than the formal hierarchical and adversarial styles found in more traditional political organizations” (1993: 143). Indeed, many radical feminists saw “some natural harmony” between men and hierarchical organizations such as political parties (Clarke, 1984: 55). As Clarke explains, such women's liberationists saw "bureaucracies, large groups and formal meeting procedures" as 'male' and "small leaderless groups, collectives and nonverbal modes of communication" as 'female' (1984: 55). Consequently, no one individual or group held itself out as representing the movement and women's liberationist groups attempted to function without leaders and formal office holders. Although its organisational form was loose and divergent, the culture of women's liberation has
been described in relatively consistent terms. For instance, Lake states that the movement was “self-consciously disruptive and subversive” (1999: 141). While WEL members dressed and spoke respectfully, women’s liberationists had a “sartorial style” that was “bedraggled, unkempt, androgynous” (Lake, 1999: 141). This is not surprising, considering the origins of women’s liberation in Australia, namely those new left political movements protesting against conscription and the war in Vietnam (Lake, 1999: 220). When women realised they could only be followers in these causes and not leaders, many began to question their “exploitation” at the hands of men (Dowse, 1988: 206). Hence, the emergence of the women’s liberation movement has been viewed in part as a reaction to “the masculinist dynamics of the new Left” (Lake, 1999: 221).  

These radical origins influenced the nature of the women’s liberation movement in significant ways. Early women’s liberationists retained the anti-war movement’s suspicion of and distain for mainstream politics (Curthoys, 1997: 141). For these women, “traditional politics [was] part of the problem rather than the solution” (Lake, 1999: 254). Most were ideologically opposed to any engagement with patriarchal institutions like mainstream political parties and were largely uninterested in pursuing conventional forms of political power (Lake, 1999: 254). Their aim was to change consciousness through “social and personal transformation” and the complete revolution of “existing social and political structures” (Curthoys, 1997: 140; Lake, 1999: 231). Such a goal could not be attained though “the politics of reform” (Lake, 1999: 7). In tandem with this distrust of highly structured institutions, women’s liberationists tended to hold particular notions of power and its effects. As Balser comments, feminists of the ‘second wave’ “spent much time and energy grappling with the concept of power and attempting to redefine its meaning” (1987:
7). Women’s liberationists did not want to emulate traditional forms of power associated with men, which they viewed as oppressive and corrupt. They pointed to “the virtual male monopoly of both the membership and the ruling ideology of all centres of power”, especially political parties (Summers, 1999: 297). Instead, they wanted to develop a notion of personal and collective power, cultivated outside these institutions, aimed at positive change and liberation (Balser, 1987: 7).

In addition to this commitment to a particular mode of feminist politics, the liberation movement was also caught up in a more general debate about the relationship between class and gender. As Ann Curthoys comments, “the fiercest debates within the new feminism of the early seventies were over the relationship between gender and class” (1994: 99-100). Women’s liberationists in particular began to question the masculine bias of various Marxist and socialist theories, doubting whether in fact these theories could be reconciled with feminism (Summers, 1999: 352). Instead, these women began to assert that only “the independent insights of feminist theory” could “address the specificities of women’s condition” (Lake, 1999: 233). This debate continued into the 1980s with a particular focus on the continuing relevance of socialist theory to feminist praxis.

A good example of feminist objections to class-based theories is contained in an article written by Rosemary Pringle for the journal *Australian Feminist Studies* in 1988. This article, published in the middle of the Labor decade, is a response to a piece in the same edition in which Ann Curthoys argues that feminism has slowly abandoned class analysis and needs to strengthen its theoretical ties to socialist theory. Pringle rejects Curthoys’s plea, asserting that feminism’s shift away from class analysis has been brought about by “the internal collapse of Marxism itself, a
distrust in ‘grand theory’, a fear of universalising tendencies, and a greater awareness of the fundamental connections between theory and power” (1988: 26). For Pringle, socialism fails to meet feminist demands because it is unable to achieve any sort of “theoretical and political pluralism” or to properly theorise the class position of women (1988: 26, 28). Furthermore, Pringle argues that fraternity amongst socialist men is almost absolute and that their sexism prevents them from taking gender into account in anything more than a marginal way (1988: 27-28).²⁹ Pringle goes on to assert that the most exciting feminist work has been done by those who once classed themselves ‘socialist-feminist’ but who have since “liberated” themselves from this framework (1988: 28). At the heart of this ‘new’ kind of feminist analysis is “a rejection of some of the most fundamental socialist assumptions”, including the recognition that “there is no clear-cut ‘base’, no hidden reality of power, of which gender relations are merely the appearance” (Pringle, 1988: 26, 28). For Pringle this work has moved away from “the old fixed structures of class and gender” and opened up “new political possibilities” through its appreciation that “power is everywhere” (1988: 28, 26). Pringle concludes that it is neither possible nor desirable for feminists to “return to the socialist fold” (1988: 26).³⁰

If we accept that the Labor Party has a traditional connection to socialism, albeit at a rhetorical level, then Pringle’s criticisms implicate Labor and its continued relevance to the goals of feminism. Even though Pringle’s analysis is staking a claim for poststructuralist and postmodernist feminist theory, it nevertheless provides some insight into the mounting frustration of many Australian feminists around the question of reconciling class and gender. Even though Australian feminism has arguably been more influenced by class theory than its overseas counterparts, from
the 1970s onwards sections of the feminist movement continued to question the relevance of class-based theories and movements to its aims and agendas.

In sum, feminists coming out of the women’s liberation tradition retained a suspicion of political parties, an aversion to hierarchical organizations, and an opposition to oppressive forms of power. Having struggled through the endless debates about class and gender, many had come to reject class-based theories altogether. It is not surprising therefore that women’s liberationists largely distrusted a male-dominated, class-based, highly structured institution like the Labor Party.31 While women’s liberationists were wary of party and majoritarian politics, WEL’s primary aim was to engage with the mainstream in order to reform it. This rough division within the movement over the issues of class and methods of politics had an immediate impact on the way in which the Labor Party related to the feminist movement and vice-versa. In turn, Labor’s relationship between the ‘reasonable’ elements of the feminist movement ensured that it was the more ‘reasonable’ feminist ideas that were incorporated into the various strategies and techniques that served to construct ‘the woman voter’ within Labor discourse.

**Feminist attitudes to the Labor Party**

Feminist attitudes to Labor were mixed. Despite the fact that WEL was “avowedly non-party in its politics” (Lake, 1999: 262), it nevertheless managed to negotiate a strong relationship with the Labor Party. This relationship was, in part, the result of timing. The growth of the feminist movement and the emergence of WEL coincided “almost too neatly” with the coming of the Whitlam Government and the election of
other reforming Labor governments at a State level (Dowse, 1991: 4). As Lake argues “the pent-up desires” of both the mainstream women’s movement and Labor to embark on a program of social reform were “mutually reinforcing” (1999: 262). The social change of the early seventies brought about a “terrific sense of possibility for all women”, which was itself closely connected with the anticipation of the election of a progressive Labor Government (Dowse, 1991: 3). The fact that WEL’s campaign seemed to contribute to Labor’s federal election victory in 1972 strengthened the associations between the two. The newly elected Whitlam government acted quickly in its first year of office by implementing many of the election promises made to women, promises that were themselves a response to the demands WEL had made during the campaign (Curthoys, 1996: 140).

Throughout the 1980s, WEL continued to pressure Labor governments to act in the area of women’s policy and women’s representation in parliamentary forums. For example, in the 1983 federal election, WEL widely publicized the reaction to its call for political parties to take women’s issues seriously. Labor’s favourable response to WEL’s demands, contrasted with the Coalition’s more dismissive one, was well noted in media reports. A spokesperson for WEL, Pamela Denoon, stated in the *Australian Financial Review* that Mr Fraser had “palmed the matter” of responding to questions about women’s issues off to the Minister for Home Affairs whereas Mr. Hawke had made a “firmer commitment” to women’s issues (Malone, 1983: 28).

The career of Susan Ryan reflects the connections between Labor and WEL during this period. Ryan’s progression through organised feminism into Labor politics illustrates how important WEL became to the Party as “a training ground for aspirant women” (Simms, 2001: 221). It was during her time in WEL’s Canberra branch
that Ryan had her “first experience of political power” (Dowse, 1991: 8). Like many of her contemporaries, she came to WEL through the women’s liberation movement. However, in her autobiography, Catching the Waves, she recalls how she found the anarchy and high emotion of the consciousness-raising sessions run by women’s liberation groups “weird and sometimes frightening” (1999: 127). In Ryan’s view, the more “practical” methods of WEL were a better way “to redress the wrongs done to women” (1999: 127). Even though WEL was ostensibly apolitical, Ryan’s involvement in the organization was the catalyst for her involvement in the Labor Party. Her activism in WEL led her to “look quite seriously at the Labor Party as a way of getting political power for feminist causes” (Dowse, 1991: 8). Ryan ended up questioning WEL’s apolitical stance in the light of what she regarded as the feminist need for a Labor government. Was it possible, she wondered, to remain ‘apolitical’ “when the new Labor government seemed to be the answer to our maidens’ and matrons’ prayers?” (1999: 125).

While there were certainly heightened feminist expectations of Labor governments, these expectations were mitigated by the knowledge that in general the labour movement has been controlled by men for the benefit of men. Women’s liberationists were particularly aware that Labor and the feminist movement were not “natural allies” (Reid, 1987: 12). Following in the steps of the feminist critique of socialism, many women’s liberationists attacked the labour movement’s privileging of class over gender. By the end of the Whitlam era, many feminists were “thoroughly disillusioned” with Labor (Game & Pringle, 1978: 115). As Summers comments, internal Party brawls throughout 1973 showed that Labor men continued to hold unreconstructed views on the issue of “women, especially mothers, working” (1999: 349). Summers recollects that at this time:
... Labor proved to be as conservative, or possibly even more so, than the Liberal government it had replaced. Watching this spectacle was intensely depressing because it seemed that women and policies to benefit them were not being taken seriously by government. Why had we trusted them? We felt foolish (1999: 349).

As mentioned above, these divisions within the Australian feminist movement over the issue of party politics had one important consequence. Whereas groups like WEL were eager to communicate and work with government on women’s issues, other groups coming out of the women’s liberation tradition either took up positions of permanent opposition to government or simply refused to interact with government. As a result, Labor governments were only exposed and required to respond to a particular feminist viewpoint. Labor’s dynamic with the feminist movement was therefore only ever partial; hence, the influence of feminism on Labor politics would only ever partial as well. Furthermore, it is clear why a WEL-style feminist agenda (as opposed to a more radical, liberationist philosophy) was taken up by the Party from the 1970s onwards. The goals of WEL suited the Whitlam government's reforming agenda, with its emphasis on equal pay, education and training, anti-discrimination and child care (Ryan, 1990: 73). In addition, the “particular definition” of sex equality favoured by WEL, based on “the disavowal of sexual difference and the promotion of equality in the workforce”, was also shared by Labor, with its traditional commitment to “industrial citizenship” and egalitarianism (Lake, 1999: 262). In this way, WEL-style feminism reflected a kind of liberal sensibility shared by Labor. This is not to argue, however, that even the more moderate feminism of WEL was embraced enthusiastically by the Party as a whole. Despite the fact that “Labor had managed to cultivate many more progressive-
minded men than the Coalition” (Summers, 1999: 337), Labor’s response to the feminist movement was as mixed as the feminist response to Labor. Indeed, feminist scepticism about Labor politics was matched, if not exceeded, by Labor antagonism about the rising influence of feminists within government and the Party.

**Labor’s attitudes to feminism**

When Susan Ryan entered parliament as an active and prominent feminist she recalls that:

> .... people were more suspicious of me than I realised at the time. ... And, you know, some of the things my former male colleagues have said to me in recent years suggest that they were actually a bit shaken by my presence, and by the kind of woman I was, that they were really a bit taken aback by all of this (Dowse, 1991: 61).

The antagonism towards Ryan came from both Labor’s Right wing (who dismissed her as a women’s libber who didn’t belong in the Party) as well as its Left wing factions (who often saw feminists as captive of ‘middle-class housewives’) (Ryan, 1999: 143). She was viewed as “an interloper, ridiculed at first, but soon regarded as dangerous” (Ryan, 1999: 140). The suspicion of Ryan stemmed from a general unease amongst Labor traditionalists about the successful activities of WEL (Ryan, 1991: 139). There was particular hostility about the WEL candidate assessments in the 1972 federal election and an attempt was made by some Party officials to have WEL declared a proscribed organization. Although that move was blocked⁴¹, the “turbulence” over the incursion of feminism into the Party never receded entirely,
with the traditionalists accusing the WEL women of being “Groupers in Drag” (Ryan, 1991: 140). In order to make better sense of these attitudes to feminism, we should consider the question of Labor's masculinism and, in brief, some of the influences on it. Indeed, as Beilharz has admitted, the masculinism of the labour movement is its “most striking and most predictable attribute” (1994: 41). Such an investigation extends the discussion of the nature of Labor discourse undertaken in the previous chapter.

Mateship and egalitarianism

The Labor Party has long been associated with “the Australian traditions of egalitarianism [and] mateship” (Yeatman, 1990: xiii). Since its beginnings, the Party has “prided itself on embodying the mateship ethos, the Australian version of fraternity” (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 183). As Thompson explains, Australian egalitarianism is not based on the individual's right to self-determination (as in the United States) but involves “a collectivist approach” dependent on the State as the vehicle for “evening up certain inequalities based on economic class” (Thompson, 1994: x). It is not immediately obvious how ‘mateship’ as an ethos of class camaraderie is central to egalitarianism. The partnership between the two concepts emerges more clearly, however, if we consider that ‘mateship’ relies heavily on notions of friendship based on sameness and collectivism. ‘Mateship’ has provided the union movement with its “emotional backbone”, ensuring loyalty amongst workers and “solidarity against employers” (Thompson, 1994: 133). In addition, ‘mateship’ continues to influence the more informal operations of power within the Party and remains central to popular perceptions of its personnel and its
organizational values. Without egalitarianism, Thompson argues, it is difficult to explain the “social mannerisms of leading political figures” like Bob Hawke and Paul Keating (1994: 252). Indeed, Hawke in particular seemed to personify Labor’s commitment to mateship and egalitarianism through his image as a patriotic “bloke” and archetypal “larrikin trade union leader” (Stewart, 1993: 108).

Feminists of all persuasions have been vocal in their critique of the ethos of mateship as represented and practiced by the labour movement as a whole. In the context of the United Kingdom, Campbell argues that the relationship between the British Labour Party and the feminist movement has always been “precarious and unstable” (1999: 1). She states that:

For women, labourism was always a paradoxical place. It promised equality. It was the only party at the beginning of the century that did promise an egalitarian agenda. But at the same time, it delivered this agenda in a way that was always at the expense of women (1999: 1).

The British Labour Party may have adopted the “language of egalitarianism” but in practice “assumed women’s collective subordination to men” (1999: 1). An identical criticism has been made of the Australian Labor Party and its attitude to women’s issues. Whilst Labor’s egalitarianism seemed to offer some promise for women’s equality, “mateship among males actively excluded women” (Thompson, 1994: 133). Australian egalitarianism was thus profoundly inequitable because it was an “ethic deeply embedded in racism, sexism, ethnocentrism and conformism” (Thompson, 1994: 133). In this way, mateship has determined the reach of egalitarianism, rendering it operable only within masculine boundaries. Furthermore, Thompson argues that an appreciation of the masculinism of Australian egalitarianism goes
some way towards explaining the position of women in the Labor Party (1994: 2). She states that:

.... women in Australia were excluded from elected positions largely as a result of the institutions that had brought power to working-class men: the trade union movement and the Labor Party. Union egalitarianism was for males. The traditional stress on mateship and male bonding meant that working women could not break into Labor politics via the factory and the trade-union movement. Women who worked within the traditional structure of the labour movement faced genuine hostility from union leadership ...
Australian radical democracy ... was largely for men (1994: 22-23).

Labor women have also identified the culture of mateship as a crucial barrier to their full participation in the Party. Susan Ryan expresses a view about ‘mateship’ similar to Thompson when she states that “women were not beneficiaries of this otherwise admirable value” because, by virtue of our gender, “we could not be mates” (1999: x). If women were thus excluded from these networks of mateship, they were in many ways automatically excluded from exercising or benefiting from the power and prestige they generate. As a consequence, forms of masculine solidarity and friendship have been positioned and continually emphasized as more valuable and more powerful than their feminine equivalents.

Hence, this version of Australian mateship is based on working-class solidarity and focused around the friendships between men, forged at work and on the picket line. As a consequence, class identification has been perpetually emphasized as the unifying factor amongst (white) men. Women have not been included in this classed community, at least not in the same way as men. We have been conceived as a
category of persons “outside the labour movement” (Campbell, 1987: 55). This exclusion is itself connected to the tendency within Labor discourse to continually position gender as secondary to class. As Searle comments, traditionally, for the male-dominated union movement and its political wing “class was the only issue and gender a non-issue” (1988: 34). This privileging of class over gender partially explains why feminism and its concerns have been constantly characterized within Labor discourse as essentially ‘middle-class’. Hence, within the Labor Party, the division between class and gender has often been constructed as a conflict between the rising influence of middle-class feminism versus the established power of male-dominated trade unionism (Balser, 1987: 35).

Feminism as a middle-class concern

Feminism has “long been described and dismissed as a middle-class affair” within left politics (Phillips, 1987: 1), a cause that is “disruptive of working-class solidarity” (Sawer, 2000: 265). Phillips makes the crucial point that:

... for Left politics in particular, ‘middle class’ has long been a term of abuse, and while exceptions have been worthy and frequent, many socialists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have justified their distance from the women’s movement in terms of what they saw as its middle-class nature (1987: 1).

The ‘middle-class’ label thus works to strengthen the traditional opposition between class and gender. It also serves to position men and women on either side of the class/gender divide, distancing women and women’s issues from class-based politics.
These associations between ‘feminism’ and ‘the middle-class’ have been further emphasized in the debates about the Labor tradition and the Hawke-Keating era discussed in the previous chapter. Specifically, the notion that the Labor Party went through a process of ‘middle-classing’ during the Labor decade is firmly connected to the perceived rise of feminism within the Party itself. Probably the most extreme example of the rhetorical conflation of ‘feminism’ with ‘the middle-class’ can be seen in the writings of Peter Walsh, former Cabinet Minister in the Hawke government. In his autobiography, he laments the rising political clout within the Party of “bourgeois Left and middle class trendoids in the gentrified suburbs of Sydney and Melbourne” and rejects their brand of politics based on “environmental stunting and social engineering” (1996: 208, 79). In Walsh’s view, the “incestuous feminist network” was just one of the various “narrow and unrepresentative pressure groups” to which Labor leaders such as Hawke and Keating became hostage (1996: 170). Walsh argues further that policy issues championed by femocrats and Labor feminists such as child-care were simply middle-class indulgences (Sawer, 2000: 269).

Less colourful arguments linking the ‘middle-classing’ and the ‘feminisation’ of the Party have been made in other forums. Ian Ward has written extensively about the ‘middle-classing’ of the Party’s membership during the 1970s and 1980s. He argues that under Whitlam, Labor began to attract “new middle class” members, notably tertiary educated professionals like teachers and administrators (1989: 167). Ward sees this process of ‘middle-classing’ as the result of the overall decline of the rural workforce and the impact of suburbanisation. However he also singles out the ‘feminisation’ of the workforce, in combination with the rising influence of feminism in politics, as contributing significantly to the changes in the Party’s rank and file.
He argues that at the same time as middle class professional women like teachers began to join the Party, there was a decline in “traditional working-class female membership” (1988: 32). By this, Ward means the wives of working class men, who become involved in the Party “as a consequence of their husband’s active involvement” rather than as members “in their own right” (1988: 32). Ward argues that the “pattern of husband and wife membership reflects strong identification with Labor amongst working-class families” – again evidence of the loyal support of working class people for the Party (1988: 32). If working class male membership is in decline, Ward argues, then a decline in working class female membership automatically follows. He comes “unhappily” to the conclusion that by the early 1980s middle class women were “well represented within [Party] ranks”, having “displaced traditional blue-collar party members” (1988: 30, 32). Ward asserts that such changes in Labor’s membership community are mirrored at the higher levels of the Party with the advent of affirmative action initiatives from 1981 onwards, which serve to promote the interests of “white-collar and professional-class feminists” over and above the interests of working-class members (1988: 29).

One of the more problematic aspects of Ward’s argument is that he never ascertains whether these new middle-class women members in fact identify as ‘feminist’ (however that term may be defined). In addition, there is the assumption that traditional working-class women’s involvement is less about personal politics than it is about family loyalty and solidarity. He never establishes whether in fact these working-class women might identify as feminist either. In the end, Ward creates the impression of an impenetrable divide, with ‘middle-class feminists’ on the one side, and ‘working class families’ on the other. Cox sums up this attitude as “families are working class, women are middle class” (Sawer, 1990: 65). The rise of feminism
and the ‘middle-classing’ of Labor are thus bound together and set up in opposition to Labor’s traditional affiliation with working class culture. This process of connection and opposition has the effect of placing the issue of gender outside the boundaries of Labor discourse, as if the concerns of feminism are not naturally part of Labor’s core values. It also has the effect of obscuring the privileged position of middle-class men and the existence and status of working-class women.55

In sum, despite the rising influence of feminists and feminist ideas within the Australian political scene, the relationship between the feminist movement and Labor Party remains fragile. Long-standing tensions between class and gender have never fully subsided; in fact they have continued to structure attitudes and perceptions about women and women’s issues within the Labor Party. Furthermore, the tensions around the class/gender divide have intensified at different times as a response to the perceived power of feminists within the Party and government. Labor’s engagement with feminist issues, however moderate, remain partial and peripheral. The masculinism entrenched in Labor’s ethos of mateship has worked against the full incorporation of gender concerns into the Party’s overall philosophy and policy direction. In the end, it was the femocrats in partnership with Labor women who carried the burden of policy innovation and implementation in relation to women’s issues during the Labor decade. Positioned between the Labor Party and feminist movement, these women were responsible for translating feminist ideas into the kinds of policies that could dovetail with the Party’s agenda.56 One femocrat describes this process as “vulgarising the women’s movement message” in order to “get it across institutions” (Sawer, 1990: 24).
Inside Out: the femocrats and Labor feminists

Despite the various barriers to feminism’s full integration into Labor politics, feminists themselves continued to operate as effective lobbyists from both inside and outside the Party from the 1970s onwards. Pressure on the Party to take up feminist issues came from three different directions. Inside the Party, Labor feminists worked to reform Party structures, pushed for greater numbers of women in Parliament, and formulated and modified policy to achieve feminist aims. The femocrats, albeit outside the Party, were nevertheless brought close to it through their position inside government. In their role as advisors to government on the needs of women, they often provided information and policy ideas that were taken up by the Party during election campaigns.57 Similarly, as noted above, Labor also took on as its own policy some of the demands made by the organized feminist movement.

There are numerous connections between Labor feminists, the femocrats and organized feminist groups. Firstly, these three different sections of the feminist movement continually exchanged and shared personnel throughout the years of Labor hegemony. For example, during the late 1970s and early 1980s there was an almost automatic transfer of personnel from groups such as WEL into the femocracy and, to a lesser extent, into parliament as Labor members.58 As Bulbeck comments, the protestors of the 1970s became the “politicians, femocrats ... [and] lobbyists” of the 1980s (1997: 23). Furthermore, the status and practices of Labor feminists, the femocrats and organized feminist groups were mutually dependent. Each served to consolidate the position of the other. The existence of an organized feminist movement outside the State strengthened the position claimed by both the femocrats and Labor feminists (Yeatman, 1990: 65). As Joyce comments, “support
from independent women’s groups [has always been] an important part of Labor’s women’s success” both inside and outside the Party (1984: 75). The existence of these women within the system provided feminist organizations with various avenues for communication with government.\(^{59}\) The femocrats relied on the support and influence of Labor feminists to push the women’s agenda in caucus and the Party. In turn, Labor feminists were able to utilize the work of the femocrats in campaign strategies during election times.\(^{60}\) The demands of the feminist movement for more women in parliament bolstered Labor women’s claims for more power in the Party.\(^{61}\) Women’s policy was thus forged out of this convergence of different feminist forces. Clearly this interaction did not always operate smoothly. Moreover the various divisions within the broader feminist movement enjoyed a particular kind of relationship with the Labor Party. Whilst the connection between WEL and the Labor Party has already been touched on in this chapter, it is also useful to explore the quality of the relationship between the femocrats and the Party and the position of Labor feminists. Such an exploration is important to my analysis of the construction of ‘the women voter’ because it was largely via the work of the femocrats and Labor feminists that the Party conceptualised the needs and desires of women voters.

**The femocrats**

There is general agreement amongst commentators that the Australian feminist movement has enjoyed a closer engagement with the State than women’s movements in other western democracies (Sawer, 1993: 1). This engagement has been on both an institutional level, through the establishment and growth of the femocracy, and on a critical level, through a “wave of writing” about feminism and
the State (Sawer, 1993: 19). Throughout the Labor decade, the work of the femocrats attracted substantial criticism from both inside and outside the feminist movement. However, within this body of writing on the development of institutionalised feminism, the particular role of Labor governments has been given uneven attention. Commentators like Marilyn Lake argue that the activities of the femocrats “represented a continuation of the older non-party tradition of feminist politics” (1999: 260). Whilst this view is valid, it belies the link between the establishment of the femocracy and the rise of Labor governments at both the State and the federal level. Indeed, as Yeatman asserts, the significance of the party in power for the “development and tenor of the femocracy cannot be underestimated” (1990: 89). Hence, the emergence of the femocracy must be seen within the context of a particular political period (Watson, 1990: 19), namely that “historical conjuncture that brought together a reforming Labor government and a powerful and articulate women’s movement” (Eisenstein, 1996: 184).

Femocrats themselves recognized the extent to which their (continued) existence was reliant upon a particular form of Labor government. The femocrats were nicknamed the “tree people”, going “to and from the trees”, in other words positions of status and influence, with the rise and fall of Labor governments (Watson, 1990: 9). In an article published in 1991, Summers remarks that the establishment and preservation of women’s adviser positions to government is “totally tied to the presence of Labor governments” (1991: 44). She asserts that the position of these women’s advisers is “far more rocky” than assumed by most and dependent largely on political contingencies (1991: 44). Academic and former femocrat Hester Eisenstein goes further than most by arguing that “the alliance with the Labor Party was arguably the most powerful engine of change for feminist reform” (1996: 174).
In her opinion, the development of the femocracy and the election of Labor governments have “gone hand in hand” (1990: 90). Indeed, Eisenstein believes that whilst the femocrat project was largely a “bureaucratic intervention”, it amounted to an “electoral strategy” for the Labor Party (1996: 174). She argues that, over time:

... the work of femocrats ... helped to dramatically shift the political agenda. The strength of influence gained by the femocrats [was] due ... to the fact that they entered the bureaucracy and then proceeded to show governments how to satisfy women electorally (1996: 39).

The achievements of the femocrats in part played a “crucial role in legitimising Labor’s revision and modernisation” of its policy and image during the Hawke-Keating years (Yeatman, 1990: 90). The femocrats themselves were also highly visible members of the bureaucracy, whose presence bolstered Labor’s claim that it was making policy decisions for the benefit of women. In this way femocrats performed a symbolic function, much like Labor feminists.

This connection between the work of the femocrats and the electoral fortunes of Labor amongst women proved to be a mixed blessing for the femocrats themselves. For example, during the first terms of the Whitlam and Hawke governments, femocrats were at an advantage because Labor “perceived their electoral success as having been delivered to them by women voters” and consequently they recognized that “this political support had to be massaged in order to be maintained” (Summers, 1991: 44). The femocrats learned quickly that they could successfully implement their agenda if they were able to convince Labor leaders that particular policy initiatives could be popular amongst women voters. Election times often proved to be a chance for femocrats to push for innovative women’s policy. Summers recalls
that as a femocrat, she grew to “love elections because this was when we could get political support for spending programs” (1991: 44). However, electoral considerations constrained as much as they facilitated policy innovation. Eisenstein contends that although Labor “wanted to keep the women’s vote by getting credit for doing pro-women things”, it needed to achieve this “on the cheap and without the risk of embarrassing gaffes” (1996: 35).

Indeed, the success of femocrat initiatives depended largely on whether they dovetailed with the Party’s broader political agenda. The femocrats “shaped their claims on the state ... in terms that were recognizable and acceptable to the political culture in which they operated” (Eisenstein, 1996: x). Eva Cox, also a former femocrat, suggests that her peers lobbied government successfully only when their demands implicitly supported the patriarchal, capitalist economy (Eisenstein, 1996: 203). Similarly, Elizabeth Reid, Whitlam's advisor on women and the first femocrat, asserts that Labor’s commitment to women's issues was “not based on any deep understanding of the position of women in our society” (1987, 20). Rather, in Reid’s view, the Party’s interest in improving the lives of women was based on and informed by the Party’s core principles, namely “participatory democratic socialism, the principle of equity and a commitment to the redistribution not only of income but of access to services and to benefits” (1987: 20).

The longevity of the femocrat strategy was in part dependent on femocrats accepting the constraints of political expediency, that is, what Labor leaders considered was saleable to both the Party and the electorate (Eisenstein, 1990: 102). The success of organizations like WEL and their attempts to influence government during election times was largely due to their ability to use “the ideology of
capitalism to advance women’s cause” (Ryan, 1996: 63). Game and Pringle make a similar point, arguing that the women’s policy initiatives sponsored by Labor never “threatened the fundamental role of sexism in reproducing capitalist social relations” (1978: 120). Such a view, canvassed in the previous chapter, is in keeping with Burgmann and Milner’s argument that “the political logic of the new social movements” as articulated during the Labor decade ran “increasingly ... with, rather than against, capitalist rationality” (1997: 48). Instead of disrupting this rationality, the feminist movement actually assisted “a process of stabilizing [corporate] capitalism” (Dixson, 1989: 15).

It was this proximity to the (Labor) government and necessary adherence to the Party’s broader agenda that exposed the femocrats to the derision and mistrust of sections of the feminist movement. There was also a mixed response from within Labor circles to the femocrat project. The femocrats were not supported by the Labor Party as a whole. Despite their privileged position with the bureaucracy, femocrats were mostly considered to be ‘outsiders’, often surrounded by a hostile bureaucracy, a cynical media and a suspicious Party (Ryan, 1999: 130). For Labor traditionalists like Peter Walsh, the femocrats afflicted lasting “policy damage” on Labor governments and were “out of touch” with the people they sought to represent - real working class women and their families (1996: 248, 251). In a similar fashion, Right wing union leader Joe de Bruyn has blamed “radical femocrats ensconced in glass towers in Canberra” for diverting public money into childcare and devaluing the work of homemakers (Sawer & Groves, 1994: 435). Labor traditionalists have joined other non-Labor conservatives in attacking the femocrats for “social engineering and the imposition of political correctness” on policy formation (Sawer & Groves, 1994: 435). Hence, femocrats were caught between two
operational contexts, that of the Labor State and the feminist movement. Fortunately, the femocrats found both institutional and political support from the growing number of Labor feminists in both caucus and Cabinet.

**Labor feminists**

Assisted in their task by the femocrats, Labor feminists carried the burden of Party and government policy making on women’s issues during the Labor decade. As Reynolds comments, Labor women:

> ... formed an important lobby within government ranks to follow through the election promises on implementing women’s policy. Working specifically through the Caucus Status of Women Committee (representing federal government members) women were able to scrutinise the progress of the reform agenda, question ministers and public servants and to give vital support to [the Minister] who had responsibility for the government’s women’s policy (1995: 89).

While the femocrats occupied positions of outside advisors to the Party, Labor feminists were similarly situated as both of the Party and against the Party. By investing loyalty in both Labor and feminist politics, Labor feminists occupied a somewhat liminal position, as both defenders and critics of the Party. To return to the definition posed in Chapter 1, Labor feminism was, and is, a strand within Labor discourse “a strategy, a local, specific, concrete, intervention with definite political, even if provisional, aims and goals” (Gross, 1986: 196). Thus, Labor feminists have
sought to work within the Party and government in order to challenge and modify Labor politics and policy.

In addition, Labor feminists have often functioned as the link between women’s groups, government and the Party. They have been “sought out by women’s groups ... enthusiastic about having another voice in what they perceive as being the source of power” (Reynolds, 1995: 99). However, this position has also left them open to the derision of both their Labor\(^7\) and their feminist colleagues.\(^2\) In much the same way as socialist-feminists struggled with their attempts to negotiate a position between socialism and feminism, Labor feminists have also worked to reconcile their sometimes conflicting allegiances. Their attempts to negotiate between their male Party colleagues and the feminist movement have left them to occupy somewhat unstable terrain. The role of Labor feminists will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, in the context of their attempts to lobby the Party leadership to take ‘the woman voter’ and women’s policy seriously.

**Conclusion**

It was during the Whitlam era that the Labor Party recognized that the rising feminist movement could become a potential source of new votes. But how was Labor going to harness the energy of this new political movement? In the main, Labor turned to the organized feminist movement (epitomized by groups such as WEL), Labor feminists and the femocracy to tell them what Australian women wanted from politics and government. The prospect that an emerging ‘woman’s vote’ might advantage Labor was a catalyst for Labor’s engagement with certain sections of the
feminist movement. It would thus be a mistake to view the continuing relationship between Labor and these ‘reasonable’ feminists during the 1970s and 1980s as evidence that the Party was wholeheartedly committed to the goals of feminism. Indeed, Labor’s engagement with feminism has been viewed as the result of “guilty compliance” and “vote-gaining acumen” rather than a “true conversion” (Reade, 1996: 127).

However, it was never simply a question of transferring feminist ideas into the party political sphere in order to appeal to women voters. Rather there was a process of translation, in which feminist demands were shaped to synthesize with Labor’s broader political agenda. Femocrats and Labor made progress when their demands “resonated with structural changes” and were “supported by other political currents” (Bulbeck, 1997: 24). However, Labor’s capacity to embrace the politics of the feminist movement, even one with a moderate and reformist agenda, was mostly restrained by the Party’s commitment to mateship, “an ethos which has contributed to male bonding and the exclusion of women” (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 183). Thus feminism emerged as a discursive influence on the construction of ‘the woman voter’ only via its inflection through Labor discourse as a whole.

The next three chapters will seek to explore the construction of ‘the woman voter’ within Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating years. The development of gender gap research was a crucial technology developed and deployed by Labor feminists in their attempts to construct a new notion of ‘the woman voter’. The next chapter will explore in detail the nature of the gender gap research as a technology used to construct this new subject position within Labor discourse.
Bulbeck argues that “it is possible that Australian feminism gave the world the term ‘femocracy’” (1998: 171). The term refers to women "who are employed in one or other of the publicly funded organizations" that deal with women's policy and service provision (Jaensch & Teichmann, 1992: 91). Summers maintains that ‘femocrat' was initially used as a “term of abuse [and] derision, intended to denigrate those women who had seemed to desert their sisters in the movement by taking highly-paid government jobs” (1991, 43).

In his speech launching the second National Agenda, Keating promised a $1 million per annum increase in funding to women's organizations, which he described as “a more appropriate amount in view of the important work [these] organizations undertake on behalf of women” (1993a: 9). In another speech, delivered in 1992, Keating also spoke of the important partnership between women’s organizations and the (Labor) government. In this speech, Keating stated that this partnership has, “over the past decade … produced an unprecedented program of reform” in the area of women’s issues (1992: 153-154).

Lake argues that it was only after the seventies that Labor women “enthusiastically adopted feminism as their own cause” (1999: 262). Until that point, Labor women “refused the label feminist, seeing it as the preserve of middle class women” (Lake, 1999: 262). Nevertheless, there is a strong history of Labor women’s activism that can easily be characterized as ‘feminist' in spirit, if not in name. See generally Reynolds, 1995.

Sawer & Groves, 1994a. In this article, the authors use the term ‘women’s lobby’ to refer to, often national, organizations engaged in “policy advocacy on behalf of women” (1994a: 436).

There is also the related question of defining the term ‘feminism’ as it is used by those outside the arena of feminist theory. In her study of the representation of feminism in the American press, Huddy comments that despite feminism’s varied meanings, the term itself is used on a wide scale both by the media to “describe the beliefs and adherents of the feminist movement” as well as by movement activists as a “self-description” (1997: 183, 191). Former femocrat Sara Dowse argues that the term ‘feminist' was adopted by most in the Australian movement as a generic term, but then qualified by the adjectives ‘radical’, ‘revolutionary’, ‘socialist’ and so forth (1988: 207). Furthermore, Dowse argues that taking up the term ‘feminist' was a way for more “sober” political organizations such as WEL to establish a historical connection with first wave feminism, at the same time distinguishing themselves from women’s liberation “in order to attract wider support” (1988: 206).

For example, Lake argues that there are “five overlapping phases” to be discerned in the history of feminism in Australia, from the 19th century feminist movement focused around suffrage and social welfare to the broader women’s liberation movement (Caine, 1998: 132-142). There is a (problematic) tendency to see Australian feminist thought as a linear progression from liberal and maternal feminism, to socialist feminism, to radical feminism and finally to post-modern feminism.

Dowse argues that by 1974, the declared height of the second wave, the feminist movement emerged as “a broad-based, somewhat protean movement loosely made up of many disparate parts” (1988: 207).

Like Reade, I recognise that the categories ‘WEL’ and ‘the women’s liberation movement’ are “more fluid and interwoven than these distinct terms suggests” (1996: 142). Nevertheless, I adopt them not just “for reasons of convenience and practicality” (Reade, 1996: 142) but because many activists consistently use these terms in the process of self-description and identification.

It must be remembered that WEL grew directly from women’s liberation groups in Victoria (Curthoys, 1996: 140) and attempted to retain some of the latter’s commitment to a non-hierarchical structure (Sawer, 1993: 14). For example, Susan Ryan recalls that in her first WEL meeting in Canberra there was real “ideological opposition to leaders as such, and to national organizations, and to structures which were seen as being a part of the patriarchy and therefore hostile to what we wanted to achieve” (Dowse, 1991: 8). WEL did become a national organization in 1978 with the establishment of WEL Australia (Caine, 1998: 517. See also Sawer and Groves, 1994: 440.) Furthermore, WEL and women’s liberation groups often combined efforts in some campaigns of common interest. One Canberra WEL member,
Lyndall Ryan, describes WEL as “the pragmatic wing of Women Liberation” (McCarron Benson, 1991: 72), indicating that while the two were different in terms of methods and style, there was at least some connection in terms of broad objectives. There was also more general “overlapping of membership and involvement” (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 246).

Consider, for example, the career of Anne Summers, arguably Australia’s highest profile feminist since the seventies. Summers was a member of the Labor Party during her early university days and went on to become Labor’s most prominent government appointed femocrat and advisor. However, she was also involved early on in the women’s liberation movement and publicly opposed many of the decisions of Elizabeth Reid, Gough Whitlam’s advisor on women’s issues (whose job Summers herself had applied for). She was active in the women’s refuge movement of the seventies, the home ground of women’s liberation (Caine, 1998: 498). A cursory view of Summers’ own career shows how difficult it is to draw clear lines between the activism of so-called ‘state-sponsored’ feminists and that of women’s liberation in Australia. See generally Summers, 1999.


13 Although many commentators agree that WEL never managed to equal its efforts in the 1972 election campaign, they continued to make their presence felt during elections in the eighties. For example during the 1983 campaign, WEL placed the following advertisement in the *Sydney Morning Herald*:

Mr. Fraser, Mr. Hawke. Women ask, will your party if elected: guarantee women an equal share of all new jobs created with particular provision for those under 20; guarantee women, including older women, an equitable share of all training and retraining programs, so they can have a fair share of available employment; guarantee an increased financial commitment for the expansion of ALL children’s services programs? Mr. Hawke, Mr. Fraser. The female voting majority - 51.4% of Australian voters - is interested in your responses.

This advertisement was endorsed by a range of women’s organizations but authorized by Pamela Denoon of WEL. In addition, there is evidence in the National Secretariat files that WEL continued the practice of sending questionnaires to candidates prior to elections. A letter faxed to Geoff Pryor from Linda Brabham of the South Australian branch of WEL indicates that her organisation sent a questionnaire to Labor candidates prior to the 1984 federal election.

14 Gail Radford comments that WEL’s success “can be measured by the manner in which the Whitlam government immediately set about [meeting] many of those early WEL demands” (McCarron Benson, 1991: 24).

15 There has been some scepticism amongst other WEL activists about the extent to which their organization was able to change the political agenda. For example, Jayne Ross comments that WEL had only shown that the political system was indeed capable of absorbing women (McCarron Benson, 1991: 24). She comments that “we have not changed the system - rather we’ve trained the women” (McCarron Benson, 1991: 24).

16 Consider the following comment by former Canberra WEL member Philida Sturgiss-Hoy:

What appealed to me [about WEL] was the pragmatism. ... I was too conservative for Women’s Liberation ... WEL was reformist, entrenched in the bureaucracy (McCarron Benson, 1991: 24).

17 Lyndall Ryan describes WEL as “a liberal feminist organization concerned with equal opportunity” (1990: 73). It has already been established that ‘liberalism’ has a variety of definitions. However, it seems that Lyndall Ryan sees WEL as advocating a form of social liberalism in its development of “goals and strategies in relation to the state”, which it viewed as a neutral institution “whose services should be extended to the disadvantaged” (1990: 71).

18 Sawer and Groves describe WEL as “the most ‘reformist’ of the organizations generated by the second wave of the feminist movement” (1994: 440).
In this context, it is interesting to note Skeggs' point that respectability is “one of the most ubiquitous signifiers” of middle class status (1997: 1).

In an interview with Paul Lynch on 2UE in 1972, WEL member Wendy McCarthy protested that she was “not a women’s liberationist, I’m simply a woman who believes that we should know how politicians think; we want to know how they will vote on women’ issues” (McCarthy, 2000: 191). McCarthy states that in the early days of the organization there was “still denial about Women’s Lib”, stemming in part from WEL’s desire to define its role as “reformist, not revolutionary” (2000: 191).

Jean Curthoys argues that “the activity of ‘consciousness raising’ ... was itself formative of the early movement” (1997: 4).

As McCarthy explains, “within the spectrum of the Women’s Movement, women’ health clinics were seen as far more radical politically than family planning organizations” (2000: 119).

As Ferguson states, “small, decentralized women’s groups” coming out the broader feminist liberation movement “have often found that consensus works well for them, allowing them to employ strategies that respect individuation while achieving unity” (1985: 72).

This characterization of the feminist movement as fundamentally divided persists to the present day. For example, consider the following characterization of the movement in the nineties by Sawyer and Simms:

The Australian feminist movement in the 1990s had two faces. On the one hand, there is the public face of glossy government publications listing the initiatives and the institutions which have been founded by government in response to feminist demands. On the other there are the continued actions of women in small groups, often focused on the delivery of services, and the development of networks among the activists in these groups (1993: 241).

As Cox points out:

... a lot of feminists like myself came out of the Left. We had been involved in anti-war movements and various other political issues, and for us there was a passionate desire to change the world (Cox, 1998: 123).

In contrast, the notion that the women’s liberation movement had its roots in student protest movements is refuted by Elizabeth Reid who argues that in fact feminism “began as a reaction to the increasing confinement, truncation and vulnerability of women in post-war Australia” (1987: 9).

The view that conventional politics was irrelevant to the women’s liberation agenda is reflected in Anne Summers’ account of her early conversion to feminism. To the young Summers, party politics “seemed irrelevant to the brave new world ... opening up” (1999: 254). A desire for liberation and revolution seemed far more important than settling for the typical Laborite goals of equality and reform (Summers, 1999: 254).

Jean Curthoys argues that liberation theory is premised on the conviction that oppression cannot be “eliminated from the psyche by way of the oppressed seeking power” (1997: 1). For Curthoys, liberation theory demands that “ultimately a stand would have to be taken against power” (1997: 1).

Pringle argues that many feminists coming out of the liberation tradition were deeply sceptical about the dynamics of party politics, something she attributes to the New Left “cynicism about parties ... that offer to take on co-ordinating or synthesising roles” (1988: 27).

On sexism and socialist men, see Connell, 1982.

For a continuation of this debate, see Curthoys, 1988.

This rejection of hierarchy is in stark contrast to the attitude of Labor feminists. For example, Meredith Burgmann argues that hierarchy actually assists women in their attempts to gain power in the Party. She argues that:

... it is a good idea for women to fight for fairly formal structures, because if rights are written down ... at least the participants know their rights. Whereas in a totally unstructured situation, women sometimes wonder ‘should I be here?’ (1995: 87).
In her biography, Susan Ryan shows how she came to a similar conclusion as Burgmann. She recalls that the early Canberra WEL meetings were run without standing orders and were consequently “loud” and “fractious” (1999: 125). The favoured feminist mode of operating without rules was “getting them nowhere” and in fact “did not necessarily produce more participation” (Ryan, 1999: 125, 135). Rather it often allowed “bullies and bores” to monopolize the meeting, leaving those who were less experienced at speaking out marginalized (Ryan, 1999: 125, 135).

32 Susan Ryan remembers that “Gough Whitlam scored highly [on the WEL questionnaire] as did many, but not all, of his team” (1999: 123). The Liberals and Nationals in comparison did not score as well. It would seem, therefore, that WEL’s intervention amounted to an encouragement to vote Labor. Ryan states that “apolitical or not, [WEL] had decided that a Labor government was what we wanted” (1999: 123).

33 Kaplan goes further to say that WEL’s 1972 campaign “helped elect the Labor Party to power” (1996: 36). Interestingly enough, Reade argues that the demise of the Whitlam government coincided with a regression of “morale and optimism” within WEL (1996: 126-130).


35 This is not to say that WEL was always happy with Labor’s record on women’s issues. In a letter to Bob McMullan, then Secretary of the Western Australia Branch of the Party, WEL’s National Communication Officer Yvonne Carnahan states that “WEL has frequently been disappointed with ALP policies (or lack thereof!) in relation to women in politics and in the Party” (Carnahan, 1980: 1).

36 In an undated, un-authored paper in the National Secretariat papers, it states that “women members of the ALP have played an important role in the revival of the women’s movement in Australia and this has influenced the participation of women in the Party” (1).

37 As Pringle comments, “historically [feminists] have expected to fulfil more of our aims through Labor than through conservative governments” (1988: 29).

38 Furthermore, Lake argues that the feminist aversion to Labor was part of its general concern about Australian masculinity. As Lake comments, “in the eyes of the nineteenth century women’s movement, Australian masculinity was a problem” (1999: 31). Australian masculinity was personified by the working class husband (who drank heavily, beat and abused his wife and children and sometimes deserted his family) and the male trade unionist (who saw women workers as industrial “invaders, usurpers and thieves”) (Lake, 1999: 176). These unionists opposed any initiatives to make it easier for women to perform waged work in the name of protecting the jobs of men who abused and abandoned women and children.

39 Despite this disappointment, Game and Pringle argue that the feminist movement “had no alternative but to support Labor” (1978: 115). It was a case of “better the devil you know” with “gruesome predictions” circulating about the future of the women’s agenda under a Fraser government (Reade, 1996: 130-131). Sections of the feminist movement ended up rallying behind the sacked Whitlam government “albeit in a disorganised way” by forming “Women for Labor” groups (which were more anti-Fraser than pro-Labor) (Game & Pringle, 1978: 132).

40 By “industrial citizenship” I refer to a form of citizenship “in which rights flow primarily from participation in the workforce” (Caine, 1998: 29).

41 The move was blocked by the collective efforts of WEL activists within the Party, supported by sympathetic Labor men like Kep Enderby (Ryan, 1999: 140).

42 ‘Groupers’ is a colloquial term for those members of the Catholic-backed Movement and Industrial Groups formed within the party organization and affiliated unions during the early fifties (Jaensch & Teichmann, 1992: 21). The Democratic Labor Party (DLP), which was virulently anti-Communist and pro-Catholic, was formed by these Movement and Industrial Groups members, who were expelled from the Party in 1955 (Jaensch & Teichmann, 1992: 22). The DLP played a major role in keeping Labor out of government, especially in Victoria where the Groupers were “particularly located” (Jaensch & Teichmann, 1992: 21). In 1954 Labor leader Doc Evatt publicly attacked the Groupers, accusing them of “disloyalty and subversion of the party” (Jaensch & Teichmann, 1992: 21). To describe WEL members who
were also Party members as “Groupers in Drag” implies these women are disloyal, will
damage the electoral potential of the Party and will prioritise their feminist agenda ahead of
their commitment to Labor.

While ‘mateship’ may well be considered an Australian specific concept, similar notions of
‘fraternity’, ‘brotherhood’ and ‘solidarity’ are commonplace throughout all forms of Left
political culture. The concepts of ‘fraternity’ and ‘solidarity’ have, of course, been subjected
to feminist investigation. For example, Anne Phillips explores the inherent masculinism of
‘fraternity’ as a concept within socialist praxis in her book Divided Loyalties. As a model of
working-class solidarity, Phillips argues that fraternity is “flawed and partial, celebrating the
unity of men and exclusion of women” (1987: 25). Solidarity becomes the “prerogative of
male workers” (1987: 30).

Fia Cummings’ book Mates, is just one contemporary example of this mythologizing of
male political friendships in the Party.

For example, Sawer states that Labor’s lack of commitment to women’s equality has been
attributed to “the influence of Irish Catholicism, the tradition of machine policies, the
attitudes of affiliated blue-collar unions, and the ethos of mateship” (2000: 264). All of these
facets of Labor’s masculinism are in some way connected to the operations of egalitarianism.

Or, as Barbara Wiese comments, “exclusion from these ‘old boy’ networks is effectively
exclusion from power” (1981: 9).

Interestingly, the Party itself acknowledged the problems with ‘mateship’ in its 1978
Committee of Inquiry. In the discussion paper on women, it states that:

The traditions of mateship, reflecting the solidarity of individual unions,
encourages the principle that a mate is supported first for elected positions,
rather than a candidate who by some other more objective criteria must have
a higher claim for support (1979: 5).

The Committee concluded that “some means of removing the oppression of women by the
spirit of mateship must be found” (1979: 9). Years later, a Federal government report
entitled Women, Elections and Parliament recognized that women in the Labor Party are
“disadvantaged by their lack of ‘mateship’ networks” (1994: 18). The culture of mateship
thus managed to persevere, undiminished, throughout the Labor decade and is still operative
to this day.

In their discussion of women in the culture of the British Labour movement, Swindells and
Jardine point to the marginality of women in La bour discourse, their simultaneous inclusion
and exclusion:

Denied the clarity of marginality, and the lucidity of its versions of exclusion,
we kept experiencing ourselves as included - but on the wrong terms - and
were forced to conclude that women are obliged to articulate their exclusion
from there. For women, politically, the problem is this simultaneous
recognition of inclusion and exclusion, left in and left out. How do we
challenge the version of ourselves that is left in, without being left out?
(1990: xi)

The other pressure groups criticised by Walsh include “green extremists” and “professional
ethnics” (1996: 170).

On Peter Walsh’s opposition to child care policy, see generally Brennan 1994: 180-183,
187-204.

There were those within the Party who questioned the neat associations between ‘white-
collar’ and ‘middle-class’ interests, with its underlying anxieties about the feminisation of the
workforce. Howe and Howe argue that “embourgeoisement” theory rests on assumptions of
causal connections between white-collar employment, middle class status and the “rejection
of the collectivist traditions of the labour movement” (1984: 164). They rebut these
assumptions by pointing to the expansion of white-collar unionism to cover “as many varied
and conflicting interests as old blue-collar unions” (1984: 164). They also point to the
“proletarianisation” of middle class occupations in the service, banking and education
Ward identifies two aspects to this ‘feminisation’ process; first, the increased participation of women in paid work in general and second, the rise of service industries and white-collar industries such as clerical work (1988: 29).

Ward goes on to state that “it does appear that women drawn into the [Party] from the feminist movement have been largely middle-class professionals” (1988: 29).

Cox states further that such attitudes to the class position of women “had been strong during the Whitlam government and were still present in the eighties” (Sawer, 1990: 65).

This is an example of how women experience class as “exclusion” (Skeggs, 1997: 74). As Skeggs comments “whereas working-class men can use class as an positive source of identity, a way of including themselves in a positively valorised social category, this does not apply for working-class women (1997: 74).

The femocrats were seen to represent women in a bureaucratic sense by bringing their life experiences and knowledge as women to the creation and implementation of women’s policy. As Eisenstein states, this concept of “representative bureaucracy”, developed under Whitlam and expanded under Hawke and Keating, “gave credence to the idea that an interest group could legitimately ‘represent’ a constituency in formulating policy” (1996: 88). However, instead of representing women’s interests to government, Eisenstein argues femocrats mostly had to represent (and defend) the decisions of government to women and the feminist movement at large. Carmel Niland confirms this when she states, “there was a danger that as women’s adviser I would be just another ‘buffer zone’ between the electors and government, rather than a conduit for women’s concerns” (Eisenstein, 1996: 96). In the end, the femocrats could easily be accused of becoming apologists for Labor.


Indeed, many, if not most, of the early WEL leaders ended up in senior positions in the public service or in the established political parties (Eisenstein, 1996: 38): for example Sara Dowse, Eva Cox, Carmen Lawrence, Susan Ryan, Gail Radford, Carmel Niland, Joan Bielski, Wendy McCarthy, Lyndall Ryan, and Jocelyn Scutt (McCarron Benson, 1991: 31-36). The recruitment of WEL activists into the bureaucracy had the effect, as Sawer and Groves comment, of depriving “the movement of its original activists” and sequestering them “within institutional settings where the expression of their feminism is necessarily constrained” (1994: 448). Some have pointed to this to support a general argument that Labor effectively coopted feminists into these institutions in order to neutralise feminism’s challenge to the system.

For two case studies of Labor women’s (sometimes tentative) working relationships with women’s organizations, see Scutt, 1985 and Davenport, 2000.

For example, during her time as head of the Office of the Status of Women, Anne Summers enjoyed a close working relationship with Labor women, attending National Labor Women’s Conferences and communicating with delegates about possible government policy. In her address to the 1984 National Labor Women’s Conference, Susan Ryan states that “Anne [Summers] has, at your invitation, attended this conference as an observer and I hope that those of you who want to put views to her and who have not yet met her, take the opportunity during the rest of the conference to do so” (1984: 9).

In a letter to the editor of The Bulletin, WEL (WA) member Jocelyn Terry congratulates the Labor Party for choosing well in the recent selection’ of Pat Giles on the Western Australian Senate ticket:

WEL looks forward to the time when disapproval need no longer be expressed of party policies towards/against women - and when it is no longer necessary to express surprise and applause when parties recognise the calibre of women members (1980: 7).

In Getting Equal, Lake continuously makes the point that one of the defining features of feminist activity in Australia has been its commitment to non-partisan politics (1999: 13). She asserts that post-suffrage feminists largely eschewed traditional political parties in favour of “mobilizing women at the grass roots level” (1999: 13). They wanted to develop their own policies and perspectives without the constraints of party structures, in order to influence the political agenda from their own unique and independent position (1999: 13). For Lake, it is possible to view the femocrat project as a “continuation and fruition of the bid by many post-
suffrage feminists early in the century to create a woman-friendly Commonwealth” (1999: 261).

Yeatman pin-points the same time period, arguing that “it is unlikely that the Australian femocracy would have developed to the extent it has without the crucial coincidence of a reforming federal Labor Government and a dynamic feminist movement in the period 1972-75, and without the renewal of this connection with the election of the Hawke Labor Government in 1983” (1990: 89).

For a short history and description of women’s policy machinery, see also Sawyer, 1999.

It should be noted that the Fraser government retained many of the femocrat initiatives installed by the Whitlam government “albeit under more strained circumstances” (Lake, 1999: 260). Lake points out, although the Fraser government was “less sympathetic” to the feminist movement than its predecessor, it “still had to answer to a continuing and outspoken feminist movement” (1999: 260). Any strong moves against the institutional inroads of the femocrats would have been viewed by the Liberal Party as a possible electoral problem.

Summers was fortunate enough to enjoy a good working relationship with Bob Hawke. Indeed, when Susan Ryan become Minister Assisting the Prime Minister on Women, she chose Summers as the head of the Office of the State of Women because:

... she was able to deal with Hawke very well. Hawke respected Anne and liked her, and that crucial role between bureaucrat and Prime Minister was greatly enhanced by the fact that Anne could get on with Hawke (Dowse, 1991: 89).

At the end of her time as head of the Office of the Status of Women, Summers wrote to Bob McMullan, then National Secretary, expressing her gratitude for “the close and productive relations I have established with you during my period running the Office” (1986: 1). Summers added that she hoped McMullan would “maintain similarly close relations” with her replacement Ms Sue Brooks (1986: 1). Similarly, Elizabeth Reid (Australia’s first femocrat) recognized that her “position was clearly transient, dependent totally on political goodwill and understanding” (1987: 15). Good working relations between femocrats and Labor politicians, an under-analysed aspect of the femocrat phenomenon, was clearly important to the advancement of a shared agenda.

Summers argues that the appointment of women’s advisors to government was itself a “potent demonstration of the electoral power of women” (1989: 59). For example, Lyndall Ryan describes the appointment of Elizabeth Reid as the first women’s advisor to the Prime Minister as a “political rather than a bureaucratic” action (1990: 74).

Between elections, it was harder to get Labor government support for women’s policy. In these periods of electoral lull, femocrats had to demonstrate their more general utility to ministers and department heads (Eisenstein, 1996: 48).

The institutional restrictions on femocrats are illustrated in the following recollection by former femocrat Carmel Niland in conversation with her then boss, Labor Premier of New South Wales, Neville Wran:

“We’ve had a lot of trouble with women’s advisors” (“we” meaning the Labor Party). ... He said ... “This is what your job is. You’ve got to raise the status of women in New South Wales”. ... So you’ve got to do something for women. He said, “And in doing something for women, you’ve got to increase the number of women who vote for me.” Right? “You’ve got not to tell anyone you’re doing it”. ... He was very nervous about the whole exercise. And he said “You’ve got no money”. Right. So you had no money, had to increase the votes, had to raise the status, and you’re not to tell anyone about it (Eisenstein, 1996: 35).

Campbell comments that “feminism has a dialectical relationship to the left – it is in it and against it” (1999: 1).

The suspicion of Labor traditionalists about the increasing numbers of feminists entering the Party from the seventies onwards has already been commented on. As Susan Ryan states, this incursion of feminists into the Party ranks left many wondering, “were [the feminists] proper Laborites or just using the Party?” (1999: 153).
Consider, for example, the following excerpt from Susan Ryan’s biography, where she recounts the reaction of some WEL representatives to the passing of the *CTH* Sex Discrimination Act in December 1983.

Two spokeswomen for WEL, an organization whose long-standing top priority had just been enacted, were invited along with me to appear on ABC-TV’s *7:30 Report*. Surprising even the urbane Richard Carleton, the WEL representatives, far from welcoming this major step forward in justice for women, were hostile towards me and full of complaints about the new law. They described the Act as useless, an insulting token. In the absence of big financial penalties and goal sentences for offenders, they just weren’t interested. It seemed they were after punishment of the totemic enemy rather than practical opportunities for women. I could hardly believe my ears. As they whined on, I anticipated mentally the sarcastic observations of my less supportive colleagues; I would have slapped the ingrates (1999: 243).

Ryan was thus caught between the priorities and expectations of two, very different, often opposing forces, and ended up antagonizing and disappointing both as a result. On the feminist movement’s disappointments with Labor women, see Eveline & Booth, 1997. On the position of femocrats and WEL activists, see Franzway *et al*, 1989.
Chapter 4

Counting on women: gender gap research in the 1983 federal election

In Chapters 2 and 3, I have described and analysed Labor discourse and the important shifts within this discourse during the Hawke-Keating years. In the context of this thesis, the most significant shift within Labor discourse at that time was its incorporation of a particular kind of feminist politics. A clear and detailed understanding of Labor discourse as it operated during the Labor decade is essential because it is within this specific discursive field that the new political subject of ‘the woman voter’ “comes to be whatever or whoever she is” (Bové, 1995: 58). As argued in Chapter 1, “discourse is one of the most empowering ways ... for the forming and shaping of humans as ‘subjects’” (Bové, 1995: 58), or, in this context, subject positions. At this stage, it is vital to describe and analyse how this subject position has been produced and reproduced within Labor discourse. Such an analysis necessarily focuses on the “technical”, in other words, the technologies that operate to produce this subject position within discourse (Rose, 1996: 128). It is through technologies that a subject is rendered into discourse as “knowable, calculable and administrable” (Miller & Rose, 1993: 79). In this chapter I focus on how the gender gap research, developed for the 1983 federal election, worked to make ‘the woman voter’ both visible and knowable. I analyse the gender gap research as a technology constituted by both political numbers and forms of experiential knowledge generated, in the main, by Labor feminists.
Hence, this chapter will describe and analyse the gender gap research as one of the more important technologies that works to construct ‘the woman voter’. The first part of the chapter will explore the conceptual framework of the sameness/difference divide and its impact on the conventional construction of ‘the women voter’ prior to the development and use of gender gap research in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The entrenched view of ‘the woman voter’ as apolitical and anti-Labor was a significant impediment to Labor feminist arguments that the Party needed to reform its image, policies and campaign techniques. I will show how Labor feminists organized and lobbied the Party leadership in order to convince them that this traditional construction of ‘the woman voter’ was, in their view, both inaccurate and sexist. They sought to challenge the orthodoxy that women voters were “only interested in supermarkets and childcare” (Moore, 1984: 4). In their lobbying efforts, Labor feminists saw gender gap research as an invaluable tool. I will detail and analyse the gender gap research, particularly its use of quantitative materials (political numbers such as statistics) and qualitative materials (interviews and group discussions with women voters plus the experience of Labor feminists themselves). In general, these materials are from the Party’s National Secretariat papers in the National Archives; indeed, this chapter will make extensive use of this primary material. Whilst the primary focus of this chapter will be on the 1983 federal election campaign, some materials dating from a later time will also be used, namely The Australian Bureau of Statistics’ *Women in Australia*, both to illustrate theoretical points about the relationship between political numbers and subject constitution and in anticipation of further discussion in Chapters 5 and 6.
The ‘sameness/difference’ dichotomy, as it relates to gender, has occupied a ubiquitous place in political and popular debates about the status of women in society (Bacchi, 1990: xi). This dynamic opposition has structured discussion and analysis, both feminist and non-feminist, about the identity, needs, rights and aspirations of women as a class of persons. While this divide has informed general political and popular discussion about women, questions of ‘difference’ and ‘sameness’ have also “shaped the thoughts and arguments of various parts of the women’s movement” (Bacchi, 1990: xi). In the previous chapter I explored the rough divisions within the Australian feminist movement over questions of class and feminist methods. The movement has also been divided, again unevenly, over whether feminist reform should proceed on the basis of arguments asserting women’s ‘sameness’ to men or on arguments emphasizing our unique and fundamental ‘difference’. The femocrats, Labor feminists and WEL activists were interested in joining the existing ‘male’ system, albeit with the aim of changing it from the inside; in their arguments for gender equality, they stressed women’s capacity to perform as well as men in a variety of fields. Many women’s liberationists, however, channelled their energies into constructing alternative and separate cultures, groups and rules for women; for them, women are fundamentally different from men and, as such, require different ways of organizing, communicating and living. As Bacchi argues, “when disputes which seem to be about women’s sameness to or difference from men” emerged, Australian feminists would differ over which political strategies and arguments were most appropriate to employ (1990: xiv). This disagreement over strategies:
... reflected political differences of opinion about the way in which society ought to be organized. The labels ‘sameness’/‘difference’, ‘equality’/‘difference’ came to represent these contending philosophies (Bacchi, 1990: 104).

Although some feminists strongly identified as either advocates of sameness (in the form of equality arguments) or difference, it is important to note that Australian feminists did not always divide into “sharply contending factions” (Bacchi, 1990: 29). Despite the fact that there were conflicts within the broader feminist movement over which route to take in arguing for social justice for women, some feminists were sufficiently flexible enough to utilize both sameness and difference arguments in their lobbying efforts. Feminists, including the suffragists and later Labor feminists, have sought to manoeuvre within the boundaries of various conceptual systems by emphasizing either sameness or difference, whatever strategic approach might prove most successful in a given situation. They have employed sameness or difference arguments “when political constraints suggest that these are the only means available to improve women’s lives” (Bacchi, 1990: xi). As such, they have found their way “within shifting political institutions and ideologies” and taken their chances where they have found them (Bacchi, 1990: 260-261). The adaptability of these feminist arguments, especially in relation to the debates about the character of ‘the woman voter’, will be revisited later in this chapter.

It is crucial to note that the sameness/difference dichotomy, although concerned with the position of women, is actually premised on a masculine standard. The very idea that we can think of gender in terms of either sameness or difference is premised on the assumption that women are judged to be either the same as or different to men. This “leaves men as the standard of analysis” (Rhode, 1990: 204),
the “point of reference” in all comparisons between the sexes generally and in the sameness/difference dichotomy specifically (Bacchi, 1990: x). As Gatens argues:

Women, in traditional social theory, are assessed and analysed in terms of deviations from, or complements to, a human norm which is really the masculine norm. Put differently, although there are two norms of gender – the masculine norm and the feminine norm – in fact, there is one standard which divides into two unequal ... components (1998: 7).

Thus, to address the position of women in terms of the sameness/difference dichotomy leaves the masculine norm intact. It also ensures that women as a category of persons are defined as “accidental, different, other” (Theile, 1992: 29). Within conventional social and political theory, the identities, behaviours, and attitudes of women voters are judged as either a divergence from or a convergence with the masculine norm, which is always posited as “the abstract, the essential and the universal” (Theile, 1992: 29). We can observe the effects of the sameness/difference dichotomy, and its privileging of the masculine norm, in the conventional construction of ‘the woman voter’ as apolitical and conservative.

**The conventional construction of ‘the woman voter’**

Political scientists have always been at odds on the issue of whether women’s political behaviour is the same as or different to that of men. In the past, these experts have generally assumed that women and men have “similar, if not identical, economic and political interests” and therefore will automatically vote alike (Mueller, 1988: 240).³ Wives in particular were believed to “follow their husband’s lead” in
public matters (Mueller, 1988: 241). However, with the advent of suffrage movements in western democracies, women began to be “viewed by politicians, the public and political scientists as possessing a unique set of political beliefs and electoral preferences” (Mueller, 1988: 151). Suffragists were faced with a dilemma: emphasize difference or insist on sameness? Women’s organizations were divided about what avenue to take in their arguments for the vote. In taking the sameness route, they could attempt to “erase the perception of distinctiveness” and argue that women “be accepted as the equals” of male voters (Mueller, 1988: 150-151). On the other hand, they could focus on women’s difference from men, advancing the idea that women possess “special knowledge and skills” and thus have “a distinctive and valuable contribution to make” to the public sphere (Pateman, 1994: 337).

The tactical choice facing the suffragists was a consequence of what Searle describes as the inherent contradiction within the suffrage cause. She argues that the Australian women’s movement, like first wave movements in other western democracies, drew on two major and, in many ways, opposing traditions:

The first was that of the Enlightenment, which saw woman as individual. The second belonged to another central tradition of emerging bourgeois ideology. This envisaged woman as the lynchpin of a collective called the home, then increasingly seen as a highly privatised “haven” in an increasingly competitive and “heartless” public world (1988: 20).

From the very beginning, suffragists were inspired by “the ideology of eighteenth century European liberalism and the rights of the individual” in their arguments for women’s full citizenship and place in the public sphere (Searle, 1988: 21). Many believed that the right to vote itself “conferred citizenship and a political status of
equality no matter what unequal social or economic position women endured” (Searle, 1988: 35). However the suffragists also came to realize the power of arguments based on the position of woman as mother, wife and manager of the home. As Nash describes, John Stuart Mill, as a key advocate of women’s right to vote⁵, articulated a notion of liberalism and democracy that “explicitly asserted women’s difference” (1998: 92):

[O]n Mill’s account, it was because women might have a different perspective from men and different interests, as well as being in special need of developing a wider sense of the public good than was available to them so long as they were confined to the private sphere, that they needed representation in government (1998: 92).

Hence, in the context of Mill’s theory, women have different views and interests than men due to their unique contribution to the private world of home and family, views and interests that should be represented in the public sphere. Indeed, “the campaign for the vote … came to symbolize women’s claims both to self-determination and equality with men and also to a recognition of women’s specific value as women” (Nash, 1998: 93). In the end, Australian suffragists, like their sisters in America and Britain, choose the difference path, although not to the total exclusion of sameness arguments.⁶ Indeed, as Bacchi points out, “most suffragists claimed equal human status at the same time as eliciting women’s particular virtues” (1990: 19). This apparent inconsistency in the suffragists’ construction of ‘the woman voter’ proved to be an asset rather than a liability; the suffragists could capitalize on the strength of both sameness and difference in their arguments for the vote. For Bacchi, these ambiguities need to be recovered in order to grasp the full power of suffragist arguments:
It seems clear from the structure and content of suffragist arguments that there was a conscious attempt to answer critics. And, since the historical sources are predominantly public pronouncements, contradictions may reflect the fact that speeches and books were tailored for particular audiences. Contradictions might demonstrate simply the adroit management of political symbols (1990: 22).

These contradictions are productive of what Nash terms “the undecidability of women in liberalism” (1998: 13). For Nash, ‘women’ are positioned “between inclusion as the subjects of universal principles” (sameness) and “exclusion from those universal principles as women” (difference) (1998: 13). For many feminists, including Nash and Jaggar⁷, such instability, a position of both inclusion and exclusion, is a superior alternative to choosing exclusively between ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’.

**Apolitical and conservative**

Whatever position the suffragists adopted, however, they were unable to fully displace the masculine bias of politics. As Baxter and Lansing comment, men continue to “serve as a control group” in studies about women’s political attitudes and behaviours (1986: 6). Men’s political identity constitutes the standard, with women’s identity evaluated as either the same as or different to that masculine norm. In particular and perhaps as a result of the suffragists’ appeal to ‘difference’, a common perception of women voters as apolitical and conservative emerged within suffrage debates both in Australia and overseas.⁸ This perception has remained
largely entrenched. For example, writing within the American context in the early
1980s, Lovenduski and Hills state that the women were said to be:

... more traditionalist and right-wing [than men], ... to adopt unquestioningly
their husband’s political allegiances, to be more swayed by candidates than
issues, to be more moralistic, more emotional and less politically aware and
interested than men (1981: 1).

Similarly, Sawer and Simms identify four main clichés about Australian women’s
voting behaviour and political identity, namely:

... that women are more conservative than men, that wives follow their
husband’s political preferences, ... that women tend to personalize politics
and that women are less interested in politics than men (1993: 30).

As Lawrence observes, whilst the early suffrage movement in Australia managed to
secure women’s right to vote and to stand for Parliament, it did not however
“successfully challenge society’s prejudices and stereotypes of women” (1994: 9).9

At the heart of this characterisation of ‘the woman voter’ as apolitical and
conservative lies her status as mother and wife. Her position in the domestic sphere
of the home and family is seen to be both the cause and the effect of her inherent
conservatism and political disinterest. She signifies “the personal and the private”
(Campbell, 1987: 151), whereas her husband or father signifies the public sphere of
work and politics. The public/private divide and its impact on the construction of ‘the
woman voter’ is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. It should be noted
here, however, that in these characterisations of women as “politically disinterested
and inattentive” we can see a clear example of the sameness/difference dichotomy in operation (Richards, 1984: 436). Women’s political identity is constructed in opposition to men’s political identity, which is taken as the benchmark or norm. Within the terms of this dichotomy, women are “apolitical”, “insecure” and “lack initiative” whereas men are “assertive” and “politically committed” (Bacchi, 1990: 236). Furthermore, and in keeping with this “myth of the non-political woman”, social scientists have continued to assume that women are more “irrational” than men in their political choices, preferring candidates based on “their good looks, personality, character, or style” (Daley & Nolan, 1994: 46, 61) (see Figures 4.1 and 4.2).10 As Bulbeck recollects:

When I studied Politics at the University of Adelaide in 1969, the message was that women were politically ignorant and inactive, lacking the capacity or inclination to be good voters because they relied on emotional responses to candidates rather than making rationally-calculated decisions about candidates’ policies (1998: 173).

In view of this characterisation, we can see how ‘the woman voter’ has often been considered synonymous with either the ‘swinging’ or ‘undecided’ voter. Mills claims that demographically, a swinging voter has typically been “a 30-40 year old parent (usually mother) of a young family, residing literally in the middle of all demographic categories, with a middle-class, middle-suburban, middle-income, middle-employment lifestyle and middle-of-the-road politics” (1986: 22-23). The Labor Party itself possesses polling data, generated in the early 1980s, that supports the conclusion that women are more likely than men to be swinging voters.11
Associated with the characterisation of ‘the woman voter’ as apolitical is the assumption that women are inherently conservative in their politics. Writing within the Australian context in the early 1980s, Clarke and White state that it has long been “a truism of political science that women are politically more conservative than men” (1983: 11). Studies like Maurice Duverger’s *The Political Role of Women* serve to emphasize the ‘fact’ of female conservatism (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 29). In part, the characterization of women as conservative is a product of ‘first wave’ feminism’s “narrow class and racial base, and its commitment to liberal politics” (Daley & Nolan, 1994: 7). Political scientists and journalists have also attributed various post-war victories for conservative parties in America, Britain and Australia to the introduction of women’s suffrage (Mills, 1986: 16). Within the Australian context, ‘conservative’ also denotes ‘anti-Labor’ (Clarke & White, 1983: 11). Australian research into women’s voting habits has tended to bolster claims that women are ‘anti-Labor’. As Curtin reports, “between 1910 and 1966 it appears that men on average lent slightly more support to the [Labor Party] than to the Liberal-Country Party coalition, while a marginally greater percentage of women on average supported the Coalition compared” with Labor (1997: 4).

In an article for *Labor Forum* in 1982, Susan Ryan asserts that despite the Party’s growing interest in women’s issues, “many myths about women’s political behaviour”, established during the suffrage struggles, “are still current in Labor circles and affect Labor thinking about social policy and electoral strategy” (1982a: 23). Indeed, as discussed in the next chapter, the characterisation of ‘the woman voter’ as apolitical and conservative has yet to be eradicated; rather it has been absorbed into and reworked within more contemporary constructions of women’s political identity. Despite the problems posed by myth and prejudice, Labor feminists
in the late 1970s and early 1980s lobbied the Party leadership to pay attention to
women voters in election campaigns. They argued that the entrenched
characterization of ‘the woman voter’ as conservative and apolitical was “obviously
contradictory” (Owen, 1980: 132). They asserted that the data generated around
women’s voting patterns was “incomplete and sometimes contradictory” (Ryan,
1982a: 21). They pointed to that fact that the active support by Australian women
for the anti-Vietnam war and anti-nuclear weapons campaigns did not correspond
with the stereotype of the conservative, apolitical woman.\(^{17}\) In sum, Labor feminists
attempted to convince the Party leadership that the traditional characterization of
‘the woman voter’ was, in their view, both inaccurate and sexist. Like their suffrage
sisters, they emphasized both sameness and difference in their arguments about the
‘true’ characterization of ‘the woman voter’, depending on which tack they thought
might be more persuasive.\(^{18}\) With the right approach and the right policies, Labor
feminists argued that women voters could be convinced to vote Labor in sufficient
numbers to ensure the Party victory at the 1983 election. In their attempts to
construct a new notion of ‘the woman voter’, gender gap research became a
persuasive tool in the eyes of Labor feminists.

**Labor feminists and gender gap research**

The term ‘gender gap’ generally refers to a difference between the sexes in voting
patterns, party support or some other political variable (Mueller, 1988: 42; Curtin,
1997: 7).\(^ {19}\) In Australia between the early 1960s and early 1980s, the data available
suggested that “on average 6-8% more men than women voted Labor” (Ryan,
1982a: 21).\(^ {20}\) While there was evidence in the early 1980s that this gender gap was
closing to approximately 4% (Ryan, 1982a: 5), the 6-8% figure was more likely to be quoted in the Party materials and speeches of the time.\textsuperscript{21} The accuracy of the gender gap figure itself, produced via market research and exit polling, was rarely questioned within Party circles.\textsuperscript{22} However, on the question of \textit{why} this gender gap might exist, there were grounds for debate and disagreement. For many in the Party, both men and women, the 8% gender gap seemed to confirm their own experience and belief that women were less inclined to vote Labor than their male counterparts.\textsuperscript{23} They tended to view this gap between the sexes as a predictable consequence of women's apolitical and conservative nature, as described above. The existence of the gender gap also tended to confirm for them that women were naturally different from men in their opinions and perspectives. Attempting to close this gap was unnecessary, undesirable and perhaps impossible. Ultimately then, the gender gap figure, this "single number" (Rose, 1991: 680), can be seen as the quantification of the different voting preferences of women from men. It is a quantification of sexual difference itself, a representation of the extent to which women differ from men in their political opinions and behaviours.

For Labor feminists the usual explanations for why women were not voting Labor were both inadequate and sexist. They spent much of the period between 1975 and 1983, between the defeat of the Whitlam government and the election of the Hawke government, countering arguments about the inherent conservatism of women, presenting their own reasons for the existence of the gender gap and constructing a new and different notion of 'the woman voter'. The activities, belief systems and identities of Labor feminists thus became an integral part of the construction of the gender gap as difference. Labor feminists in particular believed that new and detailed research into women's political choices and behaviours would help "demolish
these myths” about the apolitical, conservative woman voter (Ryan, 1982: 23). They pushed the Party leadership to commission gender gap research prior to the 1983 election campaign. This research aimed at a more precise exploration of the views of Australian women voters and was fundamental to attempts by Labor feminists to convince the Party that women were worth targeting in election campaigns. In the process of generating data about women in their attempts to convince the Party leadership, Labor feminists were themselves involved in the production of new ideas about women’s political behaviours and attitudes. Through this process, Labor feminism became a major discursive influence on the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as a new political subject position within Labor discourse.

**Labor feminists speak**

Rose argues that while numbers generally function to legitimise forms of government, they can also be used “by minorities to press their case for social justice” to government (1991: 688).\(^{24}\) This is exactly what feminists have done with gender gap numbers. During the 1980s, the organized feminist movement and women politicians in the United States commissioned, published and publicized gender gap research in an attempt to “advance their agenda” (Norris, 1996: 120). These feminists used opinion polls as a way of “translating the grievances of women into a program of change” (Mueller, 1988: 34). In a similar fashion, Australian Labor feminists have used gender gap research as “the means of riveting the Party’s attention on gender issues” (Ryan, 1999: 178).\(^{25}\) In order to persuade Party leaders that women voters were worth targeting, Labor feminists like Susan Ryan had to show that women could be convinced to vote Labor and that this in turn would give
the Party a significant electoral advantage over its opponents. Ryan and many other Labor feminists have argued that generating numbers was the crucial first step towards breaking down some of the myths about women voters described above. New kinds of statistics, polling data and market research, interpreted by Labor feminists, would make women voters visible to the Party leadership, to the public and to the media. Numbers of this kind were, as Ryan puts it, “better than gold” (1999: 178). With this “new powerful tool”, Ryan asserts that she “convinced the male leadership that with the right policies” the gender gap could be closed (1999: 177).26

This process of persuasion was long and on going, however the first concerted attempt to utilize gender gap research in this way came with the Party’s National Committee of Inquiry, established in 1978. After Labor’s “disastrous” election result in 1977, a National Committee of Inquiry was set up by the Party “to enquire into the causes for these massive failures” (Ryan, 1982a: 21). Labor feminists saw this process as an opportunity to further press their demands for internal reform and policy innovation in the area of women issues.27 The Inquiry was also significant in that it was the first time the Party looked properly and systematically at the voting patterns of Australian women (Dowse, 1991: 64). As Susan Ryan describes, the Inquiry was an “opportunity” to find out why “crucial numbers of women voters had reverted to their traditional anti-Labor stance” at the 1977 election (1999: 177). As part of the Committee’s investigations, a young economist working for the Party, Anne de Salis, produced a paper analysing the gender gap in all elections since the mid 1940s (Ryan, 1999: 177).28 De Salis’ figures “established that, if women had voted Labor to the same extent as men, Labor would have won every election since the Second World War” (Dowse, 1991: 64). Ryan then presented this research to
the Shadow Cabinet, which she asserts “really got them thinking” (Dowse, 1991: 64). Ryan argues that it was the numbers:

... that convinced the men - not anything else. The fact that if more women didn’t vote Labor then we wouldn’t get back in (Dowse, 1991: 64-65).

In this way, the gender gap numbers provided leverage for Labor feminists, who were then able to agitate for reform and build a policy agenda. Indeed, Ryan claims that from these numbers “came women’s policy and consultation with women and commitment to legislation and so forth” (Dowse, 1991: 64-65). She and other Labor feminists therefore used the gender gap findings as the foundation from which to “extrapolate policies, structural changes, communication strategies [and] campaign tactics” (Ryan, 1999: 178).

After the Committee of Inquiry published its findings in 1979, Labor feminists increased their activism. The period between the Inquiry and the lead up to the election of 1983 was one of broad reaching and intense activism by Labor feminists. They focused their efforts on developing “new strategies and new structures” (Ryan, 1982a: 25) as well as new policies that were more attractive and relevant to the lives of Australian women (Moore, 1985: 33). They argued that such initiatives would project an image of Labor as “a party sensitive to women’s concerns” (Moore, 1985: 33) and would help “achieve the high level of female support [the Party] should have” (Ryan, 1982a: 25). A national newsletter for Labor women, entitled Labor Women Speak, was established in the middle of 1980 “as a means of strengthening and unifying the contribution Labor women make, and have always made to the [Party]” (Hazlehurst, 1979b: 1). In addition, and as a
complement to the national newsletter, a *Directory of Labour Women* was published in 1980, listing the names and addresses of women members of policy committees, office-holders, trade unions and so forth (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 186). Labor women lobbied the Party for the establishment of a National Labor Women’s Conference. Finally, there was an increased presence and activism by Labor women at the Party’s National Conference in 1982, held in Canberra in early July. The 1982 Conference saw the Party take the step of including a section on women in the platform (Sawer, 1990: 62). It also saw an intense debate over the abortion question, with a promise brokered between the pro-Life Right wing and Labor feminists.

Other feminist advances were made within the organizational wing of the Party during this period. Susan Ryan was appointed to the National Campaign Committee and was able to conduct more detailed research into women’s voting behaviours (Ryan, 1982b: 8). This research would extend beyond the simple collation of figures about women’s voting preferences towards more in-depth research about the attitudes of women voters. In August 1981, Ryan presented a progress report to the National Campaign Committee on the developing strategies for improving Labor’s vote amongst women. In this report, Ryan argued that the Party’s general approach to research was methodologically “inadequate” (1981a: 1). The traditional polling method of “mass interviews checking attitudes to issues and requesting voting intentions” was becoming less and less reliable as a mechanism for gauging political views and intentions (Cox, 1981: 1). Instead of this usual method, Ryan suggested to the Committee that she be empowered to set up a small group of experts, lead by Eva Cox (then policy advisor to Don Grimes), to design a plan for intensive small group investigations (Ryan, 1981a: 1). This group would then work with ANOP to
develop a useful polling proposal (Ryan, 1981a: 1). In an address to Labor women, Ryan described these discussions as “a specific qualitative research project into the attitudes held by women in the community about political issues, political parties and politicians” (Ryan, 1982b: 8). As an attachment to this report, Ryan included a paper by Cox, entitled “Women and Voting Behaviour”. In that paper, Cox suggests that “in-depth studies” undertaken through individual interviews and group discussions provide a better understanding of “values, concerns and commitments” (Cox, 1981: 1). Small group discussions, in which political attitudes and values can be explored in more depth and complexity, were seen to be particularly suitable to women as they provide the opportunity for intimate and reciprocal communication between researchers and respondents.38 Thus, the Party’s gender gap research project consisted of two distinct but interrelated projects; small-group discussions lead by Cox would produce information on which ANOP could conduct the usual polling. In this way, the quantitative research of ANOP was underpinned by qualitative methods.

The opinions of Ryan and Cox expressed in these documents are in keeping with a more feminist approach to research. Many feminists, including Labor feminists, have recognized the “political potential” of work that relies on statistics (Maynard, 1994: 13). At the same time, however, some feminists have felt “ambiguous” about the “power and legitimacy” accorded to numbers, especially within political circles (Pugh, 1990: 103-104). For example, Pugh comments that she has always been “suspicious of the easy power” commanded by statistics in academic research (1990: 109):

I regard my statistics as being crude, on the macho side, simplistically commanding. Numbers have an appeal, and indeed they are powerful [but] ... their power needs to be used circumspectly (1990: 110).
Certain feminist methodologists have been quick to critique quantitative materials that provide little or no explanation about the ways in which such materials have been produced. They have argued that there needs to be a greater focus on the processes and methods used in the production of knowledge. For example, they have advocated the exploration of the power dynamics between researchers and subjects and evidenced a concern with academic and professional “reflexivity” (Maynard, 1994: 16). Standpoint feminists in particular have argued that their own experience as women is a central part of any critique and should be used as a “constructive element” of that critique rather than “something to be controlled or avoided” (Pugh, 1990: 111). Such an approach is in stark contrast to the ‘anonymous’ and ‘neutral’ approach to research adopted by organizations such as ANOP. Such statistics, says Pugh, need to be “chaperoned” by other kinds of knowledge, namely materials that “respect and portray people’s experiences” (1990: 109, 111). Hence, within the context of the gender gap research, the small group discussions and individual interviews were seen by Cox and Ryan as able to produce information that better reflects the political opinions and experiences of the women involved.

Against this background, I now want to specifically explore the gender gap research produced for the 1983 federal election as one of the more important technologies that served to construct ‘the woman voter’ as a new political subject position. By ‘technologies’ I refer to the various forms of knowledge involving “technical devices of writing, listing, numbering and computing” (Miller & Rose, 1993: 79). Both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the gender gap research fit this definition of knowledge. Such an exploration of the gender gap research requires an analysis of
the power of political numbers and their relationship with knowledge based on ‘women’s experience’.

**Gender Gap research: utilising numbers and experience**

**Numbers**

Throughout 1989 and 1990, it seemed that Australia was headed for a severe economic downturn. Dismissing the rising panic within financial, political and public circles, Paul Keating continued to deny the fact that Australia was in a recession. In a radio interview, journalist Paul Lyneham put it to the Treasurer that the recently released National Account Figures showed that Australia was on the brink of a recession. Keating rejected this completely, asserting that these figures were in fact “a beautiful set of numbers for us, for policy”. At the same time, many of Keating’s Cabinet colleagues, including Michael Duffy and John Button, were “hearing depressing messages from out there” in the community from business, unions and constituents about how Australians were “doing it tough”. For Keating and for Hawke the numbers and advice produced by the Reserve Bank and the departments of Treasury and Finance were far more reliable that any of this anecdotal evidence about economic hardship. Anyone who brought up such evidence in Cabinet meetings was “derided as an economic illiterate and put down”. Keating and Hawke continued to ignore the advice of colleagues and friends in favour of forecasts from, in particular, the Reserve Bank. However, by 1991, Keating and Hawke had to admit that Australia was indeed in a recession, albeit one that “we had to have”. Individuals like Michael Duffy were in the end vindicated in their belief that their
anecdotal evidence was in fact “far better informed that anything [the government] was getting out of [the departments of] Treasury, Finance or Prime Minister and Cabinet”.

This story, told in the documentary *Labor in Power*[^1], illustrates the powerful status accorded to numbers within politics generally and Labor culture specifically. Numbers are central to Labor discourse. Indeed there is, to use Hacking’s phrase, “a sheer fetishism for numbers” within Labor discourse (1991: 192). In Party circles, to ‘have the numbers’ is your greatest asset, to be able to ‘count’ an enviable skill. Susan Ryan recollects that it was not her efforts as a policy maker and activist but her attempts to gain preselection for the seat of Fraser that gave her “standing with the machine” (1999: 153). Ryan states that these “nuts and bolts” men:

... didn’t like me any better. They didn’t suddenly grasp structural discrimination against women. They weren’t particularly impressed with my rapidly improving presentation skills or knowledge of policy and procedure. But they did accord to me that mythical attribute of the Labor tribe, understanding the numbers. ‘That woman’s libber, she can count’, they said (1999: 153).

However, the *Labor in Power* story also illustrates that ‘anecdotal evidence’, gathered through experience and personal communication, can also play a role in the Party’s political culture. In this story, the hard numbers produced by the bureaucracy were pitted against anecdotal evidence collected by Labor parliamentarians. In other contexts, however, the relationship between these two kinds of knowledge – numbers and experience - is less antagonistic. In particular, as I have noted above, Labor feminists were quick to deploy both quantitative material (for example,
statistics and polling data) and qualitative material (such as their own experience and corporate knowledge) in their quest for a more sexually democratic Labor Party. In his article “Governing by Numbers: Figuring out Democracy”, Rose explores how numbers are implicated in the operations of liberal democracy. Although Rose’s primary focus is on political numbers, his analysis does provide a strong foundation for investigating this synergy between quantitative and qualitative material within the gender gap research.

Rose’s article is ostensibly a review of two books that focus on the “numericisation of politics and the politics of numbers” (1991: 681). In this review, he explores “the relations between quantification, numeracy, statistics and democracy as a mentality of government and a technology of rule” (1991: 681). Rose also extends his review into a more detailed exploration of the ways in which numbers have become central to the discourse of politics. Political debate, Rose asserts, is “increasingly conducted in the language of numbers” (1991: 674, 685). The whole range of political decisions made by those who govern depends upon “the deployment of numbers in their calculation and legitimation” (1991: 675). The entire spectrum of political texts - policy documents, press releases, speeches inside and outside Parliament as well as campaign material - position numbers as central to their message:

Numbers have an unmistakable power in modern political culture. The most casual reader of newspapers or viewer of television is embraced within the rituals of expectation, speculation and prognostication that surround the public pronouncement of politically salient numbers (1991: 673).

Australian political life is full of these rituals, from the calculation of percentage swings on election night to the Treasurer’s speech in Parliament when he hands
down the annual budget. Along with this “numericisation of politics”, there also exists a variety of debates on the “politics of numbers”, debates that focus on the “accuracy and adequacy” of numbers, their “use and abuse” and questions related to the privacy and ethics of numbers and their deployment (1991: 674).

Rose emphasizes that there is no “essential unity to the relations of numbers and politics”; numbers do not have an “*intrinsic* capacity” (1991: 691). In other words, he is not interested in the truth or accuracy of numbers. Rather he is concerned with how and where numbers are deployed (1991: 691). Following Rose, I do not explore either the accuracy or the adequacy of those numbers produced by the gender gap research. The information about the changing gender gap numbers I provide in this chapter have not been presented as evidence that Australian women voters actually did change their political behaviours and preferences. Rather, I am interested in “the ‘what’ and ‘where’ of the deployment of numbers, and the ‘how’ of their alignment” within Labor discourse (1991: 691). Such an analysis requires a micro rather than a macro approach. As Rose explains:

> To understand the genealogy of citizenship as a socio-historical phenomenon we should lower our eyes from these grand and airy deliberations and examine also the mundane, the small scale, the technical. Citizenship should be studied at the level of the practices, technologies and mentalities within which citizens were to be formed, not simply as the moral subjects that philosophical deliberation seeks to equip with abstract rights and freedom, but as the subjects of governmental technologies, ethicalised individuals capable of exercising self-mastery, discipline, foresight, reason and self-control (1991: 683).
In order to understand the ways in which ‘the woman voter’ as a political subject position was constructed within Labor discourse, it is thus necessary to look beyond the rhetoric of equality and fairness, the “grand and airy” ways in which women are described in Labor policies and addressed in Labor speeches (as presented in the previous chapters). Instead, as Rose encourages, it is important to explore the more concrete and “mundane” techniques employed by Labor to get the attention and alliance of these women voters.

In his article, Rose identifies four broad types of political numbers operative in advanced liberal democratic capitalist societies, two of which are of particular relevance to party politics (see footnote for Rose’s other two categories). Rose asserts that democratic governments rely upon numbers or “quantification” (of all kinds) to legitimise the exercise of power. First, he points to “the diverse numbers that are connected with who holds political power in democratic nations” including numbers of persons in electoral districts, votes in elections and referenda, and calculations of majorities and minorities in houses of parliament (1991: 673). As Rose comments, “numbers here are an intrinsic part of the mechanisms for conferring legitimacy on political authority” (1991: 673). Large swings towards a particular Party are interpreted as bestowing that Party with a mandate for governing. The larger the swing, the greater legitimacy accorded the Party and its policy agenda. Second, there are “the numbers that link government with the lives of the governed outside the electoral process” including opinion polls, social surveys, market research, and reports generated by bodies like the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Numbers produced through these technologies not only aim to “calibrate and quantify public feelings” but to “act as relays promising to align the exercise of
‘public’ authority with the values and beliefs of citizens” (1991: 673). Again, this is a form of legitimation via numbers.

Rose’s second form of numbers, such as those produced through polling and market research, became an increasingly important part of Labor discourse from the 1970s onwards. It is not surprising that such statistics become central to the science of election campaigning. Hacking argues that the primary goal of statistical material is “to govern chance” (1991: 185). He states that “we use a statistical law not only to predict and organize phenomena but also to explain them” (1991: 189). Statistics are thus used to find out both what voters are thinking and the reasons behind that thinking; they are essential to determining whether or not a party can win an election. Indeed, it is important to note that Labor was “moving rapidly” into market research in the lead-up to the 1972 election (Mills, 1986: 19). By the beginning of the Labor decade, polling and market research were at the core of the Party’s campaign strategy. The 1983 election “probably saw greater use made of research than any previous poll” with forty separate studies of swinging voters conducted during the three-week period prior to election day (Summers, 1983: 108). As Summers observes, “rather than voters being asked only to deliver a judgment on the final political product, they [were] now increasingly being consulted in advance about the contents of that product” (1983: 108). The power of the polls escalated during the Hawke-Keating years. Howe and Howe comment that even early on in the Labor decade it was “opinion polls rather than party policy” that determined the direction of political decision making (1984: 169). Moreover as Rose points out, discourses that operate via the collection and analysis of political numbers require “increased technical expertise to gather and interpret” those numbers (1991: 678). Consequently, Labor’s pollsters eventually took up powerful positions within the Party
itself. For example, Rod Cameron from ANOP, Labor’s head pollster from 1972 until 1990, exercised the kind of influence within the Party even many ministers would envy.

Rose argues that there is “a constitutive interrelationship between quantification and democratic government” (1991: 675). More precisely, the proper operations of liberal democratic regimes of power are dependent upon “the delicate composition of relations of numbers and numeracy enabling a calculated and calculating government to be exercised over the persons and events to be governed” (Rose, 1991: 691). At a very basic level, Rose is arguing that people must be quantified and made quantifiable (two related processes) in order to be governed. Statistics are one of the more important kinds of governing numbers. As Rose argues, “the organization of political life in the form of the modern statistic has been intrinsically linked to the composition of networks of numbers connecting those exercising political power with the persons, processes and problems that they seek to govern” (1991: 675). Similarly, Hacking argues that statistics have “helped determine the form of laws about society and the character of social facts” (1991: 181). A clear example of how political numbers such as statistics work in this process of governing or managing persons is found in the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) report on Women in Australia, published in 1993. Whilst the content of this report will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter, it is worth analysing the report here in terms of the process by which its “numbers are linked to specific problematizations” (Rose, 1991: 686). A reading of this report illustrates how numbers work to constitute and define the domain to be governed; in this context, that domain is a specific subject position within discourse, namely ‘Australian women’, which informs the new subject position of ‘the woman voter’ within Labor discourse.
Wolf describes *Women in Australia* as “the most comprehensive social report on the status of women” produced in this country (1993: xv). The report “brings together statistics from a range of relevant ABS and other sources and provides a consolidated statistical profile” of women in Australia (ABS, 1993: viii). These statistical measures were produced to assist in monitoring the development of the status of women in Australia and were “integral” to the preparation of government policy on women, in particular the first *National Agenda* (ABS, 1993: viii). The purpose of these statistical measures, called “gender equality indicators” (GEIs), was to assist the Labor government in monitoring the situation of women relative to men in a number of areas including education, employment, income and superannuation (ABS, 1993: viii). The GEIs were updated annually and published regularly by the ABS over a ten-year period, namely 1983-1993; these are, of course, the years of Labor hegemony, described in the report as “a period of significant legislative change with direct impact on women” (ABS, 1993: viii, ix).

In analysing this report, there are a number of observations to be made about the connections between the production and compilation of statistics about women and the construction and problematisation of women as a category or persons. Fundamentally, the collection and organization of facts about ‘women’ in the ABS report works to formulate the boundaries and the properties of women as a category. As Rose asserts:
To count a problem is to define it and make it amenable to government. To govern a problem requires that it be counted (1991: 686).

In other words, “what is counted is ... what is problematized” (Rose, 1991: 686). This means that at the same time as statistics about women are produced and collated, women as a category of persons are problematised. Women are designated as a target group with specific needs, disadvantages and desires. In this process of defining and problematising ‘Australian women”, the standard of analysis is the status of Australian men. For example, the report states that there are more women than men in Australia, and amongst that category of women there are more older women than men, more migrant women than men and more lone mothers than lone fathers (ABS, 1993: 5, 6, 8, 19). Younger women, especially those in the 20-24 age bracket, are more educated than their male counterparts (ABS, 1993: 90-91). There are more women in part-time and casual employment than men, and more underemployed and unemployed women than men (ABS, 1993: 125, 128). Women earn far less than men (ABS, 1993: 179). They also perform about “four times the amount of housework as men” (ABS, 1993: 149). In the process of quantifying the status of women through statistics, women are designated as a discrete group whose characteristics are defined in relation to a masculine norm. They are thus problematised in relation to that same norm. Here we can observe, in empirical detail, one of the ways in which the sameness/difference dichotomy creates a dynamic opposition between the feminine convergence with or divergence from the masculine benchmark, which is posited as normal or ideal.

These GEIs seem to show that there is significant gender inequality in the areas of employment and pay equity as well as in the domestic sphere in terms of unpaid
work. The GEIs also show that women are carrying a greater burden in terms of child-rearing. Women are slowly out-numbering men in the population generally, but also in higher education institutions specifically. Such statistics about the status of women provide a quantitative basis for the various commentary and policy initiatives outlined in both *Women in Australia* and the second *National Agenda*. For example, the ABS report asserts that there is a particular relationship between the production of statistics and the formulation of policy. It states that the GEIs should not be viewed as:

... a comprehensive set of indicators with which to evaluate existing policies. Neither will it provide readers with an assessment of the status of women in Australia. Rather, by collecting, organizing, analysing and presenting pertinent statistics, it allows readers to make their own judgments on the basis of objective information (ABS, 1993: ix).

While numbers do not necessarily speak for themselves, their publication in an organized form provides a basis for others to interpret how the status of women has changed during the Labor decade. It is this process of “collecting, organizing, analysing and publishing” relevant statistical material that assists in constructing an image of the changing status of women that is visible and capable of being interpreted in particular ways. Indeed, the text itself emphasizes the crucial role that such statistics play in the process of political decision-making. It quotes from the concluding paragraph of a 1984 United Nations report, entitled *Compiling Social Indicators on the Situation of Women*, which describes “what is still the current situation with respect to the uses and limitations of available statistics for assessing the situation and relative status of women” (ABS, 1993: ix):
... the existence of appropriate statistics and indicators on the situation of women does not guarantee an end to laws, politics or practices that work to the disadvantage of women. However, the availability of such statistics and indicators, by quantifying both the special disadvantages women face relative to men and the process made towards equality, can stimulate politics and ... change public perceptions (ABS, 1993: ix).

In other words, numbers in themselves cannot make political decisions happen but if organized and presented in a particular way they can facilitate those decisions. Particular policies are thus legitimised, certain “images of political life” validated because of “the realities of our society that statistics appear to disclose” (Rose, 1991: 675). The political utility of statistics is so profound that it seems impossible for economic, liberal government to operate without the quantification of persons and their activities from life until death.

Hence, statistics, such as those collated in Women in Australia, emerge as one of the more important conduits for the production of knowledge necessary to govern certain domains, certain subject positions. In this context, Rose argues that:

... the collection and aggregation of numbers participates in the fabrication of a ‘clearing’ within which thought and action can occur. Numbers here delineate ‘fictive spaces’ for the operation of government, and establish a ‘plane of reality’, marked out by a grid of norms, on which government can operate (1991: 676).

Extending this argument to an analysis of the gender gap numbers, I wish to suggest that the production and establishment of the gender gap figure acted to clear a
space within Labor discourse for the construction of ‘the woman voter’. In this way, a single number, or set of numbers, works to constitute the domain to be governed. However, while a single statistic (the ubiquitous 8%) constitutes this domain (i.e. that group of women who don’t but should vote Labor), other forms of knowledge, not so reliant upon quantification, help fill out that domain. It is within this “fictive space” that certain, sometimes competing, versions of the character, predilections, preferences and behaviours of ‘the woman voter’ circulate. Furthermore, it was largely the role of Labor feminists, generating qualitative materials dependant on their own politics, knowledge and experience, to fill out the “fictive space” that the gender gap research had created.

Experience

As Maynard and Purvis state, “it is generally been regarded as an axiomatic feature of feminist social research that it is grounded in women’s experiences” (1994: 6). Feminists interested in challenging the masculine bias of various disciplines and forms of knowledge have insisted on “listening to, recording and understanding women’s own descriptions and accounts” of their lives (Maynard, 1994: 12). By “asking questions from the perspective of women’s lives”, feminists have constructed a challenge to traditional theories and research habits, at the same time providing a basis for an alternative approach to inquiry (Harding, 1991: 106, 117). At the core of this valorisation of experience is the presumption that women have a “privileged access to truth” about women (Lazreg, 1994: 56), that only they can provide “a reliable picture of women’s worlds” (Harding, 1991: 117). In other words, women have “access to the real by means of their experience” and this experience is
“indisputably authentic” because it belongs to women (Scott, 1991: 782, 787). This reliance on women’s experience, especially “as it unfolds in everyday life” (Lazreg, 1994: 49), works to equate “the personal with the political”, a central tenet of second wave feminist politics (Scott, 1991: 787).

My aim here is not to engage in any systematic critique of the use of experience as the basis of a feminist methodology or epistemology; there are already a number of excellent evaluations of the status and use of experience in feminism.51 Rather I am interested in the ways in which Labor feminists utilized ‘experience’ in their attempts to fill out this new statistical construction of ‘the woman voter’. Within the Party during the Labor decade, it was Labor feminists who were accorded and who claimed the capacity to speak truthfully about women, their interests and voting behaviours (Rose, 1996: 132).52 Labor feminists’ authority to speak on behalf of women was claimed largely on the basis of their unique access to the truth about women and women’s experience. Their access to the truth was gained via their involvement in the production of gender gap research and their own status as ‘women’.

As mentioned above, experience was incorporated into the gender gap research via the small-group discussions led by Eva Cox. In a paper to the 1984 National Labor Women’s Conference, later published in Labor Forum, Party organiser Kate Moore synthesizes the results of Labor’s gender gap research, both the polling conducted by ANOP and the quantitative research produced through the small-group discussions.53 What is striking about this analysis of the gender gap research is the ways in which the sameness/difference dynamic informs the interpretation of the findings. Moore states that the gender gap research “showed that women were primarily concerned about the same issues as men”, issues such as employment and economic prosperity
However, women voters tended to approach these issues from a “different angle” compared with their male counterparts (Moore, 1984: 4). This emphasis on women’s different approach to politics is seen to have a profound impact on the more general character of women’s political identity. As Moore describes, the research showed that women are:

... generally less critical and are more caring and cautious in their outlook. Rather than being self-interested in their approach, they tended to be ‘family interested’, in that they see issues in terms of implications for their children, husbands or themselves as part of a family unit. So it is more a difference of style and orientation, rather than a difference in the substance of political views (1984: 4).

This description emphasizes women’s sense of connection to others, especially to the family; this sense of connection may well be the origin of their political selflessness. This is because, as Skeggs explains, to be considered a “caring person” involves having to display certain personality traits such as “unselfishness” (1997: 56).

In addition to the incorporation of women’s experience into the gender gap research (as described in Moore’s conference paper), the experience of Labor women as women, their understanding of the needs and desires of ‘the woman voter’, was also utilized by the Party. As part of the preparations for the 1983 campaign, Susan Ryan distributed a questionnaire to all recent state and federal women candidates, asking for their feedback about a number of different issues related to women voters and campaign techniques (Ryan, 1981a: 1). Ryan wrote a letter to these women in January 1983, stating that:
As part of its campaign for federal government in 1983, the National Campaign Committee is paying particular attention to attracting women's votes. As a member of the National Campaign Committee, I have taken responsibility for planning a campaign to maximize the Labor vote amongst women. I believe that your experience as a woman candidate can be of particular value in planning our campaign for government. One of our first projects will be the production of a handbook on 'Winning the Women's Vote', and I am writing to seek your assistance in compiling such a handbook (1982d: 1).

The questionnaire attempted to draw upon the experience of women candidates in order to utilize this experience in the Party's election campaign strategy. Indeed, many of the questions required candidates to detail their own personal opinions and experiences. The National Secretariat papers contain twenty-five responses to Ryan's letter. These responses contain detailed information about the efforts of various candidates in different types of seats to attract the attention of women voters. An analysis of the content of these questionnaires will be given in the following chapter. However, it is important to note that, like the gender gap research, the candidate responses confirmed a view of women voters as cautious and family-oriented.

Another relevant text in the National Secretariat papers that seeks to draw upon the particular experience of Labor women is a document entitled “Winning the Women's Vote: A Program for Action”. Written by the Queensland Labor Women's Organization (QLWO), this text is left undated. However the foreword is written by Susan Ryan as the Labor Senator for the Australian Capital Territory, hence we can assume the document was produced sometime between 1975 and 1983. This text is
not a policy document about women’s issues; rather it is a “campaign manual” that provides “practical suggestions” that will help candidates learn about “the views, aspirations and needs” of women (QLWO: 1). Significantly, “Winning Women's Votes” relies entirely on the experience and common sense knowledge of Labor women. The authors start out by apologizing that:

... we can present no statistical data to substantiate the effectiveness of the techniques and strategies suggested. We concede that the techniques are largely based on ‘non-experimental’ experience. But we trust the mathematical purists will accept the assumptions and recognize, like us, that something has to be done to win the women's vote for Labor (QLWO: 1).

The above statement recognizes the status of quantitative data within Labor discourse, the capacity and power of numbers to substantiate opinion and argument. Nevertheless, the authors of the document state that their own experience as campaigners is also a valuable resource in this context, asserting the value of qualitative knowledge in the face of the “mathematical purists” devotion to “statistical data”.

In sum, gender gap research mobilized both political numbers and the experience of women, including Labor women, in its attempts to explain the traditional anti-Labor stance of ‘the woman voter’. While the gender gap numbers quantified the difference between men and women's preference for Labor in statistical form, the interviews, group discussions, questionnaires and campaign manuals that drew upon the experience of women attempted to explain why that difference of opinion existed. Specifically, this qualitative material sought to explain the existence of the gender gap by reference to the position of women voters as both the same as and
different to male voters. The status of ‘the woman voter’ as both same and different, both of the public and the private sphere will be explored in more detail in the coming chapters. Furthermore, the gender gap research conducted for the 1983 federal election will be revisited in the context of a discussion of the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer.

**Conclusion**

The Labor Party’s attempt to close the gender gap in the 1983 election was seen to be a success, with exit polls showing that “women and men at last voted Labor in similar proportions” (Hogg, 1991: 3). Labor women were eager to claim that it was “partly through [their] efforts” that the gender gap was closed (Ryan, 1984: 2). In spite of the numbers, it seems that many Labor men were still sceptical about the capacity of women voters to embrace Labor politics. Confidential documents in the National Secretariat papers suggest that the organizational arm of the Party still considered women a troublesome constituency, even given the results of 1983. Nevertheless, after 1983, Prime Minister Bob Hawke took every opportunity to acknowledge the important role the women’s vote, and Labor women, played in the historic election win. Labor’s apparent success with women voters in 1983 was significant enough to have affected the conduct of the Northern Territory State election later that year. Women continued to be a priority ‘target group’ in the 1984 election campaign.

The gender gap research developed for the 1983 federal election was arguably the most important technology that served to construct ‘the woman voter’ as a new
political subject position within Labor discourse at this early stage of the Hawke-Keating era. It provided the framework within which this new political subject position could be articulated. This research utilized both political numbers (the most privileged form of knowledge within Labor discourse) and the experience of women voters and Labor women (the most valuable form of knowledge within certain kinds of feminist theory). More precisely, the gender gap numbers cleared a space within Labor discourse so Labor feminists could legitimately include and utilize their own experiences as women activists and campaigners and the experience of women voters. This combination of ‘numbers’ and ‘experience’ is something that reoccurs in a number of texts of the Labor decade, including the second National Agenda for Women, discussed further in the following chapter. This next chapter will seek to explore the character and attributes of ‘the woman voter’ as a new political subject position within Labor discourse. In particular, it will show how this subject position developed out of the conventional construction of ‘the woman voter’ as a caring, cautious figure, focused on home and family.

1 I use the adjective ‘dynamic’ here, and the term ‘sameness/difference’ dichotomy, because it is not that sameness and difference are divided from each other and function separately, but rather that sameness and difference are interrelated, mutual constitutive concepts, constantly defining and influencing each others’ operations and effects.

2 Clearly ‘sameness’ is not the same as equality, however some, especially early, feminist equality arguments have relied heavily on assertions about the basic similarities between men and women.

3 The assumption of a shared political identity between men and women is connected to the idea that “women’s class position was determined by her father’s or husband’s relationship to either capital or to the paid workforce” (Searle, 1988: 10).

4 As Oldfield comments:

   The French expression for this absorption of the woman in her husband’s identity was femme couverte. Its anglicised form, ‘a woman under coverture’, was often used by Australian politicians when they argued that even if single women and widows needed the vote, their married sisters did not (1992: 5).

For a rebuttal of this argument, see Hayes & Bean, 1994.

5 Mill’s account of liberalism is significant to a discussion of women’s voting rights as he was one of the more prominent philosophers of his time advocating women’s suffrage. The terms in which he argued women should be granted suffrage are relevant to a discussion of the shape and content those rights eventually assumed under liberal regimes of government.
As a result of this choice to emphasise women’s difference and domestic status, the suffragists took up somewhat “unstable speaking positions” (Daley & Nolan, 1994: 11). They were arguing for their inclusion into the public world of politics based on the “specificity of womanhood and the feminine qualities that came with this difference” (Curtin, 1997: 2).

Jaggar argues that feminists should embrace both sexual difference and sexual equality: … abandoning neither our short-term determination to reform existing society nor our long-term desire to transform it. We should develop both the pragmatic and the utopian strands in our thinking, in the hope that each may strengthen the other (1990: 253).

Richards argues that by adopting difference arguments, the suffragists left the question of the sexual division of labour largely untouched (1984: 439). See generally Chapter 5.

As Lawrence comments, the suffrage campaigns did not significantly disrupt the conventional view of women. Women were given the vote but the deeply entrenched view of the day of woman as nurturer and housewife remained intact. In fact many men (and women) did not feel threatened by the extended suffrage because it was assumed that most women would automatically vote as their husbands did (1994: 9).

For a thorough summary (and refutation) of the traditional characterisation of ‘the woman voter’ in the Australian context, see Goot & Reid, 1975.

A document in the National Secretariat Archives shows that the Party possessed data indicating that women were more likely to be swinging voters than men. That document, entitled “The Swinging Voter 1980-1983”, shows that of the 15% of swinging voters in the 1983 federal election, 9% were women (1983d: 1). Furthermore, in the paper entitled “Women – How Can We Get Our Message Across?”, it states that “20-44 year old women with children who are either out of the workforce or working only part-time” are the group that ANOP research shows are the “most easily persuaded to support” Labor (1). These are the swinging and/or undecided voters, the women who should vote Labor but do not. However, in a paper for the Parliamentary Library, Peetz states that “by most definitions, swinging voters were equally split between males and females” (1982: 9). In Peetz’s analysis, “women represented 49% of long-term switchers, 51% of recent switchers and cross voters and 52% of weak identifiers” (1982: 9). Nonetheless, Peetz states that “59% of undecided voters were female” (1982: 9).

The assumption that women are naturally more politically conservative is “by no means unique” to Australia (Curtin, 1997: ii). As Curtin comments, “female conservatism was for many years a feature of voting behaviour in Europe and the United States” (1997: ii).

In his groundbreaking study on the political behaviour of women, published in 1955, Duverger argues that “there seems to be little doubt that the women’s vote is more conservative” (1955: 50).

The fact that the first wave feminist movement was mobilised around the issue of the vote, a fundamentally liberal, bourgeois right, further consolidates this association with conservatism.

The perception that the advent of women’s suffrage assisted conservative victories persists despite the existence of evidence to the contrary. Writing within the British context, Campbell comments:

There is a popular myth that the campaign for women’s suffrage was crowned in an irony of history – the election of a Tory as the first woman MP, Lady Astor. Actually, the first woman ever elected to the House of Commons was Ireland’s veteran suffragette and a revolutionary republican, Countess Markiewicz. But because she was imprisoned in Holloway at the time, she could not take her seat, even if she’d felt inclined to (1987: 251).

In Australia, the 1896 election, the first in which women were allowed to vote, “routed all expectations that women would most often vote conservative by returning the liberal Kingston ministry to power” (Daley & Nolan, 1994: 76).

Curtin adds that “there was one exception to this trend, at the 1917 election, where three in four men supported the Nationalist Party and a similar number of women supported the
Curtin is also quick to point out that the “magnitude” of the gap between women and men’s voting preferences has “varied from one election to the next, with there being little consistency in the size of the gaps over time” (1997: 4). Whilst the “size of this gap has varied from time to time”, Ryan argues that it “remained significant in electoral terms” (1982a: 21).

For example, Susan Ryan comments that “the claim that women are naturally attracted to reactionary political positions is contradicted by high female involvement” in these two movements, which, “although not properly classed as ‘left-wing’ or ‘radical’ in the overall political context, were nonetheless highly controversial at the outset, and radically politicised many of their supporters” (1982a: 23).

Sometimes Labor feminists would emphasize both sameness and difference. For example, in her speech launching Toward Equality, Susan Ryan states that “although women do have special needs arising either from their disadvantaged position or their needs as mothers, by and large women require from government the same considerations as men do” (1982c: 3).

As Norris comments, the term ‘gender gap’ became “common currency” in the United States in the early 1980s “as a convenient catch-all phrase for journalists, feminist activists and pollsters referring to the ‘woman’s vote’” (1996: 110). Gender gap strategies are generally perceived to be an American invention, despite the fact that the first recorded use of gender gap analysis in election campaigns came out of Labor’s 1978 Committee of Inquiry (Ryan, 1999: 178). For an overview of the gender gap in Australia, see Leithner, 1997.

Research conducted by ANOP showed the gender gap developing as follows: 1972 (8%), 1975 (7%), 1977 (6%), and 1980 (4.5%) (Ryan, 1982b: 5). Hence, in this period, from the election of Whitlam in 1972 until the last election before the commencement of the Labor decade in 1983, polling indicated that Labor was managing to slowly erode the gender gap.

There seems to be volatility in the gender gap numbers, with different statistics circulating in different texts. While Susan Ryan often quoted the gap as 8%, in her interview with Sarah Dowse, she states that the Inquiry research showed that there had been “a gap in female support for Labor between seven and ten percent” (1991: 64).

As Rose comments, numbers of this kind are positioned as “objective”, “disinterested” and detached from “feeling, passions and tumults” (1991: 682).

It was not only men who considered women to be anti-Labor. For example in a letter to Kate Moore, Peggie Ryan, the secretary of Richmond FEC, expressed her belief that courting the women’s vote was “a worthless exercise” for Labor (1982: 1). In her view, women:

... are not politically minded or particularly astute [and are] more conservative in their views than the menfolk. ... Our politicians will find the acceptance of women only though their representing of a less ‘militant’ front, that would appeal to the naturally, conservative/timid nature of the Australian woman. Therefore, I feel legislative measures play no part in the winning process, as the women will still look aghast as the Labor Party tears down the old established values and ushers in new and ‘revolutionary’ measures, which are in direct conflict to the cautious, conservative nature of the Australian woman. As Neville Wran so succinctly put it ... “Labor politics is no place for the faint hearted or the mealy-mouthed”, and the women of Australia are just that, faint hearted, and therein lies the problem (1982: 1-2).

For Rose, political numbers are not “univocal tools of domination”, rather they are “mobile and polyvocal resources” (1991: 684). He questions the link between statisticalisation and dominance that seems to underpin so many critiques of the relationship between politics and numbers. Consistent with Foucault’s ideas about power, its operations and effects, Rose points to the “the limitations of analyses that construe power as control and suppression” (1991: 679).

Labor feminists found support amongst certain women political journalists who by the early 1990s “were able to reinforce the gender gap message” (Sawer & Groves, 1994a: 438).

For example Neville Wran, then premier of NSW and chairman of the national campaign committee “could see the point and the opportunities” provided by gender gap research (Ryan, 1999: 177). However not all these hard men of the Party were unanimous in the
decision to act on the gender gap findings. As Ryan recollects, Peter Walsh’s response to the research was typically dismissive. She recalls him stating:

“All you proved is that it was a mistake to give women the vote in the first place. The best way to get rid of the gender gap is to abolish female suffrage” (1999: 177-178).

As Labor feminist Barbara Wiese asserts, such comments were made “only partly in jest” (1981: 1).

The findings of the 1978 Committee of Inquiry were contained in a discussion paper, released in 1979. In many ways, the Committee’s findings on the status of women in the Party pre-empt some of the conclusions drawn from the gender gap research produced for the 1983 election. First, the Committee found that the Party needed to project an image that was “less confrontationist in political style, less urban, less industrial and less male dominated” (1979: 38). It stated that the Party must begin to see itself as “not just a working man’s party” but as a party dedicated to “working people, their dependents and those unable to work or choosing a career as homemaker” (1979: 38). The Committee also suggested that “an increased level of activity” amongst Labor women was essential to solving many of the Party’s problems in relation to image and policy (1979: 35). The National Inquiry thus opened up a legitimate space with the Party arena for Labor feminists to begin to organize.

De Salis later went on to become a senior treasury officer and Prime Minister Keating’s chief of staff (Ryan, 1999: 177).

Labor feminists also used gender gap research to show that Labor women candidates would attract women voters and therefore help close the gender gap. This position was in direct opposition to what Ryan describes as “one of the strongest myths” in the Party, namely that “women candidates are at a disadvantage, particularly in attracting the support of women voters” (Ryan, 1982a: 24). In contrast, gender gap research showed that:

... credible women candidates picked up the women’s vote that [Labor] had been missing out on for so many years. ... High profile women candidates appeared to pick up more votes from women than they lost from men, with a net gain for the [Party] in terms of seats (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 187).

More significantly, the gender gap research showed that “women swinging voters indicated support for women candidates” (Moore, 1994: 2). As Moore comments in her paper at the 1984 National Women’s Conference, women swinging voters:

... feel that women have a different outlook – they are seen as being more practical, caring and honest. They believe that women have to work harder than men to enter politics and say that they would like to see more women in politics, provided they are the ‘right sort’ (1994: 2).

In an article published in 1977, Malcolm Mackerras confronts the question “do women candidates lose votes?” In this article, Mackerras discounts the prevalent view in political circles that women candidates lose votes. He asserts that “political parties should treat this proposition for what it is – prejudice” (Clarke & White, 1983: 79). He argues, rather, that women have often improved the vote when they stood in marginal seats (Clarke & White, 1983: 79). See also Mackerras, 1980.

These years of intense activism on the part of Labor feminists ensured that the 1983 federal election campaign was “aimed specifically at women” (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 2). The Party’s campaign to win the women’s vote was conducted on two levels. On a national level, as described above, woman’s policy was developed and launched in both metropolitan and regional centres (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 209). At a local level, support and advice was given to candidates on winning the women’s vote. In terms of increased representation of women, the Party presented a record number of women candidates to the electorate, although most of them in unwinnable seats. Numerous functions were held throughout the campaign, both by the Party and by women’s groups, featuring women candidates and women’s issues. The Party’s media monitoring shows that women’s issues did receive some attention during the campaign including right to life issues, sex discrimination, women’s refuges and unemployment. The question of the role of women in politics was also given some attention.

Although Labor Women Speak was produced and distributed by the National Secretariat, the Directory of Labor Women did not receive the same kind of support from the Party. It was resolved at the 9 December 1981 meeting of the State Secretaries “that the National Secretariat and State Secretaries were not prepared to use the limited resources of their offices to produce a Directory of Labor Women” (ALP State Secretaries, 1981: 7).

During 1980, Labor feminists had begun lobbying National Secretariat about convening a national conference of Labor women. They argued that the establishment of such a Conference would provide a forum for discussion about the Committee of Inquiry’s recommendations concerning women in the Party (Wiese, 1980: 1). Furthermore, the Conference would also provide “better intra-Party communication among” women as well as providing “favourable publicity for the Party in the community generally” (Wiese, 1980: 1). National Labor Women's Conferences were held in 1980, 1982 and 1984.

The ALP recognizes that Australian women do not yet experience total equality with men nor full participation in all aspects of our society. The special disadvantages of Aboriginal women, rural women, unemployed women, migrant women, disabled women, and isolated women are also recognized. In accordance with its belief in the equal rights of all people, the Australian Labor Party is committed to securing these rights for women in all matters, as set out in our Platform. In office, Labor will take all legislative and administrative steps including the introduction of affirmative action programmes to ensure that these problems and disadvantages are overcome; such reforms will recognize the rights of women to participate fully in all aspects of political and economic life, the crucial contribution of women to family life and the special needs of women who are child-bearers. Labor will achieve these reforms in co-operation with state and territory governments where possible. Where state or territory government action is inadequate, and in all areas of Commonwealth responsibility, the Labor government will use Commonwealth funding and legislative powers including the ratification of international conventions to guarantee equal rights for women (ALP Platform, 1992: 181).

At the Status of Women Policy Committee meeting on the 9 November 1981, it was decided that they would recommend to the 1982 National Conference that the resolution on Abortion Law Reform on page 187 of the Platform be deleted. The resolution, made at the 1973 National Conference and reaffirmed by the 1979 Conference states that: “All Labor parliamentary members, Federal and State, are free to take such legislative initiative or opposition as they think fit on the question of abortion law reform, and no Caucus or other Party unit is able to give any direction or endeavour to bind members in any way on this issue”. This recommendation was the last item on the agenda. Those present at the November meeting were Joan Taggart, Susan Ryan, Janice Crosio, Joan Coxedge, Joan Melzer, S. Yarrow, Anne Levy, Pat Giles, J. Hearne, Jocelynne Scutt and Kate Moore. These Labor feminists were thus attempting to dispense with the conscience vote on abortion and replace it with a strong, pro-feminist stance. They were unsuccessful in their attempt. The 1982 Conference debate started with a motion, moved by Bob McMullan and seconded by Mick Young, that the standing resolution on Abortion Law Reform be reaffirmed. An amendment to the motion was then moved by Joan Coxedge and seconded by Sandra Nori (Amendment 200), stating that the “reaffirms” in the original motion be replaced with “rescinds”. Coxedge further moved that subsequent to that amendment being carried (which would constitute the abolition of the conscience vote on abortion) that the following be added: “That it be ALP National Policy that all mention of abortion shall be deleted from all sections of Federal, State and Territories' Crimes Acts.” The following delegates, all committed Labor feminists, spoke in support of Amendment 200: Ann Levy, Norma Jones, Pat
Giles, and Sheila O’Sullivan. A third position was then presented in the form of an amendment to the resolution (Amendment 227) moved by Chris Schacht, which stated: “That the matter of abortion can be freely debated at any State or Federal Forum of the ALP, but any decision reached is not binding on any member of the Party”. Ros Kelly was the only other delegate, besides Schacht, to speak in support of Amendment 227. Amendment 200, which represented the more radical feminist position, was lost 44 votes to 55 votes. Amendment 227 was then put and carried, 61 votes to 34 votes. The more cautious approach to the abortion question was endorsed by Conference, indicating that although the Party was willing to include some kind of feminist reforms in the search for women voters, it was not yet ready to adopt the feminist agenda completely, especially when this agenda clashed with Labor’s traditional Catholic support base.

36 Ryan saw her role on the National Campaign Committee as ensuring that “any future polling or survey work commissioned by the Party explored specifically and in an informed way the attitudes and decisions of women voters” (1982b: 8). She was also “in a position to raise significant and previously neglected matters associated with women’s voting behaviour in briefing sessions” with polling organizations like ANOP (1982b: 8). In addition, she was made “responsible for coordinating a group of people to develop a women’s strategy” for the 1983 campaign (1981b: 1).

37 Kate Moore was also included in these small groups (Moore, 1984: 4).

38 As Maynard and Purvis state, within some feminist work on research methods there is “an implication that it is qualitative work, particularly the semi-structured or unstructured interview, which is quintessentially feminist” (1994: 3). Indeed, during the early stages of second wave scholarship, some methodological feminists “advocated and defended a qualitative approach to understanding women’s lives as against quantitative methods of enquiry” (Maynard, 1994: 11).

39 Olson states that the “primary focus of standpoint epistemology is the situatedness of the subject” (2002: 1). Feminist standpoint epistemology, in consideration of the fact that women “live in the margins rather than at the centre” of society, “values marginalisation as an advantage in coming to know” about the truth of women’s existence (2002: 1). The use of the word “truth” is crucial here because, as Olson argues, feminist standpoint epistemology generally accepts the notion that there is a single truth (2002: 1). This can be compared with “feminist poststructural epistemology”, which acknowledges the existence of multiple truths (Olson, 2002: 1).

40 Labor in Power is a five-part documentary, first aired on ABC television in 1993, a few months after the unexpected federal election victory of the Party under Paul Keating (Wark, 1999: 179). The documentary, produced by ABC television, aimed at reviewing the ten years of Labor in government by conducting interviews with key players in the Party, the caucus, the bureaucracy and the union movement. The interviewees told their stories in “colourful terms”, earning the series a classification warning for “medium coarse language” (Wark, 1999: 179). Wark describes Labor in Power as an “epic”, one of the “most substantial media portrayals of the history of Labor culture” (1999: 179, 41). He states that:

Besides being a chronicle of Australian political influence and celebrity, Labor in Power is also a fable about a certain kind of culture – the Australian Labor Party (Wark, 1999: 179).

Labor in Power attracted much attention when it was first broadcast because many of the figures interviewed, believing that the Party would lose the 1993 federal election, choose to be ‘candid’ in their assessment of Labor’s record in government and, in particular, the rivalry between Hawke and Keating. As Wark comments, the series chronicled all “the failures, the compromises, the vicissitudes of events” during the Labor decade (1999: 179). It is important to note, however, that despite the candour of many of those interviewed, Labor in Power can be considered, along with texts such as Mates, as part of the myth-making and history-telling tradition within Labor discourse, as discussed in Chapter 2. I use excerpts from Labor in Power not because they reveal the truth about the motives and intentions of key Party players during this period but because the series is now part of modern Labor discourse and has influenced subsequent analyses of the Labor decade.
Rose's third category includes those numbers “that are deployed within the perpetual judgment that today is exercised over political authority and its stewardship of national life” (1991: 673). These are the numbers that measure the health of the economy (for example, the balance of payments and the gross national product) and the health of the society (such as the crime rate, the divorce rate, and the rate of the spread of infectious diseases) (1991: 673-674). The fourth and final category includes “all the numbers that make possible modern government itself” such as census data, counts of population, births, deaths and marriages [and] tax returns” (1991: 674).

The ABS is an independent, statutory authority (Jaensch & Teichmann, 1992: 17). Its objectives are to “co-ordinate the collection, compilation and dissemination of official, social, demographic and economic statistics” (Jaensch & Teichmann, 1992: 17). Jaensch and Teichmann assert that the ABS’ “value to government, the private sector and the public is unquestioned” (1992: 17). Thus, the ABS stands as an Australian institution of supreme importance in terms of the production and evaluation of governing numbers.

Bob Hawke presented his version of the status of polling in Party policy-making in a radio interview in 1984, where he stated that:

The [Labor Party] over a number of years now has increased its sophistication in its approach to elections. We don't then determine our policies and our approach on the basis of what we find out [through polling]. But obviously, it is sensible that if the polling shows people are concerned about on issue, then in your speeches and in your advertising, you address that particular point (1984d: 11).

Mills tellingly describes strategic pollsters as supreme “generalisers” (1986: 18).

The collection of statistics, more than providing information “it is itself part of the technology of power in a modern state” (Hacking, 1991: 181). However, as Rose points out, the production of political numbers like statistics, formerly the exclusive job of government, “has become a business” (1991: 691). Indeed, during the Labor decade, the Party relied on numbers produced by private organizations like ANOP as much, if not more, than it did on numbers produced by the bureaucracy.

Statistics from the Report are included in the National Agenda under the “Achievements So Far” section.

The indicators were also to be used in the annual Women’s Budget Statement, initiated in 1984, in response to the need for government agencies to monitor the impact of their activities on women (ABS, 1993: viii). During the budget process, the Office of the Status of Women worked closely with the Women’s Units and Women’s Desk Officers in various Departments to help produce The Women’s Budget Statement (ABS, 1993: viii). The Statement described the measures being taken in all Departments in relation to women (ABS, 1993: viii). See also Reynolds, 1995: 93-94.

Both Women in Australia and the second National Agenda describe the Labor decade as a historically significant time for women. For example, in the Introduction to the Agenda, it states emphatically that women’s lives have “changed for the better” and that women “want this progress to continue” (OWS, 1993: 1). In his speech, Keating emphasizes women’s desire to move forward. He states that:

Even though many women [feel] they [have] paid a price in terms of the stresses involved in trying to juggle their [new] roles and responsibilities, they wouldn’t turn back the clock for anything (1993a: 4).

Keating continues to draw out this idea of progress in women’s lives, arguing that since the election of the Hawke-Keating government in 1983, women’s lives have been more dramatically changed than men’s. Keating describes the eighties as a time “when the revolution in women’s lives passed that point of no return” (1993a: 4). In Keating’s speech, this revolutionary decade is placed within a broader context of a century of Australia’s pioneering role in relation to ‘women’s rights’. Keating states that:

... if we look back over the past hundred years, we can take enormous pride in a record of progress and achievement in the area of women’s rights (as
they used to be called) which very early on earned Australia a reputation as a world leader. ... Australia continues to set the pace for other democracies when it comes to status of women issues (1993a: 3).

Keating maintains that this “rapid pace of change just over the past decade” has affected all women “no matter what their age, their education, their marital or maternal status or their present circumstances” (1993a: 4). All these women were “totally agreed on one thing: they were better off than their mothers had been” (1993a: 4).

51 I am thinking particularly of Scott, 1991.

52 My comments here are inspired by Rose’s question: “who is accorded or claims the capacity to speak truthfully about humans, their nature and their problems, and what characterizes the truths about persons that are accorded such authority?” (1996: 132).

53 I requested a copy of the original gender gap research from ANOP, but my request was left unanswered. Moore’s summary of the research findings is the only publicly available information on this research I could find.

54 This idea of women as less politically selfish than men is also a feature of American gender gap research. As Mueller comments, the American research has shown that “women, more so than men, endorse ... a sociotropic economic orientation” in that they seem “more concerned about the economic fortunes in general regardless of their own personal financial situations or the situations of their group” (1988: 270-271).

55 As Ryan states in her Progress Report to the National Campaign Committee, the point of the “short” questionnaire was “to discover what issues, in those candidates’ experience, were consistently raised by women voters and appeared to influence women’s voting choices” (1981a: 1).

56 Responses were received from the following candidates: Julie Sutton (State seat of Davidson, 1981), Sue West (federal seat of Hume, 1980), June D’Rozario (State seat of Sanderson, 1977, 1980), Janice Crosio (State seat of Fairfield, 1981), Anne Levy (various different State and federal seats in South Australia, 1970, 1972 and 1975), Fran Bladel (federal seat of Franklin, 1980), Helen Jeffrey (State seat of Townsville, 1977), Patti Warn (federal seat of Bass, 1980), Grace Vaughan (State seat of South East Metro Province, 1974 and 1980), Verona Curtis-Silk (Senate candidate Queensland, 1977), Ros Kelly, (federal seat of Canberra, 1980), Margaret Ray (State seat of Box Hill, 1982), Jean Hearn (Senate candidate Tasmania, 1980), Elaine Darling (federal seat of Lilley, 1977 and 1980), Jill Milthorpe, (State seat of Murrum Valley, 1982), Joan Kirner (State upper house seat, 1982), Jeannette McHugh (federal seat of Phillip, 1980), Carolyn Hirst (State seat of Wantirna, 1982), Patti Warn (federal seat of Bass, 1980), Helen Jeffrey (State seat of Townsville, 1977), Jan Murray (State seat of Eastwood, 1978), Kris Klugman (State seat of Northcott, 1978), Marion McInnes (State seat of Mt Gravatt, 1980), Judy Dixon (State seat of Boronia Province, 1982), and Marcelle Anderson (State seat of Subiaco, 1980).

57 Candidates’ responses reflect a view of women voters as cautious and conservative. Some candidates state that the women they encountered during campaigning were concerned about “personal security issues” (Levy and Hearn) and had a general “fear of change” (West). One candidate went as far as to say that “a large part of the women’s vote is conservative” (Hearn), while another states that her attempts to win over women was helped by “presenting conservatively in dress” (Milthorpe). In response to a question about influences on women’s voting choices, some candidates tend to reinforce the idea that women voters are primarily influenced by “husbands and fathers (Vaughan, Milthorpe and D’Rozario). Furthermore, a number of candidates express the belief that women are “influenced by personalities more than men” (Jeffrey). Indeed Patti Warn states that women’s voting choice was primarily effected by “personal knowledge of candidates” and “personal preference for one leader over another”, with Party policy “a poor last” (Warn). Interestingly, a number of candidates assert that their attempts to emphasize their own difference as women were well received by women voters. One candidate states that “when making contact with apolitical women (shopping centres) appeal as woman candidate being different and probably better”. Another claims that she was “continually pointing out that as a woman [she knew] what women’s problems are”. Another states that she encouraged her women doorknockers to emphasize to women voters the importance of women in parliament. Here the appeal to...
their status and experience as women assists women candidates in their attempts to win women’s votes.

58 The document was adapted from the “Women In Politics” kit prepared by the British Labour Party (QLWO, 1).

59 Ryan states that in 1983 “for the first time ever, 52% of Australian women, along with 52% of men voted Labor, and we were swept to victory” (1984: 2). The conclusion that the gender gap had closed at the 1983 election was based on “very limited research” conducted by the Party (Moore, 1984: 3). As Moore explains, “the results of a telephone poll taken in capital cities did show us that for the first time ever the same number of women as men” voted Labor (1984: 3). The results were ever better when calculated by age, with Labor receiving 73% of the vote from women under the age of 20, and 64% from women under 25 (Moore, 1984: 3). The group that showed the lowest support for Labor was the 34-44 age group with 49% (Moore, 1984: 3).

60 For example, in his report on the 1983 election campaign, the National Secretary, Geoff Pryor states that:

... although the gap has closed, it still appears that men might favour [Labor just a little more than women. They are, however, probably more volatile in their voting behaviour (1983: 10).

Pryor does however acknowledge that the Party’s greatest support came from “young women” (1983: 10).

61 Bob Hawke opened the 1984 Labor Women’s Conference in January with a speech in which he stated that “the implementation of our policies for women has been and remains one of the top priorities for our Government” (1984a: 1). He also stated that “the work and vision of Labor women over many years” has been “of central importance in achieving [Labor] victory in elections throughout Australia during 1982 and 1983” (1984a: 1). Hawke also acknowledged the success of women’s policy and the contributions of Labor women at the meeting of the Party’s National Executive in March 1984 (Moore, 1984: 33).

62 In a letter to Hawke’s senior advisor Ken Bennett, the campaign coordinator of the Northern Territory election states that the Liberal Party was “showing great concern about the women’s vote” because “they are at last realizing that [Labor] won the Territory in the federal elections mainly because of the women’s swing dramatically to Labor” (1983b: 1). As a result, Labor was “greatly concerned about the women’s vote” and hence developed a number of “initiatives to capture the women’s vote”, including a series of women’s seminars, speaking tours by Federal Labor women MPs, a visit from Hazel Hawke, support for Labor women’s groups and ‘Labor cares for women’ print and radio advertisements (1983b: 1).

63 Women were given some attention in the Party’s 1984 policy launch (Hawke, 1984c: 10). In addition, the ‘Candidates’ Research Brief and Strategy Paper for the 1984 election’ listed ‘women’, especially part-time workers and women aged between 25-34 years old as one of the key target groups (1984: 5). Rod Cameron’s “1984 Post-election Study Report” showed that Labor “maintained its support from women at the same level as for men but lost votes amongst the under 25s and the over 65s” (1984: 3). Overall, ANOP’s research showed that there was “no significant variation for the ALP between women and men (0.5%)” at the 1984 election (Cameron, 1984: 3).
Chapter 5

‘The woman voter’ as carer-worker

In the previous chapter, I explored one of the major technologies, the 1983 gender gap research, through which ‘the woman voter’ was constructed as a new political subject position within Labor discourse. My primary focus was how this subject position has been produced within discourse. In this chapter, I focus on the nature of that subject position. The 1983 gender gap research largely constructed ‘the woman voter’ as a caring figure, concerned with the well-being and maintenance of the home and family. Other materials, such as the documents developed by Labor feminists for the 1983 election campaign, worked to consolidate this subject position. However, as the Labor decade progressed, the priorities, preoccupations and desires of ‘the woman voter’ were rearticulated in increasingly complex ways. Through a reading of various policy texts from 1993 (including the second National Agenda for Women and the Australian Bureau of Statistics’ report Women in Australia) ‘the woman voter’ emerges as carer-worker, a new subject position within Labor discourse. This new political subject position is broadly consonant with the political rationalities of Labor discourse as informed by the concept of liberal, economic government. Specifically, the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker is “linked into” the wider social and political objectives of Labor discourse, namely ensuring social justice within the confines of market capitalism (Rose, 1996b: 133). This construction, which was well established by the time of the 1993 federal election, recognized the unstable division between women’s public lives as workers and their private lives as carers. However, the public/private divide, whilst
troubled in certain discursive contexts in relation to women, was never seriously challenged within Labor discourse. This was largely because the situation of men and their responsibilities in the private sphere were rarely addressed. Thus, in terms of the construction of identities within Labor discourse as a whole, the public/private divide (and the gendered division of labour on which it is based) remained intact.

**Managing ‘the woman voter’**

In Chapter 4, I showed how ‘the woman voter’, as a new subject position emerging within Labor discourse, is constructed via certain kinds of technologies and strategies. In the context of my argument, it is important to note that subject positions are generally constructed in ways that are consonant with certain “political rationalities” (Rose, 1996: 195). The formation of subject positions in ways that are supportive of a certain rationality of government is connected to the work on liberalism that I have canvassed in previous chapters. For instance, Dean argues that “a useful way of thinking about liberalism as a regime of government ... is to consider the multiple ways it works through and attempts to construct a world of autonomous individuals, of ‘free subjects’” (1999: 32). The programs and strategies of liberal government are directed towards “the problem” of governing these free subjects in order “that they can enact their freedom appropriately” (Rose, 1996: 29; see also Dean, 1999: 32). Specifically, liberal government attempts, by authorities and technologies of various sorts, to manage the conduct of free individuals in order to “achieve certain desirable objectives” (Rose, 1996: 29). These “desirable objectives” might include “national prosperity, harmony,
virtue, productivity, social order, [or] discipline” (Rose, 1996: 29). “Forms of identity” are “promoted and presupposed by various practices and programmes of government” in order to support these desired objectives (Dean, 1999: 32). Such practices and programmes “elicit, promote, facilitate, foster and attribute various capacities [and] qualities” to particular subjects (Dean, 1999: 32). In other words, they constitute regimes of government that “encourage particular forms of citizen behaviour” (Johnson, 2000: 104). Thus, the question to ask is, “what forms of person, self and identity are presupposed by different practices of government and what sorts of transformations do these practices seek?” (Dean, 1999: 32) Such an argument is not fatalistic; I am not arguing that regimes of government automatically determine forms of subjectivity (Dean, 1999: 32) or that the subject is the “passive product or puppet of cultural forces” (Rose, 1996: 189). Rather, I am interested in the ways in which the construction of subject positions within discourse are “linked into wider moral, social or political objectives concerning the undesirable and desirable features of populations, workforce, family, society” and so on (Rose, 1996b: 133-134).1

In terms of the construction of ‘the woman voter’, the various practices and programmes mobilized by Labor (as a Party and a government) presupposed and promoted a certain “person, self and identity” for women, one that was consistent with the goals of liberal, economic government. Within Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating era “a range of identities” were produced that were “compatible with the Labor government’s conceptions of reconstructing the Australian economy” (Johnson, 2000: 104). Women in particular were “encouraged to participate in the economy in order to contribute to our competitive advantage” (Johnson, 2000: 105). Women as workers
were thus included as key participants in “Labor’s economic agenda for restructuring Australia” (Johnson, 2000: 82). I wish to suggest, however, that women’s contribution to the market as workers was facilitated largely through government support for their (mostly) unchallenged role as carers. Moreover, this construction of woman as carer-worker was indebted to assumptions that are intrinsic to the public/private dichotomy. There is a clear recognition within certain texts of the Labor decade that women’s caring and working lives are in fact closely connected rather than discrete spheres of activity. Despite the important recognition of this interrelation, the public/private division was never fundamentally challenged within Labor discourse during this period. This was largely because the private role of men as husbands and fathers was rarely, if ever, addressed. Before exploring the shifts in the construction of ‘the woman voter’, the public/private divide needs to be explored, with particular reference to work, both paid and unpaid.

The public/private divide

The public/private divide is one of the fundamental tenets of classical liberalism. As Coltheart comments, “the separation of the public and private spheres, and the identification of the former as male and the latter as female, is fundamental to liberal democratic life” (1986: 112). This divide influenced early feminist thinking about the status of women; as Bacchi states, “the ideology of ‘separate spheres’ for women and men formed a backdrop to nineteenth-century feminist thought” (1990: 10). (The prominence of the public/private divide in suffrage arguments is discussed below).
public/private divide, like all dichotomies, works on the politics of opposition and exclusion. Men are the key players in the public world, particularly the world of work, whereas women are responsible for the domestic sphere. When women have been able to participate in public life, it has generally been in a secondary way, “as long as that work did not disrupt the interests of men” (Owens, 1995: 40). This separation between public and private worlds is seen as “natural”, based on the supposedly immutable differences in the obligations, personalities and preferences of the sexes (Findlay, 1986: 1119).

The notion of separate spheres has particularly influenced the structure and activity of the workplace. As Morris and Nott state, the workplace is largely geared towards the needs of those without domestic or child-care responsibilities, putting the majority of women at an immediate disadvantage (1991: 19). In addition, the values necessary for success in the domestic sphere (nurturing, responsiveness to others' needs, mutual dependence) have been viewed as irrelevant to, even incompatible with, the public world of work (Findlay, 1986: 1119). In this way, sex segregation in the workforce and the public/private divide are interrelated, interacting principles. Hunter argues that in relation to Australia, “women mostly do different jobs from men” (1991: 310). This in turn relates to the issue of women’s domestic responsibilities (child-bearing and rearing, house-work, emotional support) and “the domestic gendered division of labour that has been erected upon it” (Hunter, 1991: 310). Women do the greater proportion of this unpaid work in the family. Hunter argues that this means men and women experience work differently in and outside the home (1991: 310). The two issues are interrelated since “female-dominated occupations tend to involve ‘domestic’ skills and/or significant
components of service to others” (Hunter, 1991: 310). The public/private divide has a pervasive role to play in this alignment of the marketplace, in particular with women’s ‘preference’ for part-time and casual work.\(^5\) Owens argues that this atypical work (casual, part-time) reinforces women's traditional role in the family and their work responsibilities in the home:

> Women are constructed within a broad socio-economic context so that their attachment to the paid workforce is of secondary importance in order that they remain able to do the range of ‘private’ work that is demanded within marriage and the patriarchal society; the housework and the unpaid work that many public institutions have incorporated into their structure. The flexibility of [atypical] work is thus seen as work that allows women to perform their primary (unpaid) duties (Owens, 1995: 57).

The domestic gendered division of labour has positioned women as primarily responsible for the private sphere of the home, whether they are in paid work or not. However, it is important to note that since the mid-1970s there have been significant changes both to the structure of the workplace and the industrial landscape, changes that have seen a destabilisation of the public/private divide and one of its most significant products, what Cass terms the “male breadwinner model” (2000: 2). In terms of this model, “men are expected to be either the only or the primary breadwinner in a couple family”, with women “expected to be either fully financially supported as home-based carers or partially supported as secondary earners” (Cass, 2000: 2). It can now be said that the “Australian male breadwinner model”:
... has severe cracks in its edifice as a result of women’s increased labour force participation, and their struggles to combine the responsibilities and pleasures of employment and intimate life as partners and mothers (Cass, 2000: 2).  

For Cass, current “Australian arrangements” can “best be described as a modified male breadwinner model” (2000: 2). As discussed later in this chapter, whilst there is a recognition within the texts of the Labor decade that women’s involvement in paid employment is vital both to the well-being of her family and the economy, there still exists “significant barriers to achieving gender complementarity in employment/care responsibilities” (Cass, 2000, 1). In other words, the modifications to the “male breadwinner model” have differentially affected the lives of men and women. Within this model, women are recognised as carer-workers, whereas men’s caring role as partners and father is given far less attention.  

As discussed in Chapter 2, Labor has traditionally presented itself as the working man’s (rather than the working woman’s) party (Sawer, 2000: 264). Women’s work, whether paid or unpaid, has never fitted into the conventional paradigm of work within Labor discourse. Labor discourse has traditionally incorporated the assumption that the worker fits the masculine standard of full-time, continuous, and unionised. The woman worker and her particular position within the workforce and class system has been largely obscured or ignored. Furthermore, “domestic life as labour rarely features in the rhetoric” of Labor politics (Campbell, 1987: 152). In this respect, the construction of ‘the women voter’ as carer-worker during the Labor decade was significant in its acknowledgement of the role of women as workers and its acceptance of unpaid work as work. As we will see from a reading of Women in Australia, the second National
Agenda for Women and Labor’s 1993 child care policy document, the contributions of women in both the private and the public sphere were highlighted and valued as an integral part of Labor’s project of building an economically and socially successful nation. However, whilst the role of women as workers was acknowledged and facilitated, the status of women as carers was never fully challenged within Labor discourse; “women were still seen to have special family and child care responsibilities in a way that men did not” (Johnson, 2000: 82). The construction of woman as carer-worker will now be explored, with a particular focus on texts from the end of the Labor decade. The notion of ‘the woman voter’ as carer has always been present in constructions of women’s political behaviour and identity, as we can see from an analysis of various debates during the suffrage period. The carer persona remains fundamental to constructions of ‘the woman voter’ throughout the Labor decade. However this construction was complicated or modified by the incorporation of woman’s role and identity as worker, which is itself tied to the imperatives liberal, economic government.

‘The woman voter’ as carer

As described in the previous chapter, the suffragists were most successful in their arguments for the vote when they emphasized women's ‘difference’ and their capacity to bring their own particular concerns as women into the public sphere. By emphasizing, indeed celebrating, difference, Australian suffragists advocated a form of “domestic feminism”, the aim of which was “to enhance the status of women within the family and home” (Searle, 1988: 19). Connected to these arguments over sameness and difference
in the suffrage debates is the question of the public/private divide. As Pateman argues, “the connection between private and public was central to the question of womanhood suffrage”, both in terms of opposition to and support for the women’s vote (1994: 332). In terms of those supporting arguments, the suffragists claimed that “the vote was necessary to eliminate men’s domestic tyranny and to strengthen women’s position in private life” (Pateman, 1994: 337). However, suffragists believed that the vote could do more than simply protect and elevate women’s domestic status (Searle, 1988: 11). They “hoped to extend their domestic power into the public sphere by claiming they had a moral right and duty to be concerned with all matters, public or private” (Searle, 1988: 16). Searle comments that:

... the struggle for female franchise ... can be viewed mainly in terms of women of the middle class attempting to increase women’s power in the home and, by extending this domestic power to the public arena, to influence society at large (1988: 19).

Furthermore, suffragists, utilizing domestic feminist arguments, believed that the women’s vote would “have an improving effect on politics and on morality” and would contribute to the development of policy in areas such as “the education of children, public health and the management and care of the poor” (Nash, 1998: 99). As Nash states, this notion of “women’s moral superiority” was used “extensively in the campaign for female suffrage” (1998: 98). Thus, the suffragists claimed women’s public, political identity not as a “substitute for their maternal role but rather as an extension of it” (Curtin, 1997: 2).
Hence, the suffrage period saw women as a group continually defined via their private role as carers. This characterization of ‘the woman voter’ as carer persisted beyond the suffrage struggles. Indeed, the notion of ‘the woman voter’ as carer has been fundamental to all constructions of women’s political identity and behaviour that have followed the advent of women’s suffrage. This characterization of ‘the woman voter’ as a caring figure is evident in gender gap research coming from the United States. Writing within the American context, Mueller states that the character of ‘the woman voter’ is underpinned by the “nurturance explanation” (1988: 238). She argues that the distinctions between women and men, whether biological or societal, ensure certain differences in political perspectives, with women being “more compassionate and more concerned with protecting human life than men” (1988: 238). Women’s distinctive approach to political issues has meant that they are generally “more supportive of domestic welfare policies and international peace initiatives than men” (Mueller, 1988: 272). Australian gender gap research has provided the basis for similar conclusions about women’s support for certain political issues. As Sawer and Simms state, there is a marked gender gap on issues that relate to war and peace, with Australian women emerging as generally against the use of force and nuclear weapons (1993: 34-35). Gender gap research has also been used to suggest that Australian women are more “progressive” in relation to social issues, women’s issues and the environment (Curtin, 1997: 19). As Curtin explains, women voters are often perceived to “embody an ‘ethic of caring’ which results in sympathy for the disadvantaged” (1997: 19).

Indeed, the gender gap research developed by the Party for the 1983 federal election constructed ‘the woman voter’ as a caring figure, one that was “family interested” and
approached political issues “in terms of implications for their children, husbands or
themselves as part of a family unit” (Moore, 1984: 12). Moore’s analysis of the gender
gap findings positions women voters as “more community oriented” (Campbell, 1987:
146) and “cooperative” than men (Curtin, 1997: 19). The Party developed policies for
the 1983 election that emphasized the kinds of caring issues that the gender gap
research argued were a priority for women voters, such as health, education and other
social issues.¹² The construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer has never disappeared
from analyses of women’s political identity and behaviour. Rather the carer persona has
been incorporated and reworked in the more modern subject position of ‘the woman
voter’ within Labor discourse. In this way, there are significant parallels between the
conventional construction of ‘the woman voter’ (as apolitical and conservative) and the
‘new’ construction of ‘the woman voter’ emerging out of Labor’s gender gap research.
In this research, women voters are described as “cautious”, a more politic word for
“conservative” (Moore, 1984: 4). They are also described as “less critical”, which could
denote “less negative” but it could also denote “less analytical”, perhaps a result of
political disinterest (Moore, 1984: 4). In this sense, the gender gap research both
challenges and consolidates the existing construction of ‘the woman voter’. Or more
specifically, it re-articulates the established subject position, giving it a more ‘positive’
spin; conservative becomes “cautious”, apolitical becomes “less critical”. In this way,
Labor discourse provides women voters an alternative position as political subjects, one
that is neither completely limited nor completely free of the original construction of ‘the
woman voter’ as maternal and compassionate.
This construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer, established in the 1983 gender gap research, was further consolidated by the various materials developed by Labor feminists for use in the Party’s election campaign. These materials were introduced in the previous chapter in the context of a discussion about the technologies that construct ‘the woman voter’ as a subject position within Labor discourse. However, these materials also provide information about the nature of that subject position, in other words, the political identity of ‘the woman voter’. As described in the previous chapter, as part of the 1983 campaign to close the gender gap, Susan Ryan sent out a questionnaire to all previous State and federal women candidates, asking about their experience with women voters. The various responses to the questionnaire reflect ‘the woman voter’ as mostly concerned with issues related to the home and family. For example, the questionnaire asks candidates about the kinds of issues normally raised by women voters. The respondents list a wide range of policy areas (the number of responses are indicated in brackets). Many candidates mention issues commonly classified as ‘social’, such as education (7) and health (7). Issues relating to the home and standards of living also feature strongly in candidates’ responses to the questionnaire, for example, food prices (3), housing (6), public transport (4), child care (3), aged care (1), cost of living (7), pensions (1) and family policy (1). However, candidates also mention mainstream economic issues such as interest rates (1), income tax (2), economic growth (2) and employment (8). They also mention global issues such as the environment (1) and uranium mining (3). Interestingly, this aspect of the candidate questionnaires reflects and reinforces the construction of ‘the women voter’ as carer, drawn to social and quality of life issues. However, it also presents women voters as interested in a diverse number of political issues, including those normally
classified as ‘economic’. It is possible to interpret the interest of women voters in these economic issues as an extension of their focus on the social and the private (i.e. interest in economic growth is a concern for the financial future of the family). Nevertheless, it should be recognised that the responses of women voters have often been interpreted in the context of their traditional subject position as carers. It is not that women voters speak only of domestic concerns, but however they might respond, this is interpreted by researchers, pollsters and the Party as emanating from their basic focus on the private sphere. In this context, they are not initially or primarily viewed as public subjects, whatever they might say.

Candidates were also asked to describe any special efforts they made to attract women’s votes. Door-knocking was considered by almost all candidates to be the most effective technique for winning women’s votes as it provides personal, one-on-one contact with women in the home (especially those with “home duties” (D’Rozario)). Other candidates also mention personal contact and work with women’s groups and networks. A number of candidates held lunches, morning and afternoon teas at public venues as well as in the homes of local branch members. Other important sites for meeting women mentioned by candidates included shopping centres, primary schools, and child care groups. Many of the candidates express the opinion that “small group contact” in shopping centres and homes was indeed “the most effective” way of communicating with women voters (McHugh). Hence, candidate responses reinforce conventional associations between women and the private sphere of home and family (with schools constituting an extension of this private sphere). These responses also make a strong connection between women and shopping centres, sites of social and commercial
significance for women. (The connections between women and shopping centres will be explored further in the next chapter). Fundamentally, these candidates targeted women voters by reaching out to them in the places where they perform work associated with their private obligations as carers.

Finally, candidates make some interesting observations in response to the query for other comments. For example, Grace Vaughan writes:

> I found many women who were potentially Labor voters by virtue of their community concern were resentful of ‘women’s issues’ in the sense of being considered selfish, but expressed a belief that women had much to offer in opinions on all matters and particularly those caring areas where they felt strongly whether by ‘nature’ or ‘nurture’.

Vaughan’s comments are consistent with the more established construction of ‘the woman voter’ as described at the beginning of this chapter. Women are community oriented, politically selfless and caring. This construction of ‘the woman voter’ is also supported by the comments of other candidates. Women voters are committed to “compassion and honesty in government” (Darling). They are concerned about their “kids’ future” (Warn) and want “jobs for [their] husbands and children” (Levy). By analysing the content of these questionnaires, we can see how the candidates’ comments tend to confirm both the conclusions of the 1983 gender gap research and the traditional construction of ‘the woman voter’, which pre-dates that research. In this way, the construction of ‘the woman voter’, established during the suffrage years, continued to inform more contemporary analysis of women’s political identity.
The campaign manual entitled *Winning the Women's Vote: A Program for Action*, produced sometime between 1975 and 1983, presents an image of ‘the women voter’ much like the one that emerges from the candidate questionnaires. First, the entire text presumes that women, whether they are voters or campaign workers, are mostly wives and mothers not in full-time employment. While the text does not focus on policy issues, it does assert that the issues of interest to women are “community and welfare services, consumer affairs, health, justice, labour relations and education” (29). Such a list reinforces the traditional characterization of women as primarily concerned with social issues. However, as discussed above, it also presents women voters as interested in issues normally designated as ‘economic’ or ‘industrial’ such as justice and labour relations.\(^{15}\) The kinds of campaign strategies and techniques contained in *Winning the Women’s Vote* construct women voters as carers by positioning them specifically in time and space. It suggests that the candidate hold special functions aimed at women such as “morning and afternoon teas, luncheons, or coffee evenings” (4). It also suggests addressing women’s organizations (3) and attending community events such as luncheons, fashion parades, fetes, art shows, and school plays (6).\(^{16}\) Finally, the text recommends that the candidate set up information booths at “shopping centres, outside factories and caravan parks” in order to “meet and talk to women in their own familiar surroundings” (6). These sites are characterized as the places where “women gather” (6). On the whole, these locations can be described as associated with women’s role in maintaining the home and family, although the inclusion of factories indicates an interest in the status of low-income, working women.\(^{17}\)
It is worth noting that *Winning the Women’s Vote* also describes women voters’ interaction with particular media forms in a way that emphasizes their status as carers. The text recommends “ensuring television advertisements are aired during prime viewing time for women (early afternoon before the children arrive home from school)” (3). It also assumes that women campaign workers will be, to some extent, women outside the paid workforce. For example, it suggests utilizing women campaign workers in activities during the day such as door-knocking (“when women are likely to be home”), telephone canvassing (“telephone calls during the day are more acceptable than those that encroach on family life at night”) and working bees (“people home during the day can assist considerably”) (5).

Out of these texts – the candidate questionnaires and *Winning the Women’s Vote* – emerges a particular construction of ‘the woman voter’. She is placed in the private sphere and her daily activities relate to her private responsibilities as mother, wife and manager of home. Indeed, her primary focus is on the well-being and maintenance of the home and family. She is mostly concerned about social issues such as education and health. She frequents certain places (homes and shopping centres), enjoys particular social events (morning and afternoon teas), and interacts with certain media forms (day-time television). There are spaces within both texts where women voter’s interest in ‘economic’ issues and their presence in the paid workforce (“outside factories”) is given some attention. However, such references do not constitute a systematic appeal to women as workers. This changes over the course of the Labor decade. As we will see from a reading of the various policy texts released during 1993, ‘the woman voter’ is rearticulated in Labor discourse as a figure focused on both
domestic and industrial responsibilities. She is increasingly constructed not simply as carer, as had been the case in previous campaigns, but as carer-worker.

‘The woman voter’ as carer-worker

‘The woman voter’ as carer has always been present in constructions of women’s political identity, as evidenced from the above discussion of the Australian suffrage campaigns. However, the role of women as workers and as contributors to the economic prosperity of the nation was given greater emphasis as the Labor decade progressed. Indeed, ‘the woman voter’ was increasingly constructed within Labor discourse as both a carer and a worker. More precisely, I argue that it was not that women were constructed via the distinct but connected roles of carer and worker, but rather that these roles were combined into one, that of carer-worker. Women were required to perform both unpaid and paid work, and in this way bridge the divide between the public and the private spheres without disrupting the working lives of men. As carer-workers, they kept both the home and the economy operating efficiently and in a way that did not substantially interfere with the gendered division of labour.

This construction of woman as carer-worker took some time to develop. The role of women as workers was given some attention prior to the 1983 election campaign. For example, in the 1979 Committee of Inquiry discussion paper, it was recognized that “women are ... workers ... with equal claims for jobs [and] protection from exploitation” (1979: 38). In the 1983 election campaign, Bob Hawke recognized the role women
play in the workforce and the economy. Significantly, the actual election promises made by the Party in 1983 in the area of women’s issues related almost entirely to the industrial and legal sphere. When Hawke presented Labor’s policies at the 1983 campaign launch, his description of the Party’s “comprehensive women’s affairs policy” included the “enactment of Commonwealth Sex Discrimination legislation covering employment, education, the provision of goods and services, accommodation, land and clubs, and establishing a programme of affirmative action in public and private employment” (McGregor, 1983: 222). Hawke stated that Labor was “particularly concerned at the implications of the evidence from all relevant overseas countries that women in the workforce are most susceptible to the adverse effects of rapid technological change” (McGregor, 1983: 222).

Although the notion of woman as worker was evident in various texts early on in the Labor decade, I wish to suggest that by the end of the Hawke-Keating era, ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker became a well-established albeit new subject position with Labor discourse. This subject position incorporates elements of the traditional construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer, but with important modifications in relation to her expanding role as a participant in the market economy. In order to make this argument I have chosen to conduct my analysis of the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker through a critical reading of two government documents, namely the second National Agenda for Women and a report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), entitled Women in Australia, both released in 1993. These two texts are interrelated and complementary; the statistics contained in Women in Australia were compiled specifically to provide information for both the first and the second national agendas.
An analysis of government documents may seem to constitute a departure from my focus on Labor discourse and election campaigns. It should however be remembered that the relationship between government and Party was particularly close during the Hawke-Keating years. The achievements of Labor in government always provided the basis for the Party’s message in campaigns.\textsuperscript{21} Analysing the second \textit{National Agenda} and the ABS report therefore contributes to a broader understanding of the shape and content of Labor’s campaign to win women’s votes in the 1993 federal election.\textsuperscript{22} Furthermore, I also look at the Party’s child-care policy document for the 1993 federal election, as a continuation of the policy initiatives proposed in the second \textit{National Agenda}.

\textbf{The Australian Bureau of Statistics' \textit{Women in Australia}}

In the previous chapter, I discussed the ABS report \textit{Women in Australia} with reference to Rose’s work on how political numbers such as statistics operate in the process of governing or managing persons. For Rose, numbers work to constitute and define the domain to be governed; in this context, that domain is a certain subject position within discourse. However, besides bringing together in a consolidated form various kinds of political numbers, \textit{Women in Australia} also provides some context to these numbers in the form of statements and analysis. From a critical reading of these statements, the Australian woman emerges as a carer-worker. This material is worth analysing in relation to the public/private divide and how it operates in terms of the formation of subject positions within Labor discourse.
Like the second *National Agenda* (to be discussed below), the ABS report is divided into various sections under topic headings such as “Families”, “Income” and “Work”. Each section includes an introduction that intends to provide some context for the various statistical data presented. In terms of the sections on “Income” and “Work”, we can see women as a category of persons making a vital contribution to our economy through their domestic and industrial labour. Her role in the public world of work is acknowledged as important to her life, her family’s life and to the life of the nation. The report recognizes that “for most adults work is an integral part of life” (ABS, 1993: 142). It provides discrete data and analysis about all kinds of issues related to work including employment, income, unpaid work, and unemployment. However, the report also makes clear that the statistics reflect the fact that women’s experience of work is markedly different from that of men. The nature of women’s particular involvement in the paid work force is reflected in the statistics compiled on women’s increasing participation\(^23\), part-time employment\(^24\), casual employment\(^25\) and underemployment rates\(^26\) as well as persistent levels of sex stratification.\(^27\) Within the context of the report, the cause of this difference between the working lives of men and women is the uneven distribution of unpaid work associated with the private sphere of home and family.

Consider the introduction to the section on work. It starts with recognizing the important distinction between paid and unpaid work. The report states that “work”, “generally defined as the production of goods and services”, includes both “activity for which payment, either in money or kind, is received” (paid work) and “activity for which
no payment is received but which could be paid for” (unpaid work) (ABS, 1993: 117).  

The report acknowledges the importance of this unpaid work:

Work that is done in the household for no pay and volunteer work in the wider community have become an increasingly important issue in recent years, particularly in relation to the kinds of activities that women perform and the recognition that they receive for them (ABS, 1993: 117).

However, the report states that data about “the amount of time spent performing unpaid work is not readily obtainable directly as, by its nature, unpaid work is often fragmented and may be interspersed with other activities” (ABS, 1993: 117). Information about unpaid work is usually taken from surveys on people’s use of time, for example the ABS’s 1987 pilot survey on Time Use in Sydney. That survey showed that:

... women and men spent about the same average amount of time (31% of the day) on paid and unpaid work combined. Women spent twice as much time on unpaid work as on labour force activity while the reverse was the case for men (ABS, 1993: 148).  

These statistics show that women are still performing the bulk of unpaid work in society. Furthermore, the report states that women’s “economic well-being” is dependent on the resources generated by both paid and unpaid work, in other words income, accumulated wealth or assets, and home production of goods or services (ABS, 1993: 169). Women contribute to the “economic well-being of their families” through paid work as well as “family nurturing and maintenance of the home environment” (ABS, 1993: 117).
Despite all this, the report states that the unpaid work of women continues to be devalued in our market economy:

Participation in paid work affects self-esteem and status in society. ... Value and consequent status tend to be traditionally associated with monetary worth. ... Hence, voluntary work and unpaid work involved in caring for families, children or the elderly is perceived to have less value than paid work (ABS, 1993: 117).³¹

The value of paid work in women’s lives in and of itself is not strongly acknowledged in the report. Rather, the report emphasizes the difficulties women face in their role as carer-workers:

Women who participate in paid work ... face the problem of juggling employment with family responsibilities. This may result in restrictions in their hours of paid work and thus in the amount of pay they receive, and in their career opportunities. In an effort to remedy perceived injustices in the treatment of women in the labour market, successive governments have initiated and supported actions affecting conditions of employment (ABS, 1993: 117).³²

Women’s special needs as carer-workers requires the government to play a strong supporting role by implementing policy initiatives “such as special employment training for sole parents and expanding child care provision” (O’Connor et al, 1999: 8).³³ It is these initiatives that will help women manage their carer-worker role, not the increased support of men in the private sphere.
In the section entitled “Balancing Work and Family Responsibilities”, woman as carer-worker emerges as a particularly important subject position. While the section opens with an account of the pressures on “working people with family responsibilities”, it concedes that women, rather than men, are more likely to be effected by these pressures. This is because “women, whether in paid work or not, usually carry the greater share of the caring load” whereas men are “usually considered the main breadwinner in the family” (ABS, 1993: 133). Flexible working hours, permanent part-time work, rostered days off and extensions to parental leave provisions” are listed as some of the measures that can “go some way towards easing the burden” on women as carer-workers (ABS, 1993: 133). Interestingly, the report seeks to explain why this might be the case, why women require government support to manage their public and private obligations. It states that:

Despite legislation to end discrimination against women in the workplace, women and men do not participate in employment in quite the same ways. Whether through choice, through combining work with other activities (education or family responsibilities, for example) or through educational or previous employment history, it is the case that women’s employment is more likely than men’s to be part-time or casual and that women exhibit different occupational and industrial patterns from men (ABS, 1993: 123).

Family responsibilities are listed in conjunction with education, perhaps implicitly reinforcing the notion that these private obligations are ‘chosen’. Previous educational and employment history are also listed, possibly as examples of more systematic and
structural discrimination against women that impacts on their experience of the workplace.

From an analysis of the commentary in the ABS report, the Australian woman emerges as a carer-worker. Her experience of paid work is different to that of men, largely because of her domestic and caring responsibilities. While her unpaid work is undervalued by society, it is nevertheless essential to the economic well-being of her family. She is thus engaged in both paid and unpaid work, both of which make a great contribution to Australian society and the market. Out of *Women in Australia* emerges a construction of woman as carer-worker, whose public responsibilities in the domain of paid work are supported when government sponsors initiatives (such as flexible working hours and parental leave) to facilitate her caring responsibilities in the private sphere. Whilst there is extensive research presented in the ABS report on the “unequal division of domestic labour in the home”, there is only scant recognition that this imbalance needs to be addressed by government (Johnson, 1996: 37). Despite all attempts to recognize unpaid work as work, the construction of woman as primary caregiver is barely challenged because the gendered division of labour and the role of men in the private sphere are not adequately addressed.

As stated above, *Women in Australia* is a complementary document to the second *National Agenda*, with statistics from the former used consistently throughout the latter. Many of the themes of the ABS report are continued into the second *National Agenda*. In particular, the construction of woman as carer-worker is further consolidated by the *National Agenda*. This second text presents us with a more complex, more detailed
picture of this subject position, with her desires, needs and expectations structured by the tensions between her public and private obligations.

The second National Agenda for Women

In response to the United Nations Decade for Women and to Australia’s ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Hawke government established “various forward-looking strategies” for the advancement of women in society (ABS, 1993: viii). At the centre of the government’s plan of action lay the development of a National Agenda for Women, aimed at guiding future government policy on matters relating to the status of women (ABS, 1993: viii). The Agenda spells out government intentions “on a wide range of issues which effect women’s everyday lives” (OSW, 1993: 1). Femocrats and Labor feminists saw the Agenda as the primary “mechanism through which gender was incorporated into government policy planning processes” (Reynolds, 1995: 99). Margaret Reynolds, former Minister assisting on the Status of Women, comments that the goals of the Agenda:

... helped to sensitise ministers and government officers to their new responsibilities as all departments gained some responsibility for mainstreaming women’s policy. The advantage of this new development was that ministers themselves no longer saw ‘women’s issues’ as separate from the fundamental policy commitments of their portfolios (1995: 99).
Two national agendas were produced during the Labor decade. The first, entitled *A say, a choice, a fair go*, was released in February 1988. The second, entitled *Women - Shaping and Sharing the Future*, will be the focus text here. This second agenda is of particular interest because it was released in 1993, an election year; indeed Paul Keating himself launched it on the 10th of February, two weeks into the campaign. In this respect, the other related text of interest is the speech given by Keating at this launch.

Put simply, the *National Agenda* is a large and complex market research report. In preparation for this report, “an extensive series of consultations was undertaken across Australia ... to gain greater insight into the issues of most concern to women” (ABS, 1993: viii). The Office of the Status of Women (OSW) conducted these consultations with “many women in the community, many representatives of women’s organizations and all areas of government” (OSW, 1993: 159). The organizations involved in these consultations included church groups, trade unions, education groups, youth groups, older women’s networks, housing and welfare groups, the Women’s Electoral Lobby, as well as government funded consultative groups (OSW, 1993: 159-160). Consultation of this kind became, as Susan Ryan puts it, a “mantra” within both the government and the Party during the Hawke-Keating years (1999: 178). The Labor government believed that consulting with relevant interest groups would ensure that the results of those consultations would be largely representative of community views; the broader the consultation, the more representative the results. However, in his speech launching the second *National Agenda*, Keating emphasises that the consultative process did not just include the usual women’s groups in its ambit. Rather, he states that the (Labor) government:
... also listened to women who do not belong to organizations and do not have a voice when documents such as national agendas are drawn up. We commissioned research which sought the opinions of ordinary Australian women. We talked with waitresses, cleaners, primary school teachers, shop assistants, mothers at home and office workers.  

This process of consulting with ‘ordinary Australian women’ (along with the usual women’s organizations) was transformed into a kind of government sponsored market research for the Party when the resolutions coming out of the second National Agenda were adopted as part of Labor’s 1993 election campaign platform. As Keating’s personal advisor on women, Anne Summers sat in on the consultations and was able to build the findings into the strategy to capture women’s votes (Sawer, 2000: 270).

The second National Agenda combines both qualitative materials (the information gleaned through consultations) and quantitative data (namely the statistics generated by the ABS). As a text, it contains twenty-three chapters covering different areas “important to women” such as education, training, employment, sex discrimination, superannuation and the environment (OSW, 1993: 2). The chapters themselves are divided into four parts (see Figure 5.1). Statistics from Women in Australia are included in the “Achievements So Far” column, intended to show “major changes for women over recent years” (OSW, 1993: 2). The section entitled “Progress So Far” gives some background to each topic. An extensive “Action for the Future” section sets out the strategies that the Labor government has endorsed and is structured in point form, much like a list of election commitments. Each chapter opens with what is called “A
Statement of Women’s Vision and Goals for the Future”, which spells out women’s desires and expectations from government. The aspirations and demands contained in these sections are supposed to reflect the views expressed by the “women of middle Australia” involved in the consultation process described above (Sawer, 2000: 270).45

These sections are mostly expressed in the first person plural with the pronoun “we”; for example “we won’t put up with being discriminated against any more” or “we want to live as independently as we can and to be accepted for who we are” (OSW, 1993: 55, 115). The use of “we” here has important effects. It signals the personal, the collective experience of the women consulted. It operates to open up a space within the text in which the voices of the women involved in the consultation process can be heard.46 It is these voices, these “statements of vision and goals”, that work to construct the subject position of the ‘ordinary Australian woman’. Her desires are multitudinous and far-reaching. According to the Agenda, every woman wants:

... an equal share of decision-making power (5) ... to live a life free from domestic violence (11) ... a fair, accurate and diverse portrayal of women in the media (19) ... a fair share of training opportunities (31) ... a good job and the chance to develop a career (43) ... to combine paid work with family life without having to become “superwoman” (51) ... access to good quality and affordable childcare (51) ... respect and a fair go (55) ... freedom from discrimination (55) ... a healthy and active life (73) ... a place to call home (87) ... financial security and independence (99) ... a fair deal in superannuation (105) ... the time to be able to read, to go to the movies (121) ... and a healthy environment, locally and globally, for herself and her children (127).
Women’s desire for broader political and social rights is asserted here along with various goals relating to responsibilities in balancing home and work commitments. In other words, women’s visions and goals relate largely to their position as carer-workers, but also encompass concerns that are economic, industrial and global.

The chapters in the National Agenda are “clustered in such a way that related issues are close to each other” (OSW, 1993: 2). For example, “Education” and “Training” are Chapters Four and Five respectively; “Superannuation” and “Older Women” are Chapters Seventeen and Eighteen respectively. More importantly, within the context of this discussion, “Employment” and “Childcare” are Chapters Seven and Eight respectively. In other words, it is not just the substantial content of the Agenda that reflects government priorities in relation to women, but also the very organization of the text, the proximity of issue to issue. The fact that the “Employment” and “Childcare” chapters are situated next to each other invites a simultaneous reading.

The chapter on employment ostensibly covers women’s public role as workers. The chapter opens with the statement, incorporating an ABS statistic, that there are “more than 3 million women in Australia’s workforce – and we are here to stay” (OSW, 1993: 43). It states:

Our participation in the paid workforce is now so strongly established that our work is vital to the economic well-being of Australia. We are glad to make that contribution, but we insist on a fair deal in return (OSW, 1993: 44).
Women’s vital contribution to “Australian society and to our economy” is acknowledged throughout the second *Agenda* (OSW, 1993: 1). For example, in the opening paragraph of the “Employment” chapter it states:

> We are doing our fair share to make this country efficient and productive and we expect a fair deal at work in return (OSW, 1993: 43).

Women are positioned within the second *Agenda* as a vital part of the foundation of the new Australian economy, reliant as it is on white-collar and service industries dominated by female labour. This is particularly clear in the chapter on young women, where it states that they are:

> ... part of the base on which a competitive and productive Australia can expand and grow. We want to share in the rewards of good jobs and financial security that such an Australia can deliver (OSW, 1993: 37).

This increased and increasing involvement in the paid work force becomes the basis on which women can demand a “fair deal” from government; this “fair deal” includes improved policy in the areas of freedom from harassment and discrimination in the workplace and “a fair share of training and promotion opportunities and a chance to compete equally for the top jobs” (OSW, 1993: 43).\(^{47}\) The chapter notes continuing problems in relation to equal pay for jobs of equal work and high levels of job stratification.\(^{48}\) It also recognizes the need to facilitate the entry of women into non-traditional occupations (OSW, 1993: 44).
However, it is significant that the chapter on employment also broaches the issue of women's private role as carers. It states that:

We want to combine paid work with family life when we need to. ... We want jobs that offer flexible working hours and jobs sharing opportunities to suit those with young children. We want more opportunities for permanent part-time work so that all workers can share in the benefits of sick leave, paid holidays and access to training and career development (OSW, 1993: 43).

This connection between women's vision and goals as workers and their needs and obligations as carers is well established in this chapter and then further consolidated in the following chapter on child care. The chapter on child-care emphasizes that child-care is not just “a women’s issue” and therefore only women’s responsibility (OSW, 1993: 51). Rather child-care “is an issue for families, for employers, for unions and for all levels of government” (OSW, 1993: 51). It asserts that affordable, “flexible and innovative forms of child care” are essential if we are going “to make things work both at home and work” (OSW, 1993: 51). Hence, the question of women’s private role as carers becomes a concern for public organizations and institutions such as unions, government and employers. Read together, the chapters on employment and child-care in the second Agenda, whilst constructing woman as carer-worker, also recognise that the strict divisions between the public and private domains cannot be maintained, at least in relation to the lives of women.
The second *National Agenda* also acknowledges that unpaid work within the home should properly be considered as work. For example, in the chapter on women and families, it states that:

About 70% of the unpaid work done in the home is carried out by women. When a woman also works in the paid-work-force, her contribution to home actually remains constant at an average 36 hours per week (OSW, 1993: 79).

This distinction between paid work and unpaid work is maintained throughout the second *Agenda*. The text continually recognises the importance of unpaid work and the fact that women perform the bulk of this work as part of their caring obligations in the private sphere. Furthermore, women's commitment to family life is emphasised in the *Agenda*. It states that although women have “become freer and more independent” over the last twenty years, “there is no question that, in the 1990s, we will continue to want to be part of families which give us the support and warmth we need” (OSW, 1993: 79).50

Significantly, the question of men, either as users of child-care or as important participants in the family unit, is not broached in the second *National Agenda*. The role of fathers attracts no comment in this context. Indeed, the concept of man as carer-worker never emerges in the documents of the Labor decade. Furthermore, the chapter on women and families is one of the only sections in the second *Agenda* that mentions the existence of men (see Figure 5.2). There it states that women want “the caring and household work [to be] shared among family members” and “want accelerated the trend towards fathers taking and welcoming a shared role in family life” (OSW, 1993: 79).
Here is a clear example of what Cass describes as the “growing belief that sharing in the care and nurture of children is a vital expression of the human qualities and social responsibility of men as well as women” (Cass, 2000, 1). However, in the following “Action for the Future” section, initiatives to encourage this paternal participation are absent. Rather the list of future action is focused entirely on continued support for woman in her carer-worker role. Whilst the need for men to play a great role in the lives of their children is recognised, no concrete government action is presented to facilitate this greater involvement.

In the absence of any real engagement with the question of men and their private obligations, the (Labor) government is left as the main support for women in their role as carer-workers. This is not surprising; many feminists have pointed out that women have been far more reliant on government support in terms of welfare provision and protective legislation than men. As Pringle and Watson argue, history has seen “men … incorporated into public life as workers and women as welfare recipients” (1991: 72). In terms of the second National Agenda, women are positioned in an important partnership with the (Labor) government, one that provides for their mutual prosperity and security. For example, in his opening letter in the second Agenda, Paul Keating states that:

> Women have always made major contributions to shaping Australia's past and present, and as Prime Minister I will ensure that this important partnership continues to shape the future (OSW, 1993: 1).
In return for their contribution to the economy, women are given government protection and support. As Keating describes in his letter:

This *National Agenda* enables the Government to have a strong role in co-operating with women to reach their goals (OSW, 1993: 1).

Thus, it is not men, either as husbands or fathers, but the (Labor) government, acting in a kind of paternal role, who will assist women in realizing their aspirations. Instead of encouraging men to take on greater responsibilities in the domestic sphere, the second *National Agenda* concentrates on government-sponsored initiatives to assist women in their role as carer-workers.

In absence of any attempt to deal with this question of men and their domestic obligations, the entrenched view of women as primarily responsible for the maintenance of the private sphere remains intact. The lack of any substantial programs to redress the gendered division of labour “shows the persistence of conventional sexual divisions established by the conception that men and women occupy separate realms” (Swanson, 1995: 4). In this way, initiatives such as improved child-care function as a bridge between the public sphere and the private sphere in that they “enable women to study or to participate more fully in the community” without disrupting the lives of men (OSW, 1993: 51). Such an approach is a typical Laborite solution to the ‘special problem’ of women’s involvement in the public sphere. As O’Connor *et al* state:

... social democratic regimes promote women’s employment by providing services that allow those responsible for care work - mostly married mothers -
to enter the paid labour force, and also by employing women in the state service sector. ... [This results] in a desirable mobilization of women's labour while not undercutting their capacities to bear and raise children (1999: 20).

In sum, as Swanson argues, “there is a residual adherence” in the second *National Agenda* “to promoting an oppositional relation between work and home, public and private life” (1995: 4). Overall, “men’s parental responsibilities” are defined as mostly economic; they are the “male breadwinner” employed on a full-time and continuous basis (Campbell, 1987: 209). Women, whilst no longer limited to the world of home and family, nevertheless continue to shoulder most of the responsibility for the private sphere, no matter how involved they are in the public world of work. In this way, the “male breadwinner model” is modified to some extent but not significantly, at least in relation to the caring roles of men and women. The (Labor) government supports women in their role as carer-workers, endorsing “women’s presence in the labour market without offering any challenge to the sexual division of labour” (Campbell, 1987: 216). In this context, strategies in relation to child-care constitute one of the key ways in which the government can support women as carer-workers without substantially disrupting the working lives of men.

**Child care policy in the 1993 election campaign**

In addition to campaigning on the contents of the second *National Agenda*, the Party introduced substantial initiatives in the area of child-care. Indeed, both “Labor and the Coalition parties made major commitments in this area during the 1993 election
campaign” (Brennan, 1994: 187). Before I analyse these commitments, it is worth making a few comments about the development of child-care policy during the Labor decade. Deborah Brennan’s work on the politics of child-care in Australia is important in this context. Brennan states that the Party’s attitude to child-care during the Labor decade “presented a distinct contrast with previous administrations” (1994: 164). With the election of the Hawke government in 1983, “the level of interest in child-care policy and provision greatly intensified”, with child-care integrated “with key areas of government policy, notably labour market strategies and social security reform” (Brennan, 1994: 164). In addition, child-care was defined as a significant component of the social wage under the Accord between the Labor government and the trade union movement (Brennan, 1994: 164). However, Brennan makes the crucial point that the Party’s commitment to child-care policy has “been shaped by the persistent tension between economic and social justice objectives” within Labor politics (1994: 186). Childcare was embraced as a necessary part of ensuring fairness and equality for women in the workforce but was made subject to Labor’s broader drive for economic prosperity and public sector restraint. In this way “the ‘mainstreaming’ of child-care [was] achieved at a high price” (Brennan, 1994: 187). By the 1993 election, “child-care was entrenched as part of the mainstream political agenda” and portrayed as central to the overall social and economic goals of government (Brennan, 1994: 187). However, at the same time, there was an “ever-increasing reliance on the private sector for the expansion of child-care”; as a policy issue it “had become a narrowly focused instrument of economic and labour force policies” (Brennan, 1994: 187, see also 206-210).
Child-care was part of the Party’s policy package in every election of the Labor decade. Indeed, the Party proclaimed that child-care policy was one of its “greatest achievements in government” (ALP, 1993b: 1). Labor produced a major child-care policy statement for the 1993 election campaign, sixteen pages entirely focused on initiatives to assist women in balancing work and family responsibilities. Helping women strike this balance was essential because “women’s participation in the workforce” was a necessary prerequisite for “the future growth of the Australian economy and the living standards of Australians” (ALP, 1993b: 2). In addition to increasing child-care places and expanding services for special needs women, Labor promised to introduce a non-means tested child-care rebate to supplement the existing fee relief program (ALP, 1993b: 4). Moreover, in order to deflect any criticism that its child-care policies ignore the needs of those women out of the workforce, caring for children in the home, Labor also announced the introduction of a Home Child Care Allowance (Brennan, 1994: 211). The new allowance was introduced in recognition of “the contribution to Australia made by spouses at home taking care of children full time” (ALP, 1993a: 8). In these ways, Labor’s child-care policy acknowledged the needs of women both in paid and unpaid work.

Child-care was also mentioned in many of Keating’s speeches during the 1993 campaign. In these speeches, Keating acknowledged women’s contributions as carer-workers. In his policy launch address at Bankstown Hall on the 24th of February 1993, Keating states that Labor recognizes that “women’s child care needs are neither uniform nor identical” (1993c: 6). In particular, he asserts that the distinctions made between women who stay at home and women who work are misleading; “chances are these
days, in the course of their lifetimes, most women will spend periods of time doing both” (1993c: 6). Consequently, Labor’s child-care policy attempts to meet the needs of women at whatever stage of life. In his speech to the National Press Club on the 11th of March, Keating spoke of his desire to build:

... a society where child-care is, finally, a right. A society which believes women should get equal pay and be able to participate fully in all areas of work and life. A society which cherishes those who spend part of their lives caring for children or sick people (1993d: 7).

Child-care was not just part of Labor’s social policy package during the 1993 election campaign. Rather, child-care policy was positioned as an important part of Keating’s economic statement, entitled Investing in the Nation. Child-care is placed at the centre of this major statement on economic policy, situated alongside initiatives in the areas of taxation, investment and banking. The stated reason for including child-care in this document is because women are becoming “even more integrated in Australia’s economic life” and “the workforce of the new century” (Keating, 1993b: 77). These measures are described as “substantially increasing the ability of women to work and so contribute their talents and abilities to our search for competitive advantage” (Keating, 1993b: 32). Child-care is thus “no longer an optional extra” or a social issue but “an integral part” of Labor’s approach to the economy and the workforce (Keating, 1993b: 77). It is so important it must be “elevated” to an economic issue (Keating, 1993b: 77). Whilst this document challenges the designation of child-care as merely a social or women’s issue, its language further privileges the economic by giving economic policy an “elevated” status over social policy. In addition, although the document refers
occasionally to the “requirements for working parents”, *Investing in the Nation* (like the other policy documents discussed in this chapter) assumes that the main beneficiaries of child-care will be working mothers:

> While the Government encourages men to share the responsibilities, as well as the joys, of parenting, it recognizes that in practice it is still mostly women who assume the often complicated burden of arranging for child care, and that usually the cost of child care is met from women’s earnings (Keating, 1993b: 77).

Again, as with the second *National Agenda*, the (Labor) government is positioned as best suited to assist “parents, especially mothers” in “reconciling the pressures of work and family” (Keating, 1993b: 77). As Johnson comments, Labor’s policies were informed by “a belief that all women should be able to work to contribute to our competitive advantage – a scenario which not only linked child-care to work rather than parental relief but also still assumed that it is predominantly women who juggle work and child-care” (2000: 38).

In sum, whilst the public and private obligations of women are clearly connected in this text, the private obligations of men in the area of child-care are given little attention and even less government support. Whilst the notion of men taking an equal role in child-care is presented as a worthy goal (“the government encourages men to share the responsibilities of parenting”), it is implicitly deemed unrealistic, at least in the short term (“the government recognizes that in practice women assume the responsibility for child care”). While government continues to support women in balancing their public and private obligations, men need no such assistance. Thus, Labor’s extensive child-
care policy for the 1993 federal election works to further consolidate the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker. Labor documents like *Investing in the Nation* recognize that women’s paid labour is an essential part of the government’s plans to make Australia internationally competitive. However, implicit in these documents is the realization that Australian families rely almost entirely on woman to perform their duties as carers. The Labor government, through child-care policy and other initiatives, is able to assist women in meeting their obligations as carer-workers, at the same time enhancing the nation’s workforce skills and capacities without disrupting the gendered division of labour.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how the construction of ‘the woman voter’ within Labor discourse developed from carer to carer-worker. I have shown, through a discussion of suffrage debates and texts from early in the Labor decade, how the conventional construction of ‘the woman voter’ as apolitical and conservative was incorporated into and reworked within later constructions of women’s political identity and behaviour. This modification within the subject position of ‘the woman voter’ was broadly consonant with the objectives of liberal, economic government. These objectives included encouraging social justice for disadvantaged groups whilst ensuring economic prosperity on a national level. In their role as carer-workers, women were able to contribute to the market whilst maintaining their private responsibilities in the home. The Labor government developed initiatives, as evidenced in the second *National
**Agenda** and the Party’s 1993 child-care policy document, which supported women as carer-workers. Whilst the “male breadwinner model” was challenged during the Labor decade through increased government support for women in their role as participants in the workforce, the role of men as carers was rarely the focus of policy initiatives. In this way, the gendered division of labour was never fundamentally questioned within Labor discourse. In the next chapter, I continue my analysis of the character of ‘the woman voter’ during the Labor decade. I focus solely on the 1993 election campaign, in particular Labor’s anti-GST campaign materials. Within the context of Labor’s attack on the GST, we see an innovation within the subject position of ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker, namely the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as consumer.

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1. Rose is quick to distinguish his approach from analyses that have, “explicitly or implicitly, viewed changing forms of subjectivity or identity as consequences of wider social and cultural transformations” (1996b: 130). As Rose states, “these kinds of analyses regard changes in the ways in which human beings understand and act upon themselves as the outcome of ‘more fundamental’ historical events located elsewhere” (1996b: 130). Such an approach assumes that the construction of the subject is somehow ancillary to social, cultural or historical changes.

2. Nash makes the important point that “the public/private opposition is not identical in contemporary society to that theorised by Locke” (1998: 37). In fact, “in advanced capitalist societies liberalism may oppose the economic sphere as private to the state-funded public sector, or civil society as private to the public sector of the state” (Nash, 1998: 37). These kinds of debates, about what should be designated as public or private, were urgent ones during the Labor decade, as the Party diverged from its traditional commitment to the public sector in favour of business interests.

3. These tensions within suffrage arguments - between sameness and difference, public and private - were never fully reconciled. While the suffragists demanded “access to the public world of political decisions-making”, they nevertheless “accepted a family-market divide which left women the homemakers and men the breadwinners” (Bacchi, 1990: 10).

4. By sex-segregation I mean the concentration of women in ‘feminine’ occupations and women’s under-representation in ‘masculine’ occupations. For example, women are more concentrated in sectors like hospitality, child-care and services and substantially under-represented in sectors like construction, transport and storage industries (Graycar & Morgan, 1990: 84).

5. As Cass states, “a very significant proportion of women’s employment is part-time when they have responsibility for dependent children” (2000, 5).

6. As Cass states, this modification been brought about by the increase in dual earner (but not dual carer) families and prevalence of no-earner families, where both parents are unemployed or in casual, short term or precarious employment (2000: 15). The extent to which this model varies depends on social class and ethnicity (Cass, 2000, 2).
7. As Cass asserts, there is a growing, albeit contested recognition that paid employment is a valuable addition to "women's family responsibilities" (2000: 1). Indeed, Australian research has consistently shown that, in the case of sole mothers, the combination of family care and breadwinning is the major route out of poverty for the family" (Cass, 2000: 7). Women's increased work force participation has, since the mid seventies, "sustained rates of home-ownership for couples and for two parent families" and "reduced the inequality of family income distribution" (Cass, 2000: 7).

8. This argument about the caring behaviours of women is derived from the theoretical work of feminists such as Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan (Mueller, 1988: 238).

9. As Lawrence explains:

... the liberal United States gender gap has been attributed variously to differences of opinion about the use of force and violence and also to broader questions of government regulation and to so-called 'compassion' issues (2000: 219).

10. This is consistent with the historical role of Australian women as "peace-makers" (Walmsley, 1984: 63). Furthermore, "opposition to militarism and war has been an important strand in Australian feminism" (Watson & Pringle, 1990: 241).

11. Gender gap research conducted later in the Labor decade is consistent with the 1983 findings. For example, Lawrence explains that in the 1992 federal election, AEC data and Labor Party research showed that "women are consistently more likely to stress the importance of government action, particularly in areas such as increased funding for Medicare, education, getting the unemployed back to work and child care" (2000: 221). The AEC data in particular showed that women were "more likely to express attitudes consistent with the environmentalist agenda, more likely to adopt a 'green' perspective towards uranium mining, logging of forests and the green house effect" (Lawrence, 2000: 220).

12. The focal point of the Party's women's policy in the 1983 federal election was the document, The Australian Labor Party and Women: Towards Equality. The paper was the result of extensive research by Susan Ryan and Lyndsay Connors (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 209) but it also included the submissions and input of various national women's organizations. Towards Equality is a detailed and broad ranging document which looks at "women's social and economic roles and the high costs of women's inequality in areas such as education and training, employment, health, housing, the tax/transfer system and the law" (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 209).

13. Jeanette McHugh was one of the few candidates to insist that issues of concern to women were the "same as those that concerned all voters".

14. Labor men seemed to share this view. For example in his "Information to Candidates Paper: A Winning Campaign", Barry Cohen, the then Member for the marginal seat of Robertson, states that while doorknocking "you meet a lot of women who are rarely canvassed for their vote" (26). It is interesting to note that the kinds of campaign techniques normally performed by women within the Party, and often characterized as "political housework" (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 176), are perceived by these candidates to be the most effective in winning women's votes. Labor women thus utilized these "low-status chores such as door-knocking, enveloping, letter-boxing, making the tea and fundraising" as a foundation for campaigning as women seeking to attract the attention of women voters (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 176).

15. However, it should be noted that justice has associations with fairness, which in turn is associated with a certain ethic of care.

16. It suggests including candidate reports about these community activities in the local press, including "a photograph of the occasion, including local women identities, where possible" (6).

17. The authors of Winning the Women's Vote do urge candidates not to "forget the working woman" (4). Although the woman voter is largely a caring figure within the context of this document, there is some acknowledgement of the fact that she might also be a worker.

18. The text "Women - How Can We Get Our Message Across" summarises the concerns and desires of 'the woman voter' in this target group. Her focus is "home and family" and the way
she responses to political issues are conditioned by this focus (2). She is concerned about “the cost of living” and “mortgage payments” (2). She worries that “the tax my family pays is not being well spent” (2). Her other concerns are care for the elderly, childcare, law and order, personal security, the environment, and nuclear testing (2). She may also be concerned about issues such as education, jobs and training but in the context of “looking after the future for her family” (2).

19 I have chosen the term ‘carer-worker’ in my analysis, a slimmed down version of what O’Connor et al term the “earner-carer labour market participant” (1999: 224).

20 It is important to note that while the Committee acknowledges women’s contribution as workers, it also states that “women may want some different [employment] opportunities from men”, for example, they may exhibit a greater preference for part time employment in order “for personal fulfilment” (1979: 1). It can be assumed that this “personal fulfilment” relates to women’s private responsibilities as wives and mothers.

21 For example, in a memo on the first National Agenda, Senator Rosemary Crowley wrote that in order to “reclaim territory” with women voters, the Party should conduct a “well targeted campaign aimed at women, taking the message of the government’s achievements and on-going commitment to women into the community” (1989: 1). In a document attached to this memo, entitled “The Hawke Government’s Policies for Women”, it suggests ways for the Party to develop this campaign aimed at women voters, selling them the message of the Hawke government’s achievements for women.

22 Indeed, Frederickson describes the second National Agenda for Women as a “vote-buying strategy” (1993: 39).

23 “The total participation rate of women is projected to increase, reaching 60% by 2005” (ABS, 1993: 121).

24 “43% of employed women worked part-time compared to 11% of employed men” (ABS, 1993: 124).

25 “In August 1991, 31% of women employees were employed on a casual basis compared to 16% of male employees” (ABS, 1993: 125).

26 “Women made up 59% of the underemployed in December 1992 compared to 42% of all employed people” (ABS, 1993: 128).

27 There are still significant levels of sex stratification in employment with “more than half of all employed women found in two occupational groups: clerks (31%) and salespersons and personal service workers (24%)” (ABS, 1993: 125).

28 The report goes on to state that the term “unpaid work … is usually used to refer to the performance of domestic duties, whether in a relationship or by a person living alone, and the performance of volunteer work” (ABS, 1993: 148). It is also clear that women do more community and volunteer work than men, work which “includes such activities as helping or caring for the sick, frail or disabled, community activities, and helping or doing favours for others.” (ABS, 1993: 149). It seems that volunteer and community work of this kind involves an extension of women’s role as carers.

29 For example, the ABS’ 1987 Time Use Survey showed that “women did about four times the amount of housework as men, about three times the amount of food preparation and cleaning up, and about eight times the amount of laundry” (ABS, 1993: 149). The amount of time women spend on unpaid work of this kind is also recognized in the section on leisure:

With increasing numbers of women spending a greater part of their lives in the paid labour force, while also assuming the major responsibilities for unpaid domestic and caring tasks, an issue of concern is whether women have the same opportunities as men to engage in leisure activities (ABS, 1993: 237).

30 However there is a barrier to the full acknowledgement of the amount of unpaid work women perform. In the section on income it states that much of the information on women’s earnings has been drawn from ABS income surveys that do not include “the imputed income values of
services such as those provided by owned dwellings, indirect government benefits and unpaid household work” (ABS, 1993: 169).

31 The report states that there have been some moves towards including unpaid work within the scope of Australia’s Gross Domestic Profit (GDP) (ABS, 1993: 151). The exclusion of unpaid work from the GDP thus far consolidates the low status of this kind of work in society.

32 These actions include a range of legislative reforms initiated by federal Labor governments (ABS, 1993: 117).

33 The importance of child-care to single parent families and families in which both parents work is reflected in the statistics on the use of child-care. In November 1990, 73% of families with both parents (or the lone parent) employed full-time used child-care in the survey week compared to 47% of families with neither parent employed (ABS, 1993: 135).

34 Here is a good example of the shift towards the modification “male breadwinner model” (Cass, 2000: 2).

35 Cass argues that the “rhetoric of choice” is “empty … if the policies and programmes are not in place to enable choices to be constructed and realised” (2000: 15). For example, “if affordable childcare is not available, parental ‘choice’ is confined to labour force withdrawal and marginality” (Cass, 2000: 16).

36 This in turn led to the enactment of the (CTH) Sex Discrimination Act 1984. See generally Ryan, 1999: 140-145.

37 In his message to women on the first page of the second Agenda, Keating describes it as “a blueprint for bettering women’s lives” (OSW, 1993: 1).

38 The first National Agenda for Women, formally launched in 1988, is described by Reynolds as “the blueprint for reform in key areas of concern raised by Australian women” (1995: 97). It is “the result of extensive consultations with over 25,000 women around Australia - women from diverse backgrounds and representing a wide range of organizations and interest groups” (Reynolds, 1995: 97). As a text, it is divided into thirteen policy areas including consultation and participation in decision-making, education, women at home and families, employment, child care, leisure, sex discrimination, the portrayal of women in the media, income security, superannuation, violence against women and children, women with special needs and international cooperation (Reynolds, 1995: 97). There are some significant similarities and differences between the two national agendas. Employment and child-care are grouped together as connected issues in both agendas. Issues such as violence against women and the portrayal of women in the media are prioritised in both agendas. However, “women with special needs” becomes diversified into several different categories including young women, women in rural and remote areas, older women, women from non-English speaking backgrounds, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and women with disabilities. This diversification could signal a shift from “special needs” to “difference” in the handling of women as a category of persons.

39 Keating was quick to assure his Town Hall audience that his thoughts about women were “not campaign driven” (1993a: 1). Nonetheless, he was “very pleased to have an opportunity to address a great gathering of women so early in the election campaign” and that his chance to address the women of Australia through the media had been enhanced by the fact the election had been called (1993a: 1).

40 Whilst the first National Agenda was the result of consultations with over 25,000 women around Australia (Reynolds, 1995, 97), there is no indication in the second National Agenda of exactly how many women were consulted.

41 The strategy of consulting with community groups as part of policy making was initiated well before the Labor decade. Ryan comments that as part of the 1978 Committee of Inquiry, the Party set up a national women's policy committee and “in a novel and risky act, we invited all known women's organizations to consult with our committee, to tell us what they expected from government and what they would vote for” (1999: 178).
The extent and detail of the OSW's market research into women's needs and wants was "essential" to the claims that its findings were "legitimate" because they were "representative" (Rose, 1991: 686).

The distinction Keating makes between the women in women's (read feminist) organizations and 'ordinary Australian women' serves to further consolidate the class/gender divide. It implies that the views of working class women and housewives are not represented by the activities of women's organizations, which are seen to be run by middle-class, professional feminists.

Eisenstein comments that in 1993 Paul Keating "campaigned hard on a platform that included increased funding for child-care; a national program of training in gender bias for the judiciary; and an extensive National Agenda for Women" (1996: xiii). As Jupp and Sawer state, "the cash strapped [Labor Party] was able to draw on market research commissioned by the Office of the Status of Women in 1992 as part of preparing for the new National Agenda for Women" (1994: 15).

The second Agenda also incorporates the findings from some of the numerous government reports on women generated during the early Keating years, sixteen in total during the period of 1992-1993. See Chapter 1, endnote 29.

As Beard states, pronouns are utilised in political language in order to give "agency to actions (saying who is doing something)" and to help "provide cohesion to the overall text" (2000: 45).

The deployment of the rhetoric of equality, the use of terms such as 'fairness' and 'a fair go', is prevalent in both national agendas and is compatible with Labor discourse as described in Chapter 2.

"The work women do must be recognized for its proper value. Jobs most frequently done by women – those of clerks, waitresses and shop assistants – require a high level of skills, and we want to be paid for those skills" (OSW, 1993: 43).

Despite these claims that child-care is everyone's business, its status as women's business is emphasized by the picture at the end of the chapter on child-care, which shows a woman, presumably a child care worker but also perhaps a mother, with four young girls.

See also "Families" in Women in Australia for a similar description of the importance of family life to the "individual well-being" of women (OSW, 1993: 17).

For example, the second Agenda states that "women want the community, workplaces and governments to support families in a range of ways" through continuing financial support to families with children, more child care, continuing and increasing help for those caring for other family members who are elderly or have disabilities, and more flexible working conditions so that workers with family responsibilities can do both jobs well (OSW, 1993: 79-80).

As Jupp and Sawer comment, this theme of partnership between the feminist movement and the Labor government:

... was continued in the launch by Kim Beazley, late in the [1993] campaign, of his statement "Successes and Challenges: Women in Employment, Education and Training". In his foreword Beazley states that while Labor policies had been supportive: "Women are themselves the inspirations and agents for much of the change that has occurred. In national partnership with women's organizations, teachers, the trade unions, employers and community groups, the status of women can be further advanced by the year 2000 (1994: 21).

In an address to a forum of women in Canberra in September 1992, Keating describes his "changing" attitude to women's issues in a way that reflects the paternalist tenor of Labor concern for women. In this speech Keating:

... attributed a greater awareness of women's issues to ... being a father of three girls. "I watch them growing up and I worry for them sometimes, as I know the world can still be rough on women" (Gordon, 1993: 201-202).

In this way, the Labor government becomes the "character who will rescue women" (Yeatman, 1990: 88).

On child-care policy during the Labor decade, see generally Brennan, 1994: 164-204.

Brennan makes the point that from the seventies onwards the union movement began to acknowledge that child-care was indeed an “industrial issue” (1994: 141). She states that until this time Australian trade unions were more concerned with encouraging mothers to stay at home (1994: 142). On child-care as an industrial issue in Australia, see Brennan, 1994: 141-163. Despite this, Beilharz argues that “child care ... entered the discourse [of the Accord] only as an optional extra” (1987: 396). Indeed, in Beilharz’s opinion, “child-care falls outside of the scope of the discourse of labourism” (1987: 396).

These “special needs” women included women and children from non-English speaking backgrounds, women with disabilities and women from remote or isolated areas (ALP, 1993b: 1).

This new cash payment of sixty dollars per fortnight had the added advantage of being paid directly to the mother at home. The aim of the payment was to provide a source of independent income for women while they are out of the paid workforce caring for children (ALP, 1993a: 8). In addition to this measure, Labor committed to extend fee relief to occasional care to help meet the needs of women caring for children at home (ALP, 1993b: 7). In his speech, Keating recognises that “women at home can often do with some practical assistance” in terms of child-care (Keating, 1993a: 6). He also states that these women at home are “entitled to an acknowledgement and respect that perhaps was not always forthcoming in the past” (1993a: 6).

The launch of Investing in the Nation “provided the focal point for the first week of the campaign, along with two other events that had been long-planned in a pre-campaign context: a major statement on foreign policy highlighting the focus on Asia and an address at a forum of leading Australian women” (Gordon, 1993: 234). As Gordon comments, these three events, taken together, “provided what Keating termed ‘a higher, broader plateau’ on which he could build the most important element of his strategy: an unrelenting assault on the GST” (1993: 234).

There was scepticism amongst some feminists about Labor’s move towards classifying child-care as a legitimate economic issue. Frederickson questions whether in fact this move was genuine. “Could Keating and the Labor Party have changed so dramatically as to really consider child-care a fundamental economic issue?” (Frederickson, 1993: 40).
Chapter 6

‘The woman voter’ as consumer

In the lead up the Party's 1982 National Conference, Susan Ryan released a media statement, claiming that Labor was giving “women's interests and needs ... top priority” during its review of policies for the Conference (1981b: 1). This policy review would take account of “the needs of women as homemakers, workers and mothers” (Ryan, 1981b: 1). Pencilled onto the final version of this statement after “mothers” is the word “consumers”, perhaps a last minute inclusion by Ryan, Kate Moore or some other Party advisor (Ryan, 1981b: 1). This pencilling in, which occurred at a time in which Labor was preparing to take on government, signals the beginning of what would be a shift within Labor discourse towards constructing ‘the woman voter’ as consumer. Indeed, an appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as consumer, through what was termed “the handbag nerve” (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 36), underscored the Party's electoral strategy in the 1983 election. Labor's appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as consumer reached its zenith in the 1993 campaign, in which the Coalition's support for the introduction of a Goods and Services Tax became the major political issue of the election.

In this final chapter, I explore the nature and content of Labor's 1993 election campaign, which was Paul Keating’s first and only successful campaign as leader of the Party. I discuss how Keating as Prime Minister was required to undergo a particular transformation to distance himself from his persona as Treasurer. This exploration of shifts in the Keating persona is essential to an analysis of Labor’s appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as consumer.
voter’ under his leadership. I then extend the discussion of Labor’s construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker, started in the previous chapter, to an analysis of the appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as consumer in the 1993 election campaign. The construction of and appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as consumer constitutes a modification within the more established subject position of carer-worker. This modification is consistent with Labor’s sponsorship of a form of “co-operative capitalism” (Johnson, 2000: 30), which is itself broadly consonant with rationalities of liberal, economic government. I provide some background about the gendered character of consumption and the long-standing and intricate connections between women, practices of consumption and sites of consumption such as supermarkets and shopping malls. It is mainly through these practices and places of consumption that ‘the woman voter’ as consumer is constructed. Finally, I engage in a reading of Labor’s anti-GST campaign, with particular emphasis on its deployment of images of “ordinary Australian women” and images of “everyday life”. As Rose asserts, it is through the “quotidien narratives of ‘everyday life’” that the technologies of marketing and consumption operate (1996b: 146). Therefore, in order to construct and appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as consumer, images of everyday life, of ordinary women, ordinary objects and ordinary tasks, were mobilised by Labor in its anti-GST campaign materials.
The 1993 election campaign

In order to win the 1993 federal election, to be held on the 13th of March, the Coalition required a swing of just 0.9% (Emy, 1993: 1). Hence, a conservative victory seemed to be “the most likely outcome”, especially in light of the fact that “Labor had only just won the previous federal election in 1990” (Emy, 1993: 1). Furthermore, the election followed in the wake of “the worst recession in sixty years”, with government agencies reporting record levels of unemployment (Hirst, 1993: 3). The long standing power struggles over leadership at the federal level, which culminated in Keating’s caucus victory over Hawke in December 1991, had a detrimental impact on the morale of Labor personnel and, some argued, outside perceptions of the Party.2 The election year also marked “a decade in government” for Labor (Bean, 1994: 1). All signs seemed to point to the fact that this would be an “unlosable” election for the Coalition (Bean, 1994: 1).3 Labor’s era of political hegemony seemed to be coming to a close.

Despite these signs of inevitable defeat, the Party under Keating mounted a strong and sophisticated campaign in 1993. Opinion polling undertaken in February of that year showed that voters saw the Labor Party as “a better choice for dealing with health, welfare, environmental and women’s issues” (Jupp & Sawer, 1994: 13). And so Labor’s election campaign capitalized on these strengths. As Emy comments, “a vote for Labor was a vote for retaining Medicare intact, for consolidating existing reforms in higher education, and for a more generous approach to social policy” (1993: 3). More importantly, however, a vote for Labor would be a vote against the introduction of a Goods and Services Tax (GST). Indeed, Labor managed to turn the 1993 election into
“a referendum on the GST” (Emy, 1993: 2). Later in this chapter, I provide an in-depth analysis of Labor’s anti-GST campaign and its explicit appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as consumer. However, at this stage it is important to note how Labor’s opposition to the GST meshed with the general themes of the campaign. Labor’s campaign emphasized the themes of stability, moderate reform and strong social policy under Labor and social upheaval and a GST under the Coalition. Or, as the Singleton Advertising Agency phrased it, Labor’s “rhetorical thoughts for the campaign were warmth, caring, compassion and empathy with those affected by the recession versus cold, hard, uncaring and irresponsible policies” advocated by the Coalition (1993: 9). Labor’s message here can be seen as reflecting ‘feminine’ values of caring and compassion versus the Coalition’s more ‘masculine’ approach to policy.

Labor under Keating was largely successful in transforming the debate on the GST into a debate about core Australian values of fairness and equality, the kinds of values that have been central to Labor culture and language (as discussed in Chapter 2). In particular, invocations of ‘fairness’ were fundamental to Labor’s rhetoric in the 1993 campaign. In the document summarizing the Party’s policy commitments, under the subtitle “A Fairer Australia”, it states that:

Labor believes in striving for a peaceful, socially just and culturally rich society for all Australians. To achieve this, a Labor government sees its role as ensuring that all Australians, irrespective of their income, ethnic background, sex or racial origin, can have productive and fulfilling lives ... Today, Labor reaffirms its commitment to a fairer Australia (ALP, 1993a: 6-8).
“A fairer Australia” under Labor was positioned in direct opposition to the kind of “fiercely competitive, dog-eat-dog society” that the Coalition would create with their policies, policies that would “compound existing inequalities and exacerbate social conflict” (Emy, 1993: 2). As Emy states, Keating “seized every opportunity to define Labor as the party of equity and fairness, and to portray the Coalition as elitist, inequitable and obsessed by its desire to unleash unfettered market forces” (1993: 3). For example, in a speech delivered during the campaign, Keating argues that Dr. Hewson’s GST and the rest of his *Fightback* policy package “attacks the tradition of fairness and equality”:

> It attacks the tradition of progress towards civilised social goals. It attacks the tradition of care for the underprivileged and vulnerable - for protecting the weak against the strong. These traditions are built into our society - they shape the way we think, the way we go about our lives. In large part they derive from the last decade of the last century - from the rise of the Labor movement and the emergence of a new national spirit (Ryan, 1995: 81).

Here Keating is invoking the traditional image of Labor as the party of equality and fairness, the protector of the weak and disadvantaged, the prime mover in our national story of social progress. Prime Minister Keating’s support for the goals of social justice and equality stands in stark contrast to the concerns of Treasurer Keating, a figure who had fearlessly advocated privatisation, economic rationalism and the introduction of a GST. Indeed, it was necessary for Prime Minister Keating to undergo a particular transformation in order to exorcise the more unpleasant persona of Treasurer Keating.
The issue of the Keating persona and the problems it posed for Labor’s electoral fortunes, especially with women voters, will now be explored.

Keating, the scientist, Hawke, the populist: contrasting the leaders’ personae

As stated in Chapter 1, the Party’s leader becomes all-important in a political contest because he is seen to “embody the public image of the party” at the time (Parkin & Warhurst, 2000: 33). More than this, a leader must, as Wark puts it, “embody majority taste” and “taste in leadership itself” (1999: 68). The image of the leader has been viewed by some party pollsters, campaigners and political scientists as particularly important to women voters. Gender gap research has supported the idea that women are more likely than men to indicate that the leader is a major factor in deciding their vote (Lawrence, 2000: 217). Hence, the personality, image and statements of the leader are a crucial component in any election campaign analysis, especially when the construction of ‘the woman voter’ is being considered. In the context of the 1993 election campaign, this focus on the leader’s personae is particularly relevant because Party polling had long indicated that Keating was not popular amongst women voters.

By contrast, Hawke was seen to be an immensely popular figure, especially with swinging voters. Hawke’s image in the 1983 campaign in particular was “that of a man above politics”. First and foremost, Hawke was a populist (Stewart, 1993: 88). As McGregor points out, even before entering federal Parliament, “Hawke had endeared himself to much of the Australian public in a way which, especially for a trade union
leader, was unprecedented” (1983: 11). He was the “open, down-to-earth, warm and cuddly prime minister” (Gordon, 1993: 200). He was frank with the media and the public about his drinking problem and about the troubles with his daughter and in his marriage. McGregor comments that:

One of the key things to understand about [Hawke] ... is the lack of distance between his private and public selves. Unlike many professional politicians, Hawke doesn't carry a mask around in front of his face. ... It's one of the reasons people warm to him; he seems so open and direct, so much himself, that men and women alike respond to him instantly (1983: 145).\(^6\)

Hawke was seen to be popular with women voters not just because he was “sexy”\(^7\), but because of his willingness to be emotional (his famous tears) and to expose his private self.\(^8\) Although Keating and Hawke shared much in common, their personae as leaders were strikingly different. As Stewart comments, while Hawke was the “populist”, Keating was the “scientist” (1993: 88). While “Hawke walked the shopping malls”\(^9\), “Keating stalked the corridors of Treasury” (Stewart, 1993: 88). Hawke's passionate interest in sport was consistent with his image as an all-Australian bloke. This stood in contrast with Keating’s love of antiques, Italian suits and Empire clocks. Keating was famous for his “arrogance, conceit and contemptuousness” (Adams, 1997: 9). The Australian public did not regard Keating “as a warm human being and many felt he could not remake his persona” as a populist leader (Stewart, 1993: 93).

Then there was the evidence confirming Keating’s unpopularity with women, which posed a problem in terms of the Party’s attempt to hold onto their votes. It is important
to consider at this point the variations in the gender gap numbers in the elections between 1983 and 1993. (I should reiterate that I offer these numbers not as evidence that Australian women actually did change their voting preferences during this period, but as important quantitative materials that informed the construction of ‘the women voter’ within Labor discourse as a volatile, swinging constituency.) Research indicated that the Party maintained its appeal with women voters in the 1984 election (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 37). However, by the 1987 election the numbers changed, with the percentage of women choosing the Coalition higher than the percentage of men supporting the Coalition (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 37). The 1990 election saw the gender gap close completely, with no substantive difference recorded between the percentage of women and men who intended to vote for the Coalition (Renfrow, 1994: 121). However, Labor Party was again “in trouble” with women in 1991 and 1992 (Frederickson, 1993: 40). In the months prior to the 1993 election, Party polling showed that the gender gap was back up around 5% (Frederickson, 1993: 40). This research also showed that “more women than men favoured John Hewson as a leader, while Prime Minister Paul Keating was rated more positively by men” (Curtin, 1997: 8; Jupp & Sawer, 1994: 18). As Frederickson states:

Personal approval ratings for Keating and Hewson, according to a February [1993] Morgan Gallup poll of women voters, gave Hewson a 6% lead. Only 22% of women polled said they were satisfied with the way Keating was performing as Prime Minister (1993: 40).

Keating’s image problem with women prompted the appointment of Anne Summers to his staff as his “special consultant on women’s issues” (Gordon, 1983: 199). Summers
advised her new employer that his biggest handicap with women voters was that “he had played the role of ‘national killjoy’ for far too long as treasurer: dealing unemotionally with a narrow range of economic-related subjects while projecting both a cold arrogance and a lack of comprehension of the problems of ordinary people” (Gordon, 1993: 199-200). Keating also faced an uphill battle in convincing the broader feminist movement that he was committed to their principles and goals. Many feminists still recalled Keating’s first speech in federal Parliament in 1969, when the then twenty-five year old backbencher argued for government to take on a more proactive role, through taxation and price control policy, to make it less necessary for women to work (Gordon, 1993: 41). In his first speech, the young Keating stated that:

In the last couple of years the government has boasted about the increasing number of women in the workforce. Rather than something to be proud of, I feel this is something of which we should feel ashamed (Gordon, 1993: 201).

Keating’s “social conservatism” is performed here through his steadfast proclamation that family life is the basis of Australian nationhood (Gordon, 1993: 41, 201). And so there was a concerted effort made by his staff in the lead up to the 1993 election to feminize the Prime Minister, to make him over as a “sensitive new age guy” (Jupp & Sawer, 1994: 18). He appeared on Geraldine Doogue’s Radio National program “Life Matters” (Jupp & Sawer, 1994: 18). He spoke on numerous occasions about sexual violence, sending a personal message to ‘Reclaim the Night’ marches around Australia in October 1992 (Jupp & Sawer, 1994: 18). During the campaign, he took the opportunity afforded by his position as Prime Minister to reiterate his commitment to women and women’s issues. At the Australian Book Publishers Awards in June 1992, he
attacked the international image of Australia as a country of “gormless men, and shrimps and barbecues”, instead advocating a new national image incorporating our status as “a model for the rest of the world ... in legislation to protect and improve the status of women” (Ryan, 1995: 93). At the Inaugural Forum of the Coalition of Australian Participating Organisations of Women (CAPOW) in September 1992, he spoke of “Australia’s proud record in advancing the status of women”, a record which includes the passing of the *Sex Discrimination Act*, which he described as “one of Labor’s greatest achievements” (Ryan, 1995: 153, 157). Furthermore, despite reports that Keating was reluctant to use his family to “soften his image” (Gordon, 1993: 200), the 1993 campaign did see him appear more often in public with his family. His wife Annita took on a more prominent role than had previously been the case, appearing in a four-page spread in *Woman’s Day* (Jupp & Sawer, 1994: 19).¹⁶

In conjunction with solving the problems posed by his Treasurer persona, Keating as Prime Minister needed to forge a broader vision for his government, a vision that would go beyond the realm of the economic. Leading up to and during the election period, Keating started to speak enthusiastically about social and cultural issues, for example, reconciliation with Aboriginal people, the importance of multiculturalism and the move towards a Republic. In particular, he started to talk about social justice, equality and fairness in a way that had been difficult when he occupied his position as supreme economic manager. He spoke about the need to measure our nation’s strength not only by economic standards but also according to the principles of equity and fairness (Keating, 1992: 75, 82). In his address to CAPOW, Keating described the kind of society his Labor government wished to build:
We want less aggression and violence ... We as a Government ... are dedicated to improving our society, to making it a fairer and nicer place (Ryan, 1995: 160).

Keating argued in address after address, in various public forums that Labor under his leadership was committed to further consolidating a “liberal, democratic, tolerant, diverse, independent Australia” (Keating, 1992: 147). In his speeches, we see a reiteration of the goals of the Labor Party as defined by figures like Wran and Carr in the early years of Labor under Hawke, namely ensuring social justice within the confines of capitalism. At a fundraising dinner for the Queensland State branch in July 1992, Keating summarized Labor's aims in government in exactly these terms:

We've introduced a market economy, but we've done it with a decent social policy. We've done it with a social policy that looks after the sick, the aged, the young, the poor, women, migrants. We've done it to keep Australia together. We've done it the Labor way (Keating, 1992: 109).

Labor under Keating (much like its predecessor) advocated, through policy and rhetoric, “a version of neo-liberal economic ideology with discourse supporting social diversity” (Johnson, 2000: 38). Hence, as Johnson states, “there was ... an essential continuity between Keating’s project as Treasurer in the Hawke government and his broader social and political project as Prime Minister” (2000: 25). Despite Keating’s attempts to “go beyond economic reductionism”, the Party still “tended to privilege social issues that were compatible” with Labor's construction of the economic (Johnson, 2000: 31):
Citizenship was conceived in very narrow terms constrained by particular constructions of economic necessity and limited economic resources. This was just the latest version of Labor’s social harmony vision and, like so many earlier versions, the harmony between different groups was based on a conception of common economic aims (Johnson, 2000: 31).

Women as a category of persons were implicated in this new cooperative community, but mostly in ways that were supportive of market capitalism. In a speech to the National Family Summit on the 11th of November 1992, Keating claimed that:

There is a generational shift occurring. The experience of multiculturalism, the fact of global communications, new technologies, new economic and social imperatives, and indeed the new status and increasingly prominent role of women, is shaping a new national identity - one, I hope, which will continue our best traditions while embracing the new reality of Australia (Ryan, 1995: 248).

Here Keating is gesturing towards what Stewart calls “a national project of identity formation” (1993: 102). As described in the previous chapter, during the Hawke-Keating years Labor discourse facilitated new kinds of identities or subject-positions, including woman as carer-worker, through the use of various technologies of government. Such constructions were largely consonant with the objectives of liberal, economic government. As Johnson observes:

... in the government’s historical narrative, the [Party’s] natural constituency moved from being the white, blue collar male industrial worker ... to being a member of any class, sex, sexuality, race or ethnicity working in cutting edge
manufacturing, a new information economy, or in the service industries, and all working together to make Australia internationally competitive (2000: 30).

New kinds of identities needed to be constructed, identities that were compatible with “the new spirit of entrepreneurial co-operative capitalism” (Johnson, 2000: 30). These identities needed to fit into this mostly economic vision of society (Johnson, 2000: 31). The construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker is a striking example of this process of subject-constitution (as argued in Chapter 5). A significant modification within this political subject position is the appeal to and construction of ‘the woman voter’ as consumer, as evidenced in the 1993 election campaign. Before embarking on a detailed discussion of the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as consumer, it is important to canvas the key debates about gender and consumption, in particular the characterization of the consumer as feminine. Such a discussion assists in understanding the shape and content of Labor’s appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as consumer.

**Shopping for votes**

Practices and places of consumption have traditionally been closely associated with women whereas processes and places of production have been seen as inherently masculine (Scott, 1999: 197). These associations arise, as Slater explains, “from a gendered division of labour which divides public and private, production and reproduction” (1997: 56). There is also a strong association between the two
conceptual divides of public/private and production/consumption. Together these divisions position women in the private sphere, preoccupied with tasks of reproduction and consumption and men in the public sphere, involved in tasks of production in paid work. Women's designation on the consumption side of this divide, as with all dichotomies of this kind, is highly problematic. First and foremost, such a designation ignores the fact that women have always been involved in processes of production, whether through paid or unpaid work. It also ignores the fact that these two processes have been closely connected, especially in relation to women's increased involvement in the workforce. As Reekie comments, from the 1970s onwards “families became increasingly dependent on women’s waged work outside the home to maintain a desired lifestyle based on the purchase of services and commodities such as cars, whitegoods, electrical appliances, and a vast range of mass produced convenience goods” (1991: 15). Consumption of these so-called ‘time saving’ devices has been reliant on women's production in the paid workforce. As Slater points out, in a consumer culture, workers, especially women workers, are “simultaneously the makers and the market” (1997: 21).

Such insights, however, have not managed to radically alter the gendered construction of ‘the consumer’. Slater comments that:

... the consumer is a schizoid character in modern thought. On the one hand a ridiculous figure ... a cultural dupe or dope, the mug seduced by advertising. ... On the other hand, the consumer is a hero of modernity ... rational and autonomous (1997: 33).

It is significant that the consumer as hero is usually symbolised by the rational bourgeois man, the “proper economic actor” (Slater, 1997: 55). In contrast, the
ordinary, everyday consumer is the “feminine character of the irrational, manipulated and domestic consumer” (Slater, 1997: 33). It is the ordinary, everyday consumer as feminine that is the more important figure in the context of this chapter.

Reekie makes the point that “the vast majority of the world’s shoppers have been women” (1993: xi). Traditionally it has been women who have either purchased or managed the purchasing of “clothing, household goods, food, drink and other daily necessaries for themselves and for their families” (Reekie, 1993: xi). Furthermore, women have been positioned as ideal consumers because they are seen to be passive, to act irrationally, and to think uncritically (Reekie, 1991, 19). They are therefore said to be easily manipulated by advertisers (Reekie, 1991: 19). The woman consumer has been a “resented” and “ridiculed” figure (Kingston, 1994: 196). She has been perceived by (male) market researchers and advertisers to be:

... domesticated, obtuse, duplicitous, predominantly concerned with family and personal affairs, and often incapable of knowing her own mind or her reasons for buying (Reekie, 1993: 165).

Some feminists have shared this derision for the female consumer. Second wave feminists in particular tended to characterize “the post-war housewife as powerless and pitiable” (Reekie, 1991: 16). A good example of this characterization is contained in an article by Julie Rigg, published in the late 1960s, entitled “The Loneliness of the Long Distance Housewife: Mrs. Consumer”. In this article, Rigg focuses on the passivity of the female consumer in the face of mass marketing and consumer culture:
The mass seduction of Australian women is now big business; and since, increasingly, there is little to choose between competing brands of consumer products, Mrs. Consumer must be beguiled not by the intrinsic merits of the product but by associating the product with her deeper social and emotional needs. ... For Mrs. Consumer’s every whim, an advertiser has an answer; for her larger guilts and desires, a promise (1969: 136).

Reekie attributes this attitude to the female consumer to the mostly socialist feminist preoccupation “with production at the expense of consumption” (1993: xiii). She argues that the second wave feminist focus on women “as wage-earners rather than consumers ... pushed female customers ... into the background” (1993: xiii). And so these negative perceptions of the female consumer, her perceived “lack of agency and self-determination”, are mostly the result of a certain negative “attitude to consumption” (Swanson, 1995: 9).

Clearly, other feminist commentators have taken a different view, and it is their work that particularly interests me here. These feminists have argued that “bestowing a negative character on activities associated with ... consumption ... reinforces a hierarchy that continues to validate masculine productivity ... against feminine consumption” (Swanson, 1995: 9-10). They have also “tried to avoid a model of power that relies upon corporations’ direct manipulation of passive consumers in favour of a model that treats power as a network influencing in an elusive fashion” (Yelanjian, 1991: 97). Such a view recognizes that systems of consumption are not as absolute and consumers not as passive as imagined by some critics (Barrett, 1998: 131). This approach to consumption avoids replicating the masculinist derision and disregard for the female
consumer and practices of consumption. In short, it takes consumption and the
(woman) consumer seriously. Such work has focused not just on consumption as an
overall societal phenomenon, but also on the various places of consumption (such as
shopping centres) and specific practices of consumption (different kinds of shopping\textsuperscript{18}
performed by different consumers\textsuperscript{19}). An analysis of the gendered nature of places and
practices of consumption provides a foundation for my reading of Labor's anti-GST
campaign in 1993. Such an investigation helps us understand how Labor utilizes these
places and processes in their attempts to appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as consumer.

**Places and practices of consumption**

The shopping centre is the most obvious site for processes of modern consumption. In
keeping with the gendered dimension of these processes, the shopping centre has
emerged as “a large and significant public space dedicated as specifically women’s
space” (Barrett, 1998: 134). However, shopping centres are not simply places where
women go to shop. Theorists interested in consumption recognize that shopping
centres are quite complicated sites (Yelanjian, 1991: 97). Slater states that shopping
centres “serve a range of functions: not just the circulation of commodities, but a focus
for social gathering and collective identities” (1997: 54). They are sites with “leisure-
resource potential” (Morris, 1998: 70). They are “used for sight-seeing ... as meeting-
places, and for warmth, cool, and shelter, by young people, pensioners, the
unemployed, and the homeless” (Morris, 1998: 75). Shopping spaces of this kind are
also connected to “other sites of domestic and familial labour” (Morris, 1998: 67), such
as the home, the school, the retirement home, the child-care centre, the public library and the community centre. Moreover, they are linked with “other cultural forms and practices (most obviously, television)” (Morris, 1998: 77). More fundamentally, however, shopping centres are simultaneously both public and private space. Although technically private property, the shopping centre has emerged as a unique kind of public space, the venue for a wide variety of public activities as described above. As Scott comments, shopping centres are places where “competing notions of public space and commercial space” operate (1999: 191). They represent the confluence of the variously designated spheres of work, commerce, leisure and the family. Thus, shopping centres can be characterized as women’s space, both public and private, fulfilling a variety of social and commercial uses. In this sense, the location and activities of the shopping centre bring about a troubling of the already unstable divide between the public and the private, as described in the previous chapter.

Shopping itself as a practice needs to be considered in relation to the construction of consuming subjects. As with the denigration of ‘the consumer’, shopping has been characterized as an activity that is “wasteful, distracting, sexually gratifying” and “definitively feminine” (Swanson, 1995: 10). Nevertheless, even those who characterize consumption in negative terms recognize that women as consumers can “exercise a kind of collective power through their purses and shopping trolleys” (Kingston, 1994: 196). For example, Rigg acknowledges that in the process of making decisions about purchases, Australian women have been able to exercise “a degree of autonomy and an affirmation of identity” normally found by men through work or political activity (1969: 143). Through the processes of shopping, the woman consumer can display a certain
“expertise, authority [and] knowledge” essential to maintaining herself and her family (Swanson, 1995: 21). In this way, consumerism as practiced in the public spaces of shopping centres is intimately connected to “the construction of private, bourgeois domesticity” (Slater, 1997: 15). Shopping has the potential to enhance women’s relative status and esteem (Swanson, 1995: 11). Through practices of shopping women are:

... called up to nourish the bodies and minds of the nation, to produce effective citizens through their skilful manipulation of domestic finance and market information according to moral, as well as physical, agendas (Swanson, 1995: 51).

Shopping thus offers women forms of self-definition “not confined by work or home” (Swanson, 1995: 20; see also Slater, 1997: 10). As Slater asserts, it is partially through the consumption of certain “goods and services that we formulate ourselves as social identities and display these identities” (1997: 31). Shopping has thus been incorporated into women’s “desire and quest for self-identity” (Allen & Long, 1997: 141) and should be viewed as an integral part of “a process of the refashioning of public femininities” (Swanson, 1995: 52).

We can understand this interaction between identity-formation and processes of consumption by considering how it relates to broader questions of discourse and liberal, economic government. As Dean explains, in advanced liberal government the “free subject is a situated one” (1999: 165). One of the multitudinous ways in which this subject is situated is in “networks of identification based on ... patterns of consumption”
(Dean, 1999: 165). The free subject in advanced liberal government is also “institutionally and organizationally located” in the sense that he or she:

... is found at the workplace, the community organization, the school, the home and the shopping mall. It is here that its choices will be made sovereign and its decisions will be calculated (Dean, 1999: 165).

Dean acknowledges the importance of certain sites, such as shopping centres, to networks of consumption. These patterns and places of consumption, or what Rose terms “consumption technologies”, formulate and propagate “images of conduct” for consumers, which construct “new relations between the purchase of goods and services and the shaping of the self” (1996b: 146). In other words, practices of consumption can be viewed as “discursive practices” through which certain notions of the self, certain subject positions are constituted (Rose, 1996: 174-175). So it is not just that consumers seek to create a sense of identity and status through the goods and services they choose to purchase but rather, more fundamentally, that processes of consumption are the means by which one becomes “a choosing self” and hence a governing self (Slater, 1997: 61). In this way, rather than the consumption of certain goods and services merely signifying a particular social identity, identity itself becomes a function of consumption (Slater, 1997: 30). The whole range of technologies (advertising and market research, shopping, socializing in shopping centres) associated with consumer culture constitutes a new kind of regime for the conduct of conduct, a new site for the construction of the woman consumer as subject.
It may not be immediately obvious how these technologies of consumption relate to an analysis of electoral politics. However on closer inspection, the connections between the two are multiple and complex. Take, for example, market research, a technology originally developed in order to find out what consumers, especially women consumers, think and feel about products on the market. Reekie states that:

Market research, with its institutional origins in the post-World War I enthusiasm for rational, efficient and ‘scientific’ approaches to production ... claimed to provide statistical information about consumers and their product preference, brand loyalty, buying habits, decision-making, the responses of readers, listeners and viewers to advertisements, and differences in the markets by factors such as age, sex, and class (1991: 17).

Market research, like statistical material, seeks “to govern chance” (Hacking, 1991: 185), by providing “objective” evidence of consumers’ behaviours and preferences. Increasingly during the Hawke-Keating era, the Party used market research to gather information about voters’ preferences, habits, loyalties, responses and differences. Using this market research, the Party targeted voters much like consumers. In this context, a voter is not a known supporter “but an anonymous subject who can only be imagined and constructed as an object”, the target of an advertising campaign or a profile produced by a market survey (Slater, 1997: 26, 55). In the context of a campaign to win their votes, women are thus positioned as “objects of knowledges, indeed as targets for the manoeuvres” of pollsters, campaign strategists, politicians and femocrats in much the same way as they are the targets of retailers, planners and developers (Morris, 1998: 72). If voters are consumers in this context, then “political
leaders are often viewed as commodities”, who voters will “inspect and evaluate” according to the likely benefits they might bring (Lawrence, 2000: 217). ‘The woman voter’ is thus encouraged to identify as a Labor voter in a similar way as “someone who buys goods at a supermarket” is made to “identify as a consumer” (Dean, 1999: 33).

In terms of places of consumption, the link with Labor’s electoral culture has already been hinted at throughout this thesis. I have mentioned how shopping centres became an important place for the Labor Party, especially populist leaders like Bob Hawke, to reach out to women voters. This was not just because women could be found gathered there but because, by setting up an information stand or organizing for a candidate to meet and greet shoppers, the Party could involve itself with the shopping community, becoming a part (albeit briefly) of the complex social activities in the centre. More than this however, shopping centres were places in which Labor could make an appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker and consumer. Obviously shopping centres are places in which women perform certain tasks associated with their role as ultimate, everyday consumer. Perhaps less obviously, shopping centres are sites that also engage women as carer-workers, a place where they can spend their working wages and provide for their families’ needs. This complex appeal to ‘the woman voter’ destabilizes the division between the public life of work and the private world of home and family, at least in relation to the lives of women.

Labor’s move towards addressing ‘the woman voter’ as consumer from the early 1980s onwards is not surprising if we consider that the eighties “saw one of the most powerful rediscoveries of consumerism” in western cultures (Slater, 1997: 10). During this
period, especially under the governments of Thatcher in Britain and Reagan in the United States, “the model of consumer choice came to be seen as the most adequate model for all forms of modern citizenship and social action” (Slater, 1997: 37). These kinds of governments have increasingly appealed to “the elusive sovereignty of the consumer as more democratic and enabling than processes of political decision-making” (1991: 50). Modes and processes of consumption thus took on great political significance, with “the extension of the consumer model” to “other domains of social action” such as public service broadcasting or health provision” (Slater, 1997: 25).25 As described above, practices of consumption such as shopping can thus be viewed as technologies that create and recreate certain subject positions, certain selves within discourse. In terms of Labor’s anti-GST message at the 1993 election, images of ordinary, everyday people (especially women) involved in acts of consumption feature throughout the Party’s campaign materials. In analysing Labor’s anti-GST campaign, we can see how ‘the women voter’ as consumer was addressed and constituted through the propagation of these images of consumption.

**Labor’s anti-GST campaign: targeting ‘the woman voter’ as consumer**

In Labor’s campaign materials for the 1993 election, women continued to be singled out as important voters.26 In particular, “selected Labor Party election material and advertisements ... targeted women, asking them to reject key features of the Coalition’s *Fightback* package, including higher cost medical expenses, taxes on supermarket shopping, cuts to welfare and confrontationist industrial relations policies” (Johnson,
1993: 81). The campaign relied on high profile women like Jennie George and Anne Deveson to push home the message about the “lifestyle threatening GST and industrial reforms” (Hirst, 1993: 39). Jeannette McHugh, the Minister for Consumer Affairs, appeared on numerous occasions on ABC radio to talk about the GST and the burden on women as consumers. As Jupp and Sawer comment, McHugh “had little difficulty in reinforcing women’s fears of the GST” (1994: 18). In emphasizing the negative impact of a GST on women’s lives, Labor was capitalizing on Australian women’s long-standing opposition to consumption tax. Indeed, Australian gender gap research has consistently shown that women are more likely than men to be against consumption tax.

In view of women’s traditional opposition to consumption tax, it made sense in the context of this election campaign not simply to appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as worker-carer, as had been the case in previous elections of the Labor decade, but also to make an appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as consumer. This construction of ‘the woman voter’ as consumer can be viewed as a modification within the more established subject position of ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker. As discussed above in relation to shopping centres, woman’s role as ultimate consumer is connected to her role as carer-worker. She is a consumer, she spends her working wages and she provide for her family’s needs. In this way, woman as consumer is a construction that incorporates both a caring and a working persona. At different moments, within different texts, emphasis might be placed upon one facet, or a particular combination of facets, of the position of ‘the woman voter’. For example, in speeches throughout the 1993 election campaign, Keating spoke about the detrimental impact Fightback would have on women, both their
working and domestic lives. He consistently linked the Coalition’s policy to introduce a
GST with its policies on industrial relations. This link was further consolidated by one of
Labor’s election slogans, “Jobs not GST – It’s your choice”. In his Chifley Memorial
Lecture on the 12th of September 1992, Keating stated that the Coalition’s consumption
tax:

... will tax the household budget for which women are generally responsible. ...

And under the Coalition’s enterprise bargaining system, women in the workforce
can expect their earnings to erode (Keating, 1992: 148).

Here Keating is appealing to the woman voter as consumer and worker. In other
contexts, the emphasis is more on woman as consumer and carer. For example, in a
major Party policy document, entitled Poles Apart on Australia’s Future: It’s Your Choice,
it states that “almost everything necessary to keep a family healthy or a household
running would cost more with a GST” (ALP, 1993d: 59). It would be “women who run
households” who would “bear the brunt of Dr. Hewson's policies” (ALP, 1993d: 59). In
a campaign speech, Keating described Fightback as “especially unfair” to these
household managers because it would tax the woman’s purse and compensate the
man’s wallet (Keating, 1992: 161). Here an appeal is being made to woman as
consumer and carer, a figure who expresses her concern for her family through proper
management of the household budget. An appeal to fairness, one of the crucial themes
of Labor’s campaign, is also incorporated into this message. Furthermore, as discussed
above, Keating’s new image as a champion of equality and a ‘fair go for all’ was an
essential component of this appeal to fairness. In sum, Labor emphasized throughout
the 1993 campaign that Fightback would have a detrimental impact on women as
workers (through industrial relations reforms), as carers (through taxing the household budget) and as consumers (by taxing the purse and not the wallet). Hence, different aspects of the subject position of ‘the woman voter’ were emphasized in different electoral texts, circulating in various combinations and inflections.

One of the primary mechanisms through which ‘the woman voter’ is constructed as consumer in these texts is through images of “everyday life” (Rose, 1996b: 146), especially representations of “the ordinary woman” (Morris, 1998: 70) performing everyday tasks. In the following section, I offer a close reading of the anti-GST campaign materials developed by the Party for the 1993 federal election. Such a close reading demonstrates how images of “everyday life” were mobilized in Labor’s appeal to ‘the woman voter’. These images and narratives, in turn, work to construct ‘the woman voter’ as a new subject position. This subject position is foundational to the forms of life that these everyday images display (Rose, 1996b: 146). Furthermore, these images of “everyday life” are related to certain technologies of marketing and consumption, especially shopping.

Images of “everyday life”

As discussed in Chapter 4, ‘women’ have conventionally been described as apolitical. Hence, when parties have sought to “soften their image” (Sawer, 1986: 540), to present an image to the electorate that is less-partisan and more populist, they have generally utilized images of women. Throughout the Labor decade, the Party progressively used
more images of women than men in their election campaign materials because it was believed that doing so would attract the attention of women voters.\textsuperscript{36} Take, for example, the “Let’s Stick Together” series of advertisement for the 1987 campaign, developed by John Singleton Advertising. As Simms comments, “there were significantly more women than men featured in this series of television advertisements” (1988: 159). This series used various images of “Ordinary Australians” or, more precisely, images of “the ordinary woman” (Morris, 1998: 114-155, 70).\textsuperscript{37} These images include a woman driving a tractor, mothers with their children, grandmothers with their grandchildren, a female barrister, children in school and at play, housewives, a lady bowler, and a female teacher (Singleton, 1987: 1-5). When Bob Hawke shows up in these advertisements, he is accompanied by his wife Hazel or surrounded by a group of school children (Singleton, 1987: 2). Only a few images of men (a farmer, a male patient) appear in these advertisements (Singleton, 1987: 4-5). The women featured typically talk about caring issues such as Medicare, children in poverty and children’s education.

The 1987 campaign will also be remembered for Labor’s Wendy Woods television advertisements, which received a great deal of “national attention” (Simms, 1988: 159). Wendy Woods was an employee of John Singleton (Simms, 1988: 159). In a series of advertisements for both television and the print media, Wendy (a typical Aussie mum) expresses her concerns about John Howard’s policies (see Figure 6.1). Wendy’s major worry in these advertisements is the possible introduction of a new consumption tax under a Liberal government. As Simms explains:

\begin{quote}
Wendy herself took up one of the major themes from the [Party’s] women’s policies, namely that the Liberals’ policies would seriously disadvantage women
\end{quote}
financially. ‘Please tell us Mr. Howard, where is the money coming from’, cried Wendy ... [accusing him] of planning to tax ‘baby food and school clothes’ (1988, 159).

In these advertisements, Wendy poses “some real simple questions” to John Howard about home nursing, Meals On Wheels, medicines, pensions, Medicare, child-care and the impact of the GST on family spending. Again, these are the caring issues, according to gender gap research, that are important to women voters. Furthermore, within the context of a campaign in which consumption tax was a major issue, this advertisement makes an appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as carer and consumer, the manager of the home and major purchaser of its goods and services. Wendy is shown in her kitchen in some of the advertisements, standing with her family in others. She uses colloquialisms like “cop”, “whopper” and “righto”, which emphasize her status as an ordinary, working class woman. Hence, these advertisements depict the chores, routines and objects that make up daily life in its appeal to the values and concerns of “Ordinary Australians”, especially “the ordinary woman”.

John Singleton was also responsible for preparing Labor’s advertising campaign in 1993. Again, images of women proliferate, especially in the television advertisements. For example, in the television advertisement entitled “Medicare – ‘My Baby’” (see Figure 6.2), a pregnant mother with two other children voices her concern about changes to Medicare under a Coalition government. Again, this advertisement incorporates an (emotional) appeal to “Ordinary Australians” (Singleton, 1993b: 3). It depicts a woman who, in her role as carer and consumer, worries about the impact a GST will have on the lives of her children.
The National Secretariat also produced campaign materials for information booths, mail-outs and election day that predominantly feature images of women. As with Labor’s national media campaign (conceptualised by Singleton), the focus of this campaign material, to be used at the local grass-roots level, is the impact of the Coalition’s GST and industrial relations policies on women. Predictably, images of women and children appear in campaign materials on child-care. Less predictably, however, images of women predominate in campaign materials on industrial relations (a woman at a computer, a woman standing alone in front of two children), sport (women playing netball, soccer, doing aerobics, at the gym), tourism (a woman at a hotel desk, preparing coffee, training as a waitress), and training (a woman welder). Consistently emphasized in these materials is the impact the GST will have on the working lives and leisure time of “Ordinary Australians”. Furthermore, all these materials show women in both traditional and non-traditional occupations. The Party also produced campaign materials specifically dealing with women’s policy, such as a flyer entitled “Women and Fightback” and another entitled “Opportunities for Women or a New Tax?”, which deals with health, child-care, unemployment, wages, education, training and violence. At this grass roots level, the materials aimed at ‘the woman voter’ construct her as carer-worker and consumer.

The deployment of representations of everyday life, the mundane and the domestic was taken to a new level in materials developed by Labor focusing on the Coalition’s GST. These materials are completely unlike the usual election campaign flyers produced by the National Secretariat for distribution at the local electorate level. They are post-card
sized images of various objects - a chicken drumstick with a bite taken out of it (see Figure 6.3), a pair of scissors, a spanner and a saw. These cartoon images of everyday household objects are made out of stiff paper and cut to fit the specific image depicted. The picture side features a ‘witty’ slogan, such as “Don’t Bite Off More Than You Can Chew” over the image of a chicken drumstick. The other side features Labor’s messages about the impact of the GST on the everyday lives of Australian consumers, for example, by making takeaway food and supermarket items more expensive. It also recognizes that the GST will make “the occasional little luxuries like fish and chips” more expensive. This is an explicit appeal to ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker and consumer, namely the exhausted working mother who, at the end of the working week, is spared cooking the evening meal by being able to order takeaway food for her family. This small respite from her duties as carer-worker is thus threatened by the introduction of a GST, which poses restrictions on her spending power as a consumer. Other items and services listed that would attract a GST include “clothing, shoes, electricity, baby-sitting and video hire”. Again, these are the everyday commodities and services normally bought and used by women consumers, which make their working and caring lives easier to manage.

Interestingly, hairdressing, both as a service and an occupation, is given special emphasis in Labor’s campaign materials for the 1993 election. The “Women and Fightback” flyer shows an image of a young woman hairdresser setting the hair of an older woman client. Contained in this one image is an appeal to both woman as small-business owner and/or worker and (older) woman as regular consumer of hairdressing services. The message is clear - both these women will suffer under a GST. Labor
produced two flyers dedicated entirely to the impact of the GST on hairdressing as an industry and as a service. The first flyer, entitled “Dr Hewson’s GST ... It’s Enough to Make Your Hair Stand on End” describes how both salon customers and salon owners will be “hit hard by a GST” (see Figure 6.4). Another flyer features on one side the image of a comb, the other side information about the GST’s impact on “the cost of living” (see Figure 6.5). This material on hairdressing contains numerous appeals to ‘the woman voter’ as consumer, as worker and as small business owner. It also incorporates an appeal to typically ‘feminine’ interests such as appearance and beauty. It takes an everyday service of importance to women and imbues it with a political significance, incorporating Labor’s message about the detrimental impact of the Coalition’s GST and industrial relations policies.

The Party produced a further campaign flyer dealing with an everyday service that would suffer under a GST, namely the school canteen (see Figure 6.6). This flyer shows cartoon images of school children trying with difficulty to swallow sandwiches. The flyer is titled “How Dr Hewson’s GST Puts the Bite on the School Canteen”. It lists the kinds of items sold by the school canteen that would attract the GST including flavoured milks, freshly prepared salad rolls, sandwiches and wholemeal pies and pasties. The flyer compares the fact that under the Coalition’s proposed GST, “your child’s school lunch” would be taxed but “caviar and smoked salmon” would be tax-free:

Dr Hewson’s 15% GST would hit just about everything in a takeaway school lunch or in a meal sold in a school canteen, but it won’t touch smoked salmon or caviar from a gourmet deli. So while the gourmet delights go tax-free, you
would have to tell your kids to watch what they eat or find the extra money to pay the 15% tax.

By focusing on everyday goods and services, such as those provided by the school canteen, Labor is able to highlight the elitism and unfairness of the Coalition’s GST policy. This correlates with Labor’s general campaign theme of fairness, as described above. It also connects with Keating’s persistent messages about social justice and equality. The flyer deals with the fact that under the GST regime, those “hard-working volunteers and caterers that many schools depend on” to run the canteen would have to administer the GST. Under this scheme, they would be “the ones to collect Dr Hewson’s tax for him”, which means a lot of “extra book work and many wasted hours” for those volunteers, who are mostly mothers. Hence, this flyer effectively targets ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker and consumer, namely the working mums whose children rely on food provided at school as well as those parents (mostly mothers) who volunteer to provide that food.

Through a reading of the materials used in Labor’s 1993 election campaign, we can see that images of “everyday life” are the medium through which the Party appeals to and constructs ‘the woman voter’ both as carer-worker and consumer.\textsuperscript{42} It is important to note that gender gap research, both here and in the United States, has reinforced the view that woman voters are more responsive to political appeals that utilize ordinary, domestic and everyday images. Mueller argues that gender gap research in the American context has shown that woman voters are more likely to be engaged with “issues and goals closer to their everyday experiences” (1988: 287). Similarly, as described in Chapter 4, the Party’s gender gap research conducted for the 1983 federal
election consolidated the view that women voters approach political issues in terms of implications for their children, their husbands and the family unit (Moore, 1984: 2). Consequently, any appeal to ‘the woman voter’ would be pitched at the level of the practical and the domestic. Hence, gender gap research reinforces the notion that appeals to ‘the woman voter’ are more successful if made “at the level of everyday life” (Slater, 1997: 3).

This use of the everyday, the mundane, and the domestic is far from trivial. Indeed, as Slater argues, “the most trivial objects of consumption both make up the fabric of our meaningful life and connect this intimate and mundane world to great fields of social contestation” (Slater, 1997: 3). Taking up Slater’s insight, I wish to suggest that the objects and services featured in the Party’s anti-GST campaign take on powerful political meanings. These materials bestow a social meaning and a political importance on the mundane tasks usually performed by women consumers, such as purchasing chicken or going to have a haircut. Rose argues that new regimes of “self-conduct and self-formation” take shape through “quotidien narratives of ‘everyday life’”, which are themselves connected to “technologies of marketing and the shaping of consumption” (1996b: 146). In other words, particular subject positions are constructed through images of the self, especially those associated with “everyday life”. These “everyday” images set up certain “repertoires of personhood”, or regimes of the subject. In terms of the Party’s anti-GST campaign, the materials that feature images of “ordinary women” in “everyday life” unavoidably contribute to an image of ‘the woman voter’ as consumer, which is a significant modification with the broader subject position of carer-worker. However, instead of presenting this consumer as a ridiculous or mindless figure, these
materials construct her as a self-assured, pro-active figure, whose choices and decisions are given a certain political significance. She is depicted in places of consumption (shopping centres) and sites of domestic labour (the home) involved in practices of consumption (shopping). It is through these images of ordinary women in everyday places performing everyday tasks, that ‘the woman voter’ is constructed as a “free subject”, whose involvement in processes and places of consumption is connected to larger political values such as “fairness” and “equality”.

In sum, theoretical (especially feminist) work on processes and places of consumption has explored the complexities of what has conventionally been characterized as ‘mundane’ and ‘trivial’ sites and practices. Consonant with this belief about the political, cultural and social significance of consumption, Labor 1993’s election campaign utilized places of consumption and mobilized images of consumption. This campaign was conducted at the practical and concrete level, through images of everyday, domestic life, “Ordinary Australians” and especially “the ordinary woman”. Instead of characterizing the feminine consumer as mindless and manipulated, these materials construct her as an empowered figure, a free subject whose choices and habits as a carer-worker and consumer have a certain political resonance. Labor’s anti-GST materials also incorporated an appeal to values such as fairness and equality. These materials asserted over and over that the Coalition’s GST would place an unfair and inequitable burden the working, caring and consuming lives of women. Such a message strengthened both the general themes of the campaign and consolidated Keating’s new image as an advocate of social justice for disadvantaged groups. All in all, Labor’s anti-GST campaign mobilized images and figures from “everyday life” as part of its broader
political objectives, namely to secure ‘the woman’s vote’ and win the ‘un-winnable’ election.

Conclusion

Against all odds, Labor under Keating won the 1993 federal election. The Party was returned to government with a majority of thirteen seats and with a national swing of 1.9% in the two-party preferred vote (Emy, 1993: 1). However, there is some debate about whether in fact the women’s vote assisted Labor in its historic fifth election victory. In his “True Believers” speech on election night, Keating thanked “the women of Australia, who voted for [Labor] believing in the policies of this government” (Gordon, 1993: 257). The Party’s exit polling showed that “young women with children” were swayed by the campaigns conducted by unions and health groups about the Coalition’s plans for Medicare and industrial relations reform (Gordon, 1993: 256). Some feminists claimed that the woman’s vote had saved Labor. However, more substantial research has argued that the gender gap began to widen again at the 1993 election, representing a reversal of the longer-term trend whereby gender differences in support for Labor had been declining since the early 1970s (Lawrence, 2000: 210).

Despite these conflicting views about the gender gap numbers, Labor’s attempt to appeal to ‘the woman voter’ at the 1993 federal election was thorough and inventive. The Party’s campaign tactics and materials in the 1993 election continued to target ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker; this was achieved partially through the most
comprehensive child-care policies of the Labor decade, as analysed in the previous chapter. Labor’s anti-GST campaign acknowledged the collective power of ‘the woman voter’ as consumer and sought to appeal to and mobilize this consuming identity in a political way. Labor’s attacks on the Coalition’s *Fightback* package placed a strong emphasis on the unjust impact of these policies on the working, caring and consuming lives of women. Such attacks were connected to the broader themes of Labor’s campaign, advocated by Paul Keating in various speeches and statements, namely fairness and equality for all groups in society. After ten years of successful campaigns, in which the women’s vote was (albeit unevenly) targeted, the 1993 campaign can be viewed as the Party’s most comprehensive and sophisticated approach to narrowing the gender gap.

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1 An appeal to women consumers can be identified in texts from throughout the Labor decade, even the early years. For example, in his speech to the 1984 National Labor Women’s Conference, Bob Hawke states that: 

> Women, like men, are also tram drivers and farmers, they work at home and in offices, they are doctors and patients, they make bread and they buy bread - women's interests are as broad as the nation's interests (1984a: 8).

Here Hawke positions women on both sides of the production and consumption equation and on both sides of the public/private divide, as workers and as consumers.


3 For a more detailed analysis of the election, see Bean, 1994.

4 Lawrence qualifies this statement with the observation that: 

> ... judgments made about parties or leaders are likely to be influenced by the election results: cause and effect are difficult to disentangle. Having made the decision to vote for a particular party, voters may construe the attributes of that party or leader to be congruent with the decision they have made (2000: 218-219).

5 This is Rod Cameron’s description of Hawke in the documentary *Labor in Power*.

6 Similarly, Summers comments that Hawke was a politician possessing “a rare kind of honesty about personal affairs”, someone who was “not at all fazed about treating issues of purely personal (not to say intimate) circumstances with the same gravity that most politicians reserve for national affairs” (1983: 87).

This is not to say that Hawke was always seen to be popular with women or indeed with the feminist movement. Research conducted by the Liberal Party during the 1983 federal election showed that “women in particular ... were worried about Hawke's stability” (Summers, 1983: 97). Amongst some parts of the feminist community, Hawke was considered just another sexist Labor male; in 1971, the Sydney Women's Liberation magazine Mejane named him ‘male chauvinist of the month’ (Sawer, 1990: 64). The Liberal Party recognized Hawke's tenuous position as a champion of women's rights. One of the more negative pamphlets circulated by the Liberals in the 1983 campaign, under the title “Could You Trust This Man to Run Australia?”, consisted of various quotes from Bob Hawke on issues such as unions, capital gains tax, inflation and socialism. Under the subtitle, “Hawke on Women”, it quotes him as saying: “I confess to being a very slow and somewhat blinkered learner in this matter”.

Hawke's connection with shopping centres was implicit in Paul Keating's thinly veiled attempts at attacking the leader's political style in the now famous Press Club speech in 1992. In that speech, Keating argued that leadership was not about being popular, it was “not whether you go through some shopping centre, tripping over the TV crews' cords” (Adams, 1997: 10). Hawke's penchant for television and public venues like shopping centres was so well established in the public mind as to be able to be used as code for the man himself.


An article by Karen Fredericks in Refractory Girl, published soon after the 1993 election, reflects the deep cynicism about Keating and Labor amongst some in the feminist movement. In this article, Fredericks states that:

When Paul Keating thanked the women of Australia in his election victory speech on March 13, those of us who have followed his dubious conversion from unabashed sexism to the feminism of the reconstructed man, couldn't help but gag on our guess-we-should-celebrate post-election drinks (1993: 39).

Fredericks analyses Keating’s comments on women during the 1993 campaign and concludes that neither Keating nor the Labor Party could have “changed so dramatically” in such a short space of time (1993: 40). She dismisses their attempts to pay attention to women voters as “blatant vote-buying tactics” (1993: 40). Frederick's analysis reflects the level of distrust and disappointment amongst some in the feminist community about the actions of the government during the Labor decade.

As Jupp and Sawer comment, the New South Wales branch of the Labor Party “had historically been less sympathetic to the women's movement than in some other states” (1994: 11). As a key figure in the New South Wales Right and a strong Catholic, Keating was always going to be an unlikely convert to the feminist cause.

During his time as Prime Minister, Keating acknowledged the perception that he was socially conservative. He stated to a gathering of women that:

I have a feeling, an inkling that I am not widely regarded as a feminist. This may be because I am regarded rightly as the most conservative of creatures – a family man (Fredericks, 1993: 40).

In 1992 Keating spoke on sexual violence during an address at a forum on the National Strategy on Violence Against Women on the 30th of October and during an address to the National Family Summit on the 11th of November (Ryan, 1995: 181-184). In addition, violence against women was mentioned at length during his speech launching the second National Agenda for Women. Here Keating states that he finds such violence “appalling and intolerable” (1993a: 6). He then announces a number of measures to help eradicate violence against women, including a National Committee on Violence Against Women (1993a: 6-7). However the measure that received the greatest response from his audience related to judicial attitudes to violence against women. On this point, Keating states that:
Like many others, I was recently shocked to read that a judge, during a sexual assault trial, had explicitly condoned the use of violence by a man against his wife (1993a: 7).

Here Keating is referring to Justice Bollan of the Supreme Court of South Australia and his now infamous “rouger than usual handling” comment. This prompts Keating to announce that his government will fund two new initiatives to deal with domestic and sexual violence: an inquiry headed by Elizabeth Evatt and the Australian Law Reform Commission on equality before the law, and a program developed by Justice Deirdre O’Connor and the Australian Institute of Judicial Administration “for magistrates and judges to help them identify prejudice that might impact on their judicial conduct towards women” (1993a: 7). In his speech, Keating then ad-libbed the line “It’s back to school for magistrates and judges”, a comment that was met with rousing applause by his audience of mostly women (Jupp & Sawer, 1994: 16).

16 In contrast, Hazel Hawke received a huge amount of media attention, inside and outside campaign time, during her husbands’ time as prime minister. Stories on Hazel Hawke during the 1983 election included “Hazel spells it out: No dams!” (picturing Hazel Hawke at a rally in Melbourne wearing no dams earrings); “Hazel’s ready to face public: Bob Hawke’s wife steps into the spotlight” (Hawke Hawke says “Bob is a strong person but then I am as well”); “Hazel Hawke, a politician’s wife and her own woman”; “Mrs. Hawke ready for new role (as wife of Labor leader)”; “Hazel, like hubby Bob, is planning a few career changes” (includes a photo of Hazel Hawke relaxing in the garden, planning to do social welfare work). All these reports were contained in the media-monitoring folder in the National Secretariat papers. In the 1984 election Hazel Hawke was:

... used very skilfully as an adjunct to her husband during the campaign. The women’s press, in particular, paid more attention to her innovations in style and grooming than it did to the Labor women candidates or to the pronouncements of Senator Susan Ryan (Simms, 1985: 106).

In the 1987 election she was “featured prominently in two or three of the advertisements” and in the Party’s campaign launch at the Sydney Opera House (Simms, 1988: 159). As Lumby points out, this kind of media reporting of “the private, personal side of public figures and issues is not as trivial as it first looks” (1999: 24). Indeed, “it has, in fact, a deeply political effect: revealing the hidden continuity between the private and the public spheres” (Lumby, 1999: 24).

17 See also Bulbeck, 1998: 175.

18 Swanson makes the important point that there are different kinds of shopping, or more precisely, that certain modes of shopping are situated differently. She states that:

... we can situate shopping more broadly, seeing it as compromised of a diversified range of practices: for the various kinds of shopping serve different purposes, elicit different forms of engagement, allow different kinds of sociability and are integrated in varied ways with other forms of everyday activities (1995: 98-9).

19 Kingston makes the important point that the resurgence of feminism in the seventies provided an opportunity rather than an obstacle to retailers and advertisers. Instead of only targeting the “housewife buying for her family”, they could now target “the working woman spending her larger-than-ever pay packet on herself” (Kingston, 1994: 202). As time went on, advertisers and retailers found new representations of womanhood to focus on in their campaigns. As Reekie comments, “although the undifferentiated housewife predominated, the adolescent, the teenager, the ‘working girl’, daughters and mothers-in-law, the working wife, the housewife with young children and the older housewife began to make an appearance” (1991: 23). Hence, by the time of the 1993 election, there were a number of “more visible categories of woman” to appeal to in Labor’s campaign to attract women’s votes.

20 Nightingale makes explicit the connections between women as television audience and women as consumers. The introduction of television in Australia in the mid fifties “coincided with the development and intensification of shopping trends” which saw the rise of the shopping centre
(Nightingale, 1990: 31). From this point on, commercial television became “an integral part of the modern shopping world” (Nightingale, 1990: 33). This association becomes stronger if we consider that shopping centres (as geographical space) and television (as media space) were central avenues for communication between the Labor Party and women voters during the Labor decade.

Reekie makes the crucial point that women, especially housewives, have been the main targets of market research, not only because they are the main consumers of products, but because “the sexual division of labour that prescribed shopping as women’s work and took most men away from the home during the day, when most interviews were conducted … also made women the logical objects of market research” (1991: 18-20).

There are interesting parallels between the conventional characterization of ‘woman’ as consumer (passive, uncritical, irrational, concerned with family and personal affairs) and the traditional characterization of ‘the woman voter’ (ignorant, inattentive, insecure, focused on home and family) as canvassed in Chapter 4.

For example, in the paper, “Women – How Can We Get Our Message Across”, it states that “shopping centres are of course a good way to meet women” (3).

Bob Hawke, whose public appeal through ‘the personal’ has already been commented on, found himself in comfortable surroundings when he made appearances in suburban shopping centres. In her account of the 1983 election, Summers describes “one of Hawke’s most impressive campaign events”, where he addressed shoppers at a Saturday morning rally at the Capalaba Shopping Centre on the outskirts of Brisbane (1983: 114).

When Hawke began speaking, the crowd swelled [from several hundred] until several thousand people had stopped their Saturday morning business to listen. Hawke began by talking about shopping and the “interdependence of shopping centres”, how the act of shopping made people aware of the problems of small businesses. He related the record number of small business bankruptcies to the lack of purchasing power in the community that resulted from high unemployment. He spoke about “the kids of despair”, those one in three young people aged fifteen to nineteen who were unemployed, and said the “Prime Minister’s politics of division” and economic policies were “starting to break up our society”. He talked about families falling apart, of kids using drugs, of an increase in violence. Women in the crowd began crying as Hawke talked about kids and the bleak future they faced (Summers, 1983: 114).

Hawke’s appeal contains references to all those policy and quality of life issues identified in the gender gap research as important to women voters – security, freedom from violence, jobs for kids, and safe, prosperous homes. It is a political appeal but one couched in the language and register of the personal. Such an appeal finds a perfect home in this suburban shopping centre on a Saturday morning.

See generally Davis et al, 1997.

Jupp and Sawer point out that “other Labor candidates were helped along by the handbook distributed in November 1992 by the Women’s Ministerial Advisers’ Group established by Anne Summers and called Don’t Forget the Women in Your Life – After All, They are 50 plus % of Your Electorate” (1994: 18-19).


In November 1992 the ACTU commissioned Rod Cameron to undertake a national survey of community attitudes on industrial relations (Jupp & Sawer, 1994: 21). He recommended that a woman be used as “the spokesperson for the campaign against the coalition’s industrial relations policy and that creative methods be used such as advertising in women’s magazines” (Jupp & Sawer, 1994: 21). Jennie George, as the first woman President of the ACTU, was the obvious choice to take on such a role. As Norington describes:

Over the weeks of the official [1993] election campaign, Jennie travelled to marginal electorates in several states, including outlying areas, where she gave
speeches to community groups and in workplaces and had the opportunity to talk personally to locals (1998: 209-210).

George's speaking tour was reinforced in the media by the ACTU's advertisements in "mass-market women's magazines, including The Australian Women's Weekly and New Idea", in which George "emphasized that women in low-paid jobs without bargaining power would be worst affected without awards" (Norington, 1998: 210).

29 Author and feminist Anne Deve son “coordinated a non-party anti-Fightback coalition called 'Just Women' which emphasized the effects on women of the cuts in public expenditure, the GST, the loss of awards, the loss of Medicare bulk billing and the less satisfactory child care package” (Jupp & Sawer, 1994: 20).

30 McHugh was appointed as Minister for Consumer Affairs in 1992 (Reynolds, 1995: 117). Between the 10th of February and the 10th of March 1993, McHugh appeared six times on ABC radio to talk about the GST, consumer affairs and women (Singleton, 1993: 65-66).

31 As Jupp and Sawer comment, “historically women, as the household purchasers, have strongly opposed consumption taxes” (1994: 18). In 1985, when Treasurer Keating attempted to introduce a consumption tax, women's organizations were “overwhelmingly opposed” because it “would have had disproportionately impact on them”, constituting “a transfer from purse to wallet” (Jupp & Sawer, 1994: 18).

32 While Labor “has attracted less support from women than from men, ... the so-called ‘gender gap’ was reversed in attitudes to the GST” (Jupp & Sawer, 1994, 14). Polling in marginal seats conducted by ANOP over the fifteen months leading up to the election “consistently showed women as more opposed to the GST than men” (Jupp & Sawer, 1994: 14).

33 The GST would cause this transfer from purse to wallet because, as Keating describes in one of his speeches, it would “give male earners an income tax cut while their wives are slugged with a fifteen per cent GST on every item of food and clothing required by the household” (Ryan, 1995: 161).

34 Party materials also attacked the Coalition’s lack of women’s policy (“Dr Hewson is proud that he has no women’s policy” (ALP, 1993d: 56)) and Hewson’s views on women’s status in society:

Dr Hewson falsely assumes women have equality with men. ... He has no understanding of the entrenched discrimination and neglect which is the reality of many women’s lives. Ten years of achievement by Labor has brought women much closer to the goal of equality but there is still a way to go. Dr Hewson's policies, and his refusal to look at women's special needs, would reverse many of the gains that have been made (ALP, 1993d: 56).

35 See further Sawer, 1986: 540.

36 In a 1982 letter to the then leader Bill Hayden, Susan Ryan states that:

Given the results of our research on women's voting behaviours it is crucial that all advertisements are aimed at women as well as men. Therefore, women should feature in the advertisements and the themes of the advertisements should be expressed in ways that are accessible to women (1982e:1).

37 As Morris comments:

... culture is one medium of a power struggle in which most participants, at some stage or another, will passionately invoke on their own behalf the interests of "Ordinary Australians (1998: 114-115).

Labor culture is no exception.

38 Note that these are the major issues dealt with in the second National Agenda for Women.

39 Such an appeal is particularly powerful if we consider “the consistent evidence in Australia and in comparable countries which shows that employed women” are increasingly relying on the “purchase of market-produced goods (meals) and services ... rather than a redistribution of responsibilities to men as a consequence of women’s paid employment” (Cass, 2000: 6). In other words, while women have increased their paid work and slightly reduced the time they spend in household work, their male partners have not increased “their time in household chores
In this context, the power of woman as consumer is intimately connected to her capacities as carer-worker; she needs to be able to rely on the “commodification of household labour” to fulfil her role as carer-worker. This “greater recourse” to consumption of household goods and services functions as a substitute for men's increased household work (Cass, 2000: 6).

Similarly, one of Labor’s television advertisements entitled “How Dr. Hewson's Goods and Services Tax would change your day” (as discussed above) focuses on the impact of the GST on everyday commodities and services such as clothing and footwear, bed linen and blankets, used cars, tradesmen’s service calls, takeaway food, after school lessons and phone bills.

It should also be noted that local candidates in the 1993 federal election sent direct mail to hairdressers in their electorate, detailing the impact the GST would have on their business (ALP, 1993c, “GST and Services Letter, Target: Hairdressers”).

This use of images of women is evident in important women’s policy documents of the Labor decade. For example, the second National Agenda includes numerous images of women in various settings, both work and home related. On one level, these images function as a graphic re-enforcement of the consultative process. These are the “ordinary Australian women” whose “vision and goals” are expressed in the Agenda. For example, the beginning of the “Employment” chapter features a photo of a woman of colour, Lauren Peri, a motor mechanic for Brisbane City Council (a non-traditional job in the public service) (OSW, 1993, 42). She is shown in her work clothes, leaning on heavy machinery (OSW, 1993: 42). In between the “Employment” and “Child Care” chapters appears a photo of a woman cartographer engaged in remote sensing at the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (another non-traditional job in the public service) (OSW, 1993: 50). Both images also serve to reinforce the comments in the second Agenda about women’s entry into non-traditional occupations.

Frederickson states that “exit polls conducted by AGB McNair record that the 1993 elections were the first in which over 50% of women voted” Labor (1993: 41).

Lawrence puts the 1993 gender gap at 6%, “almost the same level as recorded in 1979” (2000: 210). See also Renfrow, 1994. For an anti-feminist reading of the gender gap at the 1993 federal election, see also Thompson, 1999: 47-62.
Conclusion

This thesis has sought to describe and analyse how the ‘new’ political subject position of ‘the woman voter’ was constructed within Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating years generally, but specifically within the context of the federal election campaigns of 1983 and 1993. I have focused on how this construction of ‘the woman voter’ meshed with certain shifts in Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating era. Through a discursive reading of various texts (including gender gap research, Party policy and electoral campaign materials), I have explored not only how ‘the woman voter’ was constructed, via which technologies and regimes of subjection, but also the shape and content of that construction and how it emerged within Labor discourse at a certain period.

In building my argument, I have explored certain discursive fields, namely Labor discourse and its engagement with a certain kind of feminist politics. I have drawn upon theories of governmentality and liberalism, as developed by Foucault, Rose and Dean. In particular, I have attempted to make connections between the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as a new subject position and theories of liberal economic government. I have also examined certain conceptual dichotomies, specifically sameness/difference and public/private and how these dichotomies have shaped the construction of ‘the woman voter’. Changes in the construction of the political subject position of ‘the woman voter’ can be viewed in terms of the Labor Party's engagement with a certain kind of feminist politics, a response to feminist demands for inclusion. However this process of inclusion – into Hawke’s consensus society or Keating’s internationally competitive and tolerant marketplace – has been
affected in a way that does not disrupt the basic structures of capitalist economic processes, including the public/private division on which it is based.

In seeking to identify the ways in which ‘the woman voter’ has been shaped by Labor discourse, I have utilised poststructuralist theory. This work has informed both my general theoretical analysis and my approach to methodology. My use of Foucauldian theory has been complemented by a wider feminist analysis that draws upon secondary materials that are distinctly un-Foucauldian. This work - on issues relating to the State, party politics, new social movements and so forth - provides some important insights in relation to questions of gender and electoral politics, questions that are often overlooked in analyses utilising theories of governmentality.

It is worth reviewing, at this concluding stage, the relevance of various concepts and theories to my overall thesis objective, which has been to explore the complex and various ways in which a particular subject position has been constructed within discourse. I want to bring together, in a more concentrated and comprehensive form, the key concepts and arguments that are sustained both within and across the various chapters of this thesis.

**Labor discourse**

In this thesis, I have shown how ‘the woman voter’ emerges as a ‘new’ political subject position within Labor discourse at a certain moment in the Party’s history. As such, this subject position is shaped by the (changing and changeable) nature of Labor discourse. In Chapters 2 and 3, I described and analysed some of the key
features of Labor discourse. Whilst the Labor Party professes in its platform to be “socialist”, a close examination of Labor discourse shows that it is a politics that cannot be adequately analysed by reference to a singular theory or ideology. Rather, I argue Labor politics should be viewed as a discourse that incorporates a variety of different (even antagonistic) political traditions, ethics, and ideologies, from mateship and egalitarianism to sexism and racism. In my analysis of Labor discourse, I argue that historical debates about ‘the Labor tradition’ serve to create speaking positions within Labor discourse as a whole, positions within which the Party’s factions and key personnel can operate. In this context, ‘the Labor tradition’ and ‘the Hawke-Keating’ years function as contested discursive objects, that mark out space within Labor discourse for Left and Right.

During the Labor decade, there were significant shifts within Labor discourse that have influenced the emergence of certain political subject positions. This was a crucial period in both the nation and the Party’s history. Labor under the leadership of Hawke-Keating pursued social harmony and social justice objectives within the confines of market capitalism. It sought to improve, rather than challenge, market capitalism; indeed its primary concern was to be efficient economic managers. Consensus politics, which some argue has always been part of the Labor tradition, was refined under the leadership of Hawke in particular. Government and the Party sought consultation and reconciliation not simply with traditional interest groups such as capital and labour but with new social movements focused on the politics of the environment, race, ethnicity and, of course, gender. For example, through consultation with certain feminist organizations, the Party sought to include women as a part of its consensus community. As Johnson comments:
Labor government rhetoric has traditionally seen citizens as members of economically and socially defined groups, such as business and labour, that should work together for the common good. The Hawke and Keating governments ... retained that conception despite their greater emphasis on deregulation and the role of market forces. While Labor's conception still tends to privilege male members of groups such as classes, it also enabled women to be recognized as a legitimate interest group and to be incorporated into some existing economic and social strategies (1993: 82).

However, women's incorporation into these economic and social strategies was contingent upon the contributions they could make, as carer-workers and consumers, to the economy and society in general. Labor discourse, informed by the precepts of liberal economic government, sought to “encourage particular forms of citizen behaviour” consistent with its general objectives (Johnson, 2000: 104). Women in particular were constructed as the new subjects of an internationally competitive Australian nation and called upon to play an important role in the (Labor) government's task of restructuring the economy (Johnson, 1997: 46; Curthoys & Muecke, 1993: 181).

I have attempted to show in this thesis how the construction of ‘the Australian woman’ (in policy texts such as the second National Agenda for Women) and ‘the woman voter’ (in electoral texts such as Labor's 1993 Child Care Policy Document) were consistent with the general objectives of Labor discourse. As described above, the broad objective of Labor governments (especially the Hawke-Keating government) was to secure social justice for disadvantaged groups within the confines of market capitalism. In keeping with this overall objective, Labor as a Party and as a government supported women as disadvantaged members of the
community (a clear social justice objective) in order that they could contribute better to the workforce and the economy (as carer-workers and consumers). In its attempts to meet the needs and desires of ‘the woman voter’, the Labor government and the Labor Party benefited from a strategic alliance with certain sections of the feminist movement.

**Feminism**

The Labor Party has survived in the mainstream of politics largely due to its capacity to adapt to new political landscapes and adjust to new political concepts. Indeed, the Party has been most successful when it has absorbed some of the energy and ideas of emerging political movements. Labor’s engagement with the feminist movement is an example of this process. From the Whitlam period onward Labor’s policies began to reflect some of the concerns of feminism, particularly those of the more organised and ‘reasonable’ sections of the movement. Owen argues that the rise of the ‘second wave’ feminist movement was “interrelated with the development of a new-style [Labor Party] which consulted with women activists and utilised their knowledge in the development of policies designed to evoke a response from women” (1980: 140). Starting with the intervention by the Women’s Electoral Lobby’s during the 1972 federal election, the Australian feminist movement has shown that it could make an impact on mainstream politics by “re-arranging the questions that women could ask of political parties” (Campbell, 1987: 295). Throughout the Labor decade, sections of the feminist movement “succeeded in placing certain women’s issues on the public agenda” (Sawer & Simms, 1993: 253). The feminist movement’s influence on Party policies and campaign strategies seemed
to reach its height at the 1993 federal election. As canvassed in Chapter 6, Labor’s women’s policy for this election contained items that had been long sought after by feminist groups, such as the re-education of judges (Sawer & Groves, 1994: 438).

As established in Chapter 3, Labor’s engagement with feminism was not precipitated through a relationship with the broader feminist movement, rather through an alliance with certain ‘reasonable’ and organised sections such as the Women’s Electoral Lobby. In addition, Labor, as a party and a government, was lobbied from the inside by the femocrats and by Labor feminists in both caucus and in cabinet. It was from these three feminist groups that Labor derived its ideas about what Australian women wanted and needed from government; these were the feminist reformers that attempted to show Labor “how to satisfy women electorally” (Eisenstein, 1996: 39). Perhaps as a consequence of the Party’s partial and strategic relationship with certain sections of the feminist movement, Labor did not engage with the broad scope of feminist ideas. Rather, Labor adopted and adapted certain feminist goals and concepts that “resonated” with Labor discourse (Bulbeck, 1997: 24). In this way, feminism influenced the construction of ‘the woman voter’ only indirectly, as it was contained (and many argue constrained) by Labor discourse.

I have sought to show how certain feminist ideas and debates informed the shape and content of Labor discourse even prior to the movement’s resurgence in the 1970s. In Chapters 4 and 5, I have illustrated how the fight for women’s suffrage in Australia profoundly influenced the subsequent construction of women’s political identity, both within Labor discourse and within political science scholarship generally. As canvassed in Chapter 5, the conventional construction of ‘the woman voter’ as apolitical and conservative was firmly established during the suffrage
struggles; this subject position has been absorbed into and modified within more recent constructions of women’s political identity. In this way, “the achievement of women’s suffrage [is] … the beginning, rather than the end, of the narrative of women’s citizenship” (Daley & Nolan, 1994: 13). The arguments and tensions evident in the women’s suffrage debates re-emerge, albeit in a modified form, in later materials on women’s voting patterns and political behaviours. These arguments and tensions include “the class/gender conflict” and “the relationship of the women’s movement to political parties” (Searle, 1988: 19). An investigation of the suffrage debates also highlights the role of the conceptual dichotomies of public/private and sameness/difference in the construction of women’s political identity.

**Sameness/difference**

As discussed in Chapter 4, the suffragists in Australia and other western democracies such as Britain and the United States were torn over what kind of arguments were best utilised in their fight for the vote. They could pursue a line of argument that emphasised women’s sameness to men or they could advocate a form of domestic feminism that stresses women’s different views and values as women. In the end, suffragists set a precedent for later feminist activists by stressing both sameness and difference in their arguments for reform. The suffrage debates also influenced the ways in which women’s political identity has been traditionally defined. The characterisation of women as apolitical and conservative (and by extension anti-Labor) was well established during the suffrage years and continued to inform research and commentary on women’s political behaviours and identity.
The activism of Labor feminists such as Susan Ryan in the early 1980s attempted to shift perceptions within the media and the Party about the character of ‘the woman voter’. As described in Chapter 4, Labor feminists and some sections of the feminist movement utilised gender gap research and other kinds of materials drawing on the experience of women candidates and campaigners to question the traditional construction of the woman voter as apolitical and conservative. Whilst these efforts facilitated the development of women’s policy and campaign strategies throughout the Labor decade, they did not effectively challenge the paradigm by which women’s political behaviour and identity is judged. The sameness/difference dynamic is premised on a masculine norm, with women’s political attitudes and voting patterns assessed according to whether they converge with or diverge from this singular, male standard. My critical reading of the 1983 gender gap research and related texts shows that the sameness/difference dichotomy still operates within the more modern constructions of ‘the woman voter’, even those informed by the politics of feminism. Furthermore, my analysis of the construction of ‘women’ in the Australian Bureau of Statistics report *Women in Australia* shows that the sameness/difference dynamic informs broader evaluations of women’s working and domestic lives. If the masculine norm, which is fundamental to the operations of the sameness/difference divide, is left largely unchallenged, then the sexual division of labour is similarly left untouched, with men’s private duties as in the home and as fathers and husbands mostly overlooked in policy and party documents. As Gatens observes:

... political strategies that insist on a dichotomously conceived sexual difference do not challenge the partiality structure of gender norms. Strategies that involved agitating for, or bargaining over, women’s rights, allowances, entitlements, and so on, do not challenge the formal structure of
the norms of gender. One may by these means improve some women's future position relative to their past position but leave intact the basic structure of the norms which construct men's superordinate position (1998: 13-14).

The various policies and electoral strategies developed by the Party during the Labor decade that aimed at assisting women to juggle their obligations as carer-workers ensured that the "basic structures" referred to above by Gatens were never fundamentally destabilised.

**Public/private**

As with the sameness/difference dichotomy, the public/private dynamic informed the various suffrage arguments both here and overseas. As canvassed in Chapter 5, the connections between the private world of home and family and the public world of work and politics were central to the debates about women’s suffrage. Australian suffragists, like their overseas counterparts, claimed that the vote would give issues related to the private realm of home and family greater status in the public work of politics. In their view, the vote would protect women in the domestic sphere and ensure their particular interests as women were given priority in the political sphere. In addition, the suffrage period saw women as a group continually defined via their private role as carers. In this way, the public/private divide was consolidated during the suffrage debates, ensuring that ‘the woman voter’ was characterised in terms of her private responsibilities as wife, mother and manager of the home. This in turn laid the foundation for the on-going construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer, as described in Chapter 5.
Again, as with the sameness/difference dichotomy, the public/private dynamic incorporates a masculine component. Traditionally, men are situated on the public side of the divide, the world of work and politics, with women sequestered to the domestic sphere. The idea that any person’s life can be easily or clearly divided into public and private spheres is itself a consequence of a masculinist framework, which sees men as the main breadwinners and able to opt out of “the tasks of reproduction [and] domestic work” (Gatens, 1991: 84). As feminist commentators have pointed out, despite the fact that women are no longer “forcibly confined to the private sphere”, we have not seen a parallel integration of men into the private sphere (Gatens, 1991: 299). As discussed in Chapter 5, while the increasing involvement of women in paid work has seen a significant modification to the “stereotypical Australian male breadwinner/female carer model” (Cass: 2000: 15), there has not yet been a parallel increase in the amount of time men spend in caring work in the domestic sphere. In this way, women “are still ... contained within the public/private split” (Pettman, 1996: 18), while men continue in the public world of paid work with limited domestic obligations. By analysing various policy and election campaign texts, I have shown how the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker and consumer is informed by the operations of the public/private divide and, furthermore, how this construction is consistent with Labor discourse.

**Constructing ‘the woman voter’**

The primary aim of this thesis has been to describe and analyse the construction of ‘the woman voter’ within Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating years. As stated
above, the characterisation of ‘the woman voter’ as carer was well established during the suffrage debates and prevails, even today, in texts on women’s political identity and behaviour. For example, interpreters of modern gender gap research, both here and in the United States, have argued that women are more interested in political issues that embody an “ethic of caring” (Curtin, 1997: 19), such as health, education, peace and the environment. Such a focus is seen to be a ‘natural’ consequence of women’s main concern in life, which is the safety and prosperity of the home and family. This characterisation of ‘the woman voter’ as family-focused and caring is itself derived from the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as apolitical and conservative, which was firmly established during the suffrage struggles. In terms of this older construction, the cause and effect of the political disinterest and conservatism of ‘the woman voter’ is her fixed position in the domestic realm, situated as it is outside the public sphere of paid work and politics. In this way, the enduring construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer is indebted to an even more enduring characterisation of her as apolitical and conservative.

As the Labor decade progressed, ‘the woman voter’ was increasingly constructed within Labor discourse as both a carer and a worker or, more precisely, as a carer-worker. Such a construction is consistent with the objectives of liberal, economic government. As discussed in Chapter 1, liberal government is ‘economic’ in that it privileges economic imperatives. It seeks to regulate, in a limited and modest way, the interactions between the State, political parties, corporate entities, individuals, families, communities and the general population for the benefit of the economy. As discussed in Chapter 2, within regimes of liberal government, all sorts of policy areas, even those “neither exclusively, nor even primarily, concerned with economics” (Dean, 1999: 57), are linked to and made subject to the logic of the
market. As discussed in Chapter 2, during the Hawke-Keating years even traditional Labor objectives like social justice and forging a new national identity were connected to the Party’s main goals of economic prosperity and international competitiveness.

In relation to the formation of subject positions, this thesis has attempted to describe and analyse how those subject positions, emerging within a specific discursive field, are incorporated into the broader social and political objectives of liberal government. It has been argued that the objectives of the Party during the leadership of Hawke-Keating included national prosperity and social consensus. Particular forms of identity were “promoted and presupposed” by the practices, policies and programmes of Labor, as a government and as party, in order to support these desired objectives (Dean, 1999: 32). Specifically, in their role as carer-workers, women were able to contribute to the national prosperity of Australia through their increasing involvement in paid work. In addition, their unpaid, caring work in the domestic sphere was recognised in various government and Party texts as integral to the health, wealth\(^1\) and happiness of the home and family. In other words, women as carer-workers kept both the home and the economy operating efficiently and in a way that did not substantially interfere with the working lives of men or the gendered division of labour. As my analysis of various texts, including the second National Agenda for Women shows, the primary goal of Labor during this period was to develop policy that could “accommodate women’s interests” as carer-workers “without disruption” to the basic structures of the home or the economy (Franzway et al, 1989: 165).
In terms of modifications within this basic subject-position of ‘the woman voter’ as

carer-worker, I have shown how, within certain contexts, there was also an appeal
made to her as a consumer. Butler argues that the processes of appealing to and
mobilizing a specific subject position, in this case ‘the woman voter’ as consumer,
happens simultaneously with the process of construction. At the same time as Labor
appealed to ‘the woman voter’ as consumer in its 1993 anti-GST campaign, it also
constructed her within Labor discourse as a particular discursive subject, namely as a
woman consumer who expresses her concern and care for her home and family
through thoughtful and calculated spending of her income as a worker. As such, the
construction of ‘the woman voter’ as consumer is a significant modification within the
more established subject position of carer-worker. As discursive fields develop and
shift, subject positions within these fields necessarily change. In keeping with what
Slater describes as a movement from the early 1980s onwards towards a “powerful
rediscovery of consumerism” in western cultures (1997:10), there was an
intensification within Labor discourse during the Hawke-Keating years of its
economistic features and the proliferation of ‘economic subjects’ consonant with this
rediscovery of consumerism. In this way, as Labor discourse altered, then subject
positions with discourse were rearticulated and reproduced, modified in ways that
were consistent with these changes in discourse. In Chapter 6, I illustrated that in
the context of Labor’s anti-GST campaign in the 1993 federal election, it made sense
to target women voters as consumers, especially of everyday goods and services for
the home and family. The construction of ‘the woman voter’ as consumer was
complex, incorporating her persona as carer (expressed through consumption of
domestic goods and services) and worker (who spends her working wages or works
in the shopping centre). I have shown how Labor’s anti-GST campaign mobilised
representations of everyday, domestic life in its attempt to convince women voters that the GST would unfairly affect their caring, working and consuming lives.

It is important to note that I have not argued in this thesis that women voters identified or took up the various subject positions – of carer-worker or consumer – offered to them within Labor discourse during this period. I have simply tried to describe and analyse the ‘new’ political subject positions that emerged within Labor discourse during a certain period. Clearly, Labor discourse has not been the only influence on constructions of women’s voting identity during this period; an analysis of Liberal Party documents from the Labor decade may well produce a very different construction of ‘the woman voter’. Rather, my focus has been on Labor discourse, its internal shifts and modifications during a pivotal time in the Party’s history.

**Finally ... where are the men?**

There has been universal recognition amongst feminist commentators, femocrats and Labor feminists that, despite the significant achievements of the Labor decade in terms of women’s policy innovation, the gendered division of labour was never seriously challenged within Labor discourse during this period.² As Susan Ryan comments in the conclusion to her autobiography:

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Government can provide child-care to support women’s careers; they can legislate against discrimination, but they cannot legislate to make fathers share parental tasks and housework (1999: 282).
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It is true that Labor discourse acknowledged that women’s working and domestic lives could not be considered separately; indeed, implicit in the construction of ‘the woman voter’ as carer-worker is a recognition that women’s public and private lives are profoundly connected. However, there was never a parallel recognition in relation to the lives of men; within Labor discourse men are barely visible in the private world of unpaid work, home and family. Indeed, “the changes in the domestic division of labour accompanying and affected by women’s increased employment have not shown a trend to equality in the carrying out of household responsibilities” (Cass, 2000: 7). In this way, the Labor decade saw the “increased prevalence of dual earner (but not dual carer) families” (Cass, 2000: 18).

As Lake observes, Labor, as a government and a Party, never made a concerted attempt during the Hawke-Keating years to end the sexual division of labour by encouraging, either through policy or educational programmes, men’s greater responsibility in the private sphere. For Lake, bringing an end to the sexual division of labour means more than encouraging women to take on men’s trades, as we saw in the second National Agenda for Women (1986: 142). It must also mean “enabling men to share the housework and child care” (Lake, 1986: 142). Lake suggests that:

... as well as pamphlets on ‘Women in Engineering’ we need some for boys on ‘Coping at Tea Time’ or ‘Keeping up with the Nappies’. Why not of Paul Keating ironing his shirt before addressing the Press Club luncheon or Bob Hawke dusting his study before making an address to the nation? Male role-models might visit schools (accompanying the female mathematicians) to show that men can look after babies as well as playing football (1986: 142).
As discussed in Chapter 6, during the 1993 federal election Paul Keating spoke with enthusiasm and regularity about the importance of child-care as an economic issue and the valuable contributions made by women in both paid and unpaid work to the market economy. However, it is hard to imagine that he would speak with the same vigour about “the new internationally competitive businessman” or “the multi-skilled male worker” who “should be doing more housework or otherwise trying to establish relationships of equality in the home” (Johnson, 1996: 37). These possible political subject positions - “the new internationally competitive businessman” or “the multi-skilled male worker” - do not emerge in Labor discourse at this (or any previous) time. Except for the “Sharing the Load” campaign discussed in Chapter 5, there is no evidence that Labor supported the kinds of programmes half-jokingly referred to by Lake and Johnson. Whereas constructing women as carer-workers and consumers was essential to the operations of liberal, economic government, men could continue in their (modified) role as breadwinners. Men are never constructed as carer-workers, nor do they emerge as consumers within Labor discourse during this period.

**Conclusion**

In sum, this thesis has sought to describe and explore the construction of and modifications within the subject-position of ‘the woman voter’ in Labor discourse during a pivotal era in its development. I have been particularly interested in how an agenda advocated by certain sections of the feminist movement influenced Labor discourse and, indirectly, the construction of subject-positions within this discursive field. I have focused on how those subject positions - of carer-worker and
consumer - meshed with Labor discourse under Hawke-Keating. As such, I have sought to show how processes of subjection-constitution are vital to the formation of discursive fields and the validation and consolidation of practices and programmes of government. In doing so, I have tried to mesh a largely post-structural approach to methodology and theory with broader feminist work on social movements, gender politics and the State.

1. As Cass comments, there has been a growing recognition that a “second income” in a family, which is often designated as the woman’s income, is a “strong bulwark against poverty” (Cass, 2000: 13).

2 I am not blaming these feminist policy makers for failing to destroy the gendered division of labour. These feminists, in seeking to bring about reforms to improve women’s lives, merely responded to the political framework presented to them. In this way, “particular feminist interventions are made within particular political contexts” (Pettman, 1992: 154). As discussed in Chapter 3, it was easier and more effective in the short term for feminists to shape their demands on government and the Party in terms that were compatible with the political culture generally and Labor politics specifically. As Watson comments, feminists “adopt different strategies“ to fit “different times and in different situations” (1990: 10).
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303


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1 The materials from the National Secretariat files in the National Library Archives, Canberra are cited in the form recommended by the National Library. The materials relating to the 1993 election campaign, held at the National Secretariat office in Canberra, pose a problem in terms of citation. This material is filed in a relatively organized form in cabinets and boxes, however there is no numbered system for this material. In relation to these materials, I have used the reference “National Secretariat Files, National Secretariat, Canberra”. Remaining references are in Harvard style.